

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN LATIN AMERICA

SUBJECT READER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ARGENTINA

John A. Bushnell	(1982-1987)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Theodore E. Gildred	(1986-1989)	Ambassador

BAHAMAS

Moncrieff J. Spear	(1970-1973)	Consul General, Nassau
Rozanne L. Ridgway	(1973-1975)	Deputy Chief of Mission
William B. Schwarts, Jr.	(1977-1980)	Ambassador
Andrew F. Antippas	(1981-1983)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Cecil S. Richardson	(1983)	Chief Consular Officer

BARBADOS

Edward M. Featherstone	(1973-1976)	Economic Officer
Johnny Young	(1977-1979)	Administrative Officer
Nicolas Robertson	(1980-1981)	Assistant Public Affairs Officer
Thomas Anderson	(1984-1986)	Ambassador
Paul A. Russo	(1986-1988)	Ambassador
Nadia Tongour	(1988-1991)	Political Officer
G. Philip Hughes	(1990-1993)	Ambassador

BELIZE

Ward Barmon	(1967-1969)	Consular Officer
Beauveau B. Nalle	(1976-1981)	Consul General
Robert Rich	(1987-1990)	Ambassador

BERMUDA

Blake Melville	(1985)	Consul General
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BOLIVIA

Owen B. Lee	(1957-1959)	Minerals and Petroleum Officer
Patrick F. Morris	(1958-1961)	Deputy Director
Roger C. Brewin	(1961-1964)	Economic Officer
Robert L. Chatten	(1965-1967)	Information Officer
Jack R. Binns	(1965-1967)	Junior Officer
Ernest V. Siracusa	(1969-1973)	Ambassador
William Jeffras Dieteroch	(1970-1972)	Director, Cultural Center
Michael W. Cotter	(1971-1973)	Political Officer
Roger C. Brewin	(1972-1974)	Deputy Chief of Mission
William P. Stedman, Jr.	(1973-1977)	Ambassador
Scott E. Smith	(1976-1979)	Project Officer
David N. Greenlee	(1976-1979)	Political Officer
Howard L. Steele	(1977-1980)	Coca Crop Substitution Program
William T. Pryce	(1981-1982)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Charlotte Roe	(1983-1985)	Political/Labor Officer
Edward M. Rowell	(1985-1988)	Ambassador

David N. Greenlee	(1987-1989)	Deputy Chief of Mission
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BRAZIL

Richard A. Virden	(1972-1974)	Public Affairs/Information Officer
William Jeffras Dieterich	(1974-1977)	Press/Information Officer
Margaret J. Barnhart	(1976-1980)	Consular Officer
Mark Lore	(1987-1992)	Deputy Director of Brazilian Affairs
	(1992-1995)	Deputy Chief of Mission
David E. Zweifel	(1993-1995)	Consul General
John D. Caswell	(1993-1995)	State Dept. – Latin American Affairs
	(1995-1998)	Deputy Chief
Nadia Tongour	(1994-1997)	Senior Political Officer
Richard A. Virden	(2002-2004)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Lawrence Cohen	(2002-2005)	Political/Military Affairs Officer

CARRIBBEAN ISLANDS

Leslie M. Alexander	(1989-1991)	Deputy Director, Caribbean Affairs
Sally Grooms Cowall	(1989-1991)	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America

CHILE

Robert S. Steven	(1977-1979)	Desk Officer
Charles Anthony Gillespie, Jr.	(1988-1991)	Ambassador
J. Phillip McLean	(1990-1993)	Deputy Assistant Secretary

COLOMBIA

Lewis M. (Jack) White	(1952-1954)	Consular Officer
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Robert W. Drexeler	(1957-1958)	Vice Consul
Viron Peter Vaky	(1959-1963)	Chief Political Officer
Edmund Murphy	(1966-1968)	Public Affairs Officer
Robert A. Stevenson	(1967-1971)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Charles W. Grover	(1971-1973)	Principal Officer
Robert L. Chatten	(1972-1976)	Public Affairs Officer
Sally Grooms Cowall	(1973-1974) (1974-1975)	Public Affairs Officer, USIS Director, Cultural Center, USIS
Robert W Drexler	(1975-1978)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Robert S. Pastorino	(1977-1979)	Commercial Attaché
Thomas D. Boyatt	(1980-1983)	Ambassador
Alexander F. Watson	(1981-1984)	Deputy Chief of Mission
James L. Tull	(1984-1985)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Charles Anthony Gillespie Jr.	(1985-1988)	Ambassador
Janey Dea Cole	(1987-1989)	Andean Desk Officer, USIS
David L. Hobbs	(1986-1989) (1989-1990) (1990-1992)	Consular Officer Political Counselor Deputy Chief of Mission
J. Phillip McLean	(1987-1990)	Deputy Chief of Mission
James F. Mack	(1989-1991)	Director of Andean Affairs
Charlotte Roe	(1991-1992)	Deputy Political Counselor
Ward Barmon	(1992-1994)	Deputy Director, Narcotics Affairs Section

COSTA RICA

Curtin Winsor, Jr.	(1983-1985)	Ambassador
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Richard H. Melton	(1985-1987)	Director Office of Central American Affairs
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Thomas J. Dodd	(1997-2001)	Ambassador
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CUBA

John A. Ferch	(1982-1985)	Chief – US Interests Section
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Harriet C. Babbitt	(1986-1992)	Representative – OAS
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John J. (Jay) Taylor	(1987-1990)	Chief – US Interests Section
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Sally Grooms Cowall	(1982-1991)	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Latin America
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Joseph G. Sullivan	(1993-1996)	Principal Office – US Interests Section
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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

John A. Bushnell	(1964-1967)	Economic & AID Officer
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Robert Anderson	(1982-1985)	Ambassador
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Robert S. Pastorino	(1992-1994)	Ambassador
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ECUADOR

Findley Burns, Jr.	(1970-1973)	Ambassador
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Douglas Watson	(1973-1975)	Administrative Officer
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Richard Bloomfield	(1976-1978)	Ambassador
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Charles W. Grover	(1982-1984)	Consul General
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Frederick A. Becker	(1982-1985)	Labor Officer
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William Jefras Dietrich	(1983-1986)	Public Affairs Officer
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Leon Weintraub	(1984-1986)	Political Officer
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Fernando E. Rondon	(1985-1986)	Ambassador
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Derek S. Singer	(1989-1991)	Development Officer
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Scott E. Smith	(1989-1996)	Deputy Director, USAID
James F. Mack	(1991-1994)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Leslie M. Alexander	(1996-1999)	Ambassador

EL SALVADOR

Alan H. Flanigan	(1993-1996)	Ambassador
John Helm	(1996-1999)	General Services Officer

GRENADA

John C. Leary	(1986-199)	Chief of Mission
Nadia Tongour	(2001-2004)	Principal Officer/Charge

GUATEMALA

Alberto M. Piedra	(1984-1987)	Ambassador
James Michel	(1987-1989)	Ambassador
Thomas F. Stroock	(1989-1992)	Ambassador
Prudence Bushnell	(1999-2002)	Ambassador

HAITI

Anne O. Cary	(1978-1980)	Economic Officer
Claudia Anyaso	(1988-1990)	Cultural Affairs Officer
Leslie M. Alexander	(1991-1993)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Timothy Michael Carney	(1997-1999)	Ambassador

HONDURAS

Mari-Luci Jaramillo	(1977-1980)	Ambassador
Theodore Wilkinson	(1984-1986)	Political Counselor
Wasrd Barmon	(1988-1992)	Economic Counselor

David Michael Adamson	(1995-1998)	Political Counselor
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JAMAICA

Kenneth N. Rogers	(1968-1972)	Political Officer
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Elizabeth Ann Swift	(1986-1989)	Consul General
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Sally Grooms Cowal	(1989-1991)	Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America
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Herman J. Rossi III	(1989-1992)	Economic Counselor
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Lacy A. Wright	(1991-1995)	Deputy Chief of Mission
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MEXICO

Serban Vallimarescu	(1958-1962)	Information Officer
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Terrence George Leonhardy	(1959-1961)	Consular Officer
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James J. Gormley	(1964-1965) (1986-1987)	Vice Consul Narcotics Officer
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William N. Harben	(1966-1969)	Consul General
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Edward H. Wilkinson	(1967-1969)	Vice Consul
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Arnold Denys	(1967-1969) (1981-1984)	Consular Officer Cultural Affairs Officer
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Robert E. Service	(1968-1971)	Political Officer
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Robert S. Pastorino	(1969-1971) (1983-1986) (1989-1991)	Economic/Commercial Counselor Economic Political Counselor Deputy Chief of Mission
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Jack B. Kubisch	(1969-1971)	Deputy Chief of Mission
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Louis P. Goelz	(1969-1972)	Consular Officer
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Gilbert Donahue	(1971-1973)	Vice Consul
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Clarke McCurdy Brintall	(1971-1974)	Military Secretary
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Robert A. Stevenson	(1971-1974)	Country Director of Mexico
Terrence George Leonhardy	(1972-1973)	Consul General
Diane Dillard	(1972-1974)	Consular Officer
Richard Smith	(1972-1974)	Agriculture Department
Thomas M. Recknagel	(1973-1975)	Sr. Deputy Admin. Of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs
Herbert Thompson	(1975-1978)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Michael Mahoney	(1978-1979)	Consular Officer
Leslie M. Alexander	(1978-1980)	Narcotics Program Officer for Mexico
Thomas F. Johnson	(1981-1984)	Assistant Information Officer, USIS
Robert L. Chatten	(1983-1985)	Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Langhorne A. Motley	(1983-1985)	Astt. Secretary for Latin American Affairs
Douglad Watson	(1983-1986)	Administrative Officer
Alan Hardy	(1984)	Deputy Political Counselor
Richard H. Morefield	(1985-1987) (1987-198?)	Consul General Economic Counselor
Sally Grooms Cowal	(1985-1989)	Minister Counselor for Public Affairs
Theresa A. Loar	(1986-1988)	Visa Officer/Aide to the Supervisory Consul General
Larry Colbert	(1987-1991)	Consul General
Richard H. Melton	(1988-1989)	Asst Secretary for Mexico, Caribbean and Regional Economic Affairs, Latin America Bureau

James R. Jones	(1993-1997)	Ambassador
Edward H. Wilkinson	(1999-2001)	Consul General
Dale Slaght	(199-2002)	Career Minister

NICARAGUA

Robert W. Duelming	(1984-1986)	Humanitarian Assistance Officer
Richard Melton	(1985-1988)	Office of Central American Affairs
Ronald G. Godard	(1991-1993)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Frederick A. Becker	(1994-1998)	Deputy Chief of Mission

PANAMA

Clyde Donal Taylor	(1964-1966)	Consular Officer
Ronald D. Godard	(1968-1970)	Rotational Officer
Robert M. Sayre	(1969-1972)	Ambassador
Ruth E. Hansen	(1977-1980)	Political Officer
Edward L. Lee	(1982-1985)	Regional Security Officer
David M. Adamson	(1984-1987)	Deputy Political Officer

PARAGUAY

Thomas F. Johnson	(1968-1971)	Rotation Officer
Roger C. Brewin	(1969-1972)	Deputy Chief of Mission
George W. Landau	(1972-1977)	Ambassador
Arthur H. Davis, Jr.	(1982-1985)	Ambassador
Clyde Donald Taylor	(1985-1988)	Ambassador

James F. Mack	(1986-1989)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Jon David Glassman	(1991-1994)	Ambassador
David N. Greenlee	(1999-2003)	Ambassador

PERU

John Wesley Jones	(1963-1969)	Ambassador
Alan H. Flanigan	(1967-1969)	Consular Officer
Willard B. Devlin	(1970-1974)	Consular Officer
Harry W. Shlaudeman	(1976-1979)	Ambassador
Cecil S. Richardson	(1980-1983)	Consular Officer
John D. Caswell	(1982-1984)	Narcotics Control
Richard Ogden	(1983-1985)	Deputy Chief of Mission
J. Phillip McLean	(1984-1987)	Office of Andean Affairs
Alexander F Watson	(1986-1989)	Ambassador
Anthony Quainton	(1989-1992)	Ambassador
James F. Mack	(1994-1997)	Deputy Chief of Mission

VENEZUELA

Lowell Fleischer	(1982-1983)	Consul General
Edward L. Lee II	(1982-1985)	Regional Security Officer
Alfred Joseph White	(1987-1990)	Economic Counselor
Kenneth N. Skoug	(1988-1990)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Robert B. Morley	(1993-1995)	Deputy Chief of Mission
Nicolas Robertson	(1997-1999)	Public Affairs Officer

ARGENTINA

JOHN A. BUSHNELL Deputy Chief of Mission Buenos Aires, Argentina (1982-1987)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogota, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997

BUSHNELL: I would sum up our objectives as no coups, no bombs, no disappearances, no debt default, and no more wars. With the opening up of the country and the reduction of police powers under an elected government, substantial amounts of cocaine from Bolivia and other drugs began moving through Argentina. I then added a sixth US objective – no drug smuggling. Although Argentina was seldom on the front pages of the US press, we had an important agenda in the Buenos Aires embassy with major economic, nonproliferation, peace, and human rights issues in play. The only way we were going to make progress on all these objectives was by getting a democratic government, working with it, and keeping it in power.

BUSHNELL: I chaired a committee that allocated USIS grants and generally worked closely with USIS because its programs were key to several of the things we were trying to do. I spent a lot of time with the commercial officers, and I was frequently able to open doors for them. I tried to avoid much direct contact with the DEA office because I assigned the political counselor to coordinate drug matters. Most DCM's manage the State sections of embassies. However, my observation was that most DCM's and even many ambassadors played a less active role with the other agencies. Shlaudeman from the beginning indicated that he wanted me to play a very active role with the other agencies because, when I arrived, the Embassy was in a crisis situation and for some time he thought he might be thrown out. Ortiz and Gildred welcomed my playing this expended role because it helped make the entire Embassy a single team and helped everyone accomplish US objectives.

BUSHNELL: Jaunarena, who was the deputy minister of defense, Herman Lopez, who was secretary of the presidency, labor secretary and briefly secretary of defense, Garcia Vazquez who was head of the Central Bank come immediately to mind. Jaunarena and Lopez were among the three or four people I saw privately often who were real insiders in the Alfonsín government. I could work through these people to solve the problems that any part of the embassy was dealing with. For example, one of the most severe problems

DEA had was that at one point the head of the national police, which was DEA's main counterpart, was in the pay of some drug traffickers. The entire anti-drug office of the police force which worked closely with DEA was essentially just using us to take care of the competition, i.e. the traffickers who were not paying the police. If somebody new came along and began moving drugs, then the police would work with us to get those people so their friends could have a monopoly on moving drugs through Argentina. For a while the intelligence on the police corruption wasn't too convincing, and I sided with DEA in arguing that the police were ok because they were helping us take down quite a few traffickers. I pushed the agency (CIA) hard to get additional intelligence, and it finally was able to convince me that the police chief as well as the officers in the drug enforcement office were protecting one large group of traffickers and getting well paid. The intelligence sources were very sensitive, and some aspects of the information could not even be shared with DEA. The question then was what could we do to change the situation without endangering the sources.

I had a private luncheon or meeting a couple times a month with Deputy Defense Secretary Jaunarena, who I knew was very close to President Alfonsin. Although this drug issue had nothing to do with the Defense Department, I went over this problem with him, asking him as an Argentine politician what might be done to resolve the problem before it became a major issues between our two countries. He explored the facts although I could not give him the basic intelligence. He said I would hear from him. A few days later the police chief resigned. And much to my surprise, the new police chief called and asked if I would visit him in his office. In all the history of the embassy I don't think any DCM had received such an invitation. I called on him alone; he dismissed his staff and explained how all the leadership in the narcotics division was being transferred or fired and that he was also changing most of the other anti-narcotics personnel. He said he had received clear instructions to make every effort to stop all drug trafficking, and he invited me to come to him anytime I had any information that the national police were not making such an all out effort. I promised DEA and other elements of the Embassy would do everything we could to help him. The personnel changes were soon made although none of the officers were prosecuted. The new team turned out to be fairly honest but not too effective.

No one in the Embassy except the ambassador knew about my discussion with Jaunarena, and both DEA and CIA were skeptical when I reported that the new police chief had said he was changing most of the narcotics police. Some weeks later the Agency told me a source had said the President had changed police chiefs because Jaunarena had told him I had said we were getting reports about his corruption. I was tempted to put a comment on the report that such was the way effective diplomacy used good intelligence to accomplish US objectives, but I did not comment because I did not want to invite debate on whether or not I had endangered the sources. Obviously the change resulted in a quantum change in the true effectiveness of our DEA office and the overall anti-drug effort.

Another example of an Embassy-wide effort in the drug area was working to get the Argentine Congress to approve a law permitting plea bargains in drug cases and allowing

the police to seize assets in drug cases. A key argument for a law beyond the usual Argentine practice was that the U.S. could then share with Argentine law enforcement seizures of assets in the U.S. connected to cases the Argentines helped us with. Some such seizures were measured in the millions of dollars. As Embassy drug coordinators political counselors Dick Howard and then Bob Felder did great work getting the Administration to propose a law and encouraging the relevant Congressional committees to consider it. But it was a very technical issue and not understood by the Congressional leadership. We made a list of about 20 key members of the Congress and then organized the entire Embassy to lobby them. For example, the Commercial Section was working with a couple of firms that hoped to sell US law enforcement equipment; the commercial officer pointed out that the potential law might well provide financing, and the Argentine firms then approach Congressional leaders with whom they were close. USIS discussed the draft law with a group of Congressional staffers who had participated in one of its programs. Other sections of the embassy also raised the issue where they had useful contacts. The ambassador and I raised it with many on our list when we saw them at receptions or dinners. There was an active social life in Buenos Aires, and it was amazing how much one could get done at these evening functions. When I was explaining the potential drug law to one senator I knew fairly well at a large reception, he stopped me while he gathered two other senators he thought should hear about it too. When the drug law was finally reported out of committee, it passed both houses in near record time with bipartisan support.

THEODORE E. GILDRED
Ambassador
Argentina (1986-1989)

Ambassador Theodore E. Gildred was born in Mexico City in 1935. He received a bachelor's degree from Stanford University in 1959 and certificates in 1960 from Sorbonne and the University of Heidelberg. He served in the Army from 1955-1959 and in the Air Force Reserve from 1959-1969. He became chairman of the board and chief executive officer, the Lomas Santa Fe Companies, Solana Beach, California, since 1968 and has also served as chairman of the board, Torrey Pines Bank and Torrey Pines Group, San Diego. He was appointed as ambassador to Argentina by President Ronald Reagan in late 1986. He was interviewed by Hank Zivetz on April 26, 1990.

Q: Let me put this question to you in a little different way. Very often you can tell the major thrust of American policy in a particular country by the way we staff our different embassy sections. Would you say that the political section was more important in your embassy than the economic, or was the economic more important, or was it a standoff?

GILDRED: I think every ambassador has the ability to establish priorities, but he has to work with what he's got. A lot has to do with the staff he inherits. Obviously, the economic team at the embassy has to be very, very good because this is one of the most important areas of focus. I'm not so sure that we had an overly strong economic team

when I got there and in the several years before. I think greater emphasis probably should have been put on that section. I did what I could to change this but, as you know, you're limited in the ability to move people in government. I made a couple of changes in our economic section that I think strengthened it and allowed me to deal more effectively with the Argentine government and the Ministry of Economy.

So even though I put a great deal of emphasis on our economic section, I may have given more importance to our political section. That capability, in my opinion, had to be very strong. Fortunately, my political counselor, Bob Felder, was one of the most able political officers that I have had the pleasure of knowing. He was of great assistance to me in all of our dealings which, although mostly political in nature, transcended in many cases the realms of economics, trade, drug enforcement, military affairs and other areas of concern. Everything comes together in some fashion under the political section.

BAHAMAS

MONCRIEFF J. SPEAR
Consul General
Nassau (1970-1973)

Moncrieff J. Spear was born in New York in 1921. He received degrees from Cornell and George Washington Universities. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and joined the Foreign Service in 1946. Mr. Spear served in Germany, the Philippines, Yugoslavia, Thailand, Vietnam, the Bahamas, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 1993.

Q: What was the problem with drugs then?

SPEAR: It was just beginning to get started. This was the end of the 1960's. American college students would come over there for Easter break, bringing some of the marijuana then widely used on American campuses. Marijuana use began there in relatively minor fashion, but it spread among the Bahamian youth, unfortunately. There were some efforts to smuggle marijuana through there, but the whole traffic of "hard" drugs up out of Colombia and South America really only began several years after I left.

ROZANNE L. RIDGWAY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Nassau (1973-1975)

Ambassador Ridgway was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Hamline University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1957, she served abroad in Oslo, Manila, Palermo and Nassau (Deputy Chief of Mission). She had several top level assignments including; Ambassador for Ocean and Fishing Affairs (1976-1977); Ambassador to Finland (1977-1980); Counselor of the Department (1980-1981); Ambassador to the Federal

Republic of Germany (1982-1985). In Washington, Ambassador Ridgeway played a major role in dealing with issues concerning the Soviet Union and other European issues. This interview was conducted by Willis Armstrong on June 4, 1991.

RIDGWAY: The new prime minister was Lynden Pindling. We were to make it clear to the government that we were interested in the future of the Bahamas as a new country, and not as an appendage of their colonial masters. Ron dropped his membership in all of the fancy clubs. For about six months after that the black community just observed us to see if this sea change in our attitude was for real.

In that six-month period, we had to deal with a couple of significant issues. One had to do with "hot pursuit," which was closely connected with the Law of the Sea. The Bahamas is an island nation. Under some old arrangements, the U.S. was permitted to just run in and out of Bahamian territorial waters in pursuit of criminals, such as drug dealers and smugglers without first having to seek any kind of permission from the Bahamian or British authorities, and we had become accustomed to doing just that. Large parts of the U.S. Navy really thought that this unfettered access should continue. It felt it should have the rights of archipelago passage, which would allow them to navigate at will through all the passages between the islands. That right of archipelago passage is still an issue today wherever the "nation" is a conglomeration of islands, such as the Philippines, Indonesia and the Bahamas. However, and quite naturally, these island nations want to know who is navigating in their waters.

Then there was the issue of their territorial seas, which, I believe at the time, was only three miles. The Bahamas was not one of the "bad" guys, claiming waters far from their shores. They, however, opposed us on the archipelago issue. Fortunately, the Coast Guard contingent responsible for the waters between the U.S. and the Bahamas was headed by an admiral stationed in Miami. I knew him as "Red" Wagner. He was very sensitive to the issue and very respectful of the Bahamas as a newly independent nation. He was not about to sail in Bahamian waters without respect for Bahamian policies, just because we had been doing so when the Bahamas were part of the British Empire. He and his staff kept in close contact with the Bahamian authorities whenever his ships were chasing some suspects. On a couple of occasions, he was denied access to their territorial waters, on which occasions the Coast Guard did not violate those Bahamian wishes. It was therefore, with the Coast Guard's help that we rebuilt relationships with the Bahamian authorities. When I left, the cooperation between our two countries was very good. The more difficult problems, which stemmed from a major increase in drug trafficking and corruption, arose after I had left.

Q: How would you characterize the Bahamas overall?

RIDGWAY: Bahamians were gentle. They were sweet. The people were at ease with themselves. They had their own view of their place in life. I am told that all of that has now changed. However, we are talking about the late 1970's before the drug invasion, before Columbia, before drug trafficking brought all the bad stuff into the country for

trans-shipment. In the 1970's, the country's principal earnings came from "sun and sand" and some fishing. I always seemed to end up in situations where fishery was a central issue. In the case of the Bahamas, it was spiny lobsters, rather than tuna or shrimp. This is not to say that one could not foresee that over time, the Bahamas would have to face some major issues. Young people cannot be asked to accept that their future lay in waiting on tables or changing bed linens. In the late 1970's, that was pretty much what the future held.

Some Bahamians tried farming. I remember tromping through a prospective avocado grove with the minister of planning. I don't know whether that ever got off the ground. I also saw a farming operation on Andros, which AID tried to establish with a \$10 million grant, which was part of the assistance package developed in exchange for the base rights. I don't know what happened to that project. I don't know whether the Bahamas became self-supporting in the meat and vegetable area. It had to feed not only its own citizens, but the huge influx of tourists as well. I have been told that over time, drug money corrupted the government and the society as a whole. The young people, given a choice between making an easy buck or being paid for working in a service industry, went for the easy buck, which was not surprising. I would guess that over time, our relations with the Bahamas soured somewhat as a direct consequence of the drug trade.

WILLIAM B. SCHWARTZ, JR.

**Ambassador
Bahamas (1977-1980)**

Ambassador William B. Schwartz, Jr. was born in Georgia in 1921. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina, he served in the United States Navy from 1942-1946. President Carter appointed William B. Schwartz, Jr. Ambassador to the Bahamas from 1977 to 1981. Ambassador Schwartz was interviewed by Donald C. Leidel in April 1995.

Q: Could you summarize, when you arrived in the Bahamas in October, what you considered to be the major issues, the crux of what you recall as being significant in terms of U.S. relations with the Bahamas, in terms of your role, your relationship with the leadership in the Bahamas?

SCHWARTZ: Well, this is 1995, and I went to the Bahamas in 1977. So, that's 18 years, and I'm 73 years old, and I'm trusting to memory. Suffice it to say that the Bahamas was not a critical country as far as relations with the United States was concerned. It wasn't the Middle East, and we didn't have any major problems, thank goodness.

The Bahamas, though geographically close to the United States, is a foreign country. The Bahamas had been left without a U.S. ambassador, as I mentioned earlier, for almost a year. The government of the Bahamas was a Black government who had come into power several years prior to that and were proud, as they had a right to be. They were anxious to stand on their own, but at the same time be recognized by the United States as a foreign

government due the same attention and respect as any other government.

The drug problem was an intense one for the United States. The Bahamas was a gateway for drugs. I suppose one of the major things that our government was interested in was attempting to decrease the flow of drugs through the Bahamas into the United States. The Bahamians were interested in seeing tourism, which is their major industry, continue, and were interested in promoting that and in seeing the United States recognize that and help in any way possible.

Q: Would you characterize the relations between the Bahamian Government and the U.S. Government as positive and cooperative? Were there problem areas?

SCHWARTZ: No, they really were positive and cooperative. There was some reluctance on the part of the Bahamian Government to being told by the United States that it wanted this done or that done. This was true in the drug enforcement area. When I first went there, we had no DEA office. An agent from Miami who would come over periodically. It was during my tour of duty there that we established a DEA office, which took some doing and convincing. The Bahamians didn't want the United States imposing upon them restrictions and requirements without not only their consent, but almost without Bahamian participation in it. They didn't want to be taken for granted. But the relationship between the two governments has been excellent, and I think remains so.

Q: Ambassador Schwartz, could you summarize what you consider your greatest accomplishments, frustrations, disappointments during your tenure?

SCHWARTZ: Well, I suppose one of my greatest accomplishments was establishing a DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) office in the Bahamas, and the results that were obtained from it. You may recall that drugs and addiction, the flow of drugs into the United States, was a tremendous problem then. It still is today, but it was even worse then. The Bahamas was the launching pad for the entry of drugs into this country, because of the many outer islands that the Bahamas have which make it so easy for small planes to land on and transfer contraband to boats that could come on into the coast of Florida. Through the cooperation of the Bahamian Government, and through our own efforts, the DEA Office was finally obtained, and it really did a great job in stemming the flow of drugs. That was a great accomplishment.

I might comment that after the Carter Administration left, the Reagan Administration, through its Vice President at that time, George Bush, the DEA office in our Embassy in the Bahamas, was made much larger. President Reagan gave Vice President Bush the responsibility, you may recall, of handling the drug problem, and he did a great job with it.

Q: Anything else you care to add, Ambassador Schwartz?

SCHWARTZ: I don't think so. It obviously was a tremendous personal satisfaction for me to be able to serve our country. Even though the Bahamian Government is not a crisis situation, we do have an ongoing relationship with them. They are an important partner of

ours; they are close to this country; they represent an extremely critical area. We maintain military activities and bases in the Bahamas. I considered it an honor and a privilege to serve, and I appreciate what our Foreign Service does for our country far more today than I did before. I admire the career people. They are self-sacrificing and they do us a lot of credit. It was an honor for me and Mrs. Schwartz to be there.

ANDREW F. ANTIPPAS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Nassau (1981-1983)

Andrew F. Antippas was born in Massachusetts in 1931. He received a bachelor's degree from Tufts University and entered the Foreign Service in 1960. His career included positions in Africa, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, Canada, and Washington DC. Mr. Antippas was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 19, 1994.

ANTIPPAS: Over time I began to discover that there were other problems for the United States in the Bahamas.

After my first 90 days at post I sat down and wrote a 10-page telegram, describing my impressions of what our relations were with this country. I have a copy of this report. I managed to get it out of the files before I retired. I thought that it was a rather good report. I described all of the problems and the attitudes which I had encountered. My conclusion in this cable was, "The Bahamas is no friend of the United States."

This was before we had even begun to realize the enormity of the narcotics trafficking which was taking place in the Bahamas. We already had some idea of the "money laundering" that was going on, since the Bahamas was an offshore banking center. I was also beginning to discover, to my horror, how big a transit area it was for illegal immigration into the United States. Even then, the Haitian problem was becoming a major difficulty, with boats pitching up on the beaches of Florida, hundreds of people drowning, and all of that.

I discovered that the Bahamian Government really wasn't being terribly helpful in these areas. And because of the "narcotics traffickers," American citizens were running into trouble. We had the case of a legislator from the State of Michigan who mysteriously disappeared from his sailboat. Everybody on board was apparently murdered. The boat was found, floating empty. The belief was that they'd run into some drug traffickers who killed them. It was becoming very troubling.

By the time I wrote this 90 day review of the situation to the Department, I had an American citizen come to me, at the Embassy. He owned property on an island about 35 miles West of New Providence Island, where Nassau is located. The name of this island is Norman's Cay (Key). It was a privately owned island with a marina and an airstrip on it. It had been developed over the years. A number of the properties on it were owned by American and Canadian people who came down there for the winter. It had a very nice

[scuba] "dive" location, fishing was good, and it was relatively close to Nassau. This fellow owned three or four bungalows on the island. He had developed it so that they were right off the runway of the airstrip. People could rent the bungalows and fly in. They could actually park their airplanes right next to the bungalows. He came in to complain to me that Colombian drug traffickers had moved in and, in effect, taken over the island. They were intimidating the owners of property down there, so much so that he really didn't have access to his property. His complaints to the Bahamian government hadn't resulted in any action.

It turned out that a year or two before that [1979 or 1980] the Bahamian police had raided the island but had been unsuccessful in arresting the Colombians, who had managed to escape or "paid people off." No large amounts of drugs were found. I took this complaint under advisement.

I flew back to Miami and was met at Miami International airport at planeside by a Drug Enforcement Administration agent, who took me into Miami to a hotel. He sat me down and talked to me all night about the problems they had on Norman's Cay with the Colombian cartel, which had taken over the island. What, in fact, the DEA wanted to do in the Bahamas, was to raid the island to apprehend the Colombians "in the act," as it were, because large quantities of cocaine were being transshipped there. This was the beginning of the major transshipment of cocaine into Florida. This was in 1980-1981.

I was a bit taken aback by what he was proposing because this would have involved taking American helicopters and DEA agents, with Bahamian police, and landing in what would be a "hot LZ" [coming down in a landing zone defended by hostile elements], and possibly "shooting it out" with the Colombians. I said, "I think this is not allowed under the Mansfield Amendment." The Mansfield Amendment doesn't permit American law enforcement agencies to do this kind of thing. However, I said that I was very sympathetic with what he was telling me, given what I was beginning to learn about the nature of the problem on Norman's Cay. I said that I wasn't sure that the Bahamian government would "buy" this, given their attitudes about law enforcement cooperation with the United States. On the other hand, I wasn't sure that the United States government would want to do this.

However, I said that I would "check it out." I said that this wasn't something that I would really want to write up in a cable and send up to the State Department, because I thought that it would be immediately shot full of holes if I did that. I said that what I would like to do is to take the first opportunity to talk to Assistant Secretary of State Tom Enders, face to face, and see if I could get his verbal approval.

I knew that Enders would be coming down to Miami in early December, 1981. At the time the Rockefeller Foundation had what they called the Caribbean-Central American Committee. The committee met annually in Miami, and chiefs of state from Central American and Caribbean countries attended to talk about issues of mutual interest. Since this was the first year of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, I felt sure that the Assistant Secretary would be there, and I would get a chance to talk to him. The DEA agent agreed

with that and left it to me to proceed. I did meet Enders very briefly when he came to Miami for this meeting. I didn't really have time to discuss the matter. That's another thing that you discover when you're trying to get the attention of your boss, when you're chargé d'affaires. Sometimes it's a major problem to have the chance to talk to your man in the front office of the bureau, unless he happens to come through your area on a visit. This reminded me of my experience years before in Douala, Cameroon, which I mentioned previously, when Assistant Secretary of State G. Mennen ("Soapy") Williams came through Douala one morning, en route home from the Congo. I only learned about it when the UTA (French Airlines) representative called me.

However, I did meet another person, John Upston, a political appointee in ARA [the Bureau of American Republic Affairs] who had the title of "Caribbean Coordinator", a Deputy Assistant Secretary level position. He apparently had a lot of experience in the Caribbean area and had worked in the State Department, off and on, over the years. We struck up a friendship. The chemistry between us was good. He was very interested in what I had to say about what I was seeing in the Bahamas. We were able to set up a dialogue, both by phone and when he came down and visited us on several occasions. He was very sympathetic about what I was trying to do. It turned out that he and I--and I'll get into this later in the story--managed to get past the bureaucracy in getting permission to do something effective in the drug war in the Bahamas.

I finally managed to get down to Norman's Cay because the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] would fly in from Florida from time to time to do what they called "ramp checks." The FAA would fly into an airport and just check the registration numbers on the aircraft there. They checked on U. S. registered aircraft parked at airports in the Bahamas. You could tell very easily which ones were being used for "drug hauls"--they didn't have seats in them or might have rubber fuel bladders in the back instead of seats. What the drug traffickers would do was use all manner of aircraft, initially flying in marijuana and then, of course, transporting large amounts of cocaine.

Yachts were coming through all the time. The Bahamas is a major tourist cruising area. From time to time people would tell me stories about drug trafficking. A cabin cruiser or something like that might observe a DC-3 transport aircraft dump out hundreds of bales of marijuana. The traffickers used to wrap the marijuana in garbage bags in 40 and 80 pound quantities. The bags would be water tight and would float only about an inch or so above the surface of the ocean. The bags were green and hard to see. One person told me that he was on his boat, sailing toward Nassau. He saw a DC-3 circling a nearby area and pushing out bales of marijuana. The crew then "pancaked" the aircraft in the water, stepped out on the wing, were picked up by motorboats, which then picked up the marijuana and let the plane sink. He said, if that happened, you really didn't want to be there. Three things might happen, if you came across this stuff floating in the ocean. First, the "dopers" [marijuana smugglers] could catch you, and you'd be in trouble. Secondly, the American Coast Guard could catch you. Thirdly, the Bahamian Coast Guard could catch you. Any way, you'd be in trouble. So this could become a very serious citizen protection problem. I recall that in 1982 we had one major case like that.

We were beginning to discover that large amounts of narcotics were flowing through the Bahamas, and the Bahamian Government wasn't very helpful in solving the problem. When you would confront them with this, their basic reaction was, "Look, you can't stop this traffic with all your armed forces and law enforcement resources. How do you expect us, with our tiny little Coast Guard, and only one air traffic control tower in the whole archipelago, to control this sort of thing?" They were right of course. The problem was that they were not going to allow us to come in and do it for them.

To go back to the Norman's Cay story, I hitched a ride with the FAA guy on one occasion. I asked him if he would fly me down to Norman's Cay, because I wanted to see what was going on there. In the late fall of 1981 two things had happened. First, I had received the formal complaint from the man who owned bungalows down there. In effect, he had been "run off" his property by the Colombians. Secondly, I was informed by the Bahamas desk in the Office of Caribbean Affairs in the State Department that a number of American citizen property owners on Norman's Cay were going to take out a full-page ad in 10 international newspapers, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the Times of London, complaining about the government of the Bahamas doing nothing about this problem at Norman's Cay. They had been forced off their property.

I told the desk, "Look, please contact these people, whoever they are--I don't know who they are--and ask them to hold off and at least give me a chance to raise the matter with the government of the Bahamas." My instinct was that if the ads were published, there was going to be "egg on my face," because I was the local "whipping boy." I wanted to say to the government of the Bahamas, "This is the problem. What are you doing about it?"

I wasn't having much luck with the Foreign Minister/Attorney General in talking about the base agreements. The retiring Commandant of the Coast Guard came through the Bahamas on a trip to various locations to bid farewell to the local authorities. I took him on an official call on the Foreign Minister. The Foreign Minister really gave us a hard time. He really lectured this four-star, U. S. Coast Guard admiral about what he called the "fecklessness" of American law enforcement efforts. He even made some adverse comments about the quality of American youth joining the armed services. I could see that the admiral was really doing a "slow burn." We were both pretty angry by the time we left that interview, with the gratuitous insults of the United States made by the Bahamian Foreign Minister.

Anyway, I went over and called on Prime Minister Pindling. I said, "Look, I have a couple of things to raise with you. First, I'm getting complaints from American citizens who own property down in Norman's Cay that they're being 'pushed around' by Colombian drug smugglers. They want to put a full-page ad in the international press. I've asked them not to do this until I could make representations to the government." At this point he said, "Who are these people who are going to put a full-page ad in the papers and what are their names?" I said, "I don't really know who they are. I got this information from the State Department." He said, "That's all right. I'll find out who they are from the Land

Register."

Then I said, "Look, the other issue is the base agreements. We need to sign the base agreements so that you can start getting the rent checks." I said, "I can't get any answer out of your Foreign Minister." He said, "What? My understanding is that you [the United States] are the problem." I said, "No, we're not the problem. We're ready to sign. You just tell us where and when you want to sign, and you'll start getting your money." It was clear from the expression on his face that this was news to him. He said, "Well, I'll check into that." I went home, feeling rather self satisfied. I had done an "end run" around the Foreign Minister.

One of the other problems we had had a few days before this trip to Washington was that a U. S. Coast Guard cutter had spotted a motor vessel in international waters near the Bahamas. The vessel had no flag, no markings, and apparently no radio equipment on board to respond to the attempts of the Coast Guard to contact it. It looked to be about the size of a typical drug boat. In international waters the Coast Guard challenged vessels of this kind. The cutter chased this boat for a couple of hours, trying to get it to stop so that they could board it, check it out, and find out whether it was carrying contraband. By the time they stopped it and put a boarding party on it, they discovered that it was a Bahamian mail boat traveling between the islands in the Bahamian archipelago. When the Coast Guard boarding party left the boat, both vessels had drifted into Bahamian territorial waters.

The Coast Guard cutter had not followed the established SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) and signaled Washington--Coast Guard Headquarters and the State Department--and the Embassy that it had had this encounter. I can still remember the name of the Bahamian vessel, the "MV (Motor Vessel) Geleta". During the chase the crew of the "Geleta" threw a garbage bag overboard. The Coast Guard Cutter retrieved it, and there was a small amount of marijuana in it. The captain of the cutter thought that they were on to something, and they kept chasing the "Geleta." It turned out that the crew of the "Geleta" was a feckless bunch of Bahamians. They had no radio, didn't fly a flag, and had no markings of any kind. It looked like a drug boat, but it wasn't. But, the captain of the "Geleta" returned to Nassau and screamed bloody murder to the Bahamian Government about "high handed" U. S. Coast Guard activities. So they were all worked up. I had egg on my face. There was egg on the Foreign Minister's face, because he didn't know about it.

The protocol procedure on this was that Washington would inform me, I would call the Foreign Minister day or night and either tell him that a "drug bust" was going on, that we were about to board a Bahamian vessel, or something like that. He would then give his "OK." I must say this about the Foreign Minister/Attorney General. On such occasions he was good about that. In fact, I had to call him at 4:00 AM a couple of times to tell him that DEA was about to jump on somebody on Bahamian territory and was it all right with him? There were issues of "hot pursuit" and so forth. He was agreeable to things like that. It was only on the more formal things that he was giving me--or giving the U. S.--a hard time.

ANTIPPAS: There was still a proposal on the table about using American helicopters and aircraft to carry Bahamian Police on drug raids--in other words, to facilitate the delivery of Bahamian law enforcement personnel. During the Carter administration Prime Minister Pindling had made a request to the American Government for \$25 million in assistance, including communications equipment, boats, and helicopters. Of course, people in Washington just laughed themselves sick when they saw this request. Two years later we finally delivered two "Boston Whaler" boats with spare engines to the Bahamian Government.

Q: These are small...

ANTIPPAS: Small, outboard motor powered boats. They're good for use on the open seas, but they didn't amount to \$25 million in "goodies"--and this was another issue that Prime Minister Pindling was angry about. He felt that we kept hammering the Bahamas for assistance with our problems with drugs, but we wouldn't give the Bahamas any help. I'll tell you, I was one embarrassed character when I went down to hand over these boats to the Bahamian Police.

We finally obtained agreement that we would present a proposal to use American transportation assets to carry Bahamian law enforcement people. I thought that it was rather problematical that the Bahamian Foreign Minister/Attorney General would accept this proposal, particularly since he was no friend of mine at this point. However, we put the proposal together. I drafted it on behalf of DEA and sent it on to the State Department. Upston, who happened to be the only guy in ARA at that particular time, dealt with it. He talked it over with Assistant Secretary Enders. However, Enders by that time wouldn't sign his name to anything. He indicated to Upston to "deal with it as you see fit." This proposal had not been vetted with anyone else in the State Department, or with the law enforcement community, more generally, in Washington. Upston simply sent me back a one-line cable, signed "Haig" and saying, "Proceed as you see fit."

So the ball had been lateraled back to me. I felt, "Well, let's go for it." I put the proposal up to the Foreign Ministry, fully expecting that the Foreign Minister was going to reject it out of hand. I thought that he would not agree to let the Americans come tramping through the Bahamas. Much to my surprise, the Foreign Minister agreed that we could do this.

Q: Today is October 18, 1994, Andy. You were talking about Operation BAT. Please continue.

ANTIPPAS: OK. As I said, I was really surprised that the Bahamian Government agreed to use American transportation assets to take Bahamian police on operations against the narcotics traffickers.

We're talking now about 1982. It was very clear to me that the Bahamian Government was very much involved in drug trafficking. The Foreign Minister/Attorney General was

not. I don't think that he was corrupt. I think that he was "certifiable"--he just had a loose screw. He was brilliant, an intellectual, loquacious, honest as the day is long, but not intellectually honest.

Q: So the Bahamian Government agreed to this proposal. Can you figure out why they accepted it?

ANTIPPAS: I think that it was like the appointment of the Ambassador. I think that they "blinked." They lost their nerve in terms of not permitting the Americans to do what we wanted to do. I think that they could not openly refuse the United States to exercise the right of "hot pursuit" and chase the "bad guys." The situation was getting very grim in the United States. The amount of narcotics coming into the United States was enormous. The money laundering operation was on a very large scale in the southeastern part of the United States.

I remember a statistic that I heard. At the time of the economic recession of 1980-82 the only Federal Reserve District in the United States that had a positive cash flow was South Florida. Buildings were going up, and money was changing hands in a big way. The "bad guys" [the drug traffickers] were "buying" entire local governments. Of course, I'm not talking about the Haitian situation, which was also complicating things. It really was a very fragile period of time.

After Admiral Murphy set up the Federal Task Force in Florida, I used to go over to its meetings. I handled all of my own contacts with the Coast Guard, the DEA, the FBI, and, most importantly, with Admiral Murphy's office. When I would have problems with U. S. Customs, such as not having the radar "operating" on Andros Island, I would call Admiral Murphy and say, "Damn it. We have a [suspected drug smuggling] plane in the air now. We don't know where he's going because the U. S. Customs can't seem to get their act together." And so on. Anyhow, that's how we handled this matter.

Once we got a DEA flight "team" on the ground, I decided we would position the helicopter at the Police Training College in Nassau, located on what used to be called Oakes Field, which was once the airport in the Bahamas. We had built that airport during World War II as a landing point for the aircraft which we were ferrying through the Bahamas to Europe or Africa. Until the 1960's it was the commercial airport in Nassau, until they built the international airport farther out on [New Providence] island. The Bahamian Police had set up a police training college at Oakes Field. It had a secure area. I decided that we would put the DEA helicopter at the Police College, because I was afraid to leave it out at the international airport, for fear that the Colombian drug traffickers would sabotage it. The Colombians would be out at the international airport servicing their own aircraft. If the DEA helicopter were there, without much of a team to protect it, it would be easy to sabotage it. If the DEA helicopter were at the Police College, it was more unlikely that a Colombian would come by and pour sugar in the fuel tank, or something like that.

ANTIPPAS: It turned out that one of my instructors at the National War College was an

Army Lieutenant Colonel with whom I had become very friendly. He was originally from New Hampshire and taught "American political history" at the National War College. Anyway, he was very helpful. His assignment after the National War College tour as an instructor was in the office of the Secretary of the Army. He was put to work on problems like the one I had encountered--assistance to civilian law enforcement. I got in touch with him. He became my "prime mover" in trying to get some surplus military communications equipment in place at the Embassy so that we could communicate with the law enforcement world. We were then just going through the hassle over the "posse comitatus law" between the U. S. law enforcement community and the Department of Defense over assistance to law enforcement organizations.

For example, U. S. Navy vessels would come into Nassau twice a month, on the average. Nassau was a major port of call for ships coming out of Norfolk, VA. It seemed that if we didn't have a Navy ship in port, we'd have a Coast Guard vessel. I went aboard an awful lot of ships, doing my "thing" as chargé d'affaires. I entertained some of the ships' officers and got to know them. For example, we once had a visit from the USS INGERSOLL, a Navy destroyer which carried both guns and missiles. It was one of the newer types, built since World War II. The skipper of the INGERSOLL was a very friendly Navy Captain. When I went aboard, they gave me a tour of the ship, including the Combat Command Center. They told me how, using radar, they could vector weapons systems and could "play war games" to keep up the skills of the crew. I asked them, "Do you guys ever do anything when you see a drug airplane fly overhead? It must happen all the time. Do you do anything about that? Do you tell anybody?" The Captain said, "No, we have no requirement to report on this kind of activity. Even if we should see, for example, an aircraft making a drop [of some kind of packages], we wouldn't tell anybody. There's no requirement for us to do anything about it."

It "blew my mind" that we had all of these assets floating around there playing "war games"--kind of like computer games--to keep up the training of their crews. One of these aircraft could be offloading a month's supply of cocaine, and the Navy ship wouldn't tell anybody, much less chase them or anything like that. Some of the skippers on these Navy ships were very sympathetic to the view that they should be doing more about that.

I remember that the INGERSOLL had to "clear port" one day because of a conflict in the cruise ship schedule. They had to make room at the pier. They had to get permission from Norfolk. Normally, a Navy ship doesn't leave port once it comes in. It stays for a couple of days and then leaves. "Clearing port" early is an added expense and some trouble, but on this particular occasion they had to "clear port."

The skipper said, "Would you like to bring some of your people from the Embassy on board? We'll just take a little ride outside the island." I said, "Sure, why not?" The skipper said, "Well, where should we go?" I said, "There are a couple of islands about 30 miles North of here which, I know, are major dropping points for drugs. Planes come in and drop the packages. Why don't we go over there and take a look?" We did. I got a whole bunch of people from the Embassy who wanted to go out and take a ride one morning. So the INGERSOLL showed up off this island. They put a long boat over the side, and we

went out to take a look.I think that we scared the hell out of somebody.

Anyway, it was clear to me that the Defense Department wasn't really "on board" on this drug enforcement effort.Of course, the argument on the military side was that this kind of activity detracts from their primary mission, which is training for war.It's kind of like the debate which we're having today about whether or not the military should be carrying out "peace-keeping" missions which detract from their fundamental commitments.These "peace-keeping" missions also cost a lot of money for fuel and so forth.At that time the argument was that the military were prevented from law enforcement activities under the post Civil War "Posse Comitatus" Act.This act was passed as a result of the occupation of the South by the Union Army.It provided that the military would not carry on law enforcement functions.So the Defense Department used to take cover behind that law.Eventually, the "Posse Comitatus" Act was modified to allow the military to take on law enforcement missions.In fact, after the Cold War was over, as you may recall, the military went around "looking for a mission." They needed to justify their existence and their assets.But at the time, in 1982, we had this frustration of really needing to have our armed forces to go out and chase the drug traffickers.

All things come to those who wait and try.Eventually, the military decided that we needed more than this "one lung" helicopter with one pilot with very limited "loiter" time.It was becoming very clear to the law enforcement community that there was a lot happening in the Bahamas, and we weren't dealing with it.

For example, at one time the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] reported that they were doing a "surveillance" flight over Bimini Island.Flying at about 10,000 feet, at night, using night vision equipment, they watched a drug aircraft being unloaded by the Bahamian Police.It was quite clear to everyone that we had to do something about tightening the screws in the Bahamas.

A plan was devised to deal with this situation.One of its major components was to station several radar "blimps" in the Bahamas.One of them had already been emplaced in Key West, 80 miles Southwest of Miami, which kept an eye on military aircraft activity, particularly in Mariel [Pinar del Rio province in Cuba].The "blimp" or "balloon" in Key West was called "Fat Albert." The Reagan administration proposed to put additional blimps in strategic locations in the Bahamas where they could monitor drug aircraft coming through the Bahamas.The Bahamian Foreign Minister/Attorney General was less eager to do that.He gave us a hard time.However, Congress was very much in favor of it.There were several Congressional Committees which were eager to have these blimps emplaced.Hearings were held on this and other proposals in 1983.In fact, a Congressional Committee of 21 Congressmen came down to the Bahamas to look the situation over, meet with Prime Minister Pindling and company, and come to some conclusions.

ANTIPPAS: I have to tell you about my effort to get an aircraft for the Bahamians.As I said before, the Bahamians complained bitterly that we were putting all this pressure on them to do something.As Prime Minister Pindling told Vice President Bush in Miami in December, 1982, in my presence, "You have all of this ability in the United States, and

you can't stop the drug aircraft or drug boats from coming in. We have one control tower in all of the Bahamas, no Air Force, and not much of a Navy. How do you expect us to stop the drug traffic?" Vice President Bush got very angry about that barbed comment.

As I mentioned before, the Bahamian Government had given the Carter administration a shopping list of \$25 million for equipment which they wanted to support the anti-drug effort, including helicopters, boats, weapons, communications gear, and other things. The Carter administration replied, "No way we're going to give these guys this equipment because it's very clear to us that the Bahamians aren't going to do anything with it." There was also the view that helicopters were a very expensive proposition to run. Unlike fixed wing aircraft, they are really expensive in terms of maintenance, apart from the training of air crew. They're certainly very useful, but their cost effectiveness is really questionable under the circumstances.

ANTIPPAS: I "sold" the Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Affairs. At that time the Assistant Secretary was a Republican political appointee from New York state who later went on to become a federal judge. He was quite helpful. It turned out that the desk officer in INM [Bureau of International Narcotics Affairs], who was handling the Bahamas, was a consular officer whom I knew. He was also very friendly and helpful. I said, "Look, you've got to get this plane for me. The Department of the Interior will give us the airplane. If you can scratch up \$40-50,000, we can refurbish the engines and plane. We would need some money for pilot training--and we'll get the Bahamians to fly it."

Anyway, Operation BAT finally didn't get the seaplane because the British "double crossed" us. They said that they didn't want the airplane because they were under pressure to get the Bahamians to buy a British aircraft for their use--but land based. It had no ability to land anywhere except a runway. There were very few runways available. This was totally counter to what I was trying to "sell" them. To get to most of the places where the "bad guys" congregated, you either needed a helicopter or a seaplane. The drug traffickers were using air drops and "cigarette type" speedboats, which can go 60 miles an hour. We needed an aircraft to catch them. There are no ships which can chase these boats, even though the U. S. Navy put into service in the Caribbean area several hydrofoils. One of them, the USS TAURUS, once visited Nassau. I looked a little bit stupid because we had an airplane which we couldn't use. I don't know what happened to the old Grumman "Widgeon." I don't know whether the Department used it elsewhere or everybody kind of "fell on their swords." I never forgave the British for that. I did have one other idea that I was working on. There was an island South of Bimini Island. Bimini is the closest Bahamian island to Florida and a very natural, staging point for all kinds of "shenanigans" going on, aimed at the United States--illegal aliens, narcotics, money laundering, you name it. They even had banks on Bimini Island for money laundering.

You didn't have to be a tactical genius to figure out that we had to do something to stop these speedboats, which were the primary means of moving high value narcotics into Florida from the Bahamas. What would happen was that there would be air drops of narcotics on various islands in the Bahamas, anywhere from Bimini to the

East. "Cigarette" speedboats would just run into Florida at night, with a load of cocaine. Aircraft were also used, of course, to smuggle drugs, but speedboats were being used, more and more. We had to do something to stop these boats, as they were crossing the Straits of Florida.

By that point, in the spring of 1983, Ambassador Dobriansky had been appointed and was about to arrive in Nassau. I had this 21-member Congressional delegation visit us and give us the benefit of their wisdom, as well as "dump all over us." The U. S. military had acceded to the Reagan administration's desire to give us more assets for our efforts. So a Special Mission Air Force unit with helicopters, from Hurlburt Air Force Base in Florida, was designated to send some aircraft to the Bahamas and to "set up shop." The unit was under the command of an Air Force lieutenant colonel. These aircraft were equipped for night time operations. They had night vision equipment, and the personnel knew how to use it. They had the latest model helicopters to do this.

We moved them into the Police Academy at Oakes Field, and began to run some more effective operations because we had a greater capability. I pretty much directed this whole effort. I had a good relationship with two DEA agents who were assigned to the Embassy. They were very accommodating and understanding. However, they were essentially intelligence operatives. They really would not have known how to manage this kind of operation. For example, I was the one who said that we had to have rubber "fuel bladders" brought in and set up because we couldn't take the chance that the "bad guys" would adulterate the fuel. We'd have to have our own fuel supply, which we could test and could guard. We wouldn't depend on commercial fuel. These DEA guys would not have thought of that.

It was my idea to move this whole operation closer in to the Embassy. Oakes Field was not far from the Embassy. Think of it. If you had to run an operation, if you suddenly got word that there was a "bad guy" flying up the "Slot" and you had to drive all the way out to the international airport to mount up your helicopters, since we didn't man these planes unless we had a target, it made a lot more sense to operate from closer to the Embassy. I was able to arrange that.

The U. S. Air Force was very accommodating and very helpful. We found housing for them. They were on "per diem" and were doing very well. I didn't get the impression that the Drug Enforcement guys were resentful that I, in fact, was running the "drug war" in the Bahamas because, by that point, I had been chargé d'affaires for almost two years. There was no question of who was running the Embassy, even though the Ambassador was just about to arrive.

It was my thought that we needed to station one of these helicopters closer to the Straits of Florida, so that we could actually "run down" these speedboats as they came across. I had in mind setting up a base on Bimini Island, as well as a base on this sand island, of which I spoke just now. I flew over and "made a deal" with the management of the sand island that we could station some fuel there so that the helicopters could refuel, if necessary. The management of the sand island would arrange to guard the fuel. We didn't

think that we would station helicopters on the sand island, because conditions there were not very good. There was a lot of blowing sand. It would really be like desert operations. It was not a particularly hospitable situation. But we really didn't need to station helicopters on the sand island. But we could set up on Bimini. The deal that I worked out with the Royal Navy officer, who was the Commodore of the Bahamian Defense Force at that time, was that we would construct a helicopter pad in Bimini. He would assign a patrol boat and armed guards to protect the helicopter pad, so that we could base our helicopters there. This was really "Apache" [hostile] country. There were enough of the "bad guys," so that if you're going to set up a military base, you'd better be prepared to guard it.

Payment for fuel was a manageable problem. The Commodore had to operate his forces anyway, but he didn't have money for fuel for his boats to go back and forth to Nassau. So I worked out a "deal" with IN/M [in the State Department], which was very helpful to me, that they would pick up the "tab" for the fuel for the Commodore's Bahamian Defense Force. He would station troops there to guard the helicopters. So we were all set to start operations, flying out of Bimini Island and this sand island to chase down the "bad guys."

The Commander of the U. S. Coast Guard District [Seventh Coast Guard District] was Rear Admiral "Deese" Thompson, who was very helpful. He had begun his career, flying seaplanes like the Grumman Widgeon in the Bahamas, back in the 1950's. I had complained about not having the means to check out the waterways in the Bahamas. He arranged to have shipped over to me in 1982, a 17-foot, aluminum hulled, "buoy tender," with a 125 HP Johnson outboard motor. It would really move. So one day they towed this boat over, behind a Coast Guard cutter, and said, "Here's your boat."

You could fill a volume with what I didn't know about boats. I learned "OJT" (On The Job). Of course, there was no operating money whatsoever in the Embassy for this boat. Some delicate inquiries were made to the ARA Executive Office, but I was told that there wouldn't be any money for this purpose. So I would somehow have to run this thing out of the Embassy budget. There was no money to keep this boat in a marina. Since the DCM's house in Nassau was on the waterfront, and I had a beach in front of the house, I just anchored the boat right there. For fuel I used the budget for the automobile assigned to me. We used this boat to cruise around and check on the Haitian boats which were cruising through there and to keep an eye out on the "bad guys." Now and again the marina owners were very understanding and would let me keep the boat in one of their slips for a couple of days.

Q: The rule of thumb is that you almost have to get rid of the old DCM, because it doesn't work.

ANTIPPAS: You get big egos involved, and I knew that. But operations against the drug traffic seemed to be going so well. We were really beginning to build up a head of steam. I had a great relationship with Vice President George Bush's office and the law enforcement community. In December, 1982, after the meeting in Miami, I went up to Washington to meet Ambassador Dobriansky and Assistant Secretary Tom Enders and

find out what the Department had in mind for me to do next. Tom said, "You know, the Bahamians want you out of Nassau. Prime Minister Pindling wants you out." He said, "What do you want to do?" I said, "Well, there isn't much available in the way of assignments. The only assignment available would be Principal Officer in Martinique. Frankly, from what I've seen happen to guys who go to Martinique, that's got to be the end of the line." You know, nobody ever goes on to anything after [serving in the Consulate in] Martinique.

ANTIPPAS: So I have done that over the years and I thought that there was no future in the Foreign Service after serving in Martinique. I wasn't planning to retire at that point. I was having a great time, running this anti-drug program. I thought, "I'd just as soon stay here and give Pindling heartburn." Enders' view was, "OK, you can stay as far as I'm concerned. Pindling is not going to dictate our personnel management."

The NBC expose, which was called, "The Vesco Connection in the Bahamas," alleged that the Bahamian Government was being "paid off" by Robert Vesco on behalf of the Colombian drug cartel to let them use Norman's Cay, which I mentioned earlier. The television program stated that there were drug airplanes flying out of Norman's Cay into Florida and that the original "connection" had been Robert Vesco, who had allegedly funded the initial Colombian operation in the late 1970's. The program was apparently based on "leaks," probably out of the State of Florida law enforcement community. I don't think that the "leaks" came from the federal law enforcement community. I think that it sounded like what the Sheriff of Broward County had said to me. The Sheriff had told me that Robert Vesco had been "paying off" Prime Minister Pindling and company. Vesco was allegedly also in "cahoots" with the Colombian drug cartel.

On the day before the NBC television program on the Bahamas was aired, my friend Kenny Cartwright, from the Bahamas, called me in Boston where I was visiting my brother. Kenny was still in Nassau. He said, "Watch NBC tomorrow morning. On the NBC 'Today' show there's going to be an expose on the Bahamas. I've got a problem because they're going to mention my name as being involved in narcotics trafficking." He asked, "What can I do to protect myself?" He said that Glenn Campbell, who was the DEA agent in Nassau, "knows very well that I am not involved. I knew that myself. It's going to be very bad if my name is mentioned. It can ruin me." I advised him to send a telegram to the chief of the DEA office in Miami, whose name escapes me now, indicating that this NBC show was about to be televised. I advised him to tell the DEA chief that he absolutely denies any involvement in drug trafficking and that he is willing to take a polygraph ["lie detector"] test to prove his point. I said, "I suggest that you send a copy of that telegram to NBC immediately, showing that you have done this. That may dissuade them from mentioning your name." However, in any event, Kenny Cartwright's name was mentioned prominently.

U. S. Government policy was that we didn't want to create any problems with the Bahamas. This had been my own instinct. I felt that it doesn't serve any purpose to pick a fight with the Bahamian Government. It would just give them an excuse not to cooperate with us. In fact, that is what I told Bryan Ross, when ran me to ground later on in

Grenada. At first I refused to talk to him. Then I agreed to. I told him, "Look, I may be very sympathetic with what you're trying to do--your motives and all that. I certainly agree that a number of figures in the Bahamian Government are as corrupt as the day is long. I also think that some of the things you reported in that story were not right--the references to 'air conditioned hangars full of cocaine,' and all of that stuff. If I had been in charge of the Embassy when you came to Nassau, in July, 1983, you would not have gotten in the door. Not only would I not have talked to you, I wouldn't even have let you in the Embassy, because it was not my job, as a representative of the United States, to cause an uproar in our relationships with the Bahamas and give some of the leaders of the Bahamian Government an excuse not to cooperate with us," which is what happened. They stopped cooperating on the drug side and they also stalled the signature of the base agreement for another year before they finally sat down and signed it.

I had gotten to know Kenny Cartwright earlier during my stay in Nassau. He was a white businessman who was doing very well. He owned car dealerships and property. Later on I rented a house from him which my family lived in. Initially, I looked at Kenny Cartwright with something of a jaundiced eye. I had gotten to know him because our wives were in the same bridge group. Kenny's wife was of Colombian background and had been married to Kenny for some years. We met these people socially. My wife was telling me about his wife. I thought that I should stay away from these people because he had the absolutely classic profile of somebody involved in drugs.

But I was wrong, actually. He was simply very much a hard charging, Bahamian businessman who knew how to make a buck. As Nassau was a very small community, he had gotten to know a lot of people. One of the things that he had done was that he had either sold or rented property to Robert Vesco in the Abaco Islands. I think that he either sold Vesco a house or a half interest in an island there, which, of course, was suspect in some people's minds. I asked DEA to run a "whole name check" on him before I started seeing this guy socially. We got to know each other. He had a couple of yachts. On Easter weekend, 1983, we took our families and went down to inspect Norman's Cay, which, by that time, had been abandoned by the Colombian cartel, as a result of the pressure that we had put on them the previous year through Vice President George Bush. I had been able to arrange for a surveillance of the island by an AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System] aircraft. The Vice President was able to hand Prime Minister Pindling the substance of this surveillance at their meeting in Miami in December, 1982. He insisted that Pindling had to cooperate with the United States. I think that Pindling got the word to the Colombians that they had to leave Norman's Cay, and they left. They just walked out, leaving groceries sitting right on the table. I found open bottles of Ketchup sitting on tables there in the houses which I inspected.

Anyway, I didn't advertise my presence there. We went down to Norman's Cay with an American doctor who lived on the island part of the time. We inspected every house--some 20 of them--on the island. I found evidence--drug paraphernalia--including boxes with the leaflets which the Colombians had dropped on the 1982 Bahamian independence day parade in Nassau. These leaflets said, "Nixon, Reagan, DEA--Go Home! The Bahamas for the Bahamians!" They had stapled money to some of these leaflets, which

they also dropped on Bimini and on Grand Bahama Islands. They had Bahamian \$100, \$50, \$20, and \$10 bills--which are equal to U. S. dollars--stapled to these leaflets. I learned from a grocer in Bimini Island later on that people came in to buy groceries with the money still stapled to the leaflets. The drug traffickers apparently just tossed these boxes of leaflets out of the plane door. One of the boxes apparently hit the [horizontal] stabilizer, damaging the aircraft so that they had to land. The Bahamian police knew who carried out this operation, and they arrested the Bahamian pilot. I also found plastic envelopes in which the Colombians packed cocaine. I found a duffle bag--not a military regulation size bag but a smaller size used in packing cocaine. I found a number of pistol holsters and a set of Sears Roebuck golf clubs which were cut off so that the heads of the clubs were sticking out of the bag. The bottom part of the bag was empty so that you could load things into it--drugs or money or whatever.

ANTIPPAS: I felt that we should be doing as much as we can to interdict the flow of narcotics into the United States from the Bahamas. I've looked at my statement several times since then, as I still have copies of it. I could have done it better, but this was prepared in a hurry. I made it CONFIDENTIAL because my family was still down in Nassau. I think that I came out of those hearings, "smelling like a rose." I was complimented and was certainly not hurt by that.

After it became known that I had testified before the Congressional Task Force on Narcotics, Prime Minister Pindling realized that my family was still in the Bahamas. At first I did not know how he found out. However, Ambassador Dobriansky was sending telegrams to the Department, not only to ARA but to "M" [Management], claiming that I was the "leak," that I was the "problem," and that I was causing political problems for the Embassy in Nassau because of my activities. I am not sure of exactly what he alleged, because I only saw some of his statements. The Ambassador was in trouble with the White House because he had compromised the narcotics campaign. The Bahamians were making it very clear that the NBC television program angered them and were beginning to drag their feet on law enforcement cooperation with us. In fact, the Ambassador was the source of the public affairs problem for the Embassy by his talking to NBC. He had really done the dumbest thing of all, which was to open up this "Pandora's Box." I wasn't in the Bahamas. I could truthfully say that I didn't know a thing about the NBC program on the Bahamas until I saw it myself on the day after Labor Day, 1983.

CECIL S. RICHARDSON
Chief Consular Officer
Nassau (1983)

Cecil S. Richardson was born in New York in 1926, and graduated from Queen's College. He served in the US Army from 1944 to 1947, and overseas from 1951 to 1952. Entering the Foreign Service in 1956, he was stationed in Dakar, Saigon, Lagos, Niamey, Paris, Accra, Brussels, Quito, Tehran, Lima, St. Paolo and Bahamas. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 5, 2003.

Q: Well, how, what were the issues in the Bahamas?

RICHARDSON: Drugs. The Bahamas, the only time of prosperity in the Bahamas is when there is a serious shortage of something in the United States. During the Civil War, it was smuggling guns and ammunition, supplies. During prohibition it was booze and since World War II, it's been drugs.

Q: Well, I've heard you had Roz Ridgway. She was down there earlier and she was saying this was the port drugs hit.

RICHARDSON: Yes.

Q: And this was just when the Bahamas got independence, she was, I think DCM and it was, the big money and all hadn't yet hit and it was a solid, capable young government, but all held ...

RICHARDSON: But it's so corrupt, that type of money is terribly corrupting.

Q: Well, were you concerned about the money getting, corrupting our staff in the consular section.

RICHARDSON: There was no way the visas were the problem. The Bahamas regarded themselves as the 51st state. They'd go see an ophthalmologist in Miami, the same for gynecologist. And you'd go to Florida to have your baby so there were no serious visa problems for Bohemians.

Q: Were they throwing Americans in jail for drug business or not?

RICHARDSON: Yes, but they were mules.

Q: Peru.

RICHARDSON: In Peru. Those were people, obviously they were small time entrepreneurs, they were coming down to buy a kilo to take back to make a little score for themselves. No, these were mules. Welfare mothers, single mothers on welfare who'd be paid to come over, collect the package and bring it back.

Q: So what happened to them?

RICHARDSON: They were, they'd be arrested or better yet they'd be permitted to board the plane and they'd be arrested in the States in the hopes that the information they could give would lead to the person who hired them. One, now I did have one fellow who swallowed a couple of condoms full of cocaine, but this was for personal consumption.

Q: Yes.

RICHARDSON: Well, the plane was on the runway, about to take off, when one of the condoms ruptured and he went into a frenzy, a drug induced frenzy, and died right on the runway with his wife there. Now, whether his wife was privy to his activities or not, I had no idea, but I had one dead American and fresh widow on my hands for the weekend, because I couldn't even get the medical examiner to certify to his death until Monday and this was Saturday. So I took her, I took the widow home with me.

Q: Did...

RICHARDSON: But that's the only drug death, I know I had many other deaths. Over 2 million Americans visit the Bahamas annually so they get into all kinds of mischief. I had one tourist, we found him dead at the bottom of the elevator shaft in one of the big hotels. And we don't even know how it happened. How did he get under the elevator? They never found a defective door, you know where they could say oh well, something happened, the door opened and he stepped into a void. They never found that a defective door. We had rapes. Well, these things happen. We had people die on the cruise ship on its way to the Bahamas.

BARBADOS

EDAWRD M. FEATHERSTONE

Economic Officer

Bridgetown (1973-1976)

Mr. Featherstone was born in New York City and raised there and in Japan. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania and serving in the US Army, in 1961 he entered the Foreign Service. As a Japanese language and area specialist Mr. Featherstone served primarily in Japanese posts, including Kobe-Osaka, Yokohama, Niigata, Okinawa (Consul General) and Tokyo. He also served in Barbados and in Washington. Mr. Featherstone was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 1999.

Q: What were your main problems as Economic Officer there?

FEATHERSTONE: Theodore Roosevelt Brittan.

Q: I see. That answers that one. Were there any problems with drugs at the time?

FEATHERSTONE: There were some drugs. Some of the consular people that I talked with, would speak of Americans getting in trouble with drugs and what not. I don't think it was a great big deal, though. It was mostly pot, smoking it and that sort of thing. I don't think people were heavily into it. As I understand, people are now, down in the Caribbean. You are liable to get yourself blown away because they have all kinds of traffic.

Q: It wasn't a route for drugs to the U.S. or anything?

FEATHERSTONE: No. It was not. I never got too much involved with the drug stuff, other than talking to some of the consular people, who came across it. I remember when I was a consular officer, getting involved in it a couple times, because people were smoking pot. But, in Japan, you can get seven years for pot. So, it is a big deal. We would have these people come in and say, "Gee, this is the only time I ever smoked pot. I have never done this in my life before." You find out, later on, that this is their tenth time up or something like that.

JOHNNY YOUNG
Administrative Officer
Georgetown (1977-1979)

Ambassador Young was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Pennsylvania and Delaware. He was educated at Temple University and entered the Foreign Service in 1967. Before being named Ambassador, Mr. Young served in a number of embassies in the administrative field, including Madagascar, Guinea, Kenya, Qatar, Barbados, Jordan and the Netherlands. In 1989 he was named US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, where he served until 1992. He subsequently served as US Ambassador to Togo (1994-1997), Bahrain (1997-2001) and Slovenia (2001-2004). Ambassador Young was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: The disease.

YOUNG: The disease, yes, it didn't exist at that time. Or crime. We had minor break-ins now and then, no kind of assaults, no murders, that sort of thing. It wasn't a high crime wave. It was, however, beginning to be a transshipment point for narcotics. We were running into an increasing number of cases involving transshipments from further down in Latin America or through other points in the Caribbean using Barbados as a transshipment point. I remember we had one case involving a very well known family who had come through and someone had sent a box of dolls to this family. I don't know if it was in Canada or the United States. This package was addressed to the maid at one of their estates somewhere and the police knew what was in it and when the maid went to get it they nabbed her. Then revealed that inside the dolls there was marijuana or whatever the drug was. They were able to establish really that the maid had absolutely nothing to do with it. It was somebody else's. But I mean that kind of thing was beginning to happen. Now it's a major concern to us. As a matter of fact I think we even have DEA people assigned to the mission in Barbados.

NICOLAS ROBERTSON
Assistant Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bridgetown (1980-1981)

Mr. Robertson was born and raised in California. He was born in Wilmington, near the heart of the Los Angeles Harbor district. He attended University of California at Santa Cruz. Mr. Robertson first desired to be an academic, but then spent some time working as a chef on a ship. After returning home, he took the Foreign Service written and oral tests and passed. Mr. Robertson subsequently was stationed in South Africa, Barbados, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana, Venezuela, and worked as the Deputy Director of the Office of African Affairs in at the State Department. Mr. Robertson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Drugs hadn't hit the place yet, had it?

ROBERTSON: No. When you talk about drugs it was just smoking marijuana still. It hadn't been taken to international levels.

THOMAS H. ANDERSON
Ambassador
Barbados (1984-1986)

Ambassador Anderson, an Investment Banker by profession, was raised in Mississippi. After graduating from the University of Mississippi, he became Administrative Assistant to Congressman Trent Lott in Washington, D.C, where he observed and participated in the workings of the U.S. Congress and the government as a whole. After serving as U.S. Ambassador from 1984 to 1986, he managed Mr. Lott's successful campaign for the Senate. Ambassador Anderson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: What were American interests in that set of islands?

ANDERSON: Well, certainly the situation of Grenada had just ended.

Q: Could you explain what that was?

ANDERSON: That was during the period of time, and I assume go back to your interview of Sally Shelton while she was there, there was obviously the Castro presence in the Caribbean and all of those islands were so volatile. They quite frankly are so small that each government is so susceptible to all kinds of outside influences. You take Antigua with 7700 people. You can take a government like that and work your will with it in all kinds of different ways be it undercover black market, etc. We were concerned, obviously with the buildup of communism as it was moving throughout these small Caribbean nations. The fact that the drug situation from South America, we could tell, was moving up through the Caribbean and they were using these as launching places. Of course, Grenada's actual overthrow by the communists became a concern of all the leaders in the Caribbean because they are democracies. They have a very strong background in democracy.

Q: Did you get reports or concern that the Cubans were trying to continue doing things there?

ANDERSON: Yes. Of course, as I said earlier, that was one of our concerns--Cuba and the aggressiveness that they had in the region. On a daily bases we tried to monitor what was taking place. And because they were such fragile islands in small economies, small governments, the same type thing that would happen in Jamaica with crime, robbery of tourists that were out on the beach...we had those sort of things happen in one of their major industries right there in Barbados. When that happened it hurt the tourism so the government spent a lot of time so that they didn't have crime on the beaches and that sort of thing. Drugs that they felt were basically communist inspired were kept out. They monitored it very closely with lots of our help and they were grateful for it.

Q: How about the drug business? It was somewhat off the main route as far as getting stuff up to the United States wasn't it?

ANDERSON: Yes, but you know if you look at how they come up from Colombia, they ended up...we had pretty well monitored how they were coming and they switched patterns. They moved from Colombia and started moving over to Caracas. Then they would start coming up through the Caribbean chain. I don't think it got as bad as we thought it might, but the pattern definitely shifted. You stamp something out one place and it pops up in another area.

Q: The money is just so overwhelming.

ANDERSON: The money could corrupt a government overnight. They would come in with a \$100,000 which is nothing here in the United States, but that is a fortune in a small country like St. Lucia, St. Vincent, or even Dominica. It is just incredible what they could do if they wanted to buy a government off.

Q: Did you have the Drug Enforcement Agency person there?

ANDERSON: Yes. And monitored all of that very closely. But by enlarge there were not real major drug problems. There were small problems here and there that popped up. I think they have more of a problem today than they did back then.

Q: Did you have any major drug busts or anything like that?

ANDERSON: No, we really didn't. About the only thing that actually happened was a neighbor of mine from where the Ambassador's Residence was, ended up killing his wife. They went into his house and discovered all kinds of drugs and evidently he was one of the kingpins of the drug industry there in Barbados and he was only a stone throw away. But outside of that they didn't have problems. It was more up towards the Bahamas that they had most of the major problems. But that was when they started dropping back a little bit too. So fortunately I left about the time they really started moving that way.

PAUL A. RUSSO
Ambassador
Barbados (1986-1988)

Ambassador Russo was born in Cleveland, Ohio and attended Ohio State University. He soon became involved in politics, working first for a United States Senator and then for Bob Dole who was then the Chairman of the Republican National Committee. He worked as head of Congressional relations for the Reagan Campaign in 1979, and then served as Special Assistant to the President for Political Affairs. In 1986 he was appointed ambassador to Barbados. Ambassador Russo was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

RUSSO: Maybe I should go back to my goals; what I was trying to accomplish. I viewed my responsibility as, first of all, to organize whatever resources I had to promote economic development in the area. I felt that from the standpoint of the United States, why do we have an embassy there? What are we trying to accomplish? What's in our best interest? How does this all fit in with our total foreign policy picture? My feeling was that we needed democratic governments there in those islands. If we had an unemployment rate that was low enough, there wouldn't be the unrest. If people were working, they weren't going to be listening to anything Castro had to say from down the road. So I felt that it was, one, in our best interest; that it was what I wanted to devote a great deal of my time and energy and the energy and time of the embassies to.

The second was the anti-drug situation. As I was taking up my Post, the United States was making progress in cutting off, or at least diverting, the direct drug routes from Colombia straight up on either side of Cuba to our country. And one effect of this was to push the drug trade toward the Eastern Caribbean islands. You have to understand that the airports are magnificent, especially the airports in Antigua, Barbados and St. Lucia. The facilities for ships are equally good on most of the islands, and there is a good deal of international traffic. Everything was totally open; there was no fear of terrorism. These are tourist countries, and to encourage tourism the governments wanted open, friendly ports. They didn't want armed guards and the appearance of tight security or stringent checking of cargoes and luggage. In addition, the banking systems are wonderful, and secure. It would be a very natural shift for the drug trade and money laundering operations over into the Eastern Caribbean islands.

When I arrived in Barbados, the drug problem was not imbedded. My feeling at the time was, and still is, that a great deal of the United States' anti-drug activity and efforts are directed at problems already out of control -- after-the-fact activity. I felt that we had a situation in the Eastern Caribbean that was relatively drug free, and if we could stop it before it took hold, we were way ahead of the game. On the other hand, if we couldn't stop it from coming in, I wasn't not sure we could ever get it out. Most of the Prime Ministers shared this view.

Q: Of course, we had the example of the Bahamas, where it had really taken root, from what I take it. I mean, from the very top on down.

RUSSO: Correct. And the Eastern Caribbean could have become exactly the same as the Bahamas for the same reasons: the excellent banking system, and excellent transportation to the United States and Europe, which are tremendous markets. Another concern was the fact that it doesn't take very much money and organization to elect a person in a small country like that. If someone dedicated large quantities of cash, you could very soon elect some very wrong people.

So I was approaching my job with two priorities; economic development and an anti-drug program. I also had a prime minister in Barbados when I arrived who was extremely anti-Reagan and anti-American.

Q: This was Errol Barrow?

RUSSO: Barrow, yes. And my first priority was to establish relations with him; hopefully suggest that he should not be attacking Reagan.

So my three major priorities were: one, establish a better relationship with the government in Barbados; two, promote economic activity for all the islands; and, three, do as much as possible in the anti-drug area, both on the education side and the enforcement side.

One perfect example was a situation I had with the anti-drug program. Television is a major influence in the Eastern Caribbean. In fact, there's a long-running controversy because the Governments down there don't want a lot of U.S. programming. They do want some, but that's another story. For my agenda, I found out that Sesame Street was an extremely popular program in Barbados, and had been for many years. At the time, I wasn't acquainted with the program; when it had started and the tremendous impact it has had on children. I learned that it began about fifteen years ago, and therefore had a great impact on the people now in their mid-twenties, as well as with the younger children. Everyone seemed to have a good impression of Sesame Street. One of our anti-drug projects was to air commercials on radio and television that we created locally, using volunteers. So in that regard, I called the Children's Television Workshop, the production company in New York, and explained what I was trying to do. I found that one of the women there...and I think her name is Diane, but I'm not sure if that's from the program or her real name, but, anyway, I explained what I was trying to do. I said, "You know, I think we could put together a whole program in several of the islands for you, if you would come down." I told her that what I had in mind was for her to work with some of the local television people to create some anti-drug commercials; commercials that would work locally. I told her that the facilities were not as sophisticated as the ones she was used to, but that all of the necessary ingredients were there, and that if she wanted to, we would visit some high schools as well. And that I wanted to host a major reception at the Ambassador's residence, and invite the teachers and school administrators - that sort of thing.

She said, "When? When do you want me down there?" And we arranged the trip right then and there. I was fortunate because I had a desirable place to visit but on the other hand, there are a lot of good people willing to contribute, if asked. We paid for an airline ticket, and received a tremendous service of television and radio commercials.

Q: How to mobilize talent without going through all the bureaucratic procedure.

RUSSO: Correct. And usually the answer from the staff is: "No, you can't do that," or "Are you then endorsing a particular company or a specific private enterprise?" And my answer was: "I don't know, but I don't really care. What I'm endorsing is to try to get an anti-drug commercial produced and maybe save a kid from drugs, or to try and get a canary certified as disease-free so that this poor man can go ahead and sell his canaries to the United States -- as we've been telling the world that that's what we're trying to do."

Q: How did you view Barrow when you first got there, and then how did you deal with him up until he departed the scene...?

RUSSO: Well, first of all, our Government was concerned with Barrow's election because he was of a much more liberal philosophy than the previous Prime Minister, and also the State Department did not see his election coming. They weren't sure how far he was on the scale of going towards socialism and/or beyond. We were also somewhat concerned because Barrow was a contemporary of Michael Manley (who is now the Prime Minister of Jamaica, and who had a socialist past). Manley at that time was preparing to run against the conservative Prime Minister, Seaga, in Jamaica. Barrow and Manley were from the old socialist school. They could be an indication of a real change in attitude and approach to government in the region...maybe. The fact that Barrow was elected, the fact that he was anti-Reagan and anti-U.S....he did not like Reagan; he was calling him a cowboy in the press, and it was more than just Reagan, it was the United States. And he was a very strong figure in their society. I mean, he was a part of their history, and he was someone who had to be reckoned with; he was not an over-the-hill type in any sense of the word. He was a political force and a very strong prime minister.

My approach to it was virtually again back to my political past. I had a number of discussions with my country team in the Embassy as well as many private discussions with those members who I really felt were "career," in the sense of being long-time State Department employees who had worked with many ambassadors, in many parts of the world; very professional people. And we all said, "okay, we've got a problem. How do we solve it?" "What do I do?" And, from my standpoint, too, I was saying, "well, this would be great, you know, my first day on the job and I've got a hostile prime minister, and the first thing I do is screw it up in some way." That wasn't exactly the way I wanted to start my diplomatic career.

So I put a lot of thought into it. I did a lot of research on who Barrow was, where I thought he was coming from, why I thought he was anti-Reagan, and why I thought he was anti-U.S. And I wanted to try to decide whether that was the same thing, because you

could be pro-U.S. and anti-Reagan, certainly. I'm not sure you could be the other way around, but certainly you could be anti-Reagan.

I talked to all of the people that I could find to talk to, and that would be the country team, those professionals. I went outside the embassy as well. I went to people that lived on the island, who were not part of the structure, to find out who Barrow was. And I found out that they loved this man. This was a national leader. There was a national pride that he was catering to; that he represented. The United States was looked upon as a dominant force that was going to do what it wanted. And, from Barrow's standpoint, he was the little guy saying,

"We are somebody and we are pretty good in our own right. We've had a democracy for so many years, we have a tradition of law and order, we have all of those kinds of things. Our people can read and write. And, yes, we want to be an ally of the United States, and, yes, we want to get along with you, but we're not going to sit back and let you tell us what to do."

Okay, that's easy, I think, to understand, or at least I thought so. What was his problem with Reagan? You know, had he ever met Reagan? No. Did he read the papers and watch the international news and so forth? Yes. So he formed an opinion of Reagan, based on some things that were picked out by him in his past from news accounts and probably from some of the other leaders that he knew. I would be dealing with changing a perception.

So I felt that I wanted to go and see him then. I didn't do it immediately, because I wanted to know what I was doing and what was the purpose of it. So when I did go to see him, I just had a talk with him about Reagan. I knew he was going to know who I was. I mean, he read the papers, and he was going to be briefed for the meeting and know that I was coming from a Reagan background. And so I decided that what I would do was approach it by saying, "I'm here representing the United States. I believe that we should get along. It's in your best interest for your country and the United States to have a good working relationship. I feel that what I can do here during my tenure is work with your structure to try to help the economic situation, and work with you on an anti-drug program."

I went into a little of some of the things I was thinking about. I said I was very concerned about the anti-drug side; that I had seen the problem in the United States. I hoped that I could offer some help to their efforts in combating this, so that some of the things that had happened in some of our cities in the United States didn't happen there. Coordination of U.S. government drug enforcement agencies was a problem, and I knew I could help with this.

NADIA TONGOUR
Political Officer
Bridgetown (1988-1991)

Nadia Tongour was born in Turkey and raised in South Carolina. She was educated at William and Mary and Stanford Universities and taught at several colleges before joining the Foreign Service in 1980. Primarily a Political Officer, her Washington assignments were in the fields of Soviet and Soviet Bloc affairs as well as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her foreign assignments include Brazil, Barbados and St. George's Grenada, where she was Principal Officer. Ms. Tongour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Well, what about drugs?

TONGOUR: Then or now?

Q: Then.

TONGOUR: I ask because I have served in the region more recently. In the period of the late '80s and early '90s, drugs while certainly available in the region, were not as big an issue for some of the specific islands we were covering. They represented drug transit countries, rather than large scale users or producers. The local governments allowed our vessels to patrol the area and check things out, if you will. Obviously Colombia was the main priority, but the routes used to transport drugs from there to here and to Europe were clearly areas of concern as well. This continued to be a priority throughout the ensuing years. In the case of St. Vincent, I know that it produces a fair amount of marijuana for external sale, not so much for local use. Vincentians may use it as much as anyone, but local consumption is not a significant issue. And Ralph Gonsalves, while not necessarily favoring it, has not done much to stop it. Some of the drug dealers reputedly were backers of his election campaigns.

On another topic, it's probably worth mentioning that in some ways it was an awkward period for the staff. After not having had an Ambassador for two years, we had gotten used to "being on our own" and it seemed a bit strange at first. There were a lot of expectations associated with his arrival as well as a lot of preparations, not to mention a shift in status for the political officers, who for some time had essentially been acting as our country's official representative. In my case, for example, I would escort him to islands where everyone already knew me and weren't exactly sure what to make of the "new guy" -- perhaps not providing him the degree of deference he might have expected. It was an adjustment, simply having an Ambassador around. .

On the plus side, when time permitted, there was the sea, sun and the free flowing rum, but to give the islands their due, people did work. We had our share of issues to follow -- often related to combating narco-trafficking in the region and minor bilateral disputes. However, it was certainly not the same as being in Tel Aviv or Moscow in terms of

Washington's attention.

G. PHILIP HUGHES
Ambassador
Barbados (1990-1993)

Ambassador Hughes was born and raised in Ohio and educated at the University of Dayton, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Harvard University. His career with the US Government included service at the senior level with the Congressional Budget Office, the Departments of State and Commerce, and the White House, where he served two tours with the National Security Council. In 1990 he was named US Ambassador to Barbados, where he served until 1993. Ambassador Hughes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

HUGHES: What were the guiding ideas if you would of my mission going out there? The guiding internal objectives were to revitalize the embassy itself which had been without an ambassador for two-and-a-half years, to try to upgrade personnel in the embassy to attract some brighter, younger, more talented people because Bridgetown had become one of these posts that tended to attract people who were in twilight tours or who had some problem or other that brought them to Bridgetown. My DCM and I had an idea of how to do that, by trying to make as many assignments as possible stretch assignments. If we could somehow work with personnel and manipulate the personnel system a little bit and we could stretch more assignments in Bridgetown, we would get higher caliber people who would be looking at this as a leg-up on their next promotion if they were serving in such assignment.

We also needed badly to refurbish the physical facilities in Bridgetown. We internally also needed to get the mission focused on what the hell were we trying to do here in the Eastern Caribbean? What was our hierarchy of objectives in the post-Cold War period with aid levels declining, with drugs problems increasing, with security problems probably not very much on the horizon but having made a tremendous investment in the '80s in a security infrastructure for the region that was going to crumble literally to rust if we didn't make some investment in sustaining it? We had to pull the mission together and coordinate it, because with different agencies pursuing different agendas on several different islands, and also reporting in some cases to two different chargés and the ambassador in Bridgetown, there was just infinite opportunity for agency freelancing, i.e. we're sort of doing our own thing here and we can justify it because we're responsible for two or three different masters and therefore we're responsible to no master except our one back in Washington.

Externally the goals were pretty straightforward, too. We needed to reconvince the tiny governments in the neighborhood that they did still matter to us and that they were not completely marginalized. That was a largely symbolic exercise done through a regular program of visitation to the islands, reporting on the islands and building close relationships with the prime ministers of the islands to try to get focused on the top

priorities of the day. What were those top priorities? Drugs I think had supplanted security at that stage as a top priority. Investment in security efforts was more and more being thought of in terms of how can this reinforce our counter-narcotics effort. Our aid mission, our aid effort, was clearly tapering off so we faced an investment challenge of where were we going to make the wisest final investments in our aid program to equip these economies to sustain themselves into the future. These are economies that are marginal at best.

Q: Let's talk about drug prevention. This I imagine was probably your highest priority.

HUGHES: Yes, definitely. It was hard to get systematic intelligence on the drugs flow through the Eastern Caribbean but anecdotally everybody was convinced that it was becoming more and more of a problem. That is not to say that the main highway for drugs traveling from the producing countries of South America toward the United States wasn't still through Mexico or wasn't becoming more and more through Mexico and up the isthmus. There was a lot of suspicion of drugs trafficking through the islands in the Eastern Caribbean on several fronts, with a DEA office that was fairly newly established in Barbados before I arrived and with a legal attaché office that was restaffed for Barbados just as I arrived. The first legal attaché had had some problems there of a legal nature and he was replaced by a first class professional. With our security operation there, that is to say our military attachés and our military assistance group increasingly focusing on trying to help the countries equip themselves to deal with the counter-narcotics problem and frankly with, if we can talk about that on these tapes, the station.

Q: We can talk about the station. It is unclassified but obviously we're talking about the CIA and how helpful it is.

HUGHES: With our station's activities being reoriented from bloc targets, the Cuban target, the threat of insurgency and so forth, to the drugs problem. Much of the mission was refocused on the drugs problem. What were we talking about? We were potentially talking about several things. The drugs problem manifested itself in the islands in several ways. First there was a local smuggling, local consumption problem which concerned every government because of the corruption potential, the health impact on the society and productive parts of the society, and the drain on the tiny economies that it would represent. It was clear that there was a danger of increased drugs use on virtually every island.

Most of the islands had no tradition of drug use unlike Jamaica where there is a tradition of growing marijuana and smoking ganja and so forth. Most of the islands do not have strong Rastafarian communities, certainly not in Barbados. Most of the islands did not have a tradition of growing ganja and smoking ganja for pleasure and so forth, with the exception of St. Vincent. In the northwest corner part of that island where it is truly trackless and mountainous, there is no road that goes to that part of the island, Rastafarians and others would go up in the hills and walk there out into the bush a few miles and carve out plots on the sides of hills that you think couldn't support anything. They would make a clearing and grow marijuana plants and they'd sell them or smoke

them or whatever. There was that small tradition in St. Vincent. That was really the only local growing problem of any proportions that one had to deal with. There may have also been a small enclave of such habits in the very southern tip of Dominica, in an area called Grand Pay. Otherwise, growing was not a habit in these islands and using was not a habit.

As drugs like cocaine began to be transshipped up the island chain or shipped into the islands, use was increasing, dealers were starting to appear and the islands started to feel threatened by this. Of course the governments were very vulnerable to corruption. We were all so worried that if drugs corruption became entrenched on any one of these tiny islands it would be almost impossible to root out because in the governments one is dealing with a few dozens or hundreds of people at the most senior levels. A few of them get corrupted, they make all the decisions. You'll never find out about it and you'll never get them replaced. They would be easy to buy off. Just lots of problems will surface from that.

In each of the islands we concentrated on helping to build up their drugs enforcement units. We concentrated on helping them to share intelligence about traffickers and trafficker movements. About getting a hold on who was moving in and out of their territory, the name of boats, the name of individuals and cross checking them against data bases to see if traffickers seemed to be moving through the region so that they could notify the next island or whatever and grab someone.

Each island's drug problem manifested itself somewhat differently. In Barbados what we mainly encountered was a local importation for use problem, not very much of a transshipment problem. Barbados didn't make much sense as a transshipment point. It was sort of out of the chain of islands and you had to go out of your way to get to Barbados. It wasn't a very convenient place for transshipment. We worked there with the police force and with the counter-narcotics units to strengthen their enforcement capability both against smuggling and against local drugs dealers.

In Dominica the problem was a different sort. There were known drugs dealers on the island who were importing and transshipping through the region. There was a notorious little place toward the northern tip of the island called Tan Tan where a woman and her family were involved in drugs. The police were quite convinced they were involved in cocaine shipment but they could never quite get the goods on them. Everybody knew who the police were, even plainclothes police, because these are little communities. In fact the habit was if you were from the north part of the island you got assigned to police duty in the south so people might not recognize you. Or if you were born in the south part of the island you might get assigned to police duties in the north so people might not recognize you. But everybody knew who the police were so by the time the police got there all the evidence was invariably gone of a boat landing drugs. The Dominicans tried to keep after the people at Tan Tan and they never succeeded I believe in shutting them down.

They did succeed in finding through our aid a major cache of cocaine on a boat that had been brought into Roseau harbor. They did a search of the boat and they found I forget

exactly how much but it was a huge amount for the region of cocaine. As I recall the crew of the boat were Colombian merchant men and I think that had come into Roseau because their boat had gotten into trouble. Eventually the crew were let go. After a trial it was found that they really were innocent of where this stuff was hidden in the boat; it had been welded into the bow of the boat. The cocaine was found and destroyed by the Dominica police in a big ceremony. That was Dominica's big drugs bust while I was there. Eugenia Charles was petrified as long as the cocaine was on the island because of the fear that somebody would take it off, somebody would sell it, or otherwise.

St. Lucia's drug problem was still different. It was more of a transshipment problem. I am trying to remember if we had any significant drugs successes in St. Lucia. I think maybe only minor seizures. We never found anyone who was a systematic trafficker in the way we did in Dominica.

The really interesting activity occurred in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The St. Vincent government had become very close to a family called the Non-no family. They came from Italy and they owned a bank that was originally called the Owens Bank until the Owens Bank showed up on our surveillance list for strange, suspicious institutions. Someone rearranged the letters on the facade of the building which was more or less diagonally across the street from the new government headquarters, to New Bank Ltd. It was the same building, same people, same everything. The Owens Bank, or New Bank Ltd. in St. Vincent was strongly suspected, in fact we had information that it was used for drugs money laundering by the Non-no family.

There is just a lot of suspicion of the depth of drugs involvement in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in those years. There was an island in the south of the chain, very close to Grenada, called Union Island, which was a wide open place. The owners of the Union Island yacht club and hotel were suspected of themselves being involved in drugs trafficking. I believe one of the owners turned up dead under mysterious circumstances on Union Island. The Mitchell government made a substantial improvement in the airport at Union Island though Union Island received negligible visitors. There was probably a legitimate tourism reason for the airport improvement but just the whole scene in St. Vincent reeked with there is something wrong with the drug scene here.

We put a good deal of pressure on the Mitchell government to crack down on drugs. We did some aerial surveys of the northwestern part of the island where the ganja was grown and so forth and found vastly expanded marijuana cultivation. We flew the prime minister and the attorney general up to see these marijuana fields. You could pick them out of the terrain even though it is very mountainous and undulating. They were just shocked at the extent of the marijuana explosion in northwestern St. Vincent and so they immediately agreed to cooperate with us. We ferried their special forces teams up there and they pulled up thousands and thousands of marijuana plants and burnt them. They burnt the shacks where the ganja men were growing this stuff, drying this stuff and so forth.

It quickly became a matter of political comment, and press comment, and debate in St. Vincent that what the government was doing was basically cracking down on all the little guys to please the Americans. The little guy who is growing a little marijuana for recreational use or earning a little money in a place where you don't have many opportunities to earn some money up in the northwest part of the island, and letting big fish go free. That is letting people smuggle drugs on boats and whatnot in and out of the island quite freely. That was sort of the theme of the commentary about the anti-drugs campaign there.

HUGHES: We did in a way. But let me go back, you asked about drugs. We had one other significant event with St. Vincent that is perhaps worth mentioning because it was the first event that actually, I think, finally got Washington's attention focused on the possibility that St. Vincent may indeed be a mini drugs problem. I happen to be at the CARICOM that was happening in St. Kitts in 1991. While we were at that meeting I received word from Barbados that the navy had encountered on the high seas a concession registered freighter, St. Vincent's a flag of convenience, that was loaded with something like 20 tons of hashish. It was an unbelievable amount of hashish. The largest amount of hashish we had ever found on any vessel up to that time. They asked permission from the government of St. Vincent to board, search, seize and arrest so they would be able to take immediate enforcement action. We made this request through official channels and there was no reply. The government of St. Vincent was taking forever to reply.

The navy through the State Department got in touch with me and asked if there was anything I could do to get the government of St. Vincent to get on with it and give us approval to board, search, seize and arrest. Everybody does this. The Bahamas does it, Colombia does it, Panama does it. Why is the St. Vincent government having so much trouble coming up with this authority? I went and saw Son Mitchell because we were there together at the meeting. I briefed him on the situation, told him all about it and he said he'd call his people and they would get right on it. Well he didn't have an answer for me that day and the next day he flew home but he said we'll be in touch by telephone. The next day I called him and he still didn't have an answer. "Why can't you follow the ship to port and whatever port it enters, ask them for the permission to board, search, seize and arrest?" I said "We can't do that. We want to do it now. We want to do it on the high seas. We want to do it with your permission and we don't understand why we aren't getting cooperation." We went up the escalatory ladder.

I called Son at home on yet another day for permission to board, search, seize and arrest. This was taking about three days. I said that Washington is taking a very quizzical view of why it's taking your government so long to decide this very routine matter. He said "Look, I don't know who's behind these drugs. I don't have anything to do with it. I don't know who's behind this and for all I know it could be the Mafia. If I give you permission to do this, this is a wide open place, somebody might come here and assassinate me. I have no protection. I am worried about myself. They could come over to the Frangipani Hotel in Bequia where I live and do away with me. Go handle this some

other way. Take the ship to Hawaii. Follow it to Manila. Do whatever you want but stop asking me for this permission.”

As it turned out eventually after a long negotiation, it took four or five days, we finally got permission from the Vincentians to go aboard this vessel and board, search, seize and arrest. It finally raised people’s suspicions in Washington that there was something radically wrong with this government. This was just not normal behavior. Subsequent to that we found the ton of cocaine through the operation of the drug squad and we saw how that case was handled in St. Vincent.

After coming back from the Eastern Caribbean, I guess it was about a year ago, I was participating in a round table discussion at a think tank here in Washington that was focused on international law enforcement problems. The round table began with a presentation by someone commenting on the drugs situation in the Eastern Caribbean and although we never found the smoking gun really when it comes to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, this person just spoke matter of factly that “well of course the St. Vincent government’s given over to drugs trafficking now.” It seemed to have finally penetrated that there is something wrong here. We may not be able to put our finger on what exactly is wrong and how deep it goes and just who exactly is implicated, but there is something wrong.

Q: If it had gotten to the point where you felt that the government really had gone over, what could we have done?

HUGHES: What could we have done if we really had a smoking gun that the St. Vincent government had gone over to drugs trafficking? I suppose we could have tried to set up arrest scenarios if we were able to pinpoint individuals in the community, perhaps even in the government, that could have played out when these people traveled overseas. When you came right down to it, we didn’t have a lot of economic leverage with the Vincentians. Our aid levels were pretty minimal. Our trade was mainly export trade to St. Vincent. We did not import a great deal from St. Vincent so trade sanctions didn’t have a lot to do with it. We could have possibly ostracized them in the international community by sort of calling attention to what evidence of corruption we might have and that would have an adverse impact on their tourism and so forth.

At the end of the day there wasn’t a lot of leverage that you really had over St. Vincent. You couldn’t go into the country and arrest people. You might have been able to get some cooperation from other jurisdictions in arresting them if they went in and out of the country, as long as you could tie it to a crime that was committed in or directed toward the United States. We could perhaps have isolated them regionally or help put some regional pressure on them. I think there was a measure of regional pressure put on St. Vincent to clean up its act.

We got surprisingly easy cooperation from Prime Minister Mitchell to carry his Special Forces units up to the northwest of the island and pull up all this marijuana stuff and destroy it. He may have regarded that as an acceptable political cost. Later on, by the

way, when St. Vincent was facing an election year and we wanted to renew the eradication operation, during the election season that was definitely not on. There was just one excuse after another for why it wasn't convenient to have the helicopter come back and ferry people around and so forth. Once the election was over and Mitchell won handily, we were back to eradicating. It was very politically timed.

BELIZE

WARD BARMON Consular Officer Belmopan (1967-1969)

Ward Barmon was born in Huntington, Long Island in 1943. He graduated with a double major in American and Chinese history from Yale University and then studied at the University of Madrid for a year before coming into the Foreign Service in 1967. In 1992 he served as Director of the Narcotics Affairs section in Bogota, Colombia. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Belize, Taiwan, Thailand, El Salvador, and Honduras.

Q: What were American interests there?

BARMON: Almost none. There was a concern about the Cuban communist influence as well as Guatemala's interest in taking over British Honduras. They were concerned about that igniting some kind of little war in the area. Not much of a drug problem back then, a little bit of Marijuana growing up in the North. There really was not a smuggling conduit at that point that they knew of. There were some odd characters, a couple of Americans doing artifact smuggling, robbing the Mayan temples. A little bit of agriculture exported through to the U.S., sugar cane, citrus, fish products. But, we did not have a lot of interests.

BEAUVEAU B. NALLE Consul General Belmopan (1976-1981)

Beauveau B. Nalle was born in Pennsylvania in 1927. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956, serving in Washington, DC, Turkey, Uganda, Liberia, and Belize. Mr. Nalle was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on April 19, 1994.

Q: It became independent in 1981.

NALLE: That's right. Then I left 3 weeks after that.

And narcotics was the other problem. This was when I first really faced the narcotics problem. It was unbelievable: overflights, illegal aircraft. We didn't have a narcotics man

in Belize. He came over from Guatemala, he came over about once a month. It was primarily marijuana but more and more there was evidence that it was becoming a transit point for cocaine from South America. And more and more it was obvious that senior members of the government, Belize government not the British, were involved in it and it was a very difficult matter. Also, the Nicaraguan situation was degenerating.

We had a plane land, I get called out to the airport. It was an American twin Beech I think it was, with 2 guys in the cockpit who didn't have pilots licenses, didn't have drivers' licenses, didn't have credit cards or passports. They had lots of cash, U.S. dollars cash. The aircraft itself had no aircraft log, it had no air maintenance log, it had no airframe log, it had no engine log. There were no tail numbers on the aircraft. There was nothing. Just these 2 guys with no identification. And an aircraft that couldn't be traced, all the numbers had been filed off.

Q: And they were American?

NALLE: Oh yeah, couldn't have been more so, straight out of Mississippi or Alabama, nice bunch of guys. Like this fellow who got shot down in Nicaragua. Do you remember?

Q: What did you do with them?

NALLE: I wanted to throw them in jail. The Belize government said, what the hell, let them go. Money probably passed hands out at the airport, I'm sure. They said they were lost.

Q: The plane was searched, I take it.

NALLE: The plane was searched; there was nothing in it. As I said, I think money passed hands. The Belizeans let them go, they said, "We've got no reason to hold them." I said, what do you mean you've got no reason to hold them? These guys are as illegal as they can be. They said, no, the plane's all right. So off they went.

About 4 days later a cable came in from San Jose. Saying that a twin Beech with new Panamanian identification numbers. Two Americans--it was obviously the same aircraft--had crashed in the mountains in Northern Costa Rica, just on the edge of the Nicaraguan border and some 500 rifles and a half a million rounds of ammunition had been discovered.

Q: A prominent press story.

NALLE: A prominent press story. The plane at that time had had a tail number painted on it in Panama. Which was untraceable. They go down along with this stuff in Costa Rica and had crashed flying north from Panama to Nicaragua. It was a crazy place.

Another time a plane landed at Belize International airport. It requested emergency landing, engine problems. Here's one of these good old Southern boys. Superb pilots, unbelievable pilots, they're so good. He was sitting there behind the wheel; a mechanic

was working on his engine. The mechanic, I knew him, a U.S. citizen who was a drug smuggler himself but we never did catch him.

I think the only honest policeman in the country of Belize was on duty at the airport at the time. He came out and looked over the airplane. And back in the after section of the aircraft, were a whole lot of garbage bags very neatly wrapped up and tied with tape. And the policeman turned and said, "Hey man, what that? Give me one man." And the pilot went back and got one for him. The guy opened it up, it was very neatly baled marijuana. And the fellow said to the pilot, "Man you've got about 5000 kilos of pot in the back of your aircraft." The pilot turned around and he looked at the policeman and said, "Son of a bitch, where do you suppose that came from?"

He stayed 2 days in jail. Our consular officer, Bernie Gross, was down in the jail talking to him. And a guy, Bernie told me later, with pointy toed alligator Gucci shoes and electric blue suit came in with a briefcase full of hundred dollar bills. And Bernie was saying, "Hey, we can get vitamin pills and something for food rations." And the guy says, "Why thank you Mr. Gross, I believe my problem is being taken care of." He got up and walked out of the jail.

ROBERT RICH
Ambassador
Belize (1987-1990)

Ambassador Robert G. Rich, Jr. was born in Florida in 1930. He attended the University of Florida and Cornell University. Ambassador Rich entered the Foreign Service in 1957 and during his career has served in Korea, Indonesia, Trinidad, the Philippines and was ambassador to Belize in addition to various assignments in the State Department. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 1994.

RICH: For a small embassy we did have a rather remarkable set of commitments. There were seven different agencies of the U.S. Government under my aegis in Belize. We even negotiated a military medical research agreement during the time I was there. We had an economic aid program. We had a small military assistance program. We had a rather large Voice of America contingent operating a VOA relay station in southern Belize which was targeted at the trouble spots of Central America. This broadcast primarily in Spanish to Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. The cogency of that investment is now probably less than it was just a few years ago. We also had a Defense Attaché and an important anti-narcotics program.

RICH: Two other problems emerged there which are not at all unknown in our business. I think they are among the most difficult kinds of problems an ambassador has to deal with, particularly an ambassador such as myself who didn't have an awful lot of clout back in Washington from a place like Belize considering the crises on which Washington was focused. One was corruption within the U.S. mission, itself, and the other was the discovery of misuse of U.S. aid to abet narcotics trafficking.

One of the biggest interests of the United States that I dealt with during my tenure was the fight against narcotics. We had a major marijuana eradication program going on in Belize, and this merged during my tenure with an effort to address the more serious problem caused by the inroads of the cocaine Mafia from Colombia and trafficking of cocaine up through Central America as the sea routes had become more difficult. A small country like Belize simply had no physical means to prevent this.

RICH: The north central part of the country was the area in which we had the most severe problems with drug traffic. There was a town up there, Orange Walk, that was frequently spoken of as the "wild west." Even our DEA people wouldn't stay there after nightfall. That area had elected a man to the parliament whom we knew was a brother and crony of a known drug trafficking kingpin who was in jail in the United States. The government only had a one seat majority in parliament, although later it acquired two by paying off one member to switch sides, so every seat was vital.

It wasn't but a month or two after the government changed that we began to get very good evidence that this member of parliament from Orange Walk, who had been named Minister of Works in the new government, was improperly utilizing AID road building equipment for illegal purposes. Our biggest infrastructure effort was a roads program which came under the Ministry of Works. There were serious problems also with the implementation of the program. Guidelines were not being properly observed. So, as we gathered evidence, I consulted with the AID director who said, "I have enough basis on which to put a hold on the program for performance reasons. We have a bunch of new equipment coming in, and we will just keep it on hold on our property ostensibly for entirely non-political purposes." Well, that was fine because that gave us a kind of cover excuse to put a hold on the program and at the same time gave a public reason for the AID director to negotiate with the Ministry of Works while we tried to address the more serious issue.

The bigger problem as I saw it was that here we had a major AID program under which some of our equipment was not only being diverted for inappropriate and illegal purposes, but for purposes directly opposed to a major public policy concern of the United States. The Minister was using some of the road equipment also to grade air strips in the jungle for transshipment of narcotics. This, as far as I was concerned, was absolutely something that the U.S. Government and people could not tolerate. Eventually it would become known, and that could blow up the entire AID program to Belize. So after we collected sufficient evidence, I engaged in quite a dialogue with Washington. Essentially what I sought was permission to go to the Prime Minister to lay the evidence on the table and ask him to deal with it quietly. I said, "My bottom line is that there cannot be anyone administering USAID funds or equipment who is involved in narcotics traffic."

After some hemming and hawing I got an okay from Washington to go ahead, although given the Inter-American Affairs Bureau's preoccupation with counter insurgencies and communism I never felt I had really gotten the attention of anyone very senior. So I went

to see the Prime Minister. His first reaction was, "You are trying to bring down my government. This is all a plot to overthrow me." So that was a long conversation. We finally got off of that kick, but he was very suspicious. He was a man who honestly could not believe ill of someone whom he had known all his life in Belize's small town atmosphere. He didn't want to believe ill of him. He was very dubious. He went out to near one air strip we had described the location of to him and said, "I didn't see any air strip." I then authorized my Defense Attaché to rent a private plane from the municipal airport and take some photographs from the air, totally openly, nothing clandestine about this. We hired a bush pilot. I didn't even want to use our spraying planes. It was quite clear that what we photographed was nothing but a clandestine and unauthorized air strip; it wasn't just an improved road. We also had witnesses to how it was done. Upon being shown these photographs, Prime Minister Price was clearly very disturbed. He said he would undertake his own investigation, which is what I asked of him. It took several weeks and in the meantime we had the AID program on hold. Publicly it was on hold over management discrepancies. Eventually the Prime Minister came back to me and said, "I have reluctantly confirmed your allegations."

Q: He admitted it?

RICH: Yes. It was very hard for him to do. I had set a deadline of about two months during which things were on hold, after which we would shut down the AID program if the problem were not resolved. Meanwhile, we were not spending any more money or supplying any more equipment for the roads program. I said, "Mr. Prime Minister, I really have to have a resolution. It is up to you how you do it. You have done part of what I have asked in carrying out the investigation. The other thing I ask is that you remove this individual from any position where he will deal with our funds. Thirdly, I would hope that you could gather sufficient evidence and go to court and prosecute." He never did do the third, but he found a way in a few weeks to remove this man from that ministry, giving him another job as a face saver, which had nothing to do with our programs or funds.

BERMUDA

BLAKE MELVILLE
Consul General
Hamilton (1985)

Melville Blake was born in Lexington, Mississippi in 1924. He attended Mississippi State College. He joined the army and served for four years and then attended Georgetown University where he studied in the school of Foreign Service. Following his graduation he worked as an editor in the CIA for a year and then went to Germany.

Q: Were there any problems with drugs at the time moving to the United States through Bermuda?

BLAKE: No, never. We never had that problem. Bermuda has one of the best police systems I have ever known anywhere. It is clear that they learned their lessons from the British well. Nor was there any money laundering through Bermuda. We had an informal arrangement to cover that. I would say that Bermudans combine the better qualities of the British and the Swiss: discretion, respect for law and order, the ability to work informally and with respect for confidentiality, and quite, good taste.

BOLIVIA

OWEN B. LEE
Minerals and Petroleum Officer
La Paz (1957-1959)

Owen B. Lee served in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He graduated from Harvard University in 1949 and studied in Paris, France at Institut d'Etudes Politiques. His Foreign Service career included positions in Germany, Bolivia, Romania, and Spain. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on December 4, 1996.

Q: When you were in Bolivia were there problems with the drug trade, the type we have now?

LEE: No, that problem didn't exist at that time (1957-1959). There was very little of that in the United States at that time too. Coca leaf was available everywhere. In fact, when you arrived in Bolivia, a coca leaf tea was the first thing they gave you to help with the high altitude sickness. It has some effect in relieving your headache, etc. I remember my wife was given it when we first arrived. In fact, when I went back to Bolivia 20 years later they had made some progress. One of the signs of progress that I saw was that they had coca bags (like our tea bags) in Bolivia to take care of the high altitude sickness. I remember at that time, when we did have the drug problem, asking jokingly one of the DEA officers if I could take back some of the coca bags and he said he wouldn't advise my doing so.

PATRICK F. MORRIS
Deputy Director, USOM
La Paz (1958-1961)

Mr. Morris was born and raised in Montana. Educated at Georgetown University, Mexico City College, and San Marcos College, Lima, Peru, Mr. Morris served in the US Army in Europe during World War II, where he was captured and imprisoned by the German Army. He joined the newly established Point IV program in 1950 and worked with that agency and its successors in various senior level capacities in Washington, D.C., in Paris and throughout Latin America. His final posting was in the Dominican Republic, where he served as Director of the US AID Mission. Mr. Morris was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Was drug; was that a problem at all?

MORRIS: No, it was not. It was before; it is interesting, cocaine, cocoa; the cocoa leaf is a basic commodity in Bolivia. All of the Indians chew cocoa, the highland Indians chew cocoa and it is both a stimulant and a substitute for food. If they chew cocoa they do not feel hungry. And this practice of chewing cocoa dates back to the Incas themselves so this is a cultural thing and it was not unusual during my time in Bolivia to see truckloads of cocoa leaves coming from the Yungas, which is really highland valleys, sub-tropical highland valleys, large truckloads of cocoa leaves coming up to La Paz to be sold in the markets. This was before the '60s, I guess, which is the drug culture in the United States so that there was no thought of export. And the interesting thing is that even beyond the Indians you could go into any restaurant and have cocoa tea and this was part of the culture.

ROGER C. BREWIN
Economic Officer
La Paz (1961-1964)

Roger C. Brewin was born in Columbus, Ohio. He entered the U.S. Army in 1944. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami in Ohio in 1948 and a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1950. Mr. Brewin joined the Foreign Service in 1951. His career included positions in Switzerland, India, Bolivia, Paraguay, Iran, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 9, 1990.

Q: Was the drug trade much of a factor?

BREWIN: No, almost zero.

WILLIAM B. WHITMAN
Consular Officer
Cochabamba (1964-1967)

Mr. Whitman was born in New Jersey and raised in Illinois and New Jersey. He was educated at the University of Colorado and Northwestern University. In his posts abroad Mr. Whitman served variously as Consular, Political and Economic Officer. In Washington, he dealt with Fuels and Energy. His foreign posts include Palermo, Cochabamba, Belgrade, Milan, as Director of the US Trade Center, Belgrade, as Economic Counselor and Rome as Economic Minister. Mr. Whitman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: What about drug business, was there anything going on there?

WHITMAN: Well, I was the narcotics officer which meant doing reports from newspapers, about cocaine seizures involving coca, a staple of the Bolivian diet. There were cocaine mills and they would ship stuff out to Brazil. I'm sure there was a lot going on, but we weren't particularly interested in those days.

Q: Did you have coca tea and all that, or.. ?

WHITMAN: No, I didn't. But they do, they chew, it was pretty disgusting, I mean you chew, they make a beer called Chicha by chewing coca leaves, spitting out the fluid, then fermenting it. Then they drink it.

ROBERT L. CHATTEN
Information Officer, USIS
La Paz (1965-1967)

Robert L. Chatten received an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of New Mexico and went on to receive a masters degree in communications and journalism from Stanford. He was sworn in as a Foreign Service Officer in 1959. In 1972, he was stationed in Colombia as the new PAO in Bogota. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Bolivia and Ecuador

Q: Did you consider that a negative aspect? Was your program at all couched against the growing of drugs, cocaine, at that time?

CHATTEN: The international drug traffic was not a factor in the Andes of those days. It seems incredible now, considering what has happened there and in the rest of the world and, not least, in our own country. There was a perceived threat from domestically grown or Caribbean grown marijuana but the big menace was heroin, out of the Golden Triangle. Cocaine was just a distant blip on the screen in those days.

Q: Well USIS, to my knowledge, did not get involved in the program against growing drugs until the 1970s and we launched into it heavily in Thailand.

CHATTEN: We got involved in the Andean countries later on. By the time I got to Colombia in 1972, it had really become a consideration and was indeed a subject of no small contention between our post and the USIA support mechanisms in Washington. We knew that it was a major factor in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the United States, that it had serious international dimensions and that it was on the rise as a factor in the internal dynamics of Colombia. But it was hard to persuade anyone in Washington that we ought to get their attention and resources focused upon this. Fortunately, at that stage, we were a big enough post that we could do considerable programming ourselves. As you know, it was happening in Thailand at the same time. To a certain degree we could go our own way. We had the support of the area office in the sense that their blessing was contingent only on having drug traffic fully justified in our country plan.

But in those earlier times in Bolivia, the focus was the Alliance for Progress. It was under that banner of infrastructure development that the development of a national market became a priority. That wasn't unreasonable since there were no paved roads outside of the cities in Bolivia in those days.

JACK R. BINNS
Junior Officer
La Paz (1965-1967)

Jack R. Binns was born in Oregon in 1933. He received a bachelor's of science from the Naval Academy in 1956 and subsequently served overseas with the U.S. Navy. In 1963, he joined the Foreign Service, serving in Guatemala, La Paz, and San Salvador. Mr. Binns was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: Were we during your tour in Bolivia very much involved in the drug issue?

BINNS: It was not a significant matter. Later, during the 1972-74 period, I was the Bolivian desk officer when the drug issue was a major one, calling for White House interest. There were special task forces to deal with the narcotic issue. Needless to say, most of those efforts were fruitless and the situation continued to deteriorate simply because the market for the products grew and grew.

ERNEST V. SIRACUSA
Ambassador
Bolivia (1969-1973)

Ernest V. Siracusa was born in California on November 30, 1918. He obtained a B.A. from Stanford University. He had service in the U.S. Navy during the Second World War and spent one year at MIT as a graduate student in economics. He served in Buenos Aires, Rome, Lima. He was ambassador to La Paz and Montevideo. He was also in the U.N. as an advisor on Latin America. He retired in March 1974. He was interviewed by Hank Zivetz in June 1989.

SIRACUSA: We were even getting good cooperation for our expanding anti-drug campaign which featured training and equipping Bolivian forces and several cocaine-burning demonstrations of captured drugs had taken place. However, the dimension this problem achieved in subsequent years, pulled by the insatiable US dollar demand for drugs, was yet to come. The brutality of drug kingpins and the corrupting effects of seemingly limitless funds inevitably took a toll on U.S./Bolivian relations even though cooperation still seems to be extensive.

WILLIAM JEFFRAS DIETERICH
Director, Cultural Center, USIS

Santa Cruz (1970-1972)

William Jeffras Dietrich was born in Boston in 1936. He received his bachelor's degree from Connecticut Wesleyan University in 1958 and then served in the US Navy. His career included positions in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Italy, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico. Mr. Dieterich was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Later, that whole area became a real problem with narcotics. How was it at the time you were there?

DIETERICH: Nothing yet. It was a region beginning to taste prosperity in the sense they had figured out that all you had to do was grow the right crop and you could make money. You could see them beginning to get good at shifting crops. Shifting from cotton to soy beans, for instance. There was evidence they had made some crop shifts already. The land was mostly in the hands of middle class landowners who were smart enough to know you had to pay attention, for instance in making a shift from cotton to sugar cane or vice-versa. That does help explain what eventually happened. They figured out what the most profitable crop was.

MICHAEL W. COTTER

Political Officer

La Paz (1971-1973)

Ambassador Michael W. Cotter was born in Wisconsin in 1943. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1965 and received a JD from the University of Michigan in 1968. Postings throughout his career have included Saigon, La Paz, Can Tho, Quito, Ankara, Kinshasa, Santiago, and an ambassadorship to Turkmenistan. Ambassador Cotter was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Were drugs a problem? Was it considered a problem at that time?

COTTER: No. It wasn't an issue at all, because cocaine, I suppose, was known, but it wasn't an obvious problem. We had nobody assigned to the embassy for counter-narcotics. At that time, DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) hadn't yet come into being. You had a great conflict between the Justice Department's Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) and the US Customs people who fought a major bureaucratic battle within the U.S. Government over who was going to control the counter-drug war. It was finally resolved - I'm not sure if it was the Carter Administration - when the DEA was created. But we had nobody assigned in La Paz at that time. It was not perceived as a problem. That changed by the time I was in Ecuador in the late 1970s, when we did indeed have a BNDD officer assigned to the embassy.

ROGER C. BREWIN

Deputy Chief of Mission

La Paz (1972-1974)

Roger C. Brewin was born in Columbus, Ohio. He entered the U.S. Army in 1944. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami in Ohio in 1948 and a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1950. Mr. Brewin joined the Foreign Service in 1951. His career included positions in Switzerland, India, Bolivia, Paraguay, Iran, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

BREWIN: The years 1972-74 saw the beginning of the drug issue as a major problem for the United States. Unlike the Paraguayan experience, where it took sixteen months to get a well known heroin trafficker before our courts, in Bolivia it was always fairly easy to get the malefactors transferred to our custody in the middle of the night at the airport. They were cooperative in the law-enforcement sense. It became difficult for the Bolivians to respond some time later. When it came to the matter of growing the coca leaf, which was the sole support for many Campesinos, this was much more difficult and we still have that problem today. I don't know where the answer will be found.

Q: Were there any other developments besides the growth of the drug business and the finding of oil while you were there?

BREWIN: We were looking to see what would happen after President Banzer. He had been a general who has seized power from Torres who was almost a "nightmare come true"--a crypto-communist chief of state. Banzer's military coup threw out Torres. Banzer was a center-right person who governed in a quasi-martial law environment. He was favorable toward the United States. He had aspirations to become a civilian, elected President; we encouraged him along this path.

WILLIAM P. STEDMAN, JR. Ambassador Bolivia (1973-1977)

Ambassador William P. Stedman, Jr. was born in Maryland on January 1, 1923. He went to the School of Advanced International Studies and to George Washington University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. He served in Buenos Aires, San Jose, Guatemala, Mexico City, Lima, and Bolivia. He served in the ARA in Economic Policy, as a Country Director and as a Deputy Assistant Secretary. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 23, 1989.

STEADMAN: We said, "We ought to be doing something in the drug field, something to do with the coca problem." So that was sort of the beginning of doing something with the coca crop in Bolivia. So our interests began to shift toward doing something on the narcotics front.

Another dimension arose during my time there, which brought the whole drug thing so forcefully to my attention and to the Department's attention. This was the increasing number of U.S. citizens put in jail on charges of drug trafficking. By the time I left, there were something like 35 U.S. citizens in jail in La Paz, about 15 in Cochabamba, about 20 in Santa Cruz. For many years, Americans had come in to either experiment or get some coca paste and go out, and if they had been apprehended by the police, they were summarily deported. The flood became so great that the police couldn't do this anymore and still maintain any kind of credibility. So they had to start putting people in jail.

The judicial system in Bolivia is archaic, as you can imagine, not only built on the Napoleonic code, but full of corruption and inefficiencies. These folks were in jail for prolonged periods without their cases being brought to any kind of logical or legal solution. In the population we had men and women, young people, older people, some who were experimenters, some who thought it would be fun to come down and see what it was like to find some cocaine in the area of production. We had mules, paid couriers to come down and get a load and bring it back, who would do it just for the payment. Then we had hardened criminals who were trying to set up the networks. We had quite a collection.

So this became a major, major political issue which arose during the time when I was there. Just before I left, I must have been spending fully 50% of my time on this, which is, in essence, a consular protection issue. I visited all the jails, I went to see all the prisoners in jail. We had to get a second consular officer, because the poor devil who was doing the regular work in the embassy with visas and passports was unable to do this and also look after the prisoners, to the extent that we can look after prisoners.

Finally, we got a treaty negotiated, wherein for the last six months of a prison term you can be transferred back to a jail in the United States and serve out the balance of your term, if we ever got them to the point where they would convict them and give them a term. In the meantime, we were getting visits from parents, and a Committee of Concerned Parents of the Prisoners in Bolivia was formed in Washington. They had a sit-in at the Bolivian desk one evening. They were having testimony on the Hill. This thing lived with me after I left Bolivia, because I had to testify a couple of times and be beaten around the chops by senators in testimony.

Q: There's sort of a double-face on this, that no one is particularly interested at any time--and certainly today they aren't--in people who are engaged in drug trafficking or the users of it. Yet when they're abroad, there seems to be--I won't say undue sympathy, but exaggerated sympathy for the plight of people who are patently breaking the law, particularly in the drug business, which we consider, and always have considered, to be a pretty nasty thing. Did you find yourself caught in this?

STEDMAN: You do find yourself caught, and you find yourself caught in another way, too. We had been attempting to motivate the Bolivians to do a better job of policing their own country with regard to the production, the transport, the manufacturing, the consumption of drugs. If they picked up somebody and they summarily let them loose, we

would go around and chide them on this, that they weren't really vigorous enough. Then when they began to pick up American citizens, the pressure was on us to make sure that the citizen was well taken care of. If you say you only want national treatment, national treatment in a Bolivian jail is pretty horrible. So always we are espousing something better than national treatment.

Then we would get the accusations on the part of our Bolivian interlocutors, "My God, you kept telling us to do something. Now we pick up an American citizen, now you're around here telling us to take it easy." So we were sort of arguing about this. I think that it was semantic, to a large extent, and could be explained.

We had another lovely example when DEA came on the scene. DEA became fairly prominent in Bolivia when I was there. We finally got a Bolivian deported rather than fully legally extradited--deported to Miami on drug charges for some activities that he'd conducted when he'd been in the United States before. We thought the case was solved and we had the goods on him. The judge let him go, and he was back in Bolivia thumbing his nose at us. So we had this extra complication. Here's a big producing country, and we're having a hard time with U.S. bureaucracy getting anything going. We finally got something unlocked by Secretary Kissinger's visit. Then we had this business of the American citizens in jail.

I tell you, at the end of my time there, the U.S. interest in Bolivia was exclusively in the drug problem.

SCOTT E. SMITH
Project Officer, USAID
La Paz (1976-1979)

Scott E. Smith was born in Indiana but graduated from high school in Brazil. He spent three years at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and then transferred to the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC, earning a B.A. and an M.A. Mr. Smith joined USAID in 1974 and served in Bolivia, Haiti, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. He retired in May 1996 and was interviewed by W. Haven North on January 14, 1997.

SMITH: Those days, 1977-78, were the beginning of an issue which has characterized, even dominated, the AID program in Bolivia ever since, and that is the whole coca crop problem, the drug problem, cocaine from coca production, coca eradication, coca crop substitution. During the time I was there was when the first crop substitution programs were designed and put into effect. I think we were all not under any illusions that we were going to be able to find a crop that competed with coca economically. The real solution to the coca cultivation problem was going to be a combination of demand reduction, actions in the US or wherever, as well as enforcement actions there. And, of course, it was those things that were lacking. In the absence of that, the efforts to grow pineapples or citrus fruit could provide some additional income and perhaps a more diversified product mix,

but they weren't going to solve the drug problem.

Q: You did pursue crop substitutions?

SMITH: Yes. There was a strong imperative to do that. For people who were looking for alternatives in the few areas where drug enforcement was working, substitute crops did provide an alternative livelihood to them.

Q: An alternative or complement? Did they really stop?

SMITH: In many cases they probably didn't stop. It was, I think, a vehicle for getting resources devoted to development and adapting a number of crops which were suitable for growing in those areas. To that extent, it was a useful development program. But the context was the whole drug enforcement issue and the commitment of the Bolivian government to it. Several of us felt that if the drug issue was a way to get some money for development purposes for things that could be useful, then that is great. After a couple of years it became real clear that that was not the only reason for making funds available, there was expected to be some true substitution, some enforcement and the program in the late '70s began to get much more heavily criticized.

Q: What did that mean?

SMITH: It meant getting the AID program a lot more interested in, if not involved in, what was happening on the enforcement side...the military, the police and DEA kinds of activities. And, it also meant the AID program began to be expected to meet objectives that were more than just agricultural objectives, more than just development objectives, ones that were linked to the actual substitution of coca, not necessarily on a particular piece of land, but in general. And, of course, what often happened was that a particular parcel on which the coca had been destroyed may have been converted into something else, but then the next parcel down would begin to be cultivated in coca. So, there wasn't any actual decline in coca production, in fact quite the opposite. So, the standards by which our programs were judged began to change from ones that had strictly to do with the more usual development criteria, adapting of particular crops and getting people to adopt them, to a much more political agenda. And, more and more, especially after I left there, the whole crop substitution program became much more a significant feature of the AID program in Bolivia than it was in those days when it was just beginning.

Q: What were the other features of the program that we were engaged in other than the crop substitution?

SMITH: Well, there was the health, education, construction, etc.

Q: Were you involved in trying to reduce the demand for coca?

SMITH: I wasn't and I don't think AID was involved during the time I was there. I don't really know the extent that AID subsequently became involved in some of those activities

later, but political agenda is one that was just beginning to emerge in the assistance program in Bolivia in the late '70s and is one that has dominated our relationship with Bolivia pretty much since then.

Q: Oh, the drug issue. Congress got involved?

SMITH: Yes.

Q: Having to certify part of it?

SMITH: Yes. That is part of it.

Q: What were we certifying?

SMITH: The certification related to efforts by the government to eradicate or reduce the area of coca being cultivated and also steps to address and stop the transformation of the coca leaf into cocaine.

Q: How did you find working with the government on all these programs?

SMITH: It varied. In terms of the coca crop substitution programs, the part that we worked on during my time there was really more on the research and extension side. I think several people in the Bolivian government who were responsible for that also saw it, if not a windfall, then certainly something that gave them additional resources for doing research work on various crops in these particular areas. At the time I was there we really didn't work with the government on the enforcement issues.

Working with the government in general is another point I wish to make. The Carter Administration came in and was very interested in human rights and democratic governments. This also began to affect the AID program indirectly in that issues about elections and the form of Bolivia's government got introduced as criteria effecting the size of the assistance program. Bolivia was in those days a military dictatorship, but unlike most of its history, it had remained fairly stable over a period of six or seven years to that point. That stability, I thought, was beginning to pay off in terms of some of the economic goals and social development as well. But, it was very important to the US government and the Carter Administration that Latin American governments-- governments throughout the world-- become democratic. I think that that pressure and using the AID program as a tool in that pressure, was fairly significant and may have forced the Bolivian government to have presidential elections a couple of years before they were otherwise planning to do so. So, elections were held in 1978.

Q: The elections were a destabilizing factor?

SMITH: Yes. I am certain there were issues of human rights with the Banzer government. There probably was a growing involvement, which certainly became much more pronounced later, of the military with drug trafficking. All of these were important

issues, but I think that the move to elections and Bolivia's superficially symbolic return to democracy through the vehicle of elections turned out to be destabilizing. I think moving from authoritative to democratic rule in countries is not merely as simple as having elections. Just like economic development requires a nurturing process to work, political development requires a long term process that just did not seem to be recognized or acknowledged there at that time.

Q: What was your perspective from the field about what AID was trying to do, how it was being managed?

SMITH: I don't know that I had any big perspectives in terms of how AID was being managed. There was a change of administration during that time. But, I am not sure I had much of a perspective on big management issues. The agency had just gone through this PBAR exercise where it had shifted around its formats and documents for programs to unify a system of loans and grants. So, that was kind of in the digesting phase, there wasn't a lot of new work on management systems that was being done. We were trying to make the new system work, so in terms of systems and things there wasn't much turmoil in those days, although there had been earlier and would be later on. I think the major change in terms of emphasis of agency level or US level over the years was this emphasis on democratic governments and human rights that the Democratic administration brought in and then also the focus on drug issues, which was not partisan at all, but something that was part of the time.

DAVID N. GREENLEE
Political Officer
La Paz (1977-1979)

Ambassador Greenlee was born and raised in New York and educated at Yale University. After service in the Peace Corps in Bolivia and the US Army in Vietnam, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. In the course of his career the ambassador served in Peru, Bolivia (three tours), Israel, Spain and Chile, as well as in the Department of State, where he was involved in Haitian and Egyptian affairs, and at the Pentagon, where he was Political Advisor. Three of his foreign tours were as Deputy Chief of Mission. He served as United States Ambassador to Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassador Greenlee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007

Q: At that time, what was America's interest in the drug situation?

GREENLEE: This was before Bolivia moved seriously into coca/cocaine production. There was some of that, but the problem was not as grave as it would later become. Here was a country that had been on the skids for years, into which we'd poured a lot of aid. We wanted to see it develop politically, as a democracy. But Bolivia historically is the most turbulent republic in the world. It's had more changes of government in years of existence as a republic. It was almost a laboratory for political theorists. People wanted to

see democracy work, but democracy was also seen as instrument for consolidating power and a cover for abusing it. Our main interest was trying to stabilize the country and help it become more viable. In the late 1970's, the anti-drug effort was secondary.

HOWARD L. STEELE
Coca Crop Substitution Program
Bolivia (1977-1980)

Dr. Howard L. Steele was born in Pennsylvania and graduated from both Washington and Lee University and Penn State University. Assignments abroad have included Brazil, Guatemala, Bolivia, Honduras and Sri Lanka. Dr. Steele was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: You were there from when to when?

STEELE: From October 1977 until the late summer of 1980. I was asked to head up a program which they called Coca Crop Substitution in the Coca Zones of the Yungas and the Chapara. As soon as I got there, I said (and I was not real popular with the Drug Enforcement Agency), "Hey, there is no true substitute for coca either technologically or economically unless it's opium poppies for heroin, so let's be realistic about this." So we renamed the project Diversification in Coca Zones. We started to bring in specialists to find out if those farmers could produce in the jungle of the Chapara and up in the Yungas in the valleys things like black tea, bananas, pork operations, other commodities. We started by working with the groups of peasant farmers called sindicatos. I had 12 University of Florida professors there working with these sindicatos, (syndicates, of campesinos or peasant farmers). We started finding out what their needs were. They needed a school or a gravel road or this, wanted that. So, we started trying to win over their confidence and their loyalty by doing things for them.

Well, the drug mafia didn't like that very well. So, they were paying these poor campesinos \$100 for a hundred kilogram bag of dried leaves out on the highway out of which they would make a kilogram of pure cocaine hydrochloride. Cut to ten percent purity at this time, the finished product would sell from \$250-500,000. So, as soon as we started making a little progress with some of these syndicates and they wanted to move away from the production of coca for cocaine, the mafia doubled the price to \$400 without significantly hurting their marketing margin at all. It wasn't all pure profit. They had to pay off the police. They had to pay the "human mules" to smuggle "bricks of cocaine." They had some transportation problems, etc. But, man, what a powerful thing that was.

Q: Were you under threat?

STEELE: Absolutely. At first, until we started really making inroads, it wasn't serious. They just doubled the price and then they'd try and get these farmers not to cooperate with us. Some would pull away. But then as time went on, they started flattening the tires of our Florida team's vehicles, or the group of Bolivians that we had organized

called Prodes (Project for the Development of the Yungas/Chapare). We had a big group of Bolivians that were working for Prodes. I had imported 70-some vehicles, pickup trucks and jeeps and what have you, motorcycles, too. Well, then they started pulling distributor caps. Finally they started shooting. That phase of my career ended with the cocaine coup d'état of General Garcia Mesa in Bolivia in the summer of 1980.

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Q: By this time had the diversification program pretty well broken down because of the new president?

STEELE: Yes. One of the things that I disagreed with was putting the monkey on the back of the poor little campesino. I never agreed with the DEA's idea of going in there and burning those fields up, poisoning them. That's not the way. The only way you're going to stop this nonsense is 1) education, getting the demand down. That's extremely important and difficult, I know that. The other thing is, you interdict the central marketplace. You go after the mafia. But you've got to have a companion program in place that you give those farmers alternatives so they can make a living. They're not going to make as much money perhaps as they did growing coca leaves. But a lot of them pleaded to us that they wanted chocolate beans, cacao. They said, "The mafia steals our bananas and oranges. Yes, they pay us for the coca, but they make us produce coca. They bring in the seed. We don't do record keeping. We don't know what kind of charges they're charging us for it. But we don't like to be in their tentacles." It wasn't every one of these groups, but we ran into a lot of them that were being discriminated against. So, I suggested that if you wanted to do this thing right, you interdict the central market at the same time we have these alternatives. We have rooms full of options for those farmers that would have worked. But first you had to get the truckers independent. That was another thing the mafia did. They controlled all the truckers, and a lot of policemen and a lot of military.

ALEXANDER F. WATSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
La Paz (1979-1981)

Ambassador Alexander Watson was born and raised in Massachusetts and was educated at Harvard and Wisconsin Universities. In 1962 he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to the Dominican Republic, the

beginning of an impressive career specializing in Latin American Affairs. His other overseas posts include Spain, Brazil, Bolivia and Colombia, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter three countries. He had several Washington assignments, the last being Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. From 1986 to 1989 he served as United States Ambassador to Peru. Ambassador Watson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Could we talk just a bit about the drug side? When you were pulling out the DEA, I mean, well, before the DEA went out, what were we doing?

WATSON: Well, let's go back. This is a time when the cocaine boom was just beginning in the late '70s and the early '80s. The U.S. government was already wrestling with how to deal with this down in Colombia and Bolivia and Peru. At that point Bolivia, I think, if I recall correctly, grew about half of the coca that was being converted into cocaine in the world, largely in a valley south of Santa Cruz. Yet, the coca leaf is a traditional product there. It is used by indigenous people, from predecessors of the Incas, who chew it and even today take a little coca leaf or two, put some lime in it, chew it up—it's supposed to be good against cold and against hunger and is a mild stimulant. So, you had traditional culture for which coca leaves were really important. Then you had the coca that was being converted into cocaine base paste and then base and then you got _____. It was a booming industry centered in Santa Cruz. There were several major players. One that I remember was Arce Gomez, a relative of Roberto Suarez by the way, but a lot of people are relatives in Bolivia and it doesn't mean anything in terms of their guilt by association here.

Some of these people seemed to have their own capacity to refine all the way down to hydrochloride and move the cocaine out to Europe and the U.S. one way or another. Others were clearly providing the paste or maybe something base for Colombians. They'd move out into Colombia. My conclusion, in retrospect, was that the Colombians probably ran almost everything, one way or the other. What they didn't run, they tolerated. There were a couple of occasions where Bolivians would take action and they would be punished by the Colombians. We had lots and lots of embassy efforts engaged also, and an incipient effort to try to eradicate the cultivation of coca. There was an elaborate scheme to try to distinguish between coca that could be legitimately sold at markets for legitimate use by the local population and other people there. We tried to estimate how much that should be and where it could be sold and how it could be sold and everything else, and we were working with various government agencies to deal with this. They had me involved in it—and DEA and the State Department's narcotics folks and, of course, the station. We were all in this, the political side; everybody was trying to analyze this. Meanwhile of course, the narcotics industry was booming. The cocaine industry was booming and its tentacles were getting deeper and deeper into the political tissue of the country. It was very difficult to know who had been bought off, who was not, who was on what side, who was on whose payroll, what police were where. These seemed to flip very quickly and to try to stop it, a kind of a situation where, you know, as good as we are, we are still foreigners trying to get a glimpse of what's going on. It's very

complicated and fast moving set of circumstances in a foreign country. We spent lots of time on it. I as deputy chief of mission was the narcotics coordinator so I was in the middle of all this stuff trying to put all these pieces together and make some sense and develop some policy recommendations. Sure, you could have argued when the time came, you know, this has got to be stopped what you are doing as you started, but there was no way we were going to be able to have a cooperative _____ is doing in narcotics when these thugs came into power. I had no problem in having the State Department narcotics assistance unit, _____ way, way down. There was no way we were doing collaborative work and the eradication of crops and things like that with these people at this time, but I did think that it was good to have a couple of DEA people because they serve as managing the intelligence operations to some extent. I thought that was important to have to know what the hell was going on when this new bunch came in, but they overturned my recommendation. So I ended up having to act like a DEA case officer, a special agent. That caused the station to put people to work on this.

Q: Wasn't this now totally new for the station, looking at cocaine as opposed to, not just...

WATSON: Absolutely. And it was a very difficult migration, if you will, or metamorphosis for the agency, who was desperately afraid of getting involved with this because of the fear, a perfectly legitimate one, that paying sources of information that would be paying into people who were involved in narcotics and no one wanted to be accused of giving money to narcotics traffickers. That was very difficult, so it was agreed to which they could become in those days to become really effective and penetrating was very limited, but what they could do was find sources that were perhaps not directly involved themselves, but who were knowledgeable about what we were doing and that was what they were trying to do.

Q: Did you feel... were we able to do anything interdict by what we were able to, I mean at some point either in Brazil or in Colombia or anything like that, or was it just really...

WATSON: No, I think we had some success in Bolivia, even in those days. I think that our success was less than the growth rate of the industry, but we made some difference. I did try and this is an area that really frustrated me. I did try very hard to get people in our embassy in Colombia and the State Department out of this to focus on the link between Colombia and Bolivia and to get information from Bolivia to Colombia about flights and stuff in a way that could be used and I failed at that. I'm not quite sure why anymore; I'm trying to remember. I thought here was something that the great bulk of the Bolivian stuff was being moved north via other places in Colombia. You have to realize I guess everywhere it was just beginning to come to grips with this phenomenon and hadn't quite figured out how to deal with all of it.

Q: Yes, well, you must have gone through a very difficult period about when the Reagan administration came in about you know, not just professionally I mean yourself, is this new administration going to come in and somehow play nice to this regime?

WATSON: Yes, that was the concern that we had and we had reason to think that given what the Helms people had done and the importance of the Helms people and the very conservative group, this Santa Fe group we thought was going to have on the policy for Latin America in general. My job wasn't to take a partisan political side. My job was to point out to these guys in whatever way that I could that they'd listen to, that the last thing a brand new administration of the United States or whatever political persuasion, what you need to do is to get in bed with these drug trafficking, human rights violating, anti-democratic slime balls. That was my only message. For God's sake, don't; pay attention to this place, they'll pay attention to important places like Brazil, Mexico and Argentina. For heaven's sake, don't get sucked in because you'll damage everything you do in Latin America. That was finally the message.

Q: You left Bolivia when?

WATSON: September, I think it was the 4th, 1981.

WILLIAM T. PRYCE
Charge d'Affaires/Deputy Chief of Mission
La Paz (1981-1982)

Born in California and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Pryce was educated at Wesleyan University and the Fletcher School of Tufts University. After service in the US Navy he worked briefly for the Department of Commerce before joining the Foreign Service in 1958. Though primarily a Latin America specialist, Mr. Pryce also served in Moscow. His Latin America assignments include Mexico, Panama, Guatemala, Bolivia and Honduras, where he was Ambassador from 1992-1996. Ambassador Pryce was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: What about dealing with the drug problem, were we working with crop substitution or something?

PRYCE: We were. We were working with crop substitution and with crop eradication. We were trying to set goals as I mentioned with considerable aid in both economic and military. It was basically trying to reduce the supply with only marginal success. It's a tremendous problem. The same problems then were is it supply or is it demand? How do you measure where the problems are? The Bolivians cooperated with us; the government cooperated with us.

PRYCE: The Bolivians are wonderful people and the challenges were largely in terms of trying to help devise an anti-narcotics theme. It's funny how things don't change that much. One of the programs we had going there was a crop substitution program: alternate the crops, trying to measure the progress they made in destroying cocaine areas to what our targets were and measuring our money out; should we give money to the army, under what conditions, how much?

Q: What about dealing with the drug problem, were we working with crop substitution or something?

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I remember going out into the boonies and talking to individual peasants trying to get a feel for what the cocoa farmers or the farmers in the cocoa areas were feeling. Most of them really didn't want to be involved in growing cocoa. They understood the dangers inherent in cocaine production and they understand the damage that was being done in the United States but they also wanted to make a living. I remember them telling us that, "Look we would rather be growing other crops if we had a market for them." It is a problem that we are still faced with today.

Q: Did we have any particular issues with Bolivia other than sort of the crop business?

PRYCE: I think our main issue, as I remember it, was narcotics. We had a very cooperative relationship with them in terms of voting in the UN. We were able to get them to vote with us on a number of issues where it was very useful. I think we had some problems in terms of our aid loads. A lot of it was agricultural support and there were the usual problems. Our biggest single objective was to try to decrease the amount of cocaine that was going from Bolivia to Colombia.

Q: Was violence a factor?

PRYCE: It was a factor though certainly not like in Colombia, no. It certainly was not a factor like it was earlier in Guatemala in terms of political violence. There was some violence but it was not a major problem except in the actual areas where the....

Q: It didn't seem to go as septic as it did in Colombia.

PRYCE: No, no. I began to say, speaking of violence, you remember back in your life at times when you felt danger. I spent three-and-a-half years in the navy and I was involved in a collision at sea and I never felt the danger that I felt at one point in an anti-narcotics operation. In order to provide moral support to the head of the Bolivian anti-narcotics unit, we were involved in a raid during the time of a congressional staff visit to Bolivia. We had taken these people down to where the narcotics were being grown. It was to Santa Cruz which is the airport. We said, "Okay, we'll have part of the congressional delegation with staff people and we'll go out and visit the crop substitution. We discovered a still - basically a place where cocaine was manufactured - and we're going to show you how we knock these things down." They always run when you have people that go in on them. This is a ragtag bunch of people. I remember being in this helicopter

with people with submachine guns hanging on the outside of the helicopter. We would take off. They were so excited that they had found this place and they found it quickly enough that the narcotics spies would not be able to tip them off. We swoop in on this place and instead of running they started shooting at us. I'll never forget it. There is nothing you can do. You are coming down, you feel very vulnerable when these shots come whizzing by. Thank god they only shot about four or five times and then they did what they were supposed to do, they ran. I must say that was not in my job description. It is one of those experiences that I'll never forget. In spite of what Winston Churchill says, it was not an exhilarating experience to be shot at.

CHARLOTTE ROE
Political/Labor Officer
La Paz (1983-1985)

Ms. Roe was born and raised in New York State and educated at the University of Colorado, the Sorbonne and Ohio State University. During and after her university training she was involved in political and labor activities. In 1983 she joined the Foreign Service. In the course of her career with the State Department, Ms. Roe served in La Paz, Santiago, Tel Aviv, Budapest and Bogotá, primarily in the political and labor fields. In Washington, she served on the US Mission to the OAS and in the International Organizations and Environmental and Scientific Affairs Bureaus. Ms. Roe was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Did this dicey situation affect your work or routines?

ROE: I never felt threatened, but friends in the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) encouraged me to practice target shooting at their firing range, and I did. I kept a .38 revolver at home. I didn't take a gun to Chile, because it never made me feel safer.

Q: The Chapare being—

ROE: Chapare is a semitropical province north of Cochabamba that was a prime target for coca eradication. It has around 35,000 inhabitants, nearly all farmers.

Q: Miners and people in the altiplano chewed coca to be able to work, didn't they?

ROE: Yes; coca is a traditional crop. Miners and other highlanders have used it for centuries for religious purposes and health reasons. The plant helps them withstand harsh, cold conditions and to resist hunger. It's a natural stimulus that also alleviates stomach problems. It's an excellent tea. When I went down into the Siglo XX mine, it was one of the first times a woman had been allowed to enter the mine shafts. I saw effigies to the gods of the underworld. People leave offerings of coca to ask for the deities' protection against cave-ins.

Q: One thinks of Colombia where the drug lords don't take prisoners. Had that happened in Bolivia?

ROE: It's a danger wherever big drug money accumulates. But Bolivia was a raw materials venue, not a cocaine supplier like Colombia or Mexico. There were no factories to convert coca into cocaine. The eastern part of Bolivia in the Beni and other flatlands is studded with runways for the illicit export of coca.

EDWARD M. ROWELL
Ambassador
Bolivia (1985-1988)

Ambassador Edward M. Rowell was born in Oakland, California in 1931. He obtained a B.A. from Yale University. In addition to Luxembourg, Ambassador Rowell served in Recife, Curitiba, Buenos Aires, Tegucigalpa, Lisbon, La Paz, and Washington, DC. He retired in August, 1994 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 10, 1995.

Q: I think that you've already answered this question in large part. Most new chiefs of mission have a list of problems to try to solve or do something about. When you went to Bolivia, what was your agenda?

ROWELL: At the time of my confirmation Bolivia was having an election. This was at the end of a period which really began in the late 1970's and continued through the early 1980's. There had been a series of governments that had taken office through extra-constitutional means -- in other words, coups d'état. At one stage there had been a military officer in government who was notoriously involved in the drug traffic. That person had been succeeded by a President who was a member of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement of Bolivia [MNR], a socialist party affiliated with the Socialist International. The MNR had moved more closely toward constitutional government, including the holding of elections.

My agenda was to reaffirm democratic, constitutional government; to support Paz Estenssoro in implementing his platform and to work with Bolivia to straighten out its economy, which was a disaster; and to do everything possible to cut back on the production of coca leaves and cocaine precursor products, as well as everything I could to break up drug trafficking. The country's disastrous economy was propelling more and more of its citizens to become associated with the drug traffic -- just in order to survive economically. That was a big enough agenda for any mission.

Q: Obviously, the first priority on your time there was the drug situation. What was it when you arrived, and what could we do...?

ROWELL: Coca growing was spreading rapidly. There is a whole bunch of myths in terms of coca and cocaine economics. For example, we were assuming that the production

coefficients for coca and cocaine which we had discovered in Peru were valid also for Bolivia. But it turned out that Bolivia was different. It was less than half as efficient as Peru in terms of cocaine output per hectare of coca leaf. It also had some vulnerabilities in terms of production and transport that Peru didn't have. So we made some startling discoveries.

However, the first effort was to get Bolivia to pass a law that would make coca growing illegal -- or, if not wholly illegal, then substantially illegal--so that we would have a legal basis for trying to reduce coca production. We tried to get Bolivia to upgrade its anti-drug police efforts and operations against drug laboratories. We sought to reduce the effectiveness of the drug trafficking community, particularly in terms of its ability to corrupt police authorities and other officials. And, overall, to reduce the flow of drug-related products from Bolivia. The products were mostly going to Colombia for final processing and then on to the US. However, a lot of product was also going to other Latin American countries and starting to flow to Europe.

Q: Let's stop at this point. The next time we get together we still will be reviewing your time in Bolivia, 1985-1988. You've just finished explaining what the status of the drug traffic was. So we'll talk about what we were doing at that time to deal with it. One of the questions I do want to ask you is this. You said that we were assuming that what was happening in Peru in terms of coca cultivation and all of that was the same in Bolivia. We can talk about what you found that was different in Bolivia and then talk about efforts we were making in that direction. We've already talked about the economic situation.

Q: This is March 4, 1996. Ed, do you want to continue where we were in our previous session?

ROWELL: Yes. The critical intelligence on what made Bolivia different from Peru was produced by the Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA] through confidential informants that they had developed. They deserve an enormous amount of credit in this respect. First of all, we found that the coefficients of production for converting coca leaves to cocaine were half as much in Bolivia as they were in Peru. I don't know why. I don't know whether it was the type of leaf or the primitive way in which they extracted the alkaloid from those leaves -- although I imagine that the initial extraction process it was pretty primitive in Peru as well. Whatever the reason, the process of extraction of the alkaloid was only half as efficient in Bolivia.

Secondly, we were able to confirm that the people growing the leaf were very poor and were doing it simply to get money and to survive. There was a down side to that. I recall one set of remote mountain villages in a part of Bolivia that has always relied on barter trade and still does today. The village agreed to eradicate all of its food and fiber crops and to plant coca. They harvested the coca leaf. The drug traffickers bought the leaf. Then, when the village went to neighboring villages to buy food, the neighboring villages said, "We'll be glad to sell you the food we always sell you. Will you please give us the fibers and foods that you used to give us?" The people from the first village said, "Well, we don't have that, but we have all of this money, and we'll give you a lot of money." In that

region people said, "We can't eat money. Sorry. When you can bring us some goods, we'll trade."

This village was sufficiently remote that going down to the Lake Titicaca region to buy food, or something like that, involved a major trek. It was very difficult, and they didn't have much transport. A man I know, who was affiliated with the United Nations, reported that within three years of the time the village started growing coca serious malnutrition was observed among children and child mortality more than doubled. This was not from abusing drugs but from displacing itself from barter trade in an area that only had a barter economy. This was an interesting development.

We discovered that, for the most part, the poor people growing the coca leaf were self-financed. That is, they would plant the leaf and would grow subsistence crops between the rows of coca plants. When they harvested the coca leaf, they would either process it themselves with chemicals that they obtained on a loan basis or they would sell it to a person who would process it. However, they received no cash compensation for their product until their product, which was called coca paste [pasta de coca], a precursor product, cocaine sulfide, had been converted into cocaine and marketed in the US. Or elsewhere, and the money had been physically flown back to Bolivia. So from the time that they delivered the coca leaf until they got their money was sometimes four months. From the time that they planted the coca plant to the time that they had their first full harvest, was 24 months. This represented an enormous investment for somebody who has little or no capital. They invested their time and a lot of sweat.

We also found that there was an enormous vulnerability. We had been told and convinced in Peru that if you attempted to destroy coca by whacking it off at the stem where the plant comes out of the ground, it would grow back. However, in fact, if you whack the plant off reasonably close to the ground, it does not grow back. It has to be recultivated from seeds. Again, that was new information.

Q: That gave you a two-year hiatus.

ROWELL: It gave us another destruction method, because, based on what we thought we had learned in Peru, we were having to figure out ways to use chemicals to destroy the coca which would simultaneously destroy all of the subsistence crops nearby; or ways to bring in large plows to turnover the land and plow under the coca in areas where you couldn't get the machinery in. The problems of destruction, if you couldn't just cut it down, were enormous. This had been a major inhibiting factor in putting together programs.

By the time I had spent three or four months in Bolivia, it was obvious to me that we were doing nothing effective about coca leaf production. It was equally obvious that Bolivian politicians were reluctant to alienate the peasant population that was growing the coca. They depended on them for votes. I'm not talking here about drug money and not talking here about bribes by kingpins of the narcotics traffic from Medellin Colombia. I'm talking about politicians who were elected by those people out there in the fields.

I decided to develop a strategy that involved an early shock and a longer term, follow-on program to try to get the peasants to give up coca growing and to go into some kind of legitimate crops. I asked my Army Attaché, who was a veteran helicopter pilot with service in Vietnam, to draw up a plan that I could propose to the Southern Command [SOUTHCOM -- the US Theater military command in Panama] and to Washington to bring in helicopters. We could either lend them to the Bolivian Air Force for the Bolivian Air Force to fly or have the US Army fly them at first.

The idea was to ferry the Bolivian Anti-Drug Police out into the jungle to destroy laboratories that we might find. We had two principal ways of finding them. One was information from confidential informants. Another was through aerial surveys using various high tech devices to see through the jungle canopy of trees.

There was a mythology in Bolivia that coca arrived from the Sun God and that the Native Indian population would always have to have its coca, because this was a sort of religious rite, and so forth. In fact, I later discovered that that was a myth, too. Coca had been used by the Inca tribe as a favor bestowed on certain, favorite people, who, in turn, bestowed it on other, favored people. It was essentially a device to help control people. When the Spaniards arrived in Bolivia in the early 16th century, they defeated the Inca and discovered coca. They put it to work by using it on the native population, whom they put into forced labor in the silver mines. This was done so that they could withstand the cold outside, the heat inside the mines, and the hunger in their bellies -- not notice their discomforts and keep on working, producing silver and tin. So coca was essentially a drug for enslavement.

Q: We're talking about the opiate of the masses, aren't we?

ROWELL: Well, I hate to say that. Although people used coca, they used it for quasi-medicinal purposes in the sense that they used it to alleviate physical pain and hunger. That makes it different from the opiate of the masses. It was not used in the way that alcohol is used, for example. So it was very different. But that also puts a different caste on it for political purposes, because once you manage to sweep away the mythology and you understand that coca was an enslaving device, then it becomes easier to attack it.

So we put together a program which involved trying to persuade the Bolivians to pass an anti-coca law, have AID [Agency for International Development] put together a program that would provide carrots incentives to the peasants, or campesinos, if they would give up growing coca, as well as transition assistance if they would give up coca. I regard transition assistance as not a motivator but a facilitator. Obviously, our Public Affairs Office had to support the programs that we developed and that we were negotiating with the Bolivian Government. We used the Army Attaché and the Military Assistance offices to help put together the interdiction program. First, this involved bringing in US Army helicopters in an operation called Blast Furnace. Secondly, we planned to bring in helicopters provided by funds from the State Department's anti-narcotics program that were transferred on a long-term loan basis to the Bolivian Air Force. Some people

suggested giving these helicopters to the Bolivian Air Force. I insisted that they be placed strictly on loan so that if, for some reason, the program came apart, lost efficiency, or whatever, we could pull the helicopters back and put them somewhere else where they'd be doing us more good.

What other agencies were there? We used all of our intelligence assets in the program.

Q: Had the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] been involved in this? The reason I ask this is that, from time to time, and particularly with the end of the Cold War, which hadn't happened yet, there was a lot of thought, to my knowledge, that CIA would have to concentrate on terrorism and drug trafficking. Obviously, the Cold War had not played itself out as yet in Latin America.

ROWELL: The CIA certainly contributed what it could in helping to identify drug traffickers and elements of the drug traffic that might have vulnerabilities that we might exploit. There was that sort of thing. However, they, as was the case with all of us, were very, very careful, whenever a trafficking operation was discovered that might eventually lead to a prosecution, to give it to the DEA, as a law enforcement agency. So if we ever had to prosecute somebody in US Courts, we would not get into that awful bind of having things there which couldn't be turned over to the prosecution because, somehow or other, they had been discovered by CIA. Everybody understood the rules. We followed them religiously so as not to complicate any potential future prosecution.

Now, CIA could also use some technical resources to help us locate the laboratories in the jungle so the Bolivian Anti-Drug Police could attack them. CIA worked very hard on this.

Q: We have the example of Colombia today, which is so permeated with drug money and corruption, from President Ernesto Samper on down. We're having a terrible problem with it. Could you talk a little bit about the Bolivian Government as far as corruption within it is concerned?

ROWELL: I'll talk about the corruption problem a little bit later. Let me finish this comment about the drug laboratories. The drug kingpins operating out of Colombia, and they really were kingpins of the drug traffic, basically used Bolivia as a reserve supply source for coca paste, the precursor substance for producing cocaine. Their primary sources were in Peru, Colombia, and, to a small extent, in Brazil and Ecuador. However, the primary sources were Peru and Colombia. The Bolivian supply of coca paste was there in case one of their other sources suffered a catastrophe. It also was intended to keep down the price of coca paste and to keep the people growing the coca in Peru and Colombia from being able to jack up the price. So demand for coca paste in Bolivia fluctuated. If things were going very well in Colombia and Peru and the traffickers were moving all of the coca paste that they could make, then demand in Bolivia would slacken. When demand was stronger than supply elsewhere, then the price would strengthen.

I received word from Washington in June, 1986, that the project that I had submitted on January 1, 1986, was approved and that we were to launch it in two weeks. That was two weeks to get Bolivian government consent, brief appropriate authorities, bring in people and equipment from SOUTHCOM, establish operating bases. That was the State Department. I was ready only because Gen Galvin and I had been talking to each other regularly and he had known what was happening in Washington.

So we launched the program. I might say that each of these programs, as we attempted to implement them, was carried out with the full knowledge and consent of the Bolivian Government, including the President of Bolivia, with whom I cleared the activities personally prior to initiating them. He was the first person I approached to get permission for Operation Blast Furnace. He gave us his solid support. Then I followed up with the Bolivian Ministries that would be involved, Defense and Interior. We had luck in getting the permission on such short notice. The one person who might have blocked it, Planning Minister Sanchez de Lozada, was in a Paris hospital recovering from an emergency appendectomy. He feared that if we suddenly cut off the flow of drug money, his efforts to restore the economy -- and to make it capable of prospering without drugs -- would fail. I want to emphasize that his concerns were macroeconomic. He was no friend of drug traffickers.

We brought in US Army helicopters initially for a period of 120 days until State Department helicopters could be brought in and loaned to the Bolivian Air Force, and the Bolivian Air Force could fly them instead of having Americans flying them. Our the initial strike destroyed a big coca processing laboratory. I don't remember how many hundreds of kilos of coca paste were destroyed, but it was a lot. Then two dry holes followed it. Then we destroyed a smaller sized laboratory. Then there was a string of dry holes for about a week and a half.

Q: You might explain what a dry hole is.

ROWELL: A dry hole is a site that we attacked thinking that there was a coca lab there, but which turned out to have nothing significant on the ground when our forces arrived there. Most of the dry holes were laboratories from which the equipment and chemicals had been removed.

As we went through this process, incidentally, we discovered something else about the coca paste laboratories. At one stage in the process of making cocaine, they dried the coca paste into a powder to grind it up. The drying process requires heat, and you can spot the heat with infrared equipment from anywhere and go after it. To avoid detection, then, the laboratories stayed turned off until they had a sufficient amount of product to operate at peak efficiency. So, typically, a laboratory in the jungle might be turned off for two or three months and then would run full blast for three weeks. Then it would go off again. Microwave ovens were a problem. It used to be that the coca laboratories would have to use an ordinary oven. Generally, they would be electric ovens, powered by portable generators, which they bought in Brazil. Then microwave ovens came along. Microwaves put out substantially less heat that could be observed from a

distance. And they are so cheap. They were as cheap as regular ovens, for all practical purposes. As we destroyed the regular ovens, they were replaced by microwave ovens, which were much harder to spot. So technology complicated our lives.

Something we always suspected, and which we were later able to confirm, was that the drug traffickers who were operating airplanes flying between Colombia and Bolivia had very sophisticated communications systems. They used these systems when they were flying the coca paste out and the money in. They monitored all of the radio communications that were in the air -- ours, the Bolivian Government's -- everything. They monitored it all.

So the Bolivian Anti-Drug Police had to go in quietly. We bought a bunch of inflatable rafts because the northern part of Bolivia is full of rivers in the jungle area. That's where the labs were. So the helicopters would go in. The Bolivian Police would jump out, and the helicopters would immediately withdraw to a distance that we regarded as safe. They would wait there until they received a signal to come back to recover the Bolivian Police. The Bolivian Police were accompanied by DEA agents to provide technical guidance. If they could walk through the trees to the lab target, that was fine. If the lab was on a river, which was often the case, they would inflate the rafts and go down as close as they could, sneak in, and conduct the raid. Carrying stuff out was too difficult, so they destroyed everything that they found after taking photos and making a rough written inventory. If they could capture somebody who was working there, they would interrogate the person.

Operations of this kind had a serious effect on the financial return to the peasants who grew coca. Remember, all of that coca paste that the Bolivian Anti-Drug Police destroyed at these labs had been produced at the expense of the peasants. When the paste was destroyed, no money came from it, and the peasants weren't paid.

Destroying functioning labs had to be useful, we thought. But how long would it take to replace them? Maybe two to three weeks -- no time at all, since the drug traffickers had the money to buy the gear. So it was an unending process.

We brought in the State Department helicopters, we lent them to the Bolivian Air Force, and we entered into a contract with the Bell Helicopter Company to have civilian American-managed maintenance and support so that the helicopters would continue to be safe to fly. The DEA people worked very closely with the helicopter unit to protect the Bolivian Air Force people from drug abuse -- that is, from being suborned by the drug traffickers.

I want to emphasize something else here. The Bolivian Armed Forces were determined to stay out of the anti-drug business. They had had a very bad time during the early 1980's when a general, who had later become President of Bolivia, was implicated in the drug traffic. This involvement in the drug traffic had corrupted the armed forces. It had hurt internal discipline and unity in the armed forces. In effect, it was tearing apart an institution that meant a great deal to the people who were in it. They said that the problem

was that they had let the armed forces get involved in the drug traffic. They didn't want to have any part of being in the anti-drug effort.

So, to protect them, we never told the Bolivian pilots where they were going to fly until they had been in the air for some time. After the US Army helicopters had been withdrawn, every one of the State Department helicopters that had been provided to the Bolivian Air Force had a DEA agent on board. The DEA agents knew where they were going and had a route plotted out. Typically, the initial heading had nothing to do with the ultimate destination.

Because of the way the drug money flowed, we discovered that if we could interrupt the operations of the small aircraft that were hauling cash back into Bolivia, that really made a mess, and was a loss to the campesinos who produced the coca. They operated on a cash basis. So we tried to interdict these pressure points. AID [Agency for International Development] offered alternative crops to the peasants, technical advice, and fertilizers. We set up a nursery in the main valley where the largest amount of coca was being grown. We had on display all of the plants which the peasants would be given to grow substitute crops, with technicians there to tell them exactly how to work with them.

Then we set up a program to help in the establishment of health clinics and schools and to help to provide safe water and decent roads in the coca growing area. But these services were to be delivered only if the campesinos first destroyed the coca plantations. Of course, we had to persuade campesinos -- whose long experiences with government had taught them to disbelieve all government promises -- that we really could and would deliver the promised services if they would destroy their coca plants. For example, we would put some equipment at the edge of the valley, but it didn't operate until the farmers started to chop down their coca. If we didn't see the coca being destroyed in a given area, there would be no school, no health clinic, no safe water, and no roads. If all of the farmers in a given area cooperated in destroying their coca, they got the whole works. They either got everything or they didn't get anything. However, the ability to deliver was physically placed where they could see it.

The Bolivian Government had said that they would pay the farmers for cutting down the coca. Payment was intended partly to provide capital to tide them over until an alternative legitimate crop could start producing returns. Our government said that paying the campesinos amounted to paying for sin and wouldn't have anything to do with it. The Bolivian Government, on its side, said that it was going to take its own resources and pay the farmers to destroy their coca plants. I had a war with Washington over that because they wanted to stop the whole program. I told the Washington agencies that they were crazy. The elected, Bolivian Government was trying to get their people out of the one cash crop [i. e., coca] that provided the farmer with a reasonable assurance that he would have an income. There were no other crops in Bolivia that provided that degree of assurance. I said that asserting overriding problems of sin and evil in Washington wasn't going to stop the production of coca in Bolivia.

Anyhow, the Bolivian Government did send people down to coca growing areas with the

money to pay the peasants to stop growing coca. They would set up tables in the open fields and say to the peasants, "Here's the money" if you stop growing coca. Obviously, they had armed guards around them. Survey engineers would also be on hand. If a farmer said, "I think that I am interested," the survey engineer could go out with the farmer. The farmer would say, "This is my crop and this is my land." The survey engineer would measure it and certify that there was so much land involved. The farmers were paid by the hectare for chopping down the coca. The engineer would say, "Well, when the coca is cut down, call me back." The peasants would cut it down, the survey engineer would go back and say, "Yes, it's been cut down." The farmer would go back to the table and get his money.

We had problems because the Bolivian Government was convinced that perhaps one-third of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) depended on the cash arriving in the drug trafficker aircraft. I estimated that not more than half of the total economy was in the money economy. The rest of the economy involved the use of barter arrangements. If one-third of the money economy was drug-dependent, that represented one-sixth of the GDP, still a hefty share. The Bolivian Government was going through a terrible time, fiscally and financially. They were afraid that everything that they were trying to do restore economic health, a market-based economy and a strong legitimate private sector would collapse if we succeeded in eradicating the production of coca.

So the Economic Section of the Embassy worked closely with the World Bank, the IMF [International Monetary Fund], the Inter-American Development Bank [IDB], and the Bolivian Government itself to track the fiscal health of the money economy to try to make sure that it didn't collapse.

The Political Section worked closely with all of its contacts to encourage passage of a coca eradication law. The Bolivian Congress passed such a law.

ROWELL: Virtually everybody in the Embassy was engaged in the anti-coca effort. This was a highly coordinated effort.

How successful was it? We successfully encouraged the Bolivian Congress to pass the anti-coca law. We slowed down and, for a period, stopped, the increase in acreage planted to coca. But, for every hectare that was cut down, another hectare was planted to coca somewhere else, so we didn't get very far on that. We were able substantially to increase the risk of growing coca. That meant that the drug traffickers had to pay a little bit more for it than they had been accustomed to paying -- but not enough to make a huge difference. We persuaded the professional and upper classes of Bolivia that they were paying a horrible social price by having drug production in their country. They were in a period of denial, and we broke through that. They understood that their kids were being destroyed. They understood that there were young children -- particularly boys -- being abandoned all over the country, who were then being turned into permanent social problems.

These boys would be picked up by people who would hire them to stomp on coca leaves

in maceration pits where the alkaloid was leached from the leaves. The boys would do it in their bare feet. They were promised pay, but the pay they were given was a coca paste cigarette. In theory, they could go off, sell these things, and have some money. In fact, they just smoked the stuff. The material used to leach the alkaloids was any petroleum-based solvent. The preferred solvent was kerosene, but you could use gasoline. Sometimes, when kerosene was in short supply, they used leaded gasoline. Then, when the boys smoked this coca paste cigarette, they also inhaled lead, which makes a mess of the nervous system. They were getting hundreds of kids, ranging in age from 8 to 12, stomping the coca leaves. Within six months they were like zombies. They couldn't work, and they wouldn't die. This was a permanent, social sore. It was just horrible. Bolivia awoke to what that danger meant, and there was a real turn around in the attitudes of Bolivian professional and upper class people.

However, all of our efforts didn't affect the street price of cocaine in the US. They didn't really affect the total flow of drugs to the US. So that's the way it is. I drew my own sense of satisfaction from knowing that the Bolivians themselves are sufficiently alarmed that maybe we would save a lot of children. But I didn't kid myself about having changed the US and the drug problem in the US. That sense was a disappointment.

Q: How did you feel about the fact that, despite our having made this great effort, we were probably THE major market for cocaine. In many ways the real failure is that we have not been able to control our own society. Here you were, asking another country to try to help us help our problem.

ROWELL: It's never bothered me to ask for help. I don't feel ashamed to ask for help from anyone who can give it to me. I don't think that the US should be ashamed to ask for help from a poor Bolivian Indian, if that's what it comes to. If the US can pay for the help, I think that the US should do so -- even more so, if the US can give some real, human help in return. That's the way people should behave toward each other. People should treat each other with dignity. It doesn't make any difference if one person has no shoes, and the other one is wearing patent leather. They might both be very smart. They might live in different circumstances, but they're going to have to make do as well as they can, given their relative situations.

Q: This would apply in any country, but in Bolivia I think that it would be particularly up to you. We were doing everything we could to defeat the drug traffic. We understood the political ramifications locally about the coca growers and all of that. However, in the United States a major crop that we sell is deadly. And that is tobacco. Yet one of the reasons that we continue to produce and market tobacco, both internally and in terms of exports, is the fact that the tobacco lobby is so powerful. Did you ever give any particular thought to this particular subject?

ROWELL: Yes. I thought about it but I never had to deal with it professionally. I was never at a post or in a place where, somehow or another, American tobacco exporters were suffering because of something that would require US Government intervention. In fact, except for my service in Western Europe, I was never in a place that didn't grow

enough of its own tobacco to take care of itself. Well, Honduras was a bit different, but this comment applies to the other countries. I never had to make any representations on this subject. I don't smoke and never have. I'm not enthusiastic about tobacco and I'm not enthusiastic about having US taxpayers subsidizing tobacco.

Q: Well, beside the drug effort, was there any other...

ROWELL: Let me go on a bit further into this subject, because you raised the question of corruption. Of course, what is corruption? It is very difficult to deal with. However, the presence of corruption also reveals the presence of uncorrupt people, who are very serious about this subject. For example, drug traffickers would try to persuade crew members of the Bolivian National Airlines to carry drugs into Miami. We monitored that subject very, very closely and very tightly, in very discreet ways. We did not have anyone climbing on board the aircraft in Bolivia, checking everything out, or going through people's pockets. We did nothing like that. We discovered, frankly through confidential informants, that substantial numbers of Bolivian Airlines crew people adamantly and consistently refused to do anything at all for the drug traffickers. They wouldn't touch drugs.

There was a terrible time recruiting police officers to head the Anti-Drug Police. What would happen is that a police officer would be brought in, he would spend two or three months on the job, and the drug traffickers would be able to reach him. Now people immediately assume that there was a big payoff here, and everybody has a price. That's too easy. That's sort of a comic strip approach to the matter.

Now, I knew some of these police officers. I'm persuaded that they feared for their families -- nothing else. I don't know how you beat that kind of corrupting pressure. Perhaps you beat it by arranging things so that people being targeted have such limited power, influence, or foreknowledge of what's going on that they're not worth corrupting. But that didn't happen, of course, to the guy actually running the Anti-Drug Police.

I've told you how the labs operate. They function briefly and for a short time. So things could go along for two or three months, and nobody would care. Then there would come a time when the drug traffickers were going to fly in the money, fly out the coca paste, or bring in the precursor chemical, whatever it might be. All that the drug traffickers wanted was a clear time window. It didn't have to be very big. A few hours on a given day and a few more hours on a day two or three days later, plus a few more hours in scattered spots over the following week. That's all the drug traffickers needed.

So there was a constant turnover of officers running that Anti-Drug Police Corps, the way kids run through ice cream in the summer. They would be there for two or three months, and then you would need to change them again. This process went on over and over again. I don't remember the names of any of them and I wouldn't want to, because I just don't feel that they were guilty or did anything criminal. They were caught in a very difficult position. I often asked myself, "What would happen if my daughter and wife were targeted in such a way that I knew absolutely that the drug traffickers would get

them. And if somebody said to me, "All I want you to do is to stay home from work, and your child and your wife will be all right. If you go to work, maybe you will never see them again--or you'll see them maimed. Brutally maimed, but not dead." Anybody who wants to criticize people who've been suborned by the drug traffickers should put themselves in the same position. Especially when you're 7,000 miles away from the scene. When you're on the spot, you have to think about it. You have to think of ways of getting these police officers off the spot. Otherwise, the anti-drug operations won't work.

Q: How about the American staff in the Embassy? Were you targeted yourself?

ROWELL: Two or three times I received information that I was being targeted. Not very frequently. I had substantial personal protection, as did my wife. We had a bodyguard. Whenever we left the Embassy Residence, whatever the time of day or whatever day of the week, there was a bodyguard there, even if we went to a movie theater. Even if it was an unannounced trip to the movies, decided on without notice. The need to guard us was so stringent that I was advised not to take a personal automobile to Bolivia, because I wouldn't be allowed to ride around in it. I rode in armored Embassy vehicles.

At one stage a prominent, Bolivian naturalist stumbled on a major drug laboratory. He was murdered by people guarding the laboratory. People went out to find his airplane and spotted it from the air. It had been destroyed on the ground to make it appear as if it had crashed. Somebody landed a light airplane near his plane. When they got there, they noticed that the laboratory was there, because between the time that the naturalist was murdered and his airplane destroyed, other people started taking out some of the equipment from the laboratory.

The Minister of the Interior phoned me when it first came up. It was a Saturday night. He asked if we could launch the US Army helicopters. This was during the time of Operation Blast Furnace, when we still had helicopters with US Army crews on them. The Bolivians wanted to take police out to the site of the murder. It was in an extremely remote area. To get the helicopters there would have required two refueling landings en route. It took us too long -- 36 hours-- to get the Bolivian anti-drug police there. When they finally arrived, the lab was still there with tons of precursor chemicals. It was a huge setup. However, all of the drug traffickers were gone, and some of the other equipment was gone. I called in a demolition team from Panama. They rigged it for destruction. However, the Minister of the Interior held up the destruction. After three and a half weeks, I had to pull the demolition team back, because I couldn't keep them at this site. Eventually, the order was given to destroy the site. However, nobody has any idea how much of it was actually destroyed and how much of it was carted off in the meantime. When it was destroyed, it still made a big fire.

This incident damaged the reputation of the Minister of the Interior in the eyes of the international community -- to such an extent that a number of governments were worried about corruption. I'm not saying that he was corrupt. I'm just saying that the way things worked, it created the wrong appearance, so he resigned his post and left the government. That's the closest I came to the question of drug-related corruption inside the

government. Again, I'm not saying that the Minister was corrupt. I'm just saying that it had the wrong appearance.

It was nothing like the experience we had before and we've had since then in Colombia. Nothing like that.

Q: You left Bolivia in...

ROWELL: I left Bolivia in January, 1988.

DAVID N. GREENLEE
Deputy Chief of Mission
La Paz (1987-1989)

Ambassador Greenlee was born and raised in New York and educated at Yale University. After service in the Peace Corps in Bolivia and the US Army in Vietnam, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. In the course of his career the ambassador served in Peru, Bolivia (three tours), Israel, Spain and Chile, as well as in the Department of State, where he was involved in Haitian and Egyptian affairs, and at the Pentagon, where he was Political Advisor. Three of his foreign tours were as Deputy Chief of Mission. He served as United States Ambassador to Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassador Greenlee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: What was the situation in Bolivia in 1987?

GREENLEE: Bolivia was in a comparatively rare period of stability. The president of Bolivia was Victor Paz Estenssoro, who had been the leader of the 1952 revolution. He was a very shrewd politician and a great statesman. He was able to pull rival parties and factions behind him on a general way forward. The objective was to achieve some degree of cooperation within the context of political competition so that the country could get out of its economic quagmire. When he came into office inflation was running over 20,000 percent. Paz was given rein to adopt significant economic reforms. He basically saw Chile as the economic—not the political—template.

The U.S. supported Paz's drastic corrective measures. With the economic direction of the country on a more rational course, our most acute concern was the over-production of coca and the growing traffic in cocaine. Our assistance in the areas of interdiction and alternative development began to increase. We pushed USAID to get involved in crop substitution in the coca-rich Chapare area of Cochabamba—which our AID director was reluctant to do. There was a significant police-training program, and DEA officers accompanied the Bolivian police on drug raids. At that time we had a dozen or so old Huey helicopters and a good maintenance and pilot training program. It was the beginning of what became later an even bigger push. We were limited, though, by the economic importance of the coca crop and a certain political reluctance on the part of the government. The reality was, and remains today, that the Bolivians regarded the coca-

cocaine problem as affecting us more than them. They saw it as a consumer-driven issue, that is, as a U.S. responsibility. Coca crop eradication, even in the illegal cultivation areas, was resisted by the local growers, by “environmentalists,” by some NGOs and by many mainstream Bolivians. This was the beginning of Evo Morales’ rise to political power. He was a leader of the Chapare coca-growers and took the free-market position that the coca leaf itself was innocent, and the growers were innocent, and what others did with the leaf was someone else’s problem. I recall that, in the late 1980s and early ‘90s, he likened it to the manufacture of arms. The problem wasn’t arms but how they were used. It wasn’t coca, but how it was used. As deputy chief of mission I was the embassy’s anti-narcotics coordinator. I held daily meetings but was not involved in the actual planning of the interdiction or eradication operations.

Q: You said your main problem was narcotics. When you start talking about narcotics, you’re also talking about a virulent form of corruption.

GREENLEE: Yes. There was corruption from a lot of different angles in Bolivia, but what worried us especially was drug corruption. It poisoned the democratic process. It affected at least one president, Jaime Paz Zamora, who won a runoff election in the congress just as I was leaving Bolivia for my next assignment. Paz Zamora was said to have taken campaign contributions from a narco-trafficker and he had at least one cabinet member with narco-connections in his government. But that was after I left.

Q: Was there a crop that could be substituted for coca in an equivalent economic sense?

GREENLEE: Alternative crops were developed that were viable, and the program had some success. But it was always easier and more profitable for the *campesinos* to grow coca. And it was easier to bring coca to market. That remains the case. At the end of the day, cocaine is the area’s only recession-proof commodity.

With crop substitution there are problems of marketing, transportation and pricing, as well cultivation—producing citrus, or hearts of palm or pepper to international standards. But that’s today. In those days it was a gleam in the eye to try to develop a good alternative development plan. There wasn’t enough expertise or funding, so a lot of it was simply pushing against the illegal coca crop. We would pay an indemnity to a grower who eliminated his illegal crop—and that same grower would move down the road and plant another crop. It was pernicious. These *campesinos*—many of them former miners—weren’t agronomists. They didn’t know or want to know how to grow crops that required much tending or nurturing. And they were organized into syndicates—unions--that were precise replicas, even to the names, of the labor organizations in the mines in Oruro and Potosi where they came from originally.

Q: Was the use of coca for non-drug purposes a fake issue?

GREENLEE: It was a false issue in the Chapare area. Traditionally, coca was used for chewing, that is, to improve stamina, and for ritual. That coca was and is grown in an area called the Yungas, in the high valleys north of La Paz. The traditional leaf, from the

coca grown there, is milder than the Chapare leaf. The Yungas coca is what most people chew. The Chapare coca, on the other hand, was planted in the late '70s and '80's to serve the cocaine industry, and really only for that. It is not good to chew. And in fact Evo Morales himself has told me personally that he doesn't like to chew it. He likes the Yungas coca.

DAVID N. GREENLEE
Ambassador
Bolivia (2003-2006)

Ambassador Greenlee was born and raised in New York and educated at Yale University. After service in the Peace Corps in Bolivia and the US Army in Vietnam, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. In the course of his career the ambassador served in Peru, Bolivia (three tours), Israel, Spain and Chile, as well as in the Department of State, where he was involved in Haitian and Egyptian affairs, and at the Pentagon, where he was Political Advisor. Three of his foreign tours were as Deputy Chief of Mission. He served as United States Ambassador to Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassador Greenlee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: How were American relations with Bolivia?

GREENLEE: Relations had always been good, but very asymmetrical. The U.S. was the biggest bilateral assistance donor. Until Evo Morales was elected president at the end of 2005, the U.S. was always courted, paid deference to, because of that. But our presence was overwhelming. We were too big, the way we did things, was too big for the bilateral relationship. It was bad for Bolivia, and it was bad for us. The Bolivians were in the habit, the bad habit, of being supplicants, and we were in the position, the frankly arrogant position, of doling out assistance. The Bolivians wanted help without conditionality, while we needed to know that our aid wasn't being squandered, that it was going to something that had a developmental purpose or an anti-drug purpose. The Bolivians resented the emphasis on drugs. They saw the cocaine trade as a U.S. problem, but it was increasingly, even on the consumption side, a Bolivian problem in equal measure.

Getting back to the President--Sanchez de Lozada had a very weak government. He really didn't have a mandate to govern, having won only about a fifth of the vote. And he didn't have a solid coalition. He was ripe picking for the opposition, particularly for Evo Morales and his Movement toward Socialism, the "MAS," which had emerged as a strong political force. Evo Morales could close the country down with road blockades, and leverage political power by opposing our anti-drug efforts.

Meanwhile, in Bolivia, things got worse. There was a lot of political turmoil, and Sanchez de Lozada's government didn't seem to be delivering. By the end of the year Morales' *cocaleros* had closed off the main road through Chapare and were confronting

the police. The U.S. kept the pressure on Goni to hang tough on the anti-drug front, while Morales pressed for legalization of the coca that was being produced in areas that were illegal under Bolivian law – coca that went to the production of cocaine. So Sanchez de Lozada was caught – between the U.S. and Morales, between political reality in Bolivia and the IMF, between his own political base, the MNR, and his coalition partners in the Leftist Revolutionary Movement, the MIR.

That was the situation when I arrived in Bolivia in mid-January of 2003. I presented my credentials within just a few days. Goni's advisors cautioned me against speaking with the press after the ceremony. They didn't want anything I might say to stir the pot further. I assured them I would be careful, but also that I intended to speak with the press. I didn't want to be known as someone who was surreptitious, evasive.

Q: How did the press deal with your arrival, or were you an important factor?

GREENLEE: The American ambassador in Bolivia is always an important factor. The U.S., in addition to our position as the major bilateral aid donor, carries great weight in the international lending organizations on which Bolivia normally depends. The Bolivian media are quite active, but not very professional. They roll the cameras, stick microphones in your face and try to bait you.

I came into the country with a headwind. There had been a disinformation campaign against me before I arrived. It was launched by the people who are now running the country, Evo Morales' people. As DCM I had been the anti-drug coordinator, and the MAS, or their surrogates in the press, accused me of having masterminded confrontations in which coca growers had been killed. There were articles about me being a guerilla warfare expert, because I had been in the army in Vietnam. It was said that I had been the CIA station chief in Bolivia in the 1970s, a story that was floated years before by a de facto government foreign minister. The acting chief of mission in Bolivia contacted me while I was still in Paraguay about these stories. He wanted to know how the embassy should respond. I said not to bother. But the stories persisted. Finally, I said it was okay to say the stories were fabrications, but not to go beyond that. I did not want to get into the habit of feeding media stories by denying them.

Q: During this time was there drug traffickers' corruption money? Talk about the coca problem.

GREENLEE: When I was in Bolivia in the late '70's coca wasn't dominant in our policy, but by the late '80s, when I returned as DCM, there was a lot more coca and a lot more cocaine trafficking. As we brought assets to bear on the problem, our diplomacy took on a sharper edge. Bolivians saw us as being obsessed by coca, which they didn't regard as being a serious problem, and obsessed with cocaine trafficking, which they acknowledged should be addressed, but which they didn't think affected them too much. It was our problem. Cocaine trafficking made some Bolivians rich, and the money lubricated the economy. It reached the point where mainstream Bolivians said that the

U.S. should compensate Bolivia to the extent that Bolivia stopped producing coca for cocaine. So we got into alternative development.

After I left Bolivia as DCM, in 1989, the dynamic changed a bit, because Colombia began to grow coca in large quantities. Before that, Peru and Bolivia supplied “paste” and “base,” which Colombian chemists turned into cocaine and which Colombian traffickers sent on to the U.S. But when the Colombian traffickers began to grow their own coca, the market in Bolivia became depressed, and there was scope for a successful eradication program and crop substitution. So during the 1990s, with a lot of good work on both sides, thousands of hectares of Bolivian coca were pulled up, and Bolivia escaped from what was called the coca-cocaine circuit.

But coca remained a staple crop for many Bolivians, and the cocaine product Bolivians produced, which was low-grade base, began to flow to Brazil and Europe, primarily. Very little went to the U.S. But our interdiction presence remained, and our coca and cocaine interdiction policies continued to grate on Bolivians. Evo Morales effectively exploited Bolivian resentment of our large presence and our insistence on the coca issue, seemingly at the expense of other equities.

By the time I returned to Bolivia as Ambassador, our embassy in La Paz was one of the dozen or so largest in the world. It was too big, and our coca/cocaine policy was complicating other things, like our support for democracy. But as ambassador you play the hand you’re dealt, not the one you want to play.

We were in the uncomfortable position of being the sharp end, the muscle, in the coca/cocaine issue—even though, at least when I was in Bolivia as ambassador, only about 1 percent of the cocaine on our streets was from Bolivia. We were dealing with what was most directly a Brazilian, Spanish and European problem, as well, of course, as a Bolivian problem. And in terms of consumption, we were finding that even Bolivia’s per capita use of cocaine was equivalent to that of the U.S. But these arguments carried little weight with anyone in Bolivia. Coca and cocaine were seen as issues the U.S. was stuck with dealing with. For the others it was a public health concern, a cultural matter.

Q. That gives some context, but what happened to Mesa?

GREENLEE: Mesa found he couldn’t govern. That has been the fate of most Bolivian presidents in recent history. He was beset by demonstrations and strikes. He could not, and would not, enforce order. He was especially vexed by the Bolivian congress. At one point Pepe Galindo asked me what the U.S. would do if Mesa dissolved the congress. I said he would be shutting down democracy, and we would react that way. Galindo assured me it was just an idea, but he later tried to ply it directly, by phone, with Washington. I was patched in from Washington on that conversation, and the response was the same. Mesa would deny it, but I am sure the idea had his blessing.

Q: The election polls are closing. What were you thinking and what were you hearing? Were you consulting with Washington?

GREENLEE: Yes, I was on the phone with Washington when the polls closed and the results started coming in. I was talking to Tom Shannon, the assistant secretary for western hemisphere affairs, and his principal deputy, Charles Shapiro.

Q. And in the immediate aftermath. What did you do?

GREENLEE: Well, there was the recognition that the process that had begun with the forced expulsion of Sanchez de Lozada in October of 2003 had culminated with the election of Evo Morales, a *cocalero* leader, who had delighted in describing himself as our worst nightmare. He was not our worst nightmare—that would be in his dreams, not ours. His association with illegal coca was a big factor. But another problem, really Bolivia's problem, was that he wanted to implement economic policies, and the political policies that went with them, that were throwbacks to what hadn't worked in the '60s, '70s and early '80s. He was the anti-globalist in a globalized economy. He wanted central, authoritarian control when successful 21st century governments were pushing decision-making authority downward and outward. He wanted to nationalize efficient private industries when the trend worldwide was to privatize inefficient national industries. He talked about "solidarity" to attract needed investment—when investors, even sovereign-state investors, want a return on their capital.

There were different views about what attitude we should adopt. I strongly advocated dealing with Morales. I thought there was a way to talk with him about the coca problem, the main stumbling block, and that we had to support democracy in any case—and Morales had won a democratic election. So I got a green light to meet with him before the inauguration. We had not been in touch with him during the election period or before that because of his coca ties and other things we knew about him. But it was time to shift, and Washington agreed.

Q When you get right down to it, there's no alternative.

GREENLEE: Right. To me there was no alternative, but there was a lot of distaste in Washington. Here was a guy who had said nasty things about President Bush and the United States. And of course U.S. officials had said plenty of nasty things about him. But the real problems were his curious, fawning relationship with Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro and his history of promoting the growth of the stuff that was turned into cocaine. There was no getting around that.

GREENLEE: I told him that our relationship would depend on a couple of fundamental things. On tone, it was essential that he stop insulting my president and my country. On substance we had to find a way to address the cocaine problem. He of course had his own agenda, but where we came out was that we should turn the page, try to move forward. I thought it was a good start.

Then, later, there was the matter of the inauguration. Who should come from Washington? At first the idea was that only I should represent the United States. But I

called Tom Shannon and suggested that he make the gesture and come. He said he had been thinking the same thing. And so that's what happened. The night before the inauguration, in late January, Tom and I met with Morales and Garcia Linera. It was another good meeting, much less tense than my initial round with Morales. We thought there might be a way to construct a good relationship. At the same time we realized that Morales was committed to Chavez and Castro and that there was very little space in which to get things done. Still, we tried and I, at least, was hopeful.

Morales knew the score on coca. He knew, as all Bolivians know, that the bulk of coca production in Bolivia goes to cocaine. But for him it was an economic problem that drove the political reality in which he had to operate. So he made the argument that the coca leaf was benign, even good for humanity, but cocaine was bad—a product consumed in the developed countries. So what was needed was a greater concentration in blocking the traffickers, on interdiction, and less focus on coca production—particularly coca cultivation in the Chapare, his political base. He argued that there could be “social” control of cultivation. Each family would be entitled to a limited coca plot and the syndicates, or unions, would restrict the size of other plots. It was simple economics. Control of supply would keep prices up.

This wasn't the coca policy that we wanted, but it was the one we were stuck with. Our DEA noted that there was good cooperation on interdiction. So both sides could say there was a way forward. But at bottom we all knew—and, again, all Bolivians know—that more coca means more cocaine. Bolivia under Morales is returning to that business, no matter how he and his cohorts try to dress it up.

On the political side, our relations quickly deteriorated. Morales couldn't stop attacking us. Partly, I am sure, it was his personal resentment, still occasionally stoked by intemperate remarks from Washington. The problem there was not the State Department. But off-hand comments, here and there, would give him something to work with. Once Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, for example, said something sneering about Morales on a visit to Paraguay. It played to Morales' hand, not ours.

Morales looked for anything he could use to demonstrate to his base that we were the enemy and he was “bending our arm.” Once some guy from the U.S. came into Bolivia and allegedly, I have to be careful about my language, blew up a couple of buildings, or parts of buildings. There were deaths and injuries. Morales accused the U.S. of sending him to terrorize the country. The reality was that the guy had been arrested in Argentina for blowing up an ATM machine, and then obtained a Bolivian visa on the border with Bolivia, entered the country, and went on to get a license from the police to sell dynamite. I went over this with Morales, and he even thanked me, and thanked me publicly, for the “clarification.” But within a week he was back with his accusations. “Why is the U.S. always sending us terrorists?” he would say. Morales lives in a parallel universe.

BRAZIL

RICHARD A. VIRDEN
Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Belo Horizonte (1972-1973)
Information Officer, USIS
Sao Paulo (1973-1974)

Mr. Virden was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. He joined the Foreign Service of the United States Information Service in 1963 and served variously as Information, Press and Public Affairs Officer, attaining the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission in Brasilia. His foreign posts include Bangkok, Phitsanulok and Chiang Mai in Thailand; Saigon, Vietnam; Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Brasilia in Brazil; and Warsaw, Poland, where he served twice. Mr. Virden also had several senior assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Virden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: In Sao Paulo, had crime taken over as much as it has recently?

VIRDEN: No. Of course, there was a good deal of crime even then, but not like today. The city didn't have -- at least that I remember -- it didn't have the reputation for violence that it has nowadays. I've heard a statistic when I was there in the early 2002 or 2003 that there is on average thirty violent deaths per day.

Q: Good God!

VIRDEN: Yes, and Rio has almost as many, proportionately, too. You had asked earlier about drugs. This is about poverty and the drug culture, a lot of the violence is tied to drug wars in the slums, or *favelas*, as the Brazilians call them.

Q: Did we have programs designed to penetrate sort of the slum areas, or the equivalent, or particularly more the black areas and all that.

VIRDEN: Well, we did. Over the years, we had a very large USAID assistance programs there, particularly in the poorest part of the country, which is the northeastern region, sort of the bump that juts out into the Atlantic over towards Africa.

So there were large assistance programs, of ours and the World Bank, in particular going on there, even under military rule. But they were more targeted on poverty and health, not so much on the crime issue, although that obviously played into it.

Now, there was an agricultural attaché in Brasilia -- the U. S. Department of Agriculture maintained two offices in Sao Paulo -- who did a lot of crop reporting and they did that directly to Washington on their own hook. We also had some debate over coffee reporting because there was a national employee in Rio who continued to do the coffee reporting and the coffee was all grown down in the Sao Paulo consular district and he

never bothered to check in with the Consulate General in any form. The export trade, of course, was in Santos and there were, as far as the growers were concerned, some associations in Londrina, the second largest city of the state of Parana. I had my regular contacts and would report directly to Washington and to Brasilia on what my contacts said. I didn't elaborate beyond that but I would go and interview them periodically and what they had to say was often at marked variance with what the national employee was reporting from Rio. This led to some concern. I wrote a scathing indictment of the reporting by the Department of Agriculture which I sent to Brasilia pointing out many inaccuracies in their reporting and this caused a big brouhaha. The Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs in Washington, Tom Enders, had a fellow named Carlisle assigned to look into this coffee matter because accuracy in coffee reporting. We were an important importer and an important member of the International Coffee Agreement. I thought it did matter that all views and not just the selected views gathered by a Brazilian national employee whose sources in my own consular district I knew nothing about. He would never pay me the courtesy of stopping by to see me to arrange his visits. In fact, often he didn't give any advance notice of his travel which was totally improper. I was anxious that all views be known to the United States government and I did represent the United States at the annual Guadajob International Coffee Conferences and had to know what was going on.

WILLIAM JEFFRAS DIETERICH
Press/Information Officer, USIS
Sao Paulo (1974-1977)

William Jeffras Dietrich was born in Boston in 1936. He received his bachelor's degree from Connecticut Wesleyan University in 1958 and then served in the US Navy. His career included positions in Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Italy, Ecuador, El Salvador, and México. Mr. Dieterich was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Well, let's go to Sao Paulo, 1974 to when?

DIETERICH: That was 1974 to 1977.

Q: What was Sao Paulo like when you arrived there?

DIETERICH: Sao Paulo is, and was, one of the biggest cities in the world. It is a really big, tough, and smart city. It is part of the southern cone phenomenon, the result of a huge amount of immigration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Italians, Spaniards, Portuguese - all sorts of folks plus about a million ethnic Japanese. Most of these people started down on the farm, but many now live in the big city and are lawyers and doctors. Sao Paulo is the industrial center of Brazil, almost to an embarrassing extent. You have the very underdeveloped northeast, tropical, with a heavy population of poor folks of African origins - basically people brought as slaves to Brazil. Brazil abolished slavery even later than the United States did. Rio in the center; Great port, great *entrepot*, great international city.

Big political issues? You're not supposed to have big political issues when you're in a consulate general. Nuclear proliferation issues were up. There were concerns about nuclear reprocessing plants in Brazil. Drug issues were about to come up

And remember that in 1977, with the election of Carter, we had a new administration, a different kind of administration. We suddenly had a human rights policy. Some people in the American Foreign Service establishment were pedaling pretty hard to catch up at that point.

Q: How about terrorism, was that a threat?

DIETERICH: Not a big issue, as I remember in Brazil. Terrorism, in the sense of bombings, has never been a big issue there. Kidnapping, and the death squad phenomenon that was invented in Brazil. One of the first high-profile kidnappings was our Ambassador Elbrick in Brazil. But those were not big issues in Brazil when I was there. I mentioned the drug issue before.

Q: Yes, what about that?

DIETERICH: Well, that goes back a distressingly long way. In Brazil, I began as the USIS information officer, working with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency). That was the first time I was at a post that had a DEA presence. Brazil was not a producer country, and not a real big consumer country, but a big transit point. If you think about western Brazil, that's a big outback out there, and there are all sorts of ways to move drugs through that area. We were beginning to put together information programs that basically tried to say "Hey, if you are a producer or transit country, you are going to become users. Don't kid yourself, because you cannot have this stuff in your country and not end up with a drug problem similar to the one we have. All that money sloshing around in your political system is also dangerous." We are still trying to send those same messages, and they are still not working very well, but they are good messages and should make sense.

MARGARET J. BARNHART
Consular Officer
Rio de Janeiro (1976-1980)

Margaret J. Barnhart was born in 1928 in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Goucher College in 1950 with a major in international relations. She joined UNESCO and was employed there between 1951 and 1955. Following that she worked for the State Department in the Speakers Bureau. In 1961 she enlisted in the Foreign Service and held positions in Paris, Tokyo, Jerusalem, Bangkok, and Rio de Janeiro as well as several positions in the Department of State.

Q: How were the jails for Americans?

BARNHART: They weren't bad. The morgue was the worst place. After a carnival, we'd have to go there and try and identify a missing American. But the jails were just so-so. They really didn't like to keep Americans in jail too much. There was a ring of cocaine. I visited the women's jail a couple of times. Those were the young girls, usually, in Florida or someplace carrying drugs back and forth - Americans - and we had a couple there that were there for quite some time, and they were well taken care of. They were runners. One of them had a six-year-old son back someplace in the States and was worried about him. Now the problem with the need for an exit permit, that did create problems, because our resident Americans there had to have an exit permit from the Brazilian government to leave, and they had to put up the money too, just like the Brazilians. They would be the equivalent, I guess, of immigrants but not citizens. A number of times there would be an emergency in the States - it always happened on the weekend - and they couldn't get out. We would go after the local authority. But they were very strict. They wouldn't do it. They absolutely said, "Wait till Monday." We may have gotten one done. We did have a number of those. There was a big American community there too. It was really a home away from home laid-back society. It was one of those things that Brazil was in better condition price wise than Argentina. So you don't want to go down there, because it's very expensive now. But six months or two years later, go to Argentina. Things are cheaper than in Brazil.

MARK LORE
Deputy Director of Brazilian Affairs, Latin American Bureau
Washington, DC (1987-1992)
Deputy Chief of Mission
Brasilia (1992-1995)

Mark Lore was born New York in 1938, and graduated from Bowling Green State University. He served in the US ARMY from 1961 to 1964 as an overseas captain. His positions include Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Luanda, Rabat, Brussels and Lisbon. Lore was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 26, 1998.

Q: Were there any other issues in this '87 to '92 period?

LORE: From '87-92 drugs were becoming a major issue for the United States. Drugs came to be proclaimed as a major if not the major American preoccupation in Latin America. Brazil was not in the front lines in this area because they do not have a cocaine industry. The stuff isn't grown there or processed there. But Brazil, given the fact it borders on countries which do have this problem and is used as a route to ship drugs to the United States and Europe, both through ports and by air, became part of our drug focus.

Our relations with Brazil over this have been okay, Brazilians still don't give it as much importance as we think they should. They argue that it's just simply not as big a problem for them as it is for us. They argue that they've got populations which are undernourished, they've got regions of the country that are essentially lawless, they've got environmental

devastation, they've got other major problems. So we have a difference in that area but it's one where we've agreed to disagree and cooperation hasn't been too bad - and is improving.

Q: Were there any issues that you particularly were involved in? You were charge, so you must have had a piece of almost any issue.

LORE: Well, we still had the trade issues. After all, we still have problems with Japan and the EU, so why not with Brazil? We did have quite a positive agenda, I think, on the nuclear side. That was developing very nicely during my time there. It had moved from becoming a negative to a positive. On drugs, as I say, I think that we're working out some areas for cooperation. I spent a lot of time personally on two issues where I thought that the embassy could make a big difference. One was on visas, where Brazil had a much more restrictive, less forthcoming visa policy for American travelers than we had for Brazilians.

We took some rather tough steps on restricting Brazilians in order to create pressure for change in Brazilian visa law, and we succeeded. That went through just before I left. So we were able to get a much better deal on visas for our citizens, which I think was important. It allowed us in turn to provide Brazilians with even better visa conditions. This is something we badly needed to do. Brazil is one of these countries, and there are a number of them around the world now, that with some prosperity and with lower airfares and with the attractiveness of the United States as a destination given our low costs for lodging, car rentals, etc., we've seen an explosion in demand for American visas. Our visa sections are just not equipped to deal with it. So we have to find some imaginative ways to deal with that explosion rather than just adding bodies to stamp visas. Rather than 20 visa officers to issue three-month visas, it's a lot better over the long run to have five or six who are doing four- and five-year visas. Maybe one day we can do away with the visa requirement altogether.

DAVID E. ZWEIFEL
Consul General
Rio de Janeiro (1993-1995)

David E. Zweifel was born in Colorado on September 13, 1934. He received a bachelor's degree from Oregon State University and served in the U.S. Navy overseas for five years. He joined the Foreign Service in July 1962 and served in Brazil, Lebanon, Jordan, Mexico, Oman, Yemen, and Washington, DC. Mr. Zweifel retired in 1995 and was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on September 3, 1996.

Q: What were your relations with the Embassy in Brasilia and with Ambassador, who was Rick Melton, I believe?

ZWEIFEL: Rick Melton was Ambassador when I arrived. He was succeeded by Mel Levitsky. I enjoyed working with both of them very much. I had worked with Rick when

he was Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA at the time I was Director for Caribbean Affairs. So we knew and respected each other, worked well together. I had known Mel Levitsky when he headed the International Narcotics Management Bureau (INM) in the Department. I had high respect for him as well.

Q: How about the drug problem?

ZWEIFEL: Narcotics are of increasing concern in Brazil which is primarily a transit country with illegal substances moving through, in good part, destined for European markets. But narcotics is such a fungible commodity. It moves around, and passing through inevitably means that some of it stays, rubs off on the local society. So you have a growing drug abuse problem in the country. Much of the violence in both Rio and Sao Paulo is between and among drug lords or gangs which try to control local trafficking.

JOHN D. CASWELL
State Department - Latin American Affairs
Washington, DC (1993-1995)
Political Section - Deputy Chief
Brasilia (1995-1998)

Mr. Caswell was born in 1947 in Massachusetts, raised in Massachusetts and Connecticut. He was educated at Franklin and Marshall College, the Fletcher School of Tufts University and the University of California, Los Angeles. After service in the US Navy he entered the Foreign Service in 1974. His foreign assignments as Political or Economic Officer include Rio de Janeiro, Lima, Brasilia, Lisbon and Sofia. In Washington, Mr. Caswell served in the Department's Operations Center and in European and Latin American Affairs. He also served two years with USAID's Regional Mission for Europe. Mr. Caswell was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: What was this? I'm trying to figure it out. Was this to prevent Ecuadorian planes from overflying the place?

CASWELL: It had a number of angles to do it. National security was an element. It could have that element, but it was not fear of Ecuador or Peru more the issue of national security had nothing to do with the fear of Ecuador or Peru launching their air force into the Amazon. It had to do with the fact that the Brazilian authorities didn't have any idea who was flying over the Amazon or what was going on up there. There was no air traffic control, and so there were narco-traffickers. In effect what gave a big boost to getting full EX-IM funding for all aspects of the project was its counter-narcotics aspect, because parts of the project, as I mentioned before, involved airborne radars, and the systems would be put aboard C130 type aircraft. Apparently some of the equipment was considered to be "dual-use" equipment of a potential military nature and EX-IM, because it's a civilian agency, cannot use its credit to finance the purchase of military or "dual-use" equipment unless there's a certification that the equipment could be or is to be used

primarily, or there's a justification to use it, for counter-narcotics purposes. So because of this angle and this concern in Brazil - and we as a government shared it - that parts of the Amazon airspace were being increasingly used by drug traffickers, and because the Brazilian air force didn't know what was going on, couldn't intercept these narco-trafficker aircraft, the Counter-Narcotics Bureau in the State Department, INM, certified that this project would be used, had a valid use, for this purpose, and with that certification EX-IM was able to certify those "dual use" elements, the key elements, of the project. Otherwise, the financing package would not have covered all of the equipment. The U.S. financing package would have been inferior to the French offer, and Raytheon probably would have lost the contract to Alcatel or Thompson or whoever it was that was on the French side - I forget now. So that was an important part of it.

NADIA TONGOUR
Senior Political Officer
Rio de Janeiro (1994-1997)

Nadia Tongour was born in Turkey and raised in South Carolina. She was educated at William and Mary and Stanford Universities and taught at several colleges before joining the Foreign Service in 1980. Primarily a Political Officer, her Washington assignments were in the fields of Soviet and Soviet Bloc affairs as well as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her foreign assignments include Brazil, Barbados and St. George's Grenada, where she was Principal Officer. Ms. Tongour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: In your area were there any sort of crises or anything, at least from your perspective, that you had to deal with?

TONGOUR: Crises is probably too strong a word because essentially the kinds of things that were of interest to Washington revolved around issues of narco-trafficking, corruption and how to make our assistance more effective. We were concerned about fighting crime and narco-traffickers and wanted to support the police;; at the same time, cops were involved in the killing of street children. The quandary we faced was how to help people who might be doing good on one front when some of those very people were not necessarily predisposed toward us. These were the types of issues we discussed, namely given limited resources should we send to the United States potential leaders who might now be critical of the U.S, Could they be brought around to understand our viewpoint, etc? I don't think you could say that there were major crises in our relationship with Brazil at that time. To be sure there were various pressures, including from environmental groups and NGOs to take a strong stand on developments in the Amazon or on human rights issues. On the latter, we really did try. I personally met with a lot of NGOs who frequently came in and provided invaluable information on human rights abuses in Brazil. But the problem was that most human rights abuses in Brazil were not officially being carried out by the government of Brazil. What does one do when an off-duty cop -- a cop by day, a paid security guard by night -- kills kids at night or goes after people who then disappear?

Q: Why were they killing people, killing children?

TONGOUR: Children were only one small segment. The case that became most famous, the so-called Candelaria Massacre involved the killing of children. But such killings were rare. The disappearances, the rounding up and abuse of victims was more common. A few years before I arrived, there had been what many described as an invasion of locusts, of children and teens roaming the beaches and robbing tourists and others. Officially, the police would clean that up, because after all, for a city such as Rio de Janeiro, tourism is a major industry. So, the police were there to clean up the beaches, and they did. Crime was definitely a problem and the favelas (slums) were breeding grounds for drugs; the police would invade these areas and clean them up. Some of the people rounded up were quite young, but the overt actions of the police were viewed as legitimate. The other aspect, their off-duty work, such as what occurred outside the Candelaria Cathedral in downtown Rio were more brutal -- resulting in the killing of children who were literally sleeping in front of the church. Apparently storekeepers in the vicinity did not like to see these children sleeping on the plaza in front of the church. They considered it bad for business. Who paid whom, who did what to whom, was never clarified but eventually some off-duty policemen were tried for the killing of half a dozen or more kids and the wounding of others. The so-called Candelaria Massacre became a visible problem, creating a sense of outrage among the more enlightened members of Brazilian society and the outside world and spawned considerable social activism. One of the people I got to know well in Rio, who was related to the UN Rep Vieira de Melo, was very involved in working with street children after this massacre. She was a woman who came from a very wealthy family. Yet she wound up working with these kids. And I am talking not this street group or that street group; there were thousands of children who are essentially living on the street, living in squalor in cardboard shacks.

RICHARD A. VIRDEN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Brasilia (2002-2004)

Mr. Virden was born and raised in Minnesota, and educated at St. John's College in Collegeville, Minnesota. He joined the Foreign Service of the United States Information Service in 1963 and served variously as Information, Press and Public Affairs Officer, attaining the rank of Deputy Chief of Mission in Brasilia. His foreign posts include Bangkok, Phitsanulok and Chiang Mai in Thailand; Saigon, Vietnam; Belo Horizonte, Sao Paulo and Brasilia in Brazil; and Warsaw, Poland, where he served twice. Mr. Virden also had several senior assignments at USIA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Mr. Virden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

Q: When you got there, were there any major policy differences with Brazil, or not?

VIRDEN: Oh, there were lots of them, sure. How to deal with terrorism was one. There was fundraising going on, in our view, down in the Arab communities down in the tri-border area with Paraguay and Argentina. Are you familiar with that area?

Q: No, no, I'm not.

VIRDEN: At any rate, there was concern there and the answer we would get back is, "Well, they're raising funds there for legitimate charitable organizations that do good things for widows and children" in the Arab world, and so forth.

There was not a meeting of the minds about that, so there would be a lot of back and forth about people who were allegedly raising money that was ending up in the hands of terrorists.

And then there were the drug wars and how to deal with drug trafficking, a perennial bone of contention between us.

Q: What about the Amazon? Were we raising the ecological issue of the Amazon?

VIRDEN: Yes, we were, and so were some of our congressional delegations that came through. A couple of those went up to Manaus, in the heart of the Amazon, looking into that among other issues up there.

By the way, we did have, the Smithsonian Institution was up there, doing some projects on preservation of the rain forest. They had some people based up there in the heart of the Amazon. NASA and the Center for Disease Control were also engaged in the Amazon.

One of our defense companies, Raytheon, had sold Brazil an electronic surveillance system for the whole Amazon region and was putting equipment in place during this period. Primarily it was supposed to help detect drug trafficking, particularly by aircraft.

This was more than a billion dollar deal, with lots of questions about getting the contract completed in time and how the information collected would be used. Among our concerns was avoiding an incident such as happened in, I think Peru, where an aircraft carrying missionaries was shot down in the belief it was ferrying narcotics. That was very much on our minds.

Brazil wanted the surveillance system for lots of reasons; drug trafficking was one of them, but so was identifying mineral deposits and other valuable resources in these remote, inaccessible areas.

Q: What about the Drug Enforcement Administration? Was this a difficult element to deal with, or not?

VIRDEN: Yes, it was, because the DEA agents are used to carrying weapons and this is where the rubber met the road for us. They had trouble accepting that they were only to

be there as kind of liaison and advisors to the Brazilians. That's not what they're used to doing. They wanted to be operational and to be authorized to carry weapons, which the Brazilians would not permit. The ambassador and I were the heavies in insisting that Brazilian law had to be respected.

The Brazilians are in charge of law enforcement in their own country and that runs against the proclivities of DEA people who want to go out and do the job. So this was another major conflict. Brazil is a sovereign country that gets to create and enforce its own laws; if they don't want foreign drug agents carrying weapons around Brazil, then you can't do it.

Q: Was drug smuggling a major problem?

VIRDEN: Not drug production, but smuggling, yes. There was a fair amount of drugs passing through.

Q: This was mainly from Bolivia, wasn't it?

VIRDEN: Bolivia and Colombia, too, up in the Amazonian region in the north and it was also having an effect on Brazilian society. Those slums, or *favelas*, as they call them, in Rio, in particular, but also in Sao Paulo and some of the other big cities, there's a drug culture in there. It's illicit drug money that makes these places run and causes perennial security problems.

This issue is going to be in the spotlight soon because Rio is scheduled to host the World Cup and then the Summer Olympics, the World Cup in 2014 and the Summer Olympics in 2016; Brazil will have to find a way to cope with the crime and drug problem in Rio and Sao Paulo during those games.

Q: One reads about the criminality in those cities.

VIRDEN: Well, yes, Sao Paulo has an average of thirty violent deaths every day! And Rio has an average of about twenty. Those are huge numbers by American standards, and most of it is drug related crime.

In Rio, these *favelas* are on a hillside overlooking the city. Geographically, they are in a strategic position, they can block the major arteries and they have sometimes done that in the past.

There was a major movie about this called "Cidade de Deus", or "The City of God," that came out four or five years ago. What it depicts is the violent world of those slums and the drug and crime bosses who run them.

It's a major internal threat for Brazilians, one they're grappling to resolve; they have tried various things and are still doing so now in a major push to get ready for these huge sporting events.

Good luck to them! Some of these favelas are in areas that the police can't even get into, much less control over time, because of the criminal hold on the people who live there.

LAWRENCE COHEN
Political/Military Affairs Officer
Brasilia (2002-2005)

Mr. Cohen was born and raised in Pennsylvania and was educated at Dickinson College, and the Universities of Pennsylvania, Tel Aviv, Chicago and Northwestern. Entering the Foreign Service in 1980, he served variously as Economic, Political and Political/Military Officer at posts in Mexico, Honduras, India, Hungary, Nigeria and Brazil. In his assignments at the State Department in Washington Mr. Cohen dealt with Foreign Assistance and Environmental and Scientific matters. His last post was in Afghanistan, where he had two assignments with Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Mr. Cohen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Was there anything else, from your perspective, where we could work together with Brazil?

COHEN: We actually had some success working with Brazil. The U.S. assisted Brazil with creation of an aerial surveillance system over the Amazon called "SIVAM" (System for the Vigilance of the Amazon.) Using U.S. technology from Raytheon, SIVAM provides complex surveillance of the Amazon from locating aerial intruders, drug runners, to locating environmental degradation. Drugs flown out of Colombia and Peru flew unhindered over the Amazon. SIVAM now could track these airplanes.

A lot of strings were placed on high level U.S. technology due to proliferation concerns. In other areas of our political-military relationship, the difficulties in providing certain U.S. technology created problems. One area concerned jet fighters. Brazil sought to replace its antiquated, 30 plus year old squadron of Mirage fighter jets. Given the size of its economy and the size of the country, Brazil's air force was surprisingly obsolete and puny.

CARRIBBEAN AFFAIRS

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Deputy Director, Caribbean Affairs
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages,

including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: So you came in '89.

ALEXANDER: In '89, and I stayed until '91, during which time I focused mostly on Haiti because that was the biggest headache of my portfolio.

Q: Oh yes.

ALEXANDER: And we had a few other problems: hurricanes in Jamaica, a major drug trafficker cum Prime Minister Dictator in Suriname by the name of Bouterse, who caused us a lot of problems.

Q: Oh yes.

ALEXANDER: We had an attempted coup in Trinidad led by a Muslim fanatic, Abu Bakr, who I understand is still causing some problems in Trinidad.

Q: Well, let's talk about Suriname first. What was the problem there?

ALEXANDER: Suriname was under the boot of Désiré Bouterse who was a former military, Surinamese military officer, corporal turned sergeant turned colonel turned emperor or something or another. I can't remember what rank it was, but he was a thug. He participated in the assassination of several cabinet members and is alleged to have pulled the trigger himself, while his henchmen killed the rest. They massacred some 12 or 13 of them in the '70s and took over the government. He was in office until the Dutch and the Americans just made it impossible for him to stay. He ran Suriname for probably 12 years or so if I remember correctly, and then stepped down, but very much stayed the power behind the thrown. He became involved in drug trafficking out of Colombia heading principally to the Netherlands, gave shelter to drug traffickers, aided and abetted in the shipments of their product to the Netherlands and to Europe in general. This was an all around bad guy, accused of all kinds of terrible things, arms smuggling and everything else. He was always there intimidating the government, trying to get the government to do whatever he wanted done to support his particular agenda. So we were frequently at odds with the Surinamese government because they wanted to do things that were just downright illegal or stupid or unhelpful or all of the above and, sure enough, we would always find Bouterse's fingerprints all over whatever they were trying to do or not do. So he was a bad boy that caused the little tiny Suriname to be the source of a lot of unnecessary attention. Not just my attention, but even the assistant secretary's attention. One day, he said, "I can't understand, here I've got all these countries like Argentina and Brazil," and he says, "I spend a remarkable amount of time on this little country of 400,000 people stuck off the northern coast of South America that nobody's ever heard

about. The secretary thinks I'm insane when I bring it up, but it's like a thorn in your foot. It's not going to kill you but it's so uncomfortable that you've got to deal with it." That was Suriname.

Q: What were you doing?

ALEXANDER: Trying to keep them on the straight and narrow. Flying down there, trying to buck them up, asking the ambassador to go in and talk to the prime minister and buck him up, and making sure that all the FBI investigations we were running there weren't stumbling all over one another. A lot of small but niggling, irritating issues that we had to deal with and most of them, again, involved the criminal activities of this former dictator who was still the strongman: drugs, prostitution, white slavery rings, arms smuggling, all kinds of crazy things.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: When you got there in '89, did we have a policy to try to do anything about this?

COWAL: Well, not really to rewrite history. I think we were encouraging and helpful. There had been some original Caribbean basin legislation passed, which was essentially giving them trade preferences, mainly for assembly industry, for the textile industry, which is important in the Caribbean. We sought to have all of them sort of hang together enough to do one trade agreement with the United States, and then to renew that trade agreement. That was somewhat helpful, then. As drugs became a bigger issue, we certainly tried to provide some of the fiber optic network that would allow the Jamaicans to talk to the Trinidadians or the Barbadians or the St. Kittians by radio and by fax and by phone.

All roads lead to Miami, but the roads aren't very good that lead between Jamaica and Barbados. To sort of foster and to provide the infrastructure for a better law enforcement network, in our own interest – I think it was in our own interest – but I think what we've discovered with the drug business all over the world is it can't be just coming through you. The beginning, I think, of the whole war on drugs, going back to Nixon, probably,

and certainly through Reagan, there was a tremendous dialog of the deaf, where the United States of course – still does, to a certain extent – blames the producer countries. The producer countries say, “Hey, it’s not our problem. If your young people didn’t want to consume it, we wouldn’t be growing it, would we? And besides, we don’t have drug addicts. It doesn’t affect us.”

I think the shortsightedness of that point of view began to be addressed in the years that I was there. The Caribbean are not producers, but there are two ways for drugs to get to the United States. One is through Mexico and the other is through the Caribbean, so I was really handling both sides of that portfolio, therefore very drug related. I think that the transit countries, as well as the producer countries, began to understand the terrible effects, how distorting that amount of money to the Caribbean economies. Suddenly somebody is getting paid enormous amounts of money to close your eye when the boat goes through, or as paid mules and shippers.

They began to catch some of the really low-level folks, the poor Jamaican women who would take a few kilos in their suitcases and go to the United States. Of course, it’s much harder to catch the real traffickers, because they’re much more clever at what they do. At any rate, I think through our working with all of the countries of the Caribbean, both on trade issues and on law enforcement issues, we have done something to encourage a better dialog between us.

CHILE

ROBERT S. STEVEN
Chile Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1977-1979)

Mr. Steven was born in Massachusetts and raised there and in Rhode Island. He graduated from Brown University and served in the US Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. Mr. Steven became a specialist Latin America, where he served in Mexico, Chile and Argentina. He also served in Burma, Vietnam and Japan and had several senior assignments at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Steven was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001

Q: Were there any other issues that you got involved in on Chile besides the Letelier case?

STEVEN: Well, the overall human rights issues. There was an effort, driven considerably by Pat Darien in Human Rights, Human Affairs, HA, at the time and her cohorts, who were pressing, as they properly should have, the importance of the human rights. But it went to the point where - I do remember specifically one case - there had been a *Carabinero* officer, police officer in Chile that I knew well, a good source, a friend even, very, very proper in the sense that he was 100 percent for his own government, but he was able to put things in perspective for me at times. He was a good friend who was

personally involved. He proposed to go to the States for a tour on narcotics issues. Narcotics were one of the few issues that we were still able to engage the government with at that point. The military government had drastically reduced the narcotics traffic coming out of Chile very simply. As I mentioned earlier, in one incident they simply shot the traffickers, and that was that. But there were still concerns, and we were working with them. This officer, the *Carabinero* was in a senior position able to help influence this, and we thought it would be useful to have him come here and do a tour in cooperation. And you could set it aside from the political side. He was not personally in any way considered hated. He'd never been associated with the repressions and the things that were done wrong. He spoke better English than I do, one of the few cases I've ever seen of a foreign military officer, a cop, in his house standing there proudly declaiming Shakespeare verse after verse in English. "Send him up. He's not tainted, he's not controversial. We need their help in the narcotics work. Let's do a tour, a two-week tour or something like that." And the HA Bureau fought to assist him. "No, this is Chile." I said, "It's not Chile. This is a specific non-controversial officer who should be allowed to come." And they killed it, simply on these mindless sanctions against Chile. I think if they had their way, they would have broken off diplomatic relations - not a sensible attitude at all.

CHARLES ANTHONY GILLESPIE, JR.
Ambassador
Chile (1988-1991)

Charles Anthony Gillespie Jr., was born in Long Beach, California in March, 1935. He graduated from UCLA in 1958 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Following a six year term with the U.S. Army, he entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and was nominated by President Reagan as Ambassador to Colombia in 1985. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to the Philippines, Indonesia, Belgium, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Chile.

GILLESPIE: Well, let's talk about narcotics. The way the narcotics question came up in Chile was kind of interesting. We had a very low-level program. George Franguli, who was chief of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) office in the Embassy in Bogota, had been the DEA or BNDD (Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs) representative in Chile at the time of the military coup d'etat which brought down the Allende Government in 1973. So there had been some interest in narcotics in Chile. In fact, interestingly enough, there had been a sort of Chilean narcotics cartel that had handled a lot of the financial dealings and the money from the drugs that were produced north of Chile. Some of that financial skill and knowledge, I guess, moved up to Colombia, when the military government was established in Chile in 1973 and really tightened down on the Chilean drug business. I should add that Chile is not a drug producing area. They produce marijuana in Chile, but nothing else.

Q: Was Chile at all tied in to the Bolivian connection?

GILLESPIE: When I arrived in Chile, we had a very modest drug operation in the Embassy. We had one or maybe two people there from DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration). We had no narcotics unit from the State Department. Reporting on narcotics was handled as part of the duties of the political section. Political officers kind of followed the situation and tried to find out what was going on. The DCM (deputy chief of mission) was the narcotics coordinator, as is the case at most Foreign Service posts. He dealt with the vice-minister of the interior, first with the military government and later with the civilian government.

My recollection of the beginning of my direct concern with the narcotics situation in Chile began on a July day in 1989. The plebiscite had been held in July, 1989, I guess, and there were going to be elections in December, 1989. The transition was already under way. I received a phone call from foreign minister, Hernan Felipe Errasuritz. He said: "I wonder if you could come over to the Foreign Ministry and see me, if not this afternoon, then maybe tomorrow." I looked at my calendar and said that I really couldn't come that afternoon. He said: "That's all right. Why don't you come over at 10:00 AM tomorrow, and we'll have a cup of coffee." I thought that this was an interesting kind of development. This was the man with whom we had dealt on the issue of cyanide contamination of Chilean grapes and all of that. I had developed a pretty good relationship with him, given the overall state of affairs.

So on the following day I went over to see the foreign minister. In this case I went by myself because he had asked me to come over for a cup of coffee. I didn't take an officer with me to take notes and didn't really know what he was going to talk about.

The foreign minister closed the door to his office, gave me a cup of coffee, and said: "I want to talk to you about narcotics. I am really concerned." By the way, earlier in 1989 there had been a seizure of a boat off the coast of the northern part of Chile, with a substantial quantity of narcotics on board. The Chilean Navy, which runs the Chilean Coast Guard, had seized, if I remember correctly, maybe 100 kilograms of cocaine, or something like that. It was a considerable amount. The foreign minister evidently wanted to talk about relatively recent narcotics developments.

The foreign minister said: "We have pretty good indications that there are more narcotics going through Chile, headed elsewhere, than any of us know about. And that's a problem. However, what I'm really concerned about are three things. First of all, we know that our high school children up in northern Chile, near the Bolivian and Peruvian border, are getting access to the equivalent of crack cocaine. That is the result of drug smuggling destined for other places. We think that the payoff is increasingly in narcotics to the Chilean side. Instead of giving these Chileans money, the narcotics traffickers give them some drugs. That is very bad."

He said: "The second thing that disturbs me is that we really are an economic success. Whatever happens in the elections later this year, we're going to continue to be an economic success. I'm convinced of it. Our levels of disposable income are going up. Under those circumstances it's going to be possible for more people to buy drugs in the

entertainment, recreation, and tourist areas. There will be more of an internal market in Chile and greater consumption. I am afraid that this will begin to change our society and that it will be a real problem."

Then he said: "The other thing that bothers me is that there are beginning to appear in Santiago and in Vina del Mar, on the coast, people who are buying property and businesses, people who are putting money in our banks and who are driving big Mercedes automobiles. I'm worried about the penetration of our economy by drug money and the laundering of drug money. We want to have an open banking system and don't want to have a lot of disclosure. However, I'm really concerned about it. Whatever happens in the elections, I'm not going to continue in office as foreign minister. However, during my last months in office and on a personal basis, I would appreciate your thinking about how you can help me and us to learn a little more about this traffic and perhaps begin to get some programs in place to deal with it."

So I thanked him, and we talked further about this matter. I went back to the Embassy and talked to David Greenlee, the DCM and also the Embassy narcotics coordinator. We talked about what might be done with both DEA, the INM (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters) in the Department of State, and others.

About four weeks later, in August, 1989, Senator Richard Lugar (Republican, Indiana) came on a scheduled visit to Chile. He met with foreign minister Errasuritz, who mentioned the conversation he had had with me on narcotics but didn't go into it in any great detail. Nevertheless, Senator Lugar was interested. Then we went to the offices of the *Concertacion*, the coalition of democratic parties which sought to elect a democratic government. There still wasn't a formal declaration of Patricio Aylwin's candidacy for President, but he was President of the Christian Democratic Party, the largest group in *Concertacion*. The assumption was that he would probably be the *Concertacion* candidate, but this had not yet been officially decided. I felt that it was important for Senator Lugar to meet different elements of the democratic opposition. By the way, I don't know whether I have mentioned this, but I was the first American ambassador to Chile to meet with the socialists. I made sure that there was a meeting between Senator Lugar and the head of the Socialist Party.

When we got to Patricio Aylwin's office and sat down with him and about three of his key lieutenants, the conversation was going along about lots of things, including the transition to democracy, relations with the Chilean military, and human rights. Senator Lugar is a broad-gauged man interested in all of these things and very knowledgeable. A man named Carlos Figueroa, who was very active in the Christian Democratic Party, was the campaign manager of the *Concertacion* group. He was later appointed Chilean ambassador to Argentina, and now is minister of the interior. During the visit with Patricio Aylwin and his associates, Figueroa said: "There is a matter, Senator Lugar, that we'd like to talk with you about, and that is narcotics." We had no formal agenda for this meeting, but narcotics were a subject which we had not expected to have raised with us. Patricio Aylwin, who doesn't speak English particularly well, though Carlos Figueroa

does speak English, said, in Spanish: "I really would like to have Carlos Figueroa set out our view on narcotics for you, Senator."

Figueroa's presentation on narcotics was almost a tape recording of the comments made by foreign minister Errasuritz to me. He started with Chilean youth in northern Chile, increasing signs of drug consumption in the beach areas, disposable income apparently going up making it possible for people to buy drugs and thereby fueling internal drug consumption, and the threat posed by drug money to the financial system and the economy. It was a repetition, almost point by point, of what Errasuritz had said to me. Aylwin, Figueroa, and their associates said that they were going to be elected, were going to take over the Chilean government, and wanted to work very closely with the United States on narcotics problems. There had been no apparent connection between foreign minister Errasuritz and Carlos Figueroa, and I hadn't told the Christian Democratic side what the foreign minister had said.

In effect there are two police forces in Chile. There are the *Carabineros*, a national, uniformed police something like the French *Gendarmerie Nationale*. They are everywhere in the country. They don't have a plain clothes, detective squad at all. There is another force called the investigations police, a plain clothes, criminal investigative body.

On the basis of information that DEA and others had provided, my predecessor as ambassador, Harry Barnes, had tried to persuade President Pinochet to fire the head of the Investigations Police, because he was a crook. The Investigations Police were penetrated to a fare-thee-well by narcotics traffickers, prostitution rings, bootleggers, and so forth. It was a thoroughly bad group. However, Pinochet wouldn't do anything about the matter, probably because it was Ambassador Harry Barnes who asked him to do it, and Pinochet didn't like Harry.

In fact, after Patricio Aylwin was nominated candidate for President by *Concertacion*, I developed a pretty close relationship with him. We shared with him the information that we had about the director of the Investigations Police. Aylwin was not surprised. The man's reputation was bad, anyway. However, Aylwin was not aware of the depth and extent of the corruption in the Investigations Police. We were able to tell Aylwin that, as far as we could tell, the Carabineros, whatever else they had done, were not corrupt and had not been penetrated by the drug traffickers. He should be alert to the possibility that the Carabineros had also been penetrated by drugs traffickers, and this could happen. However, the U.S. did not have any information that this had happened to the Carabineros.

As I mentioned before, we had a very small anti-narcotics program in the Embassy, by Latin American standards. If I remember correctly, it amounted to a couple of hundred thousand dollars annually. David Greenlee, our narcotics coordinator, felt that this was hardly respectable and tried to have this anti-narcotics program budget increased. My recollection was that we had it increased a little bit. However, the fact is that the Chileans didn't want a lot of money. They wanted technical assistance. They wanted people whom

they might have some confidence in. Both the Pinochet people and the democrats wanted somebody to help them figure out ways to deal with the narcotics problem.

Remember that when I was in Colombia, my objective had always been to get the Colombian government to develop an anti-narcotics strategy, a strategic approach to the narcotics problem, as opposed to merely reacting to U.S. pressure and then the occasional problem of criminality in the bombings and the rest of it. In fact, ultimately, I was able to persuade the Colombian government to begin to develop an anti-narcotics strategy, but this didn't emerge until a year after I'd left Colombia.

So we tried to persuade the Chileans to develop an anti-narcotics strategy. I think that, given the nature of the problem in Chile, we were able to encourage them to do that. We were able to provide some in-kind help. However, one of our problems was that, right away, the Chileans wanted radio systems that had to be licensed under our export control regulations. This was prohibited by the Humphrey-Kennedy amendment, and so the Chilean government couldn't buy this equipment. That's another example of how these "wonderful" prohibitions and embargoes cut several ways.

GILLESPIE: Before we start on the Bush visit, let's go back in time a bit and pick up something that I don't think we covered and which relates to Chile and its economy. It has become a major thrust of U.S. policy in Latin America and, increasingly, on a global basis since then. That is, the Enterprise for the Americas initiative. This was really the brainchild of George Bush following a narcotics summit in late 1989 or early 1990 held in the Andean region, involving Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and other countries, possibly including Mexico.

When President Bush flew back to Washington from that meeting on Air Force One, he said: "We need to encourage the people of these Latin American countries to do something more against narcotics. We need to reward those who are helping us and hold out some carrots for others. I'd like to see if there is something that would be of use in that regard." Two things eventually emerged from that. The man on the airplane who really picked one of them up was David Mulford who, at that time, I recall, was the Under Secretary of Treasury for International Affairs. The two things that eventually came out of this conversation were the Andean Trade Preferences Act and President Bush's Enterprise for the Americas initiative.

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN
Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America
Washington, DC (1990-1993)

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogotá, where he was Deputy Chief of

Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: What about the economic enterprise democracy business, if you were doing that, in South America?

McLEAN: Well, to just touch on the fact that as part of it, we had another summit on drugs that increased. We had Venezuela and Mexico and San Antonio. Again it was in an election year in 1992, and that was a sort of capping at that particular point that we did have a drug strategy. The Enterprise in the Americas Initiative grew out of the fact that, when Bush went to the first drug summit in Cartagena, on the way back I'm told, I've been told by a couple sources, that he is not a man to get angry but he was annoyed clearly that he didn't have in his briefing books the material to reply to what the Latins wanted to talk about. The Latins wanted to talk about economic development. So he set everyone to work in late February of 1990 to come up with a program. I know we were interested in a program. We were interested in a program that would have elements that would encourage the Andean countries, Colombia specifically, to get on board and stay on board with this. We in fact had been pushing for an Andean preference plan, tariff preferences, and that was a good thing, and that had been announced as part of Bush's plan back in 1989 and was being pushed going through Congress. We also pushed special credits for the EXIM (Export-Import Bank), but I was on the phone continuously with Washington, specifically with USTR (U.S. Trade Representative), to try to shape this program that was coming out. And then I'm told, and in fact I was told specifically in late May, that the program had disappeared, it had been taken off the table. We had had all these inter-agency meetings, and suddenly everything had stopped. What had stopped was that it was taken away and brought over to the Treasury Department and put into this initiative, which was an initiative to propose to Latin America that there be one free trade area from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska, in effect taking the free trade aspect of NAFTA and pushing it outward. So that caught an almost enthusiasm in Latin America, because the old model of protectionism and state industries, basic economic nationalism, wasn't leading anywhere good for Latin America, and they were ripe for these types of ideas, and they saw NAFTA and they saw the potential for success in that, so they bought on board, and it was a very exciting time, and it gave us an awful lot of oomph in the area. We began negotiating bilateral agreements with each of these countries to have consultative mechanisms with them. I had proposed, and it was adopted in some of them, that they have business groups as one of the dimensions of the dialogue that was set up, and we went forward. One of the first questions was which country was to be the next country after NAFTA, after Mexico, for these negotiations. I pushed very strongly for Chile, which had recently been democratized, which had also made many of the economic sacrifices to adopt a reform plan to open up its markets, and I thought we should give them a double reward as being the first country. It was very difficult to get that done. There was major conflict. USTR did not want to choose Chile because they thought that negotiating with Congress about one country would be as difficult as about many countries, and in some ways they were correct. On the other hand, I felt very strongly that we needed to give Chile that particular encouragement. President Bush was

then going to make a trip to the region very soon after I got there. The trip was postponed because of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, but he eventually did make the trip in December of 1987 to Brazil, Argentina and Chile with enormous success. It was particular success in Chile, where the President did agree to say openly that Chile would be the first candidate. That came about basically because Ambassador Gillespie, who now had gone from Colombia to Chile, came in and had a very strong showdown with USTR, one of the most heated meetings I've ever attended during my government service.

COLOMBIA

Lewis M. (Jack) White
Consular Officer
Bogota, Colombia (1952-1954)

Lewis M. White was born in August 1921 in Virginia. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946 he finished his bachelor's degree at Georgetown University. His career included positions in Colombia, New Caledonia, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Morocco. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2001.

Q: Was there a drug problem at all?

WHITE: I don't recall in any big drug problem like they and we have now. We did have to inspect coffins in which bodies were being shipped back to the States to see if there was some contraband inside. I know of one case where we had an airplane accident and an employee of Texaco's plane ran into a military plane and he was killed. I was supposed to go and check whether there was just his body in the coffin or whether they stuck something else in there, too. That went back to the old days of Prohibition, I guess. I don't recall any great concern about drugs at that time.

ROBERT W. DREXLER
Vice Consul
Barranquilla (1957-1958)

Robert Drexler was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his Bachelor's degree from Harvard University before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Geneva. Mr. Drexler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Could you talk about your Consular business -- the American community, problems, visas, Consular stories?

...There was a port, and we had to deal with crew list visas, and that sort of thing. The one thing we didn't have to deal with was drugs or narcotics. There was a lot of smuggling going on, and we had no liquor privileges through the embassy. They didn't

help us in any respect, so the liquor that I and the Consul served was brought in by well known, reputable, dependable smugglers, who landed the cases on the beach in up the coast. Even the Collector of Customs at that time would proudly show off neckties and things that he had acquired and were known to be smuggled in. So there was a well established contraband operation, with no stigma attached to this type of activity. And that has had some implications for the drug problem, which was 20 years in the future, but which arose in that very same area. The criminal class was highly developed then, not so much in Barranquilla as in Medellin. It was quite sophisticated, and even then was known for its skill in counterfeiting American dollar bills, which brought regularly to us those Secret Service officers, from that branch of the service that deals with counterfeiting, or did then. And so, this same criminal class and its sophistication figured again 20 years later when the great drug cartels were formed. The use of small aircraft became vital in the early stages of the cocaine trafficking. The small airports everywhere, which were so vital at that time, just to get around, became vital for carrying the stuff to the United States. So, looking back at that period, I can see, so to speak, a kind of infrastructure already there, waiting to be developed when the drug cartels moved in. There was also a general disrespect for authority, a sort of sneaking admiration for people who got by with things, petty criminals and so on. This was also a factor.

Q: During the Rojas regime, did you have any problems with protection and welfare, arrest cases, or anything like that?

DREXLER: Yes, we did. Americans would turn up and that was the first time I ever heard the word "busted." An American called me and asked me to send a telegram to his mother, telling her "I got busted in Cartagena." And of course, I found out soon enough. The Colombian police were very good, then as later, when I was DCM, at picking out nervous American youths at the airports. They had a profile, of course, I needn't describe it to you, of the kind that was attracted to drugs there. And so they were routinely picked up. In those days it was marijuana, if anything. And I would sometimes have to go to the Secret Police headquarters to try to work things out for Americans. Sometimes also they would come in -- we had the whole north coast, and there were many little ports, and surprisingly young Americans would come all over from Panama, or God knows how, and wind up in these small ports where there was no Customs or anything, and then make their way to Barranquilla, and had to regularize their status.

VIRON PETER VAKY
Chief Political Officer
Bogota (1959-1963)

Ambassador Viron Peter Vaky served in the U.S. Army in World War II, studied at Georgetown University and the University of Chicago and entered the Foreign Service in 1949. He was posted to Ecuador, Argentina and Colombia and served in Washington, DC. Ambassador Vaky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: Also Castro was at his real prime at that time. Did you feel that there or not?

VAKY: Yes, you did. You know there were rumors that Castro got his start in the Bogotazo when he was supposed to have been there as a student, but I don't know if that is true or not. But, yes, that was always a matter of concern. What would Castro do if he were going to be exporting revolution, what would you do there when you had an insurgency. The beginning of the Kennedy counterinsurgency stuff had its first sort of test in Colombia. Here was an insurgency that had gone on for a long time and the political violence had been muted so a lot of the country was pacified, but you still had these groups that were beginning to be...a lot of it was pure banditry...the start of ideological stuff. So it was a matter of great interest.

So it was an interesting country and an important country in all of those senses. What was happening was important to know.

Q: I take it that at that point drugs was not a particular problem?

VAKY: That came in my ambassadorship to Colombia.

EDMUND MURPHY
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bogotá (1966-1968)

Edmund Murphy was educated at the University of California, Berkeley. He began his career in the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in 1942, but left 9 months later to serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He returned to that office in 1946, and subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Foreign Service, including Policy Officer for Latin America. He served in Argentina, Haiti, Colombia and Finland. He later became a Senior Inspector for the Agency. This interview was conducted by Allen Hansen in January 1990.

Q: Now, in July of '66 you were then assigned as country public affairs officer in Bogotá, Colombia. Was there any inkling in those days that narcotic trafficking would some day become a major problem for both Colombia and the U.S.?

MURPHY: None whatever. Nobody ever mentioned the subject of drugs during the time I stayed in Colombia.

Q: What were the major issues and concerns with regard to Colombian-U.S. relations at that time? I suppose the Alliance of Progress was one of them.

MURPHY: A lot of our work was on the Alliance for Progress in Colombia. We had a big publications program specifically on that subject and we also did a lot with AID and with student groups in Colombia, because coincident with emphasis on the Alliance for Progress there was a push for more programs aimed at students.

ROBERT A. STEVENSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogotá (1967-1971)

Robert A. Stevenson was educated at the University of North Carolina where he majored in foreign trade. He also earned a master's degree from Harvard. During World War II, he served as an ensign in the Navy Supply Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947 and was assigned to Costa Rica. He also served in Ecuador, Germany, and Chile. He was appointed Ambassador to Malawi in 1974. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 1989.

Q: There just wasn't an awareness, because it was not a major problem. We're speaking now of 1967-71. This interview is in 1989, in which Colombia is top priority as far as being a source of drugs, and there's violence there within the country and all that. So in that perspective, we see quite differently.

STEVENSON: The system was really functioning quite well. The elections were reasonably honest. The court system, as in all of Latin America, is very defective. The legal system is very defective. I can remember a good Colombian friend, a lawyer, who was a very sharp lawyer, saying, "Every judge in Colombia has his price. Prices differ, but every judge has his price." This is the sort of thing you had to contend with down there. So it was hard for the little man, as Graham Greene points out, to get justice. It's hard, really.

CHARLES W. GROVER
Principal Officer
Medellin (1971-1973)

Charles Grover was raised in Gloversville, New York after several years of moving when his father was permanently assigned. He earned a major in American History from Antioch College in Ohio and then received his master's in history from the University of Oregon some years later. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956 and in 1971 served as principal officer in Medellin, Colombia. In addition to Colombia he was posted to Bolivia, Spain, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador.

GROVER: That area was largely without law, and I think what happened was that spread from the Bay of Uraba through the very enterprising Medellin business community. The remarkable thing about Medellin is, what good businessmen they are for whatever they happen to be engaged in. And if it's textiles, it's one of the major textile cities in the western hemisphere; they're very good businessmen. And then, if it's drugs they are very good at that too, unfortunately. That's how it became in Medellin.

ROBERT L. CHATTEN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS

Bogota (1972-1976)

Robert L. Chatten received an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of New Mexico and went on to receive a masters degree in communications and journalism from Stanford. He was sworn in as a Foreign Service Officer in 1959. In 1972, he was stationed in Colombia as the new PAO in Bogota. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Bolivia and Ecuador

Q: What kind of programming did you people develop when you saw the birth of the drug industry or at least the early stages of it?

CHATTEN: We did a number of things. One of them was to determine how much assistance we could get from Washington in putting together media and speaker programs and other kinds of educational and outreach efforts. We learned that it wasn't easy. It's hard to believe in terms of subsequent developments but it was perceived in Washington as our local problem. Our biggest asset was an Area Office that said "OKAY, you're the PAO. Go ahead and spend your program resources the way local circumstances dictate." If I could justify something on those terms, I could do it, but I got precious little institutional support from USIA.

Drug trade did not skew everyone's attention upon Colombia, as it later did and so there were still healthier things that you could talk about. There came to be a time in which you couldn't mention Colombia in Washington without first dealing with drugs. This engendered a great deal of negativism about the whole nature of the relationship, and came to dominate everything. We didn't have later levels of security problems pressing down upon our physical presence. That was before we closed down operations in other cities.

When we went, there were class A binational centers in Cartagena, Barranquilla, Medellin, Cali, and Bogotá. This put officers in key places all around the country, and we were able to approach Colombia from a somewhat broader base.

I could still come and go freely from downtown, and walk into the offices of newspaper editors with whom we had very cordial relationships. Even though ultimately I came to need a bodyguard in our last years there, it was a very different atmosphere than in Colombia of a few years later.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Public Affairs Book Officer, USIS
Bogotá (1973-1974)

Director, Cultural Center, USIS
Bogotá (1974-1978)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

COWAL: Despite the fact that they had these terrible internecine sort of political battles, they were able to leave the economy out of it, and I say, that's probably why they could survive as well as they've survived. The drug thing began when I was there, and I think we didn't quite know it, we didn't quite recognize it. I remember the first manifestation of it being up on the coast, up in Cartagena and Barranquilla, just traveling, doing some weekends. Those were beautiful places to go. And going to someone's house and realizing that all the faucets in the bathrooms were gold, and so you suddenly had all these people with so much money, and nothing to invest it in. So they had wonderful art collections and gold faucets and stuff in the bathroom. You just sort of said, "Well, what's all this about?" But you didn't know.

I left in 1978 and still didn't know, I must say, and went back for my first visit in 1982, and I'll never forget what one of my Colombian friends told me – '81 or '82. And I said, "Well, you know, Pedro," or whatever his name was, "in the three or four years since I've been gone, what's changed here? Tell me about how is Bogotá different than when I was here." And he said, "Well, you know, Sally, when you lived here, if you were walking down the street and you see somebody coming down the street toward you in a Mercedes, you waved, because you might not know exactly whose Mercedes that was, but you knew you pretty much knew everybody who had a Mercedes." And he said, "You don't wave anymore, because those aren't the people. It isn't our friends who own the Mercedes, it isn't the doctor and the lawyer and the head of the business corporation, it's the drug traffickers."

I thought that was always very profound, that now the Mercedes are in different hands. You know, it was obviously already happening before 1978, but in the years '78 to '82 was when it got a really, really, really strong foothold in the country.

Q: You mentioned the violence, La Violencia. From what I've gathered, the Colombians were renowned sort of in the United States as being more violent. They and the Jamaicans were sort of within gangs or what have you. They're more likely to pick up a submachine-gun than anybody else.

COWAL: Well, as I said, drug trafficking – and, of course, drug trafficking is also linked to arms trafficking. A whole lot of drugs going out of the country are paying for arms coming in, so the fact that they had a lot of drug trafficking certainly caused an escalation

in the number and sophistication of the arms going in. The other thing about Colombia, I mean, one of the things that were totally not successful about it, was a large number of orphans and abandoned children.

I suppose this is in part the anti-abortion policies of the Catholic Church, but there were more children born than could apparently be cared for by their families. So I can remember, even when I lived there, that there would be these gangs of very young children, starting maybe at age six or seven, who were called *gamines* (street kids), and they would be on the streets, and they would usually live under the protection of an older boy, let's say, or an older child. These were mostly boys, not exclusively, but mostly.

ROBERT W. DREXLER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogotá (1975-78)

Robert Drexler was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his Bachelor's degree from Harvard University before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Geneva. Mr. Drexler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Today is the 19th of March, 1996. Bob, we're off to Colombia. First of all, what did the Drug Enforcement Agency, which was relatively new at this period say to you? It wasn't the powerhouse it now is.

DREXLER: Yes it was. They showed much more interest in my assignment to Bogotá than the ARA bureau did. So I for the first time realized that drug enforcement might be an important part of my job. But even with the DEA briefing, I didn't think it was going to be the major concern. And when I arrived in Bogotá, it was not in fact a major concern of the Ambassador.

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Q: By the way, had the desk said anything about drugs?

DREXLER: No, I did not really talk to them about that. I was also sobered by a briefing by Security, who told me about the security risks in Bogotá, which I hadn't known about since I'd come from Geneva, and that I couldn't drive my own car; that I would have

bodyguards 24 hours a day, and wherever I went that my house was under special protection, and so it was. I had an armored car, a policeman with a submachine gun in the front seat, and when I was in charge there was a follow-up car with four more bodyguards behind. When I got to Bogotá I was issued a riot gun, which was an automatic sawed-off shotgun, and a .38 caliber pistol. All of this was laid out for me by SY, which also had a sobering effect. When I got to Bogotá, I was welcomed by the Ambassador at the airport. I'm surprised that he chose me, although he probably had to take someone from outside of ARA under the GLOP program. I did not know him, nor he me. He was Viron "Pete" Vaky, an outstanding diplomat. I replaced Robert White, who went on to become ambassador to Paraguay and El Salvador, and a very outspoken liberal minded expert on Latin America. He has a very strong personality, and I was told that Ambassador Vaky was looking for a DCM with a less strong personality, sort of vanilla flavored DCM, and I guess I filled that prescription. But anyway, he welcomed me and my wife, and we developed a very good working relationship, and I had and have great respect for him. At that time, the embassy was mostly concerned with trade and aid issues. There are always trade problems, having to do with quotas, and reduction of duties, and so on. In the case of aid, we had a very large AID mission because Colombia had been one of the pilot countries for the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s. The Colombians loved planning, and that sort of thing, and they had experienced a number of different US AID mission strategies for development. At the time I arrived, the AID mission was very large. In fact, it occupied the whole former embassy, from which we moved out when the new chancery was built. The Embassy was also concerned with crime problems -- kidnapping in particular, because the American citizen vice-president of Sears was being held by kidnappers when I arrived. This was a common Colombian crime. I myself narrowly escaped them a couple of years later. I found the DEA mission in the basement, in a crowded office which had formerly been the senior officers' dining room, off the cafeteria. It was headed by a Cuban-American, and he had about four other officers, and their job was to train the Colombians in controlling narcotics traffickers. They themselves could not engage, of course, in any police-type missions, or enforcement or interdiction operations, and they had a small budget and were making small progress in training the Colombians. But this was not one of our major concerns at that time. Shortly after I arrived, I went with the Ambassador to present the AID mission's grand new aid plan for the coming year or the coming years, to the Minister of Finance. He shocked us by saying, in effect, thank you, we don't want your AID mission anymore. We appreciate it but you can close your shop and go home. The Ambassador was totally surprised by this...

... I should explain that the drug cartels, as we came to know them, were formed at this time. The mid-1970s were the formative time. Before that time, marijuana had been the main drug industry. About 70% of all the marijuana coming to the United States came from Colombia, the northern part. But then, the market switched to cocaine. The two Colombian entrepreneurs were Carlos Lehder and Fabio Ochoa who made common cause with the Medellin underworld. There had always been a highly developed underworld in these big cities, counterfeiters, kidnappers, and so on. And they began to form the infamous Medellin Cartel, to get a monopoly over the supply side. We saw that this was happening; DEA saw that this was happening, and tried to encourage the Colombian

police to crack down on them, but it was impossible for me to go to the Colombian president, or to deal with Cabinet ministers. In the first place, Bogotá was highly protocol conscious, very snobbish, and this was something, quite properly of course, for the Chief of Mission to do. And, in fact, it would have been regarded as a slighting if someone less than the Chief of Mission tried to go off to see a person of higher rank. But Sanchez had not developed any rapport with the president nor his top officials. So we did not have that high-level access that we needed to give orders to the Colombian police to alert them to the problem and to begin to take cooperative measures with us. Even if Vaky had still been there, it would have been tough, because as I said, President Lopez's mindset was against getting together with us on a new aid venture. More basically he felt, with reason, that this was an American problem in its origin. That you should curb it on the demand side, and any help he was going to give us was going to be a special favor, and if we wanted help, we would have to pay for it, provide the means and all of the equipment. So we tried to get this, but it was very tough, and such programs as we had going made some progress, but not much. Meanwhile, this very large operation that I had been briefed on in Washington by DEA, was initiated and was a colossal flop, because the drug traffickers had already penetrated the Peruvian, Bolivian, Ecuadorian, and Colombian law enforcement agencies involved. And it was easy to do, since so many countries and people were taking part. So this had failed. We tried to warn the Colombians that this drug trafficking would pose a danger to them too, and we got USIA to make a film which was designed to show how they might become consumers of cocaine, just as Americans were. We misjudged the threat to Colombia. That is, we thought that it was going to be a spread of addiction, when instead it was the spread of corruption in the country. The film was shown, but it didn't do much good, and we weren't doing much good.

Q: What was the genesis of this?

DREXLER: We never knew. The assassin was an American. We think that he was an informant, probably, that DEA had probably found him no longer useful or undependable, and that led to a dispute between the two, at a time when the Special Agent was alone in his office. Having moved to this new building, they had less than adequate security arrangements, not even metal detectors at the door at that time. They probably had a quarrel, Octavio was murdered, and then, as I said, the fellow then killed himself. It is possible that the assassin didn't mean to survive, because we found in his hotel room, that he had piled all his clothes up neatly, and left a farewell note to his father. Typical of the situation I faced, that very night Ambassador Sanchez was due to leave for Barranquilla to reopen the Consulate formally. It had been closed just before I got there, it was my original post in the Foreign Service, of course, and then we had to open it at great expense again because it was needed, especially in the drug war. But Ambassador Sanchez wanted to stay in Bogotá to console Gonzalez's widow, who was distraught. And among my many concerns then was to get Ambassador Sanchez out of Bogotá and up to Barranquilla, not only because he had an important function to perform there to open the Consulate, but I wanted him off my hands and out of the way while I dealt with this killing. So I finally persuaded him to leave and was able to attend to the matter without detraction from Sanchez. So this was an example of how I was obliged to operate with such an Ambassador. Interestingly, the Colombians never sent any

condolence message, not a wreath, not an expression of interest even, in Gonzalez's assassination. Only some months later, when we had an altercation with the Colombian President over a kidnapped Peace Corps volunteer, did the President send us a message, in which he pointed out that the killer of Gonzalez was an American, which, he thought just went to show that drug trafficking was an American problem. So that's how the situation dragged on. We were not able to really work out any good cooperation with the Colombians while Sanchez was there. The Ambassador was, of course, concerned as he saw the drug problem growing. He was shocked, of course, by the killing of the DEA agent. But he did not involve himself directly in our efforts to change the situation. His status and standing in the community fell continually, and I became rather distressed by this situation.

DREXLER: The Colombians made it known that they would really like a career man, and preferably not a Hispanic, and the Department was not about to cave in. As a result, I found myself as Chargé d'affaires for about 10 months of 1977, which was again, a formative period for the drug cartels.

DREXLER: Mrs. Carter came, and the visit was quite successful. I found her totally charming and a very intelligent person, with most winning ways. To spend five minutes with her was as if I had known her for 20 years. Undemanding, but very professional, serious minded, articulate. She turned her brief visit with the President to the greatest possible advantage. I think she charmed him, and I think he realized he had made a mistake in not taking her seriously. So that visit was a plus when she came she stayed at the Ambassadorial residence, which was vacant of course, and was to be for some time. I met privately with her before we were to go see the President, and she told me that she had orders, instructions from her husband, President Carter, to take a very hard line with Colombia. I should explain that in our efforts to get some equipment for the Colombians and activate their drug interdiction programs, we'd gotten \$3 million to buy them three helicopters and some related equipment. And it took a long, long time to get it delivered. And of course Lopez would always throw this delay in our faces, saying, "You say you want us to help, but you're not giving us the equipment. You're not fulfilling your promises. Where are the helicopters?" So I thought, well, Mrs. Carter was coming and we could formalize the helicopter arrangements, but she had orders from President Carter to tell Lopez that there would be no helicopters. She was to say also that there would be no further assistance of any kind unless Lopez dealt with the official corruption that the embassy had reported was spreading throughout his government. I was horrified, and I argued with her. I said, "There is corruption, it is growing, but it's going to be a long-term problem. We simply must have the helicopters because he will regard it as a broken promise. Any chance of getting the President's cooperation will be jeopardized if you take this line, and moreover, at the working level, the ordinary Colombians, that is, the Colonels and the police and so on, have been counting on this equipment, and they really need it. If we deny it, they will be demoralized and will not believe any further pledges that we make to them." So I pleaded with her to not follow her husband's instructions. And to my surprise, she agreed, and told me that she would not, after all, take this line. And she didn't. She met with the President, she touched on the subject of corruption lightly, and went on with confirming that the helicopters would come, as they did. I was

of course pleased, though it was a close-run thing. Later I regretted this, and I think I made a mistake, that they were right all along in Washington, that they should have drawn the line then, that it would have been better to have a confrontation with Lopez at that point, because when the helicopters were delivered -- and I received them, I stood there getting sprinkled with holy water at a military airfield when they were turned over - I was immediately invited on a joy ride with the Colombian Military high command, who it was clear to me thought that they were getting some wonderful new toys, and that they were likely going to divert these helicopters to their own pursuits, rather than have them used for drug interdiction. And I had a constant battle with the Colombians over the helicopter support facilities. They wanted us to provide not only the helicopters but all the support costs as well. And Ambassador Sheldon Vance would get on the phone and reprimand me for even considering this. He said this was unthinkable. And I said, "Well, Ambassador, you just don't understand it. The Colombians will just let those helicopters rust away, unless we provide what they want. We are at their mercy." And he grumbled, but we did this. We provided the additional support but it became clear to me that the helicopters weren't going to be effectively used.

Then, the CIA Station Chief came to me with a plan for CIA involvement in anti-narcotics work. And it involved an intelligence operation. There's no point in my giving the details about it, but he asked me to approve it, and said it had been approved by the 40 Committee, which was the sub-Cabinet level group that passed on clandestine operations abroad that were sensitive. And this was not to be made known to the DEA. So I approved it, and we started it. It was, in essence, a fine operation in which we used a very small number of trusted Colombian law enforcement officials, who we could monitor closely so as to ensure that they weren't being turned against us or corrupted, or that we would see it when they were; and in which we collected intelligence on the contacts between the drug traffickers and high-level Colombian officials. The idea was to pass this on in Washington. The program worked very well. The intelligence it gathered was horrifying, because it detailed the rapid spread of corruption. And of course, this depressed me all the more. Meanwhile, I got constant visitors, including members of the Congressional Special Committee on Narcotics, Congressman Gilman and Congressman Lester Wolf, who subjected me to almost a congressional type of investigation and interrogation in our conference room, putting a microphone before me, recording my remarks, and throwing questions at me which were designed to show that I and my staff were not doing enough to curb the flow of narcotics to the United States. And their final conclusion was that it was bad that the embassy was left in the hands of a *Chargé d'Affaires*. We should have an ambassador. Of course, I would agree with that, but we know why we didn't have one. The Congressmen came down frequently, and were a heavy burden, particularly for my wife, since their wives were inveterate shoppers. My wife and the other wives were almost exhausted by their demands. I had no doubt that Congressman Gilman was sincerely interested in narcotics. He was sympathetic and seemed to understand my problems and the difficulties we faced. Mr. Wolf, I always thought was grandstanding it, and was insensitive and demanding, and mostly liked to hear himself talk into the record.

Nonetheless, they went to see the President, and he brushed them off again, and so we

drifted along. To make a long story short, finally a new ambassador was nominated. It was Diego Asencio, the DCM in Caracas. The State Department had agreed, in other words, to the Colombian demand that it be a career diplomat, but they would not accept that he should be non-Hispanic. But Diego, of course, met the bill, because he was Hispanic from Spain, he was not Mexican or Puerto Rican. So he came to Colombia. Of course he was a very capable professional, very bright, hard driving, and he sort of reestablished the relationship we had had with Lopez under Vaky. But by then it was too late. The corruption of the officials, the organization of the cartels had gone so far, that it could no longer be reversed. And as I say in the book I've written on this subject, I think that it was in late 1976 and 1977 that the balance of forces theoretically was still in favor of the law enforcement side. That is to say, if the United States and the Colombians could have effectively allied their law enforcement and judicial forces against the cartel at that time, we could probably have swamped them, or at least forced them to go someplace else; disrupted them at a time when they were very weak and disorganized, and still eliminating their own rivals. But by the end of 1977, the balance of forces, I think, was in their favor, and it couldn't be reversed. And it still hasn't been. Ambassador Asencio arrived with his own plan to fight the narcotics problem. He said to me, "I may not be able to stop the flow, but they won't be able to accuse me of not having tried." And he was right in both cases. He unveiled to me an ambitious plan involving more US government entities, Coast Guard, Customs, and so on. The plan also involved the Colombian military, which I was opposed to, because I feared that they would be corrupted next. Asencio also thought he could work effectively with the new Colombian president, Turbay, about whom I had doubts. Ambassador Asencio, who was and still is a friend of mine, had no previous experience in Colombia, and didn't know what we had been up to. He didn't know, for example, that I had met privately with the Colombian President and Peter Benzinger, the DEA Administrator, who had come down secretly, and that we arranged a completely off the record, two-on-one meeting with the President, in which we turned over to him a list of officials of his government we believed had been corrupted. I didn't know if he would throw us out of his office or what he would do. But he looked at the list and said very gravely that this confirmed his worst suspicions, but he took no action. He never even asked me for further information on the officials, and none of these people, to my knowledge, were ever removed from office.

So I thought that Ambassador Asencio's plan was completely unrealistic. I prepared a dissent channel cable to this effect and took it into him. I said that I thought that this would not work, that the drug war couldn't be won in Colombia, that the decisive battles had to be fought in the States. We should have some programs going on in Colombia, like the small intelligence operation I just described to you and had started, but we should collect intelligence for the purpose of interdiction of these people in the United States, interdiction of their persons, and their funds, and so on, and just keep a small program going in Colombia. Asencio told me in the friendliest possible way that such a dissent telegram would ruin my career. Not that I would be fired, but I could say good-bye to any important assignment, because he said that in Washington the sentiment was so strong now, and so revved up behind anti-narcotics, that anyone who didn't share this view, and didn't have a can-do attitude, but had a defeatist attitude like mine, would be brushed aside and would be discredited. I should remind you that by that time, I had already lost

the assignment to Peking as DCM because of my disagreement with the Carter Administration's policy on China. And so, of course, this was a sobering thought, that I would suffer further in this connection. I was coming to the end of my assignment in Colombia, and of course, never expected to be involved in narcotics again, but I agonized over this, and finally we thought of a way out. Asencio said, "We're going to have a team of inspectors coming, it's going to be a new policy inspection, not nuts and bolts. Rewrite your dissent telegram Bob, make it a memo, and give it to them," which I did. They were not much interested. They took the memo, and I never heard anything about it since.

I left Colombia, and I was glad to put it all behind me. I left in the summer of 1978. But then, years later, when I started writing the book, Colombia and the United States: Narcotics Trafficking and the Failure of Policy, I wrote to the Inspector General after I retired, and said that I would like to find out what happened to the memo, what the inspection report was, because I had left before it was published. The Inspector General, Mr. Funk, wrote back and said that there was no mention of meeting with me on narcotics in the inspection report, nor any notation that my memo, with the dissent, had been handed to them, or that anything had been done with it. A copy of it could not be found, the inspectors themselves had retired, and could not be contacted. But the Inspector General assured me that nothing like this could ever happen again. Then I learned that this Inspector General himself was doing an assessment of our worldwide narcotics program, and having his own doubts about what we were doing in Colombia. So I sent him the chapter of my book, which covers what I've just been talking about, in even greater detail, thinking he might find it useful. He did not thank me for it, nor even acknowledge its receipt. So it was rather hard for me to remain convinced that the disregard of my first memo was not something which could happen again, because as far as I know, the second record that I gave him was also ignored.

ROBERT S. PASTORINO
Commercial Attaché
Bogotá (1977-1979)

Robert S. Pastorino was born in San Francisco in 1949. His career included positions in Caracas, Lisbon, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Santo Domingo. Ambassador Pastorino was interviewed by David Fischer and Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1998.

Q: Was Colombia in those days a backwater? Was it considered a good assignment or a mediocre assignment? Palaver

PASTORINO: In terms of Latin America, it was considered a good assignment, especially from the perspective of the Commercial Attaché because Colombia had a lot of money, it was a big economy, and they traditionally bought American goods and services. And, it was an interesting, large marketplace where the Commerce Department experimented with its commercial programs in order to develop new ways to help American business.

Q: What kind of place in Colombia in 1977? This is pre-drug days?

PASTORINO: Right. Drugs were there, but it was basically marijuana growing on the North coast, on the Guajira peninsula. There was very little cocaine, as I remember. Drugs were a problem in that they were exported to the US and it became a problem affecting relations between the two countries. Violence among the dopers and druggers was beginning. I remember Ambassador Diego Asencio putting a couple of locations in Northern Colombia off limits. We had to get special permission to go to Santa Marta and Barranquilla, for instance. I remember, he actually gave me permission, as Commercial Attaché, to go to those places because there was business to be done, whether it be helping Export-Import Bank collect loans from the Barranquilla City Government, or trade and investment interests, especially offshore in the oil and gas fields. There was no problem at that time going to either Cali or Medellin. The drug cartels were only just beginning to form and were not the powers they are today, but I would be less than honest if I did not say that I could see the power coming to the narcos, just as I had seen it happen in Sinaloa.

Colombia was a violent place, although much less than today. Some of the violence, it's interesting to note, came from the *esmeralderos*, which were the emerald dealers controlling the mining and marketing of emeralds, of which Colombia was a major source. In fact, it still is.

THOMAS D. BOYATT
Ambassador
Colombia (1980-1983)

Ambassador Thomas D. Boyatt was born in Ohio and was educated at Princeton University. He then earned an MA at Fletcher in 1956. He served in the Air Force for two years prior to joining the Foreign Service. His first post was in Chile in 1960. He then served in Luxembourg, Cyprus, and Chile. He served as Ambassador to Upper Volta in 1978 and Colombia in 1980 after which he retired from the Foreign Service and entered the private sector.

Q: Your concern was not the drugs lords at this time?

BOYATT: They were a concern too. One of the reasons people say, "Well, it's worse now than when you were there." Well, yes and no. The drug lords are stronger, but the M-19 is now a political party, instead of a terrorist organization. A lot of the left wing has come in from the cold, and they were very much in the cold when I was there. So my feeling is that the left wing threat was greater when I was there. The narcotics threat existed, but wasn't as great as it is today.

ALEXANDER F. WATSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogotá (1981-1984)

Ambassador Alexander Watson was born and raised in Massachusetts and was educated at Harvard and Wisconsin Universities. In 1962 he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to the Dominican Republic, the beginning of an impressive career specializing in Latin American Affairs. His other overseas posts include Spain, Brazil, Bolivia and Colombia, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter three countries. He had several Washington assignments, the last being Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. From 1986 to 1989 he served as United States Ambassador to Peru. Ambassador Watson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Let's talk about... when you arrived in '81, what was the situation in Colombia?

WATSON: Remember that, not too long before it would have to be '80, Ambassador Diego Asencio, my good friend, is among those that were kidnapped in the Dominican Republic embassy there by M-19 guerrillas. He subsequently has written a book about it called Our Man is Inside. So there was that kind of attention. There was a lot of violence in Colombia, as there is today, perpetrated by the guerrillas on the left. There was a lot of violence perpetrated at that point by the narcotics traffickers who were just starting to feel their oats and to put together the huge national cocaine cartel that the Colombians ran and still run. It was also a time where a lot of marijuana had been shipped to the north coast of Colombia and onto the United States and elsewhere. Many people think that the marijuana phenomenon was even more important than the cocaine phenomenon at that time. There was virtually no poppy cultivation, so virtually no heroin coming out of Colombia at that time as there is today. You had sort of a lot of kidnapping for ransom for money being done by a variety of groups and some of them affiliated with one or the other of the cartels, the active narcotics criminals. Some of them were just gangs who needed money. There you have this beautiful country, spectacular beautiful geography with great variety and sophisticated and nice people, embroiled in a country whose economy, up until the last two or three years, has always been one of the best in Latin America—the only country in Latin America that didn't have to reschedule its debt, etc. Fiscal management and steady growth and a wealth of natural resources in a difficult situation caused by the guerrillas and by the drug traffickers. The embassy was an active place, sort of in the center of things—particularly as we were trying to work with interested Colombians who deal with the narcotics issue. That meant a lot of things. It meant, first and foremost, raising the Colombians' awareness of the seriousness of drugs. They had to view it as a real problem, to stop the demand. Failing to understand the maxim that any country that is a drug producer or a drug transit country is becoming drug consumed. To a considerable extent they just didn't want to admit it. I must say the faults of Colombians for all their virtues is the incapacity in probably some of the most intelligent people to understand the gravity in the situation you're in and to perceive sort of minor problems to their profound illnesses and therefore not deal with them as they should.

JAMES L. TULL

**Deputy Chief of Mission
Colombia (1984-1985)**

James L. Tull was born in Iowa. After serving in the US Navy from 1951-1955 he received his bachelor's degree and his master's degree at the University of Colorado. His career included positions in Colombia, England, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Cyprus, and Costa Rica. Mr. Tull was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in May 2001.

TULL: To Bogotá, back to Colombia but this time as DCM. Our ambassador there was Lewis Tambs, a professor of Latin American history at Arizona State University in Phoenix who had been active in the Republican Party and appointed by President Reagan about two years earlier. His deputy was Alec Watson, who had just been named ambassador to Brazil. We did not know each other, but Tambs selected me and we arrived in Bogotá in July, 1984. In the twenty years since we left Colombia, two major new issues had arisen: the first was the rise of the leftist guerrilla groups from a scattering of ex-bandits and disaffected university youths to well-organized and armed rural militia of several thousand whose skilled leadership usually enabled them to emerge the winner in any of their frequent firefights with the police or Colombian army units; the second was the even more spectacular rise of the major drug lords such as Pablo Escobar and Carlos Lederer and their international narcotics cartels. Worse still, about the time we arrived, a symbiotic relationship was developing between the two, with the guerrillas providing protection for drug laboratories while Escobar and his like paid huge sums of money which bought them arms and equipment.

In Washington, too, the “War on Drugs” was in full bloom and focused on Colombia as the main supplier of illegal narcotics to this country. For his part, Ambassador Tambs was determined not to fall prey to the intimidation the drug dealers had used so successfully against their foes- rather, on every available public and private occasion, he attacked them head on and personally. In speeches and the media, he condemned their ruthless and bloodthirsty ways, he ridiculed their attempts to appear “friends of the poor” by sponsoring youth clubs and building soccer fields, and he demanded their extradition to the U.S. to face persecution and “hard time” federal imprisonment.

**CHARLES ANTHONY GILLESPIE JR.
Ambassador
Colombia (1985-1988)**

Charles Anthony Gillespie Jr., was born in Long Beach, California in March, 1935. He graduated from UCLA in 1958 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Following a six year term with the U.S. Army, he entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and was nominated by President Reagan as Ambassador to Colombia in 1985. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to the Philippines, Indonesia, Belgium, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Chile.

Ambassador Gillespie was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

GILLESPIE: We needed to keep in close touch with our American and local staffs. So, whenever anything would happen or whenever we'd get a report of a shooting, I would call a meeting. We would invite the entire Embassy staff to assemble in the little auditorium that we had. I would get up on the stage, usually with Walt Sargent. We would say, "This is what we know. This is what happened. This is what's going on. This is what we're going to do about it. Do you have any questions?" I would say this in Spanish, if it had to be in Spanish, or I would say it in English. There were assassinations every day. One of our Colombian police contacts was the Chief of the Colombian Anti-Narcotics Police, a wonderful man. We knew his wife and children. He was assassinated within days of my arrival in Bogotá. We had met him - and then, boom, he was dead. I think that meeting with the staff whenever anything happened was the right way to deal with these kinds of things. This view was reinforced by the people from MED who came to Bogotá. The regional psychologist and the people from MED would come to town. It was interesting to see how people reacted to Dr. Smith, the regional psychologist. He would come in and tell me afterwards, "This place is about ready to blow up from the pressure. It's a good thing that I came."

In any event, in 1984 the Colombian Government was faced with the first indications that the drug traffickers were really on the rise. Colombia had been the source of much of the marijuana that was coming into the U.S. and going to Europe. It was part of the international market for marijuana. Growing conditions for marijuana in Colombia are about right. The areas where marijuana was grown weren't really under anybody's control, so it was easy to plant and harvest it. The ports were open for its export by sea or by plane. The drug situation in Colombia, I think that you could say, was evolving or deteriorating, depending on your point of view. In roughly 1983 or 1984 Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel began to appear on the scene and became visible.

In 1985 the situation continued to deteriorate. I arrived in Bogotá in August, 1985, and spent the month of September getting my feet on the ground and learning a little bit about the lay of the land.

Remember, this was the mid-1980s. The term, "hostage situation," was then very current. In this case it meant the takeover of a Colombian Government building by armed people. There was shooting going on. Nobody knew exactly what was happening. However, this was a true crisis.

We entered into a dialogue with the President, which I handled directly. We also dealt with his chief of staff, who was acting as the day to day crisis manager. This was a very nasty situation. Demands and threats were made by the M-19 terrorists within the Palace of Justice. Reports came out that, first, this or that Justice of the Supreme Court had been killed, that another Justice had been shot, and that terrible things were happening. The upshot was that over 100 people lost their lives during the takeover and continuing occupation of the Palace of Justice. This covered a period of three or four days, if I

remember correctly. I haven't gone back to look at the files, but it was an extended occupation. It was finally ended when the Colombian military attacked the Palace of Justice through the roofs, the front door, and any available openings in the building. They even used tanks. As I said, over 100 people lost their lives.

GILLESPIE: It was a relatively short time. The Colombian Government felt that they could deal with it. This incident indicated, though, this very traditional gap between the civilian and the military leadership. The Colombian military's position was, "Look, this is our problem. Turn it over to us, and we'll deal with it. Don't even watch." In this instance President Belisario Betancur and the civilian, political leadership were saying, "Wait a minute, the world's eyes are on us. This situation can't be dealt with by the unrestrained use of force." All kinds of stories were coming out - almost hourly, in fact - about who was in charge, who was going to do what, and was the Minister of Defense or the President making decisions about what was to be done. It reflected a very serious disconnect, if you will, between the civilian political leadership and the military. It also reflected badly on the Colombian Government's ability to manage a crisis which in fact had Colombia very much in the headlines around the world. One could see this very clearly.

There were other incidents later that year. For example, in 1987 we learned of a meeting of the narcotics traffickers with representatives of the three or four guerrilla groups in Colombia. There was some discussion of how much they wanted to kill the American Ambassador and the head of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) office in the Embassy in Bogotá. They were talking about spending millions of dollars to do this. They talked about being ready to pay that much money. But nothing drove it home so much as seeing this reference, in cold print, to killing or kidnapping our daughter. This was totally unrelated to anything else. This was not an intelligence report. For me this implied threat characterized what all of us were facing in Bogotá.

I've dwelt on the security aspects of living in Bogotá for some time now, but this occupied everybody's attention at the time, from the most junior Foreign Service Officer to the Colombian employees of the Embassy. In other words, all of us. It was a very real threat.

GILLESPIE: Well, as it may be somewhat evident now, since I joined the Foreign Service, I had been in, near, or around a lot of different, crisis situations. I guess that I had picked up a lot of ideas from watching others. I learned a lot from the evacuation of dependents for political or terrorism reasons and from dealing with kidnapping or other, major problems. I think that I learned a lot from what the Foreign Service had to offer. I had talked to people about these kinds of things.

There is corruption in the Colombian military, involving the acquisition or purchase of defense items. It is not rampant. There were, and there continue to be, actions by the Colombian military which violate the basic human rights of a lot of citizens. As the situation continued to deteriorate in the countryside- (end of tape)

Back in the 1970s the Colombian military had consciously been used, to some extent, in an anti-narcotics role, mainly in the eradication of marijuana crops. This involved pulling out marijuana plants by hand. Then it became very evident that some of the Colombian military were being corrupted by the narcotics traffickers. So the military pulled out of this kind of activity and really tried to stay as far away from the narcotics traffic as they could.

Many of the officers in the Colombian armed forces are educated and articulate. Many of them are quite honest, although others are not. In our view of Colombia back in the mid-1980s we were always somewhat ambivalent as to whether we really wanted to encourage the Colombian military to participate in the struggle against the narcotics traffic. The Colombian National Police are very much organized on the model of the *Carabineros* a semi-militarized police force in Chile. The Chilean *Carabineros* helped to train and establish the National Police in Colombia early in the 20th century, following the German model.

Early in the 1980s the Colombian National Police had set up a very special anti-narcotics unit, which was called just that - the UEAN, or Special Anti-Narcotics Unit. We referred to it as the SANU, using the English translation of the unit's name. That was composed of a cadre of police who, at the patrolman level, were taken out of their home districts, where they had joined the Police force. They were assigned to areas which grew large amounts of narcotics and were stationed away from their places of origin, so that they would not be under family pressures, either in favor of or opposed to the narcotics traffic. I think that they were only allowed to serve in SANU units for a total of four years. After a year or two they were moved to another area as a matter of policy, in an effort to build some kind of firewall against involvement with the narcotics traffickers.

When I arrived in Colombia, the Director of the National Police was considered to be almost a paragon of virtue and a very hard-working man. Nothing has ever happened to darken his reputation, which seems to have held up over the years. Later, however, this Director of the National Police was replaced by an officer whom many people regarded as quite honest. However, we later learned that he may have been involved in some cases of corruption. In the Latin American context, and without taking into consideration the narcotics traffic, Colombia would probably have ranked in the middle area in terms of corruption - neither the worst and certainly not the cleanest. This flows from the way Colombians have carried on their business over the years. What is perceived to be corruption in the Anglo-Saxon world in the northern hemisphere is not always perceived to be corruption in the southern hemisphere. The realization has increasingly begun to dawn on many observers that corruption has a bad effect on society and the economy.

In any event, with narcotics and especially cocaine, added to the marijuana traffic, Colombia's levels of corruption, both public and private, are dramatically up. It's a very sad situation. Interestingly enough, when I was in Colombia, the belief was very strong that the people in and around the Executive Branch of the Colombian Government were, for the most part, quite clean of corruption.

However, I know that one of the best pieces of advice that I got when I was leaving for Colombia was from people who knew the country. They said, "Get to know the ex-Presidents. Meet with them." I forget precisely who told me this, but one of the best introductions you can get is to go and meet with each of the ex-Presidents and ask each of them how he thinks an incoming American Ambassador ought to comport himself and what he thinks the issues of greatest concern are in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the United States. Also, how does he see the current situation in terms of U.S.-Colombian relations?

I did that religiously. I prepared a set of questions and asked each of the ex-Presidents those same questions. I received dramatically interesting and helpful answers from them. They were quite willing to give me their views and they were thoughtful. I forget now how I got off on this side track.

Q: We were looking at the role of the Colombian military. You moved over from that subject, but, in a way, it's all part and parcel of the same matter. Could we follow through on the war against the narcotics traffic? When were you in Colombia?

GILLESPIE: August, 1985, to September, 1988.

Q: Could you stick to that time and talk about what we did? One comment that the Colombians might make, and I imagine that it was thrown in your face, was more or less, "Yes, here in Colombia we have a narcotics problem, but it's your damned people up in the Colossus of the North who are buying this stuff. Can't you control your own people?"

GILLESPIE: I had talked to past American Ambassadors to Colombia, including Pete Vaky, Diego Asencio, Tom Boyatt, and my immediate predecessor, Lewis Tambs. Ambassador Tambs was President Ronald Reagan's initial appointee to the Embassy in Bogota. He is the American Ambassador who put his finger on the narcotics problem in the firmest possible way. In fact, he didn't miss an opportunity to publicize, in Colombia or in the U.S., the perverse and pervasive nature and the pernicious effects of the whole narcotics traffic. He would say that this was hurting Colombia, could hurt U.S.-Colombian relations and was certainly killing young people in the United States. He didn't miss an opportunity to get that point across, both publicly and privately.

As you might imagine, that elicited a variety of reactions, one of which was, "Wait just a minute. It is you Americans who provide a market for narcotics." At this point U.S. was one of the major markets for marijuana and probably THE major market for cocaine. Colombians would say, "If the United States didn't provide this market, we wouldn't have this problem. We'd have a much more manageable problem." So that debate had been going on for some time when I arrived. I had just come out of the Caribbean area.

One of my nightmare scenarios was to see Colombians or people from the fertile crescent in the Middle East, in Turkey, where opium poppies were being grown, or perhaps from Thailand or Cambodia, where heroin was being produced, being taken over by narcotics traffickers. My nightmare involved seeing some group or somebody deciding that one of

the best moves that they could make would be to take over a government in the Caribbean, in the Western Hemisphere, where there are very vulnerable, little governments. Unfortunately, in some instances these small countries are probably very vulnerable. With a little money you can do an awful lot. A government in the Caribbean might be taken over by drug trafficking interests - or be subject to such influence by these interests that these could no longer be considered honest governments. Imagine all of the problems that that would create, not only in terms of the narcotics trade but political problems - how would we deal with these kinds of things internationally?

When I got to Colombia, I certainly didn't have that fear about the Government of Colombia. However, I could see - and it was certainly evident - what was involved in the takeover of the Colombian Palace of Justice by terrorists. Afterwards, the President of the Supreme Court came to me privately and almost secretly to say, "You've got to get my family out of here. You in the United States must help me. I have nowhere else to go." He brought with him an audio cassette mailed to him by the drug traffickers which included the voices of his wife and daughter, talking on their telephone. The message was implicit, "You see, we know exactly where your family is. If you do not act in our favor, you will not see your wife and your daughter again. We'll deal with them." This was quite different from asking him to step back from issues of interest to them or to be neutral where they were concerned. He said that if he did things for the narcotics traffickers, he would receive fantastic amounts of money. He said that if he refused to do this, and tried to be either neutral or negative toward the narcotics traffickers, then they would kill his family.

While the possibility of Colombia's government being taken over by the drug traffickers was certainly not imminent in Colombia, I thought that I saw the possibility of the nightmare scenario, to which I referred previously, taking place in Colombia. When I first thought about it, I had assumed that this scenario might affect a small government in the Caribbean. I could begin to see that this narcotics trafficker group made "ruthless" a real word. They just simply were not willing to stop short of anything. The fictional creations of Tom Clancy and others and the way those traffickers have been portrayed in the movies, while ostensibly exaggerated and overdrawn in some respects, basically were not far off from the reality we saw in Colombia. These traffickers were men and women who think nothing of exterminating or snuffing out lives, if it seems to serve their purpose.

A class of assassins has developed in Colombia. They are called *sicarios* (hired assassins) in Spanish. These are kids, often street kids who were basically brought up in small gangs, where they learned how to kill people. They were tested by being given a gun. They would go out and get on a motorcycle, ride up behind somebody, put their gun as near as they could to the back of someone's head or the rear window of the car, and blast away. Or they would do that when the car was stopped at a light. If the car is not armored or does not have some armor plate, that's goodbye to the victim. That's the end of it.

Medellin had basically gone over to the narcotics traffickers. Ambassador Tom Boyatt had closed our Consulates in Medellin and Cali. One of the arguments was that it was no longer safe to have U.S. Consulates in Medellin or Cali because the drug traffickers were

so strong there. During the three years that I was in Colombia, I made two trips to Medellin but did not spend the night there. It wasn't considered safe. In Medellin there was a large amount of construction of houses and buildings. Cars were being bought and sold all over the place. Television sets were easily available in the stores. There was very little doubt that this was drug money at work. The citizens of Medellin and of the Department of Antioquia around the city were benefiting substantially from the narcotics traffic. They were making lots of money.

Within the Embassy the group of U.S. Government agency representatives was small and was mainly concerned with the eradication of narcotics crops in Colombia. We were testing Glyphosate out in Colombia's eastern provinces. This product is supposed to be a relatively benign herbicide. We had helped the Special Anti-Narcotics Unit (SANU) of the National Police to construct and occupy a camp in San Jose del Guaviare, a little cow town which is hardly reachable by anything but air, although there are some roads out to it. At a base in the Guaviare area the police had put helicopters supplied by the U.S. Government. You could fly into this base in small, twin-engined aircraft, which we had also provided to the police. I think that the aircraft were Beechcraft C-100s, or something like that.

We would fly out to this base, get into the helicopters, and go out to the area which they had been spraying with Glyphosate, to see how effective it would be to kill the coca plants. The Colombian Government had allowed us to conduct some of these tests out there. Our intention was to try to convince the Colombians that the government ought to engage in eradication of the coca crop on a large scale. However, we didn't seem to have an anti-narcotics strategy. We had an anti-narcotics policy - that is, we were against narcotics. We had an objective, which was to end the narcotics traffic. But we really didn't have a strategy to get us from where we were to where we wanted to be. I remember my DCM, Mike Skol, saying, "The only place there's ever going to be an anti-narcotics strategy is right here on Avenida Septima," where the Embassy was located. He said, "Tony, if we don't come up with an anti-narcotics strategy, nobody else will. Nobody is really paying close attention to this." This was in 1985. There would be an occasional story about narcotics, an occasional blurb or flurry of one kind or another - but not a lot more than that.

Ambassador Tambs had been trying to sound the trumpet against drug trafficking in Colombia. However, he had generated a tremendous amount of resentment. Although much of what he said was right, he was probably a prophet ahead of his time.

In any event Michael Skol, my DCM, and I sat down and tried to figure out what we could do to deal with drug trafficking. Remember that I had been in the front office of the ARA Bureau with Assistant Secretary Tom Enders, where we had sort of a restricted interagency group to consider various policy issues. We had never used the word, restricted, but we tried to define who were the people with whom we could talk who could do something in the narcotics area. We tried to identify what the strategic choices were. What could we do here? There was a new CIA chief of station in the Embassy in

Bogotá and a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) chief who had been in Colombia for some time. Those people were very sharp.

We formed a small, core group, an executive committee, to look at the drug trafficking problem. We decided that what we needed to do, particularly with the change of government facing us in Colombia...

Q: When was the election going to be?

GILLESPIE: In the spring of 1986. So we decided to work with the new government, whoever the President was going to be. We had a pretty good idea who it would be. All of the polls and all of our contacts indicated that the Liberal Party candidate, a man named Virgilio Barco, would be the next President. Our Political Counselor, who was very good at predicting elections, said that the new President was going to be Virgilio Barco. I would have done this in any case but I paid special attention to cultivating Virgilio Barco. He had a degree from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in economics...

...Anyway, I got to know the Barco's very well. I met with Barco both before the election and afterwards. He shared a lot of his polling data with me, including material on the narcotics traffic. He was using modern polling techniques. The Liberal Party in Colombia was part of his campaign operation. They were no strangers to this. Colombian Liberals had a close, working relationship with people in the Democratic Party in the United States. Interestingly enough, they were in touch with Sawyer Miller, a public relations consulting firm. I think that Sawyer Miller was doing some of their polling, or arranging for it to be done - telling them what questions to ask, helping them to refine their message, and doing all of those things.

Barco shared a lot of his data with me and said, "Look, Ambassador, I know the interest which you and your government have in narcotics. I'm worried about that, too. I feel that, in addition to whatever your demand for narcotics is, we face a demand situation and a use and consumption problem here in Colombia. We know all of the other parts of it. Let me show you this data." He reached over, grabbed some of the papers on his desk, and showed me that, according to his polling data, the Colombian people were not very concerned about the narcotics problem. It didn't show up on the list of their major concerns. Nobody appeared to be concerned about it. It just wasn't an issue. The Colombian people were concerned about their personal security, economic issues, and where they were going in terms of their economic standing. He said, "These are the issues that I have to be concerned about. My priority is to begin to help the process of development in this country and to extend government where it does not now exist. The way I'm going to do that is to build market roads. I'd like to get telephones out to rural communities and spread more widely in urban areas. I'd like to do a lot of these things, which are terribly important, and to maintain our sound economic status and base globally." He was an economist and thought about these things in those terms.

He said, "I will listen to you and, if elected, will cooperate fully. You can count on Colombia. However, narcotics trafficking will simply not be the highest priority issue in my government, if I am elected."

So, Barco was elected. I went to call on him. I began with narcotics. He said, "I discussed this matter with you before. The situation hasn't changed." This was May, 1986. He was elected in the first week or so of May, and I went to see him about a week after his election, in his apartment - just the two of us. We spent a couple of hours going over all kinds of issues. Colombia had had, and will continue to have, access to international financial markets. Despite the crash of several Latin American economies in 1982, Colombia never rescheduled its debt and never welched on a payment. The Colombians still had access to the financial markets. They had been negotiating what was called the jumbo loan for the government. They were going to use its proceeds to smooth out their official debt. He said, "We're going to worry about that and the economic progress of this country. You can count on me," and he repeated everything that he'd said before.

A week or so later the CIA chief of station came to see me and said, "Ambassador, we've just learned that President Barco intends to appoint as the head of the Colombian equivalent of the FBI, called the Department of Administrative Security (DAS), a colonel from the Army or the Police. We know that this guy is really bad. He is corrupt, he is taking drug traffickers' money, and President Barco intends to appoint him to replace a man named Miguel Masa, who has been an honest, upstanding man. We have worked closely with him. DEA has worked with him," although the CIA and the DEA groups hated each other, institutionally and really didn't want even to talk to each other. We can go into that later. Anyway, the chief of station said, "Masa is going to be bounced, and that will be bad." I said, "Okay, what have you got on this new chief of the DAS that you can put in writing? If you can put something down on a piece of paper, I will take it to President Barco and make him aware of this. We'll see if we can influence his decision."

We had decided that the best thing we could do would be to convince President Barco that Colombia needed a national drug strategy of some kind, even if it wasn't initially a high priority matter. If they didn't have a way to deal with the supply and demand for narcotics in their own country, then they would be at the mercy of those who did want to do things in those areas.

My objective, as I told Washington, was to try to persuade the new Barco administration in Colombia to devise and implement a national, anti-narcotics strategy, done in a Colombian way. I didn't know whether they should set up a "DEA," a Drug Enforcement Administration. We had begun this idea of having a drug czar in the White House. William Bennett was the first such drug czar. His focus was domestic. He didn't do much regarding drug trafficking in the international area at all.

This was in May, 1986. In July, 1986, here in Maryland, in the United States, a basketball player at the University of Maryland named Lenny Bias, died of an overdose of cocaine. That hit the newspapers. I'm sure that it's not fair to say that narcotics, cocaine and drugs hadn't been part of the already running U.S. off-year campaign for the Congressional

elections of 1986. President Reagan had already been reelected in 1984, but the drug issue didn't figure very large in that campaign. There had been some references to it, but not much.

However, when Lenny Bias died of an overdose of cocaine, and that hit the newspapers. In vulgar terms, that was when the shit really hit the fan on narcotics, and particularly cocaine. Colombia, Peru, and other sources of cocaine attracted a great deal of attention. Every politician became interested in narcotics, and especially Congressman Charley Wrangel (Democrat, New York) and Congressman Ben Gilman (Republican, New York), who were the co-chairmen of the Special Committee on Narcotics of the House of Representatives. They were all over the place. Narcotics had become a major, campaign issue in the United States. It's as if night turned to day or the sun came up.

All of a sudden, everyone was pointing at Bogotá, Colombia. Everybody in the State Department was pointing at INM (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters), which was also pointing at Colombia. All of this was beginning to happen. I went over and said to President Virgilio Barco, who was now getting ready to be inaugurated on August 7, 1986, "Mr. President, I think that you should expect that the heat is going to rise here. Things are really going to start to get hot. Maybe, after you're inaugurated, we could talk about this subject and what we're doing to deal with it."

Q: With his American connections, was he sort of following the situation in the United States, too?

GILLESPIE: Sure. He was following it but, like so many, he said, "I see what's happening there, but it's your problem. Well, how did we get that stuff? I know that it's a political issue in your country and I can see that it's going to cause lots of problems here, but I don't have the political backing to go hell bent for election on this issue." It was not a strong negative. He never said, "No, we won't do anything." He said, "I've got to get this balance right. Here I am, about to be inaugurated. I have to move my program forward. I still think that this is the best program for me to follow. Your program may be important, but it's of less importance." He said, "I'm not sure how we're going to do this, but I understand what you're saying."

At that point we had already told Washington what our strategy was - that is, to get the Colombians to deal with the narcotics issue. Washington said, "Go ahead." We told Washington what we thought our narcotics strategy ought to be, and Washington then instructed us to do what we recommended doing.

So basically the inauguration of President Barco came along, and we had that kind of approach to working with him. Secretary of State George Schultz was the official representative of President Reagan at the inauguration. While he was there, he had his first meeting with President Virgilio Barco. It turned out that they had this common background of having been students at MIT at about the same time. They were of similar ages and could talk about lots of different things - which they did. Schultz mentioned the problem of drugs. President Barco said, "Don't worry. We'll be with you on that. I've told

Ambassador Gillespie what my views are. We're not going to ignore drugs but we're going to have to keep this issue in perspective." At that point Schultz was very realistic about it. In conversation with me he said, "well, I can understand that President Barco doesn't think that he has a problem. He thinks that drugs are our problem." As you know, Secretary Schultz later came out in support of the decriminalization of certain drugs. Even then, I think, he thought that the demand aspect of the problem was important and that it was not just a supply side problem.

Q: He's an economist by training, after all.

GILLESPIE: The strategic approach which we had proposed to the Department had been fully accepted. We were trying to find ways to move that forward and to achieve that objective.

However, the situation didn't look terribly bright as President Barco went into office. We knew that we would get some attention. We knew that the Colombians were already dealing with the drug issue. We were providing some assistance to them, in this field, which was rather substantial, though not overwhelming. Our aid to the Colombians in the narcotics field amounted to several millions of dollars. We figured that we would continue with that and try to create the conditions under which the Colombians would make an increased effort in this area.

Well, anyway, that was the kind of man he was. That was the kind of relationship I had with him, within which we were going to try to develop an anti-narcotics strategy. I think that the next time we can go into the transformation of President Virgilio Barco on narcotics.

Q: All right, we'll do that. We've discussed the fact that you didn't get along very well with the Foreign Minister. I would like to put down the usual shopping list that I would like to cover at some point. You'll continue with the drug war and narcotics and President Barco...

Q: Today is November 20, 1996. Tony, let's start with the narcotics problem.

GILLESPIE: I think I may have mentioned but will quickly recapitulate, so it isn't too long, either way. In the 1970s Colombia was tagged as the source of some of the most commercially attractive marijuana in the world. Remember, we used to talk about Colombian gold, and things like that.

Q: I think that somebody even had the name, Colombian gold, trade marked in the United States, ready to be used in case the sale and use of marijuana was decriminalized.

GILLESPIE: right. So Colombian gold, or marijuana, was a very important product. I think that I may have mentioned this in connection with our own narcotics problem, when we were talking about my time in Mexico. What was once the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, BNDD, eventually became DEA, the Drug Enforcement

Administration. The overseas operations of our anti-narcotics agency, which once came under the Department of Justice, were very much a center of attention.

In Colombia the 1970s were the era of marijuana. However, during the 1970s and into the 1980s we became aware of this other product called cocaine, or cocaine hydrochloride, a distilled alkaloid, if you will. This product was derived from the leaf of the coca plant, a bush that grows into a tree. The coca leaf is otherwise benign, in the sense that it contains some of the alkaloids, but not a lot of them. Coca leaves have been used for centuries by the native Indians of the region since the time of the Incas, and who knows when prior to that? These Indians have used coca leaves either for medicinal or sacred ritual purposes, which are somewhat interconnected. However, my understanding is that, historically, people used coca leaves to gain strength. These coca leaves help the human organism to sustain some of the pressures of high altitude and hard work if they are chewed, and the juices, in effect, are absorbed into the body. If the leaves are mixed with a soda ash in the mouth, which is the way the indigenous people used it, the result is something of a buzz or a kind of high, though I couldn't tell you what it is.

That was part of the ritual and culture of the Andes mountains area, particularly in southern Colombia, although it's known way up in northern Colombia, on the Caribbean coast. The use of coca leaves for this purpose goes South into the higher elevation areas of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

So in the 1970s it was learned that you could produce a substance known as cocaine, which has been around for a long time as a drug. This, so-called recreational drug originally came to the United States in the 19th century. Some people say, and I guess that it's true, that coca - not cocaine hydrochloride - may indeed have been an ingredient in the early Coca Cola formula.

Q: Yes, and many of the patent medicine drugs had both opium and a form of cocaine in them.

GILLESPIE: I'm no chemist and never would pretend to be, but I've learned a lot during my lifetime. What really happened was that in the 1970s groups of Colombians learned that there is or can be a market for cocaine hydrochloride in its commercial form, which is basically a fine, white powder, which was sniffed at this time. I don't know much about the sociology or the chemistry of that, either. In any case, Colombian cocaine came on the market in the U.S.

The commercialization of cocaine was interesting because you had the production of cocaine hydrochloride, through a very rudimentary, chemical process. Coca leaves are collected from bushes and trees, they are soaked in a chemical mixture involving, gasoline, ether, and other chemicals. Then that mass is allowed to ferment, and it is mixed by mainly poor people who stir it with their feet, much as grapes used to be tramped on to get the grape juice out of them. I'm no expert on this, but you eventually draw off a brown, ugly paste. This is then treated further and turned into a nice, white powder. That process takes leaves which, for example, sell for a couple of dollars per

hundredweight, as leaves. The cost of producing the white powder, back in the 1980s, used to be around a few hundred dollars per kilogram (2.2 pounds).

At that point it is fascinating to see the exponential kind of price markup that takes place. It moves from where it is white powder to market through a transportation and distribution chain. At each level the cost goes up astronomically, because that is where you get into what are considered higher risk activities. It is still a low risk activity to grow the coca leaves. It is a relatively low risk operation and a very rudimentary operation to produce cocaine paste. It is still pretty low risk to produce the white powder in what are called laboratories. Those were initially in Colombia, in the jungle. When you get a package of white powder, that is where you have to start moving it - and there is where it starts to become risky. The narcotics traffickers put the product on planes or smuggle it to market in some other way. People who smuggle it charge considerably more than those who produce the white powder.

By the time the kilogram of white powder is ready to leave Colombia or South America and arrive on the shores of the U.S. At that point a kilogram of cocaine has cost the owner about \$4,000-5,000 for something that started out being measured in a few hundred dollars, at most, per kilogram. Maybe it isn't worth even that.

Then the cocaine hits the distribution system in a market area, where it is cut or diluted and, in effect, prepared for retail sale. It goes through another increase in price - I think an increase of 15 to 20 times the price, up to \$60,000 a kilogram. I think that the prices now are lower. Maybe it is worth \$35,000 a kilogram. That's both a markup which reflects what the market will bear and what the traffickers consider their risks to be. The rest is pure profit.

The largest producers of coca leaves, the basic raw materials, are still Peru and Bolivia. In the 1980s we did not consider Colombia to be a major producer of the coca leaves. However, geographically, Colombia has the eastern plains or the *llanos orientales* in Spanish. If you look at a map of Colombia, Bogota is more or less in the center of the country. There are three main ridges of the Andes mountains in Colombia, more or less running North to South. There is one ridge close to the Pacific Coast, then a second ridge, and then the third ridge farthest East. From that third ridge of the Andes, against which Bogota nestles, all the way over to the Orinoco River and the Venezuelan border, are what are called the eastern plains. South of that the plains turn into jungle. The plains adjoin the eastern slopes of the third ridge of the Andes Mountains.

In the southern area of the plains you find the airstrips used by the cocaine smugglers and many of the laboratories to which the cocaine paste is flown in from Peru and Bolivia and processed. It was in that area that a lot of the drug processing was going on back in the mid-1980s. The paste would be brought in, processed, and then sold. I would characterize it as drug cultivation, the production of paste, then powder, and then the distribution or trafficking. Colombia was not considered a major cultivation country but was a place where the production of powder went on and where the trafficking started.

The commercial structure which developed in and around this was what eventually became known as the Medellin cartel. There was a similar, trafficking group in Cali, but that was much less important back in the mid-1980s or was presumed to be less important. It probably should not have been considered less important.

In any event, I'm not an expert on the internal functioning of the trafficking networks, but the Medellin cartel consisted of the Ochoa family, people like Pablo Escobar, and a number of other individuals who really came up out of the lower or peasant farmer class in Colombia. These people were not members of the Colombian elite. In my view they were very smart traders and businessmen. They had been used to dealing in cattle or horses and land, as commodities. They brought a lot of business acumen to the narcotics trafficking business. They had been in the marijuana business before. The pressure on the production and traffic in marijuana grew, as the Colombian Government cooperated with the U.S. Government to eradicate or stop its production, either by pulling the plants out by the roots or eventually spraying the plants with Glyphosate, a herbicide. This had obvious consequences for environmentalists, health specialists, and all the rest.

Quite frankly, as we later learned, there is a strongly competitive production of marijuana within the U.S. The U.S. domestic production of high quality marijuana, often from seeds of Colombian origin, is centered in Hawaii, the U.S. Northwest, and the U.S. Middle West. The seeds are even genetically engineered to grow faster and better in different climates. If you look at it, it is scary, and it still goes on in 1996. A lot of the market for marijuana in the U.S. is supplied by domestic production.

The Colombian marijuana traffickers moved away from the marijuana traffic, though they didn't get out of that business entirely. They moved into the cocaine business, which was so terribly lucrative. Our governmental and law enforcement structure to deal with the cocaine traffic grew apace. It's not fair to say that the Colombian traffickers did not take U.S. law enforcement agencies seriously, but they certainly didn't give it the weight that the U.S. did. Their overall position seemed to be, and certainly Colombian public opinion, if there was any, seemed to be, "This is a problem for the people of countries who are consuming this drug. It is not our problem. We just happen to be the place where the coca leaves grow or are processed. So it's a U.S. and developed country problem, where people can afford to buy these narcotics. This doesn't affect us." That had certainly been the Colombian attitude through part of the 1970s and into the early 1980s.

Three of my predecessors as American Ambassadors to Colombia had varying experiences with the drug traffic. Ambassador Diego Asencio was kidnapped by the guerrillas and held hostage, along with other diplomats. Ambassador Tom Boyatt, a career Foreign Service Officer, did a superb job. However, his concern about the drug traffic, while real enough, reflected, I think, a Washington view that we didn't quite know where we were going or what we were doing.

Ambassador Lewis Tambs was my immediate predecessor, to whom I previously referred. He had really focused on the narcotics issue. He was a political appointee of the Reagan administration. I think that he came out of the University of New Mexico and had

a long history as a petroleum engineer in Venezuela, next door to Colombia. He spoke Spanish well and was a very interesting man. He had some of the characteristics of an oil field roustabout but also had a very refined approach which went along with that. During the 1983-1984 time frame he had really focused attention on the narcotics issue. He went full bore at narcotics trafficking in the press, in public, and with the Colombian Government. He never missed a chance of shaking his finger at the Colombians for not doing enough. He was perceived to be pretty much a single issue Ambassador. Interestingly enough, as recently as 1996, *El Tiempo*, one of the most prestigious newspapers in Bogota, had a columnist who was a member of the family that runs the paper. He said in one of his columns, "We should have listened to Lou Tambs back in the 1980s, because what he predicted has basically happened." He said, in effect, "Look, narcotics are going to get you. It may be getting us in the U.S. now, but they are going to get you in the future." And he said, "It's already on the way to doing it."

So, in any event, Ambassador Tambs had pushed very, very hard on these issues and on THE issue of narcotics. Then, during this 1983-1984 time period - and even earlier - the Medellin cartel had shown a viciously, violent streak. First, in terms of their internal discipline. I guess that if you messed up, you were dead. If people on the outside seemed to be interfering with the cartel's business, whether they were police, law enforcement officials, or just about anybody else, the easiest way to take care of them was literally to get rid of them by killing them. So there was a tremendous surge of violence from the people who were running the Medellin cartel.

President Belisario Betancourt was elected in 1982. By this time the United States was very concerned about the whole cocaine business. We had identified people who were running the cocaine game, both the key players and some of the second tier people, one of whom was a man named Carlos Lehder. In any event, back in 1983, I guess, we sought the extradition of several Colombians to the United States. Extradition has always been an extremely touchy point in Latin America, along with nationalism, sovereignty, and all of those subjects, although we have a number of extradition treaties with countries in Latin America.

Then there was a change in administrations from President Betancourt to President Virgilio Barco in 1986. I think that I may have mentioned that during the election campaign and pre-inaugural period Barco shared polling data with me which indicated that narcotics were simply not on the minds of the Colombian people. Development issues and the Colombian economy were the most important subjects for the Colombian people. He indicated that that was where he was going to put his emphasis.

My immediate staff in the Embassy in Bogotá and I all sensed that, while there was a lot of rhetoric in Washington about narcotics, there wasn't much in the way of policy guidance.

U.S. policy at the time was that, "We're against drugs and don't want them to come into the country." However, there was no clear cut, strategic approach which set out our objectives, what we wanted to achieve, and what were the various ways of doing that. In

the Embassy we concluded that if anyone was going to define that strategy, at least as far as Colombia was concerned, we would have to do that in the Embassy.

So we organized ourselves to do that. We set up a sort of Executive country team group which included the people I've already mentioned, plus the head of the Narcotics Assistance Unit, or NAU in Colombia. The NAU was an arm of the still small Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) in the Department of State.

When I got to Colombia in 1985, the head of the INM Bureau was a gentleman whose name I can't remember now. I recall that his first name was John. He was a Republican, political appointee. He had an approach to the narcotics problem which involved interdiction, or trying to stop the flow of drugs out of South America, at the source of the drugs, whether at the production or trafficking end. In any case, he wanted to stop this traffic. But that was as far as it went. He had resources to provide the countries where the drugs were being produced. We were giving the Colombian Government aircraft and support money. At that point our military assistance program was focused much more on national security, military, and defense issues than on narcotics trafficking. At that point we were not trying to get the Colombian military directly involved in the narcotics problem.

I believe that, fairly soon after I arrived in Colombia in 1985, John was replaced by a woman named Anne Wroblewski, another political appointee. In any event, though the INM people seemed to be managing various, anti-narcotics programs, there was no single, strategic point. The Department of Justice had a Colombia task force which brought together a lot of the people from the law enforcement community in the U.S. A State Department representative, the desk officer for Colombian affairs, attended meetings of that task force. I think that the deputy assistant secretary of state who dealt with South American affairs was also involved with that task force, to some degree. This task force was not set up in the national security, inter-agency, structural institutional approach. It was separate. However, it was a point of contact. There was also a very active Commissioner of Customs, William Von Raab.

Very powerful, a brilliant kind of mind, very articulate, and not at all shy about promoting himself or the Bureau of Customs and the rest of it. He was charging forward, in effect, running his own foreign policy through the Bureau of Customs.

DEA was again under a very solid, former FBI agent who went on to become part of the New York Yankees' managerial structure under George Steinbrenner. I think that he ran the security aspect, or something like that. DEA was global in its reach: Mexico was a major source of drugs, especially heroin, and Colombia was also a major source of cocaine. The DEA was also concerned about heroin coming into the United States from the golden crescent in the Middle East, the golden triangle in Southeast Asia, as well as Mexico. Furthermore, DEA still had its U.S. domestic drug enforcement programs, including control over pharmaceuticals and their distribution.

So there wasn't any single point of control of our anti-narcotics efforts. At that point the NSC (National Security Council) really had no one involved in anti-narcotics policy or strategy. This area was sort of an orphan. In the embassy in Bogotá we concluded that the way to deal with this was to decide what we ought to be doing in Colombia and then tell Washington that that was what we were going to do. We said, "UNODIR (unless otherwise directed), we were going to continue down this path." In my instructions when I went to Colombia, which I had drafted, I covered narcotics. However, I didn't realize in early 1985 how vacant this strategic package was. We were "against" narcotics, we didn't like drugs, we wanted to stop their distribution and use in the United States. Nevertheless, beyond that there just wasn't a whole lot there.

So in the Embassy in Bogotá a little executive country team group would meet regularly. I named Michael Skol, the DCM, to chair that group for me. The idea was that this arrangement left me open to agree or disagree with whatever the committee did, rather than having to sit there as chairman. We started to move forward. We asked ourselves what it would take to get something moving here. What we quickly appreciated was that, if we didn't have a strategy, then certainly the Colombians didn't have one, either. We thought we needed a strategy. I said, "Everybody needs a strategy. Everybody has to have a plan."

First we had to figure out how we could create the demand or reasons for having a strategy in the Colombian mind or in the Colombian Government. Colombia had had these terribly violent incidents. We could see what the violence was doing. We could see the pressures on the Colombian system of justice. We could even begin to see - and this came out rather quickly - the degree to which Colombian youth and others were using drugs. However, many Colombians had a tendency to shut their eyes to that and to pay no attention to it.

Ambassador Tambs had been pushing the Colombian Government very hard on this issue. My conclusion was that continuing along the Tambs' line would not make any sense. The Colombians would just say, "Well, here comes another Lewis Tambs." So how could we persuade the Colombian Government to become concerned about the narcotics problem? We could not and would not, under any circumstances, disavow anything that Ambassador Tambs had said or done. However, I met with my executive country team group, and particularly with our public affairs people, and said, "How can we draw attention to this problem in a way that will get what we want, which is more attention to resources and activity devoted to narcotics?" We felt that this was important but that we needed to pursue our objective in a way which was not just going to turn the Colombians off.

We started off with trying to find another way of defining the U.S.-Colombian relationship and find another set of policy interests that would allow us to work with the Colombians. Then we would work the anti-narcotics effort into that.

It didn't seem that we would find in Central American political issues an area where we could work easily with Colombia. There was already some antagonism and tension

between President Betancourt's Contadora process approach and our own views of that area. President Barco was clearly not as committed to resolving the problems of Central America as President Betancourt had been. Barco did not think that resolving Central American issues should become the keystone of Colombian foreign policy.

Q: We're talking here about the problems of El Salvador and Nicaragua.

GILLESPIE: Yes, the Nicaragua and El Salvador situations. Although President Barco's Foreign Minister, Julio Londono, to whom we previously referred, was very much involved in those issues, Barco kind of let Londono do his thing but didn't give Central American matters much personal attention. That would not be the area to find a new focus for Colombian-American relations. There didn't seem to be a lot of interest in the regional approach to issues of the area. To short cut this discussion, we basically concluded that an area where Colombia really stood out was in its general approach to economics, management, and related areas. We concluded that what we should do would be to work with the Colombians in the field of economics and management, emphasizing what the Colombians had been doing right. For example, they had not had to reschedule their foreign debt after the 1982 debt crisis. They were still in touch with the commercial banks. Foreign banks were open to Colombia. So we concentrated on the economic and trade aspects of the Colombian-American relationship.

That got us into coffee questions. Remember, there was an international coffee organization at this time. Obviously, that is a commodity area where the U.S. has never been of one mind as to how it ought to deal with commodities and how they're marketed, dealt with, and received. However, this is a huge piece of the U.S. economy. There is a large number of coffee buyers, processors, and distributors. I think that Colombia is the second or third largest coffee producer in the world. Brazil is the largest, and the African countries and Indonesia also produce a lot of coffee. So it's a global commodity. However, it was an area of active interest, where we were not always in agreement with Colombia. Nonetheless, it allowed us to engage in a lot of discussion over very tangible kinds of issues which were not perceived as nearly as deleterious to human health as cocaine, the other, major commodity coming out of Colombia.

President Barco found this approach to Colombian-American relations to be quite acceptable. He was pleased that we were doing this, though I didn't discuss it with him in these kinds of terms. However, he could see that, when I had a chance to talk to Colombians or about Colombia, I would always start with this area. That is, the economic situation and where Colombia fit in the trade and investment area. There was a lot of U.S. investment in Colombia. For several years Exxon had been building a huge installation, the Norte project, up near the Caribbean. It was the largest, open pit coal mine in the world. Some 4,000-5,000 contractors had come in from the U.S. to help to build this installation. It generated a lot of Colombian employment. It was a large operation, and we focused on things like this.

Tremendous oil reserves were being discovered and confirmed in Colombia at the time. So there was a lot going on there. We kept trying to bring the focus of our interest to such matters. Then, from that, we began to talk about how the narcotics traffic was a threat to

Colombia, as well as to the people who were consuming drugs. This line of action developed over a period of time, of course. We pointed out that narcotics trafficking was infiltrating and weakening the system of justice in Colombia. Corruption was related to narcotics, and Colombia was already fairly rife with different levels of corruption. We said that that was going to be a handicap, a brake on Colombia's development. There were a lot of things to talk about, and we worked in the references to the narcotics traffic at that point - the cocaine, the marijuana, and other drugs. We tried to raise the consciousness of the perils of drugs, both in Colombia and, frankly, in the U.S. We pointed out that narcotics trafficking was another facet to the Colombian-American relationship. The only news about Colombia that was being printed in the U.S. that one could find, other than in the *Journal of Commerce* or *The Wall Street Journal*, would be stories about narcotics related violence.

Terribly embarrassing situations were coming up which affected honest Colombian government officials arriving in Miami. They had to go through the entry lines and were often strip searched, just because their passports were Colombian. There were no other apparent reasons for doing that.

One of my jobs, and one of the jobs of the Embassy, was routinely to take a blast either from the Foreign Ministry or some other Colombian Government minister, who asked, "Why was I, my wife, or my daughter stopped by U.S. Customs? Why were my employees stopped?" The crazy thing was that, every so often, some Colombian who was stopped by U.S. Customs had a load of cocaine on him or her. So it was not a clear cut case of harassment of Colombians by U.S. Customs. I felt that it was important for us to try to make sure that our handling of these examinations was as professional as it could be, from the point of entry into the U.S. to whatever else had to happen. But our idea was to remind the Colombians that these were the costs which they were paying because they didn't have a visible, positive approach to the narcotics issue.

My efforts to convince President Virgilio Barco of this were not particularly successful. He is a very stubborn man. Occasionally, I would talk to his wife, Caroline, about this subject. She would reaffirm just how stubborn he could be. Once he got his mind set on one thing, he would move down that track. At the time that I knew him, President Barco was a man in his mid-'60s. In the light of what we know has happened since then, after he left office as President in 1990, he went to Great Britain as Colombian Ambassador and almost dropped out of sight. It soon became apparent that he was probably suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. How much that condition affected him during the time he was still President I honestly don't know.

In any event, I kept pushing on the question of narcotics in this way. All of our official American visitors kept pushing to persuade President Barco to come up with an anti-narcotics strategy. His response always was, "We'll get around to that. We'll do something about it, but it's not that important right now." Well, that attitude changed suddenly in December, 1987, when the publisher and one of the principal owners of *El Espectador*, the second largest newspaper in Colombia, was brutally assassinated by the narcotics traffickers. They made no bones about it. He and *El Espectador* had taken a

position which basically supported the extradition of drug traffickers to the United States and a tough line generally on narcotics. He was well known to President Virgilio Barco. When Barco had to face the fact of the funeral of the publisher of *El Espectador* and the fact that this man had been gunned down mercilessly, that seemed to get Barco to say, "Oh, well, maybe we'd better start thinking again about this issue."

Although President Barco didn't immediately jump onto the line, "Okay, we're going to develop an anti-narcotics strategy," he began to realize that he had a real problem. Well, this was December, 1987. Barco had been President for about a year and some months, when this occurred. That event sort of marked the turning point in Barco's mental outlook on narcotics.

Well, the Colombians just set themselves up to be taken advantage of. Under Foreign Minister Londono this was particularly the case. Colombia fought to be the President of the non-aligned movement. They supported Castro in Cuba and did different things in an effort to moderate the positions of the non-aligned movement, or the NAM, as it was sometimes called.

We would get these crazy instructions from Washington. I felt that Washington's handling of the NAM was often rather flaky. The State Department would remember that the NAM meets every year in a General Assembly. They have this huge kind of orgiastic event. At the time of the Cold War, and particularly the hot parts of the Cold War, the non-aligned movement was nothing like non-aligned. It was essentially taking positions that were antagonistic to the United States and the developed world in general. It reflected North-South antagonisms, from the South position. Invariably, this annual Assembly of the NAM would produce a communiqué or declaration of some kind. It did everything from condemning Israel, to Zionism, to the United States, to our Cuba policy or anything else that we were doing at any given point. The communiqué didn't always praise the Soviet Union, but by saying nothing, by being silent, the implication was that the Soviet Union was just fine.

These NAM communiqués were terrible diatribes. Weeks before this annual meeting was to take place every American Embassy throughout the world would receive an instruction, saying, "Go in and tell the government to which you are accredited that they should not support this line or should make sure that certain points are excised from any statement the NAM makes.

So we were supposed to approach the Colombian Government, use whatever political capital we had, whether it was by bold force or persuasion, and try to get the Foreign Ministry, in whatever capital, to do something and not support this terrible diatribe, either as a whole or in part. So all of our Embassies would dutifully go into the governments to which we were accredited, in this sort of annual rite. We would use up some chips just to get in the door, just to raise this kind of thing. Many governments would say, "Oh yes, we agree with you completely. However, we think that if we take this position, we'll be able to influence the communiqué this way. So, even though we're going to say something that you won't like, please understand that it's to prevent something worse from happening."

So it cost us something to get in the door. We paid our price to get in the door and we got an unsatisfactory answer.

I don't want to beat this straw horse to death, but I think that Foreign Minister Londono took some glee in making sure that Colombia's position in the NAM would always be at the optimum level of antagonism with the United States. He just had a problem with that. It turned out that he was very interested in, and afterward showed himself to be actively involved in, multilateral diplomacy. So, he was never an easy person to deal with as Foreign Minister. He was also preoccupied with things like the NAM and the UN and what was going on there.

Today, in 1996, there is the problem of drugs related to the guerrillas. When I was in Colombia, at that time we were just beginning to see, and our intelligence was beginning to show us, how the narcotics traffic and the guerrilla problem were developing linkages. I guess that the way this struck us most directly was in some reports that we were getting. First, we knew that out in the remote areas of Colombia the guerrillas were taxing the narcotics producers. The narcotics laboratories were located in these remote areas, and the traffickers had their landing strips there, where they based their aircraft. The basic image was of guerrillas coming up to the people operating these laboratories and landing strips and saying, "Look, if you want to continue to operate here, you have to pay your share." So the guerrillas just collected tribute from the narcotics traffickers. In return for that tribute, our assumption was that the traffickers were getting some protection. So it was kind of like a New York Mafia protection deal. I'm not quite sure what they were protected against, but the traffickers paid the tribute. If they didn't pay the tribute, they would certainly need protection from the guerrillas.

Even back in the mid-1980s - the 1986-1988 period - we were beginning to get some reports that the guerrillas were finding other ways to make profits out of the narcotics traffic. My recollection of this situation isn't perfect, but at that point I don't think that we had much information which said that the guerrillas were really producing drugs and that they were really running the laboratories. We still thought that there was a connection between guerrillas and drug traffickers, involving the payment of "taxes" and protection money to the guerrillas. We knew that the Medellin cartel of Pablo Escobar or his lieutenants had had some meetings with the guerrillas. At that point the guerrillas formed something called the *Coordinadora*, or Coordinating Board of activities directed against the Colombian Government. This was an attempt to bring the M-19, the FARC, the ELN, and the EPL, or the People's Liberation Army, together in some way. I don't think that it was ever very formal.

In any event, there were reports that the Medellin cartel was in touch with this *Coordinadora*. In fact, we had one report that the Medellin cartel had met with representatives of the major guerrilla groups and had said, "We want your help in dealing with some of the threats to our enterprise." That is, the narcotics traffic. Specifically, the narcotics traffickers were interested in three issues. There was the head of the Department of Administrative Security, the DAS, which I mentioned before and which was like the FBI in Colombia. This was a domestic, federal intelligence and counterintelligence body

composed of plain clothes police. The other people in whom the Medellin cartel was interested were the head of the DEA group in the Embassy and the American Ambassador. In other words, me. The cartel representatives said, "We want to get rid of them. We want to threaten them" and things like that.

One report quoted the cartel representatives as saying, "What would it take and how much money would be required to go after these people? Would you all go after these people, or would one or two of you do it?" I was never quite clear on the gory details, but we knew that there had been discussions of that kind. The first word that we had was that nobody in the various groups was very much interested in that. We knew already, and later had it confirmed, that some of these guerrilla groups were interested in each one of these targets - each for its own reasons. If they were interested in these targets, they were planning to kill the American Ambassador and members of his family, the head of DEA, and the head of the Department of Administrative Security. These three people were always a target, I think. This had nothing to do with the people holding these jobs. It sort of went with the job description.

Later, as time went on, we began to see what seemed to be a closer linkage between some of these guerrilla groups and narcotics traffickers. The FARC was the largest and best organized guerrilla group. Our own estimates, which were derived from figures obtained from the Colombians, primarily through the CIA and our Defense Intelligence Agency people, the military attaches, and other sources, suggested that the FARC had a core strength of 5,000 to 8,000 guerrillas. That was a big guerrilla organization. It covered most of the country, although it was concentrated primarily in the central part of Colombia. The leadership was the same as it had been in the early 1960s, when the FARC was formed. This organization had linkages to Cuba and Fidel Castro, to Libya, and to other parts of the world. It had always maintained a high degree of national independence. They had not become part of the international revolutionary movement.

In any event, the FARC seemed to be the group that was, perhaps, becoming more intermixed with the drug traffickers. The traffickers in the Medellin cartel were finding that they could provide arms, equipment, and money, and relationships like that were beginning to develop. Ambassador Tambs had used the term, narcoguerrilla to describe this relationship in Colombia. We started to follow developments concerning the narcoguerrillas. The other reason that we did so was that, quite frankly, we saw the guerrilla movement as a continuing, festering problem. Because we were trying to generate some support in Washington for programs that would deal with both the guerrilla and narcotics problems, we found that this linkage was useful in my conversations with U.S. Members of Congress in our briefings. When we could demonstrate this linkage, we did so. That seemed to elicit some bipartisan or non-partisan support.

Later, I found this even more the case in Chile, when I went there as Ambassador. However, in the U.S. Congress, and particularly with the 435 members of the House of Representatives, there were extremes on the right and left and then this big, middle group. The big middle in terms of foreign policy seemed to be willing to go along with

whatever was reasonable. You could get active support if you could approach them in a reasonable way and brief them. There was an active, narcotics approach. There was a special committee on narcotics in the House of Representatives.

At this time the Democrats controlled the House of Representatives. Representative Charles Wrangel from New York was the chairman of this committee. The ranking minority members of the committee was Representative Ben Gilman, also from New York. They were very active in narcotics affairs. Interestingly enough, Representative Larry Smith, from Florida, was a member of this committee. He later went to jail for corruption. He was a thorn in our sides all the time.

Representative Wrangel could be a thorn, and Representative Gilman was like a bulldog. He would get hold of a particular aspect of the narcotics problem and just never let it go. That could get on your nerves after a while. We would say, "But Congressman, we've already dealt with..." He would say, "I don't care. You've got to keep going on this." Representative Wrangel would be all over the lot. He had been a prosecutor and took a very prosecutorial attitude. Actually, we all got along with Representative Wrangel quite well. Both he and Representative Gilman came to Colombia and both of them were very supportive of what we were trying to do. So we didn't have a major problem with them. Anyway, narcoguerrilla was a good term to use with Congress to get the support that we needed.

Q: What type of support are you talking about?

GILLESPIE: First, money for the INM (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters) budget. Then, it was a matter of getting them to come to Colombia, getting them to understand that the problems in Colombia were not unidimensional, that it was not only narcotics but that there was a guerrilla movement, and that there were economic problems that flowed from this situation.

One of the issues on which you could get superficial acquiescence from Congress fairly quickly was that the justice system in Colombia must be in trouble. However, Congressmen would say, "Oh, no, we're not going to give them any aid for their justice system. We're not going to help them. No aid." What we were trying to say was that the root causes of the problems facing the justice system in Colombia were not well identified. However, we said that we can at least put our fingers on what we think are some of them. For example, the administration of the Colombian judicial system is still in the 17th or, with luck, maybe the 18th century, in terms of scribes writing down testimony and other documents in long hand. That was the only way in which court documents could be prepared which were considered acceptable. You couldn't use a typewriter. The typewriters that they had were old Smith-Coronas - nothing electric. At the time they hadn't seen a computer. During the 1980s the Minister of Justice did not really know how many employees the Ministry of Justice had throughout the country. For example, the Ministry of Justice did not know who the Justice of the Peace was in a particular place in the northern part of the Department of Santander. They didn't know

how much money was being paid out in salaries. That's how antiquated and bad the system, which was supposed to be a national justice system, really was.

This is still the case today, in 1996. I just saw a figure today. Out of 4,500 people accused of crimes, 4,402 never came to trial. So the system of justice in Colombia is still bad. We thought that part of our strategy, which would help to resolve all of the problems and particularly the narcotics problem, would be how to strengthen the system of justice. What could we do? Well, it's not our system. It's not based on our system of common law. It's based on civil law, which goes back to the time of the Romans. So we really don't speak the same language. However, where we could speak the same language in the 1980s was in the field of administration, management, and those kinds of things. President Barco was building the computer system in the Office of the President, and the Foreign Ministry was getting computers. Well, we thought, maybe the Colombian Ministry of Justice, their prosecutors, and their attorney general could use computers, too.

The problem was that you could go into the Office of the President. It didn't make any difference how you kept records. The trouble was that the laws said how records had to be kept for the purposes of the administration of justice. So you had to change the law. There was a very inefficient and corrupt National Congress. Voters elected members of the National Congress by lists. There was no individual, constituency responsibility. Nobody was accountable to anyone. There is no exact equivalent to accountability, in Spanish. The nearest equivalent is responsibility. Accountability as a concept has only recently emerged in Spanish-speaking countries.

We had this fellow I mentioned before, Jim Michael, a lawyer who had become the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the ARA Bureau. He had really worked on what became the administration of justice program in AID (Agency for International Development). This was an effort to get our Justice Department, the United Nations in Costa Rica, the Canadians, and the different bar groups to come together and cooperate. We would say, "Democracy is a value for all of us. It cannot really function if you don't have a way to settle grievances. You need a system of justice to settle grievances. It has to work to be effective. So how do you get it to work?"

Jim Michael had come up with a programmatic approach for this kind of problem. We wanted to help to initiate that approach in Colombia. My predecessor, Ambassador Tambs, didn't want AID in Colombia at all, because AID supported, as I think I mentioned, the Tropical Research Center where, in the view of Ambassador Tambs, the commie Sandinistas were allowed to be part of the group, because Nicaragua under the Sandinistas was still a member of the UN. So he didn't want to have any AID office in Colombia. I brought AID back in. We mentioned Peter McPherson, the AID Director.

So that's how we dealt with the narcoguerrilla question. We sought to get support when we needed it. This term was a good way to encapsulate things, it was a good, sound bite for the press, if we needed that. However, it also had an increasing amount of reality to it. What was happening was that there was terrorism - out and out bombings and assassinations. These things were happening in Colombia. They were frightening. They

were directed, in part, at the U.S. However, they were being increasingly directed at Colombian institutions and other Colombians.

The M-19 movement was engaging in what we now call terrorism. The Libyans were supporting some of this activity. Fidel Castro, in Cuba, was not at all quiet, even in the late 1980s. He was still involved in the Central American situation. The U.S. Ambassador to Colombia was still being identified in internal guerrilla documents as imperialist, anti-democratic, counterrevolutionary, and all of those terms of abuse.

I had been in touch with friends like Jerry Bremer, who was the head of the counterterrorism staff in the State Department. I knew a lot of people at CIA and the Defense Department in Washington. I was trying to find a hook which would get President Barco in particular, and those around him, thinking along a particular line. This was, "How do we organize and how should we deal with the narcotics issue, the guerrilla problem, and the threat to the oil fields which the guerrillas posed?" There were big U.S. interests in the oil industry.

We all met for this long weekend. I was able to get the Colombian Government to pay to bring these Americans down for the meeting. We helped a little bit, I think, but not very much. We had three, solid days with the President of Colombia and these, key members of his cabinet. We did nothing but examine the roots of the Colombian guerrilla movement and narcotics traffic. We considered the kinds of activities that might occur which might create a national crisis and how one might deal with them. As a result of this meeting we then developed a program under which the CIA and our counter-terrorism people from the State Department, including Jerry Bremer, brought down to Colombia some exercises. We were able to bring together, for the first time ever in Colombia, civilian ministers and military generals and colonels in real exercises, crafting or gaming various kinds of crises which might occur, particularly on the terrorism and military-guerrilla front. These exercises did not deal with natural disasters.

In any case this exercise was very important. I think that it eventually helped the situation, after these assassinations that I've talked about. My successor, Ted McNamara, was able to work with President Barco and to begin to get a narcotics strategy adopted in late 1988 or 1989. However, it took all of that time to overcome the initial inertia and turn Colombian government policy in another direction. This experience got us into the crisis management area. I was still in Colombia during 1987 and the first nine months of 1988. We were doing these exercises. The CIA was beginning to train Colombian military units to be reaction forces. We provided some aircraft which could be used to support these reaction forces.

Q: As the Ambassador, did you have a personal problem of adjusting your priorities? You understood the coffee situation. You had this major drug problem facing you. The coffee producers in Colombia are very important. In a way, they were our allies but, at the same time, the coffee consumers in the United States want something different. Obviously, you represented both sides. However, did you ever find yourself getting too

involved in presenting Colombia's position? How did you find the coffee buyers' side in the United States?

The U.S. position on coffee caused me no problems. John Rosenbaum was the coffee negotiator in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. He was about a third or fourth echelon official in that office - pretty high ranking. John came to Colombia two or three times when I was there as Ambassador. He was never quite sure that somebody wasn't going to throw a coffee bomb at his car. I'm kind of joking, but the Colombians didn't like John Rosenbaum. He was a tough negotiator. He took the U.S. position and drove it forward. I supported John in public and in private. However, this didn't rub off on me.

I took the position that it is not the U.S. Ambassador's task, nor does it particularly serve U.S. interests, to seek opportunities to antagonize your host government. Very honestly, I would not look for opportunities to go to the Colombian press and say, "The way you handle the coffee issue is all screwed up." I didn't think that such an attitude would persuade them to change their behavior. I thought that it was much better to talk more generally about trade, opening it up, removing protection, and keeping such discussion about coffee less specific. There was a drug cartel over here and a coffee cartel over there. One product is more benign than the other. However, it is an emotional subject. I don't think that an American Ambassador should go after the coffee cartel the way he goes after the narcotics cartel.

Q: To go back just a bit, I would think that anybody who is trying to push our drug policy runs into the problem that we have Senators who are adamant about doing something about drugs. At the same time, they're worried about protecting their tobacco industry. Did you ever have that comparison thrown in your face? I'm talking about the people at the lowest level, the coca leaf or marijuana producers, compared to the tobacco farmer. Did this comparison ever come up?

GILLESPIE: Not to the tobacco farmer as such. I think it did come up - it may have been in the newspapers. However, it really wasn't that sharp an issue. When did Everett Koop enter office as Surgeon General?

Q: He would have come in under President Reagan. In a way, he turned out to be not what Reagan wanted.

GILLESPIE: He's the one who said that tobacco is harmful to you. That was just about this time. My recollection is that there were articles in the press about tobacco and cigarettes, and I'm sure that somebody must have drawn the parallel with narcotics at some point. However, I didn't have to defend the U.S. on that score. What they were really going after at that point were the stories out of Hawaii. We were trying to get the Colombians to eradicate, that is, use herbicides against drugs, and particularly marijuana. They were using some herbicides on marijuana. We were barred from using those herbicides in the United States, and particularly where we grow the most marijuana, which is in the lush, mountain regions of Hawaii. In Hawaii the DEA people can't go onto the land because of legal barriers. We were telling the Colombians, "Go in and get

that marijuana trafficker." They said, "Yes, but you can't go in and get that marijuana trafficker in the U.S., and we can't, either." We said, "Well, we don't care about your laws."

Q: Tony, what's left on our list regarding Colombia?

GILLESPIE: Regarding Colombia? I think that we want to talk a little bit about business promotion and some aspects of consular activities. I'll have to remember that some of Oliver North's Iran-Contra activities spilled over into Colombia and San Andres Island. We can go into that next time. Some other things are likely to come up, but we've really covered everything else on the list we started with.

Q: Then, at the end, we might talk about when you left Colombia and how you felt about what you had accomplished, particularly on the narcotics side, as well as drug relations.

GILLESPIE: When Cuba was actively supporting the guerrilla movements in Colombia and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, I think that we had a lot of reporting that indicated that Gabriel Garcia Marquez was a conscious agent of Castro. He may have carried money or information back and forth and done those kinds of things. By the mid to late 1980s, he was mellowing. His support of Castro was not unflinching at that stage, and it is even less so today. So he became less of a problem, and his views were not a major issue.

Another consular problem which came up when I received a telephone calls in the middle of the night from the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bogotá. I was told, "We've got an airplane up on San Andres Island. It's a U.S. plane and is carrying drugs. It is on a U.S. flight for the contras in Central America." This was not connected with the Iran-Contra question as such but with Lt. Colonel Oliver North and his operations in support of the contras in Nicaragua. It turned out that flights of this kind were activity carried out by the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Front) as part of the support structure put in place by Ollie North, to move weapons and supplies in and out of Nicaragua. They had been using San Andres Island as a refueling and stopover point.

Q: But there are two truths involved here. One was that the aircraft was engaged in re-supplying the contras. That's one truth. However, what about the drugs? If there were drugs on board the aircraft...

GILLESPIE: There were no drugs on board the aircraft. The Colombian authorities on San Andres Island had not found drugs on the aircraft.

This matter was reported to us as a consular matter. American property and people had been detained. That's when we learned who they were, what was involved, and what was being done. The question for us was, "What do we do about this?" To me the answer was very simple: we would tell the Colombians everything that we could tell them. If there were drugs on the aircraft, presumably the Colombians didn't find them. The Colombian authorities said that they had searched the aircraft for drugs and hadn't found any. Our

DEA people were alerted to this development. They didn't suspect this aircraft of being involved in the drug traffic at this point. They told me that this plane had a record of involvement in the drug traffic but they said that they didn't think that it was engaged in such traffic at the time. Then I learned through State Department channels that this plane was under contract to the U.S. Government, was on a mission that was known and approved, and was being paid for by U.S. appropriated funds.

Today, in 1996, the Colombian-U.S. relationship is as troubled as it ever has been. When I left Colombia in 1990, I felt that we had not had an effective anti-narcotics policy or strategy and I still believe that we do not have one. We were trying to interdict or stop the flow of drugs from and through Colombia to the United States. We were trying to do this either by finding the drugs and destroying them on the ground or by eradicating the cultivation of coca leaves. During the time I was in Colombia we were dealing primarily with marijuana and coca which was processed into cocaine. We had only marginal success in doing this. DEA representatives and other people on the Embassy staff could and did boast of large seizures of narcotics in terms of tons of marijuana and cocaine discovered.

I have become very skeptical and, to some degree, cynical about our ability to deal with this problem. At the same time my fear, or concern at least, is that in the same way that drug trafficking has further corrupted the societies in which it goes on we are also being corrupted in ways that we do not fully appreciate and have not faced up to. Colombia is a perfect and perhaps extreme example of the corruption which the narcotics traffic has created, although Mexico also suffers from it, as does Peru, Bolivia, and other countries. I feel that the corruption is in our police and judicial systems in ways that we are not aware of. I don't think that there are huge conspiracies in our country in this respect but I think that it's happening. There's a lot more drug consumption than people want to admit.

The new manager for Barclay's Bank came to Bogotá from England. He was a very bright man. His wife was the daughter of the British Ambassador to Bolivia and Peru when she was younger. He was a tennis player. We would invite them over to play tennis and got to know them fairly well. They had come to Bogotá from New York. After we had become pretty well acquainted, he confided to me that when I would go to a party - not necessarily a diplomatic function but especially a Colombian society party - it was not absolutely unheard of that, when the American Ambassador and other senior officials had left the party, people would bring out cocaine and other drugs for people to sample. He said, "This is just like Manhattan and Washington, DC, where they do exactly the same thing." He said, "Ambassador, don't be misled by all of this. Colombia's not any different from New York, Chicago, or Washington, because I've done it." His wife said, "Absolutely. We stopped going to parties given by certain members of major law firms, investment banking houses, and others in Manhattan - or, just going very early, dropping in, and leaving. Because if you stay around long enough, somebody will come out with a silver tray and offer you narcotics."

That was going on in the late 1980s. Nancy Reagan, President Reagan's wife, was saying, "Just say No." My skepticism at that point was growing. I don't think that I was cynical

about it but I was wondering if we were on the right track. Nobody was in charge. We had the beginnings of an Office of National Drug Control Policy, but they weren't really doing anything. It was mainly a matter of making political hay in the 1986 and 1988 elections. I remember coming back from Colombia to a meeting in the White House in the Cabinet Room. I sat directly across from President Reagan. Vice President Bush was there, as well as 16 American Ambassadors from around the world - not just Latin America - where the drug issue was important. We all talked about this and how important it was. The basic line was that, "We've got to keep these narcotics out of the United States." There was nothing about what we should do in the United States, although at the end of the meeting President Reagan - or maybe Vice President Bush, I can't remember which one said this - "Now we've all been drug tested here in the White House. Have you all been drug tested?" Well, there was no drug testing program in the State Department. We all got up, went over to the dispensary in the Old Executive Office Building, and peed in a cup. I had Bill Swing, Dan Donohue, and a mixture of career and non-career Ambassadors with me. We all lined up to have our drug test. They sent us all the results later and said, "Don't worry, you're all okay." (Laughter)

Anyhow, I had thought, when I started my tour of duty in Colombia, that the drug question was important but that my predecessor as Ambassador had, perhaps, devoted too much attention to it. I felt that I should try to find some approach that would allow us to have an impact on the Colombian drug strategy. My objective had been to persuade President Virgilio Barco to come up with a narcotics strategy for Colombia and fit it into his vision of what he wanted to accomplish during his Presidency. As of the time that I left Colombia, he had not done that. He was beginning to do that and actually approved a narcotics strategy when my successor, Ted McNamara, was Ambassador to Colombia. He was a really effective Ambassador.

Barco eventually came up with a narcotics strategy - not necessarily a good strategy and certainly not the best one. However, it was a strategy of sorts. It devoted resources to it and identified responsibilities. It defined Colombia's objectives in this respect. Even so, the levels of narcotics related corruption, as we have seen, have grown. The narcotics problem has not declined at all, and this complex of difficulties remains.

In one sense I came away fairly frustrated after spending three years in this surreal, threatening atmosphere, where I felt for the first time in my life real fear associated with my job. My wife felt this fear, also. I was concerned that we had not been able to do very much either in Washington or in Bogotá to deal effectively with this set of problems. We'd been very successful, in my view, in understanding the political dynamics of Colombia and, perhaps, in influencing some of the events. We'd been very successful in focusing attention on some of the positive aspects of the relationship between Colombia and the United States, primarily in terms of economic and some of the political and other security issues. However, in terms of this core set of issues that revolved around the narcotics traffic and the illicit activity associated with it, we just didn't do as much as we hoped.

DAVID L. HOBBS

**Consular Officer
Colombia (1986-1989)
Political Counselor
Columbia (1989-1990)
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1990-1992)**

David L. Hobbs was born in Iowa in 1940. After serving in the US Army from 1960-1963 he received his bachelor's degree from University of California at Berkeley. His career included positions in Germany, Brazil, England, Japan, Colombia, and an ambassadorship to Guyana. Ambassador Hobbs was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1997.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you went down, politically?

HOBBS: The post has a reputation of being a very, very dangerous post and I suppose it was in a way. The drug war had been going on for a while and we were trying to work with the Colombian government to put a little crimp in the narcotic traffic out of that country. First marijuana and later on cocaine became a major export item from that country. The famous Medellin and Cali cartels, criminal elements, were going full blast. A few months before I got there a bomb had gone off in front of the embassy and a woman who was waiting outside to get a visa was killed. There was a tremendous amount of tension. We had hundreds of jeeps, bodyguards, machine guns, etc. The place was an armed camp.

The president of Colombia, Barco at the time, did some very helpful and I suppose you would say brave things. He, for a while, opened up the window for extradition, although it was stopped after a few months by a parliamentary bill. We had a chance to extradite narcotic offenders to the United States. I got pretty much involved in that. We extradited quite a number. One of the first was Carlos Lader, who was the famous leader of the drug business of Colombia. He was prosecuted and is still serving time.

Q: What was your impression of how Tony Gillespie ran the embassy?

HOBBS: I think he was very good. I felt he was an excellent manager. He had a good DCM, too, in Mike Skol. Tony had a big picture and understood very well, I think, the environment in which we were working. He understood all the theory we were up to but also very practical in making decisions. I remember once I went to him when I got the idea that we should be refusing visas to Colombian congressional members who we had information making us aware of their involvement in the narcotic traffic. Why should they be exempt from paying the price? I knew it would be controversial if we took on congressional leaders. One was a presidential candidate, which would cause a bit of an uproar. I went to see Tony Gillespie about this idea. He listened to me, thought about it for a few minutes and said, "Go ahead. It makes sense." I was pleased to see a person in his position who could see all the pressure from the

Colombian government to be nice to them. If he was uncomfortable with the idea he never showed it to us. He was quite willing to let us take the visas from the various congressmen.

Q: What happened when you started to do this? Did the papers attack you?

HOBBS: Yes, there was a bit of an uproar. At first the congressmen would come in and want to know why this was being done. You can't tell them precisely why because you can't reveal intelligence sources and methods, but you would give them enough information to let them know it had to do with narcotics. At one time I had a congressman crying in my office over losing his visa. It was probably the worse punishment he ever had, I suppose, to lose his visa.

Eventually it got to be a matter of debate in the congress and they had this famous debate where I was denounced personally by one of the north coast politicians for my role in this. I stayed on in Colombia for three more years and for awhile. The foreign minister, whenever he saw me, even after I had left the consular section, would refer to me as señor consul to let me know that he remembered my role in the visa thing, I guess. However, it was something we needed to do, did it and got away with it. I think it sent a message that the United States government was serious about the drug war and you didn't have any position whatever that made you exempt from the rules that everybody else played by. Later, after I left Colombia, we took the visa from the president, Samper.

Q: With the tremendous drug trafficking going on there, there must have been Americans involved. Did that arise?

HOBBS: A little of that but much less than I expected. By the time I got there the narcotic trafficking had progressed way beyond the simple little mule carrying a little bit of cocaine on their person. They were shipping it in ships and aircraft, using commercial shipping and aircraft that belonged to them. There was one case that lingered on, having taken place before I got there, where a person claimed that he had been unjustly arrested and that the DEA had engaged in framing him and participated in some interrogation of him. But the guy had left by then. So, that case wasn't a problem.

At time we tried to look into these allegations but they were very fuzzy and you couldn't put much credence in them. We had only about six or eight prisoners which is a very small number for a country that size.

Q: So from 1989 to 1992 you were back in Colombia?

HOBBS: Yes. From 1989-90 I was political counselor and from 1990-92 I was DCM. So, it was a six year tour.

Q: That's a long time. What was the political situation and how did the embassy deal with the Colombian side during this period?

HOBBS: When I first got to Colombia there used to be a fair amount of questioning inside the embassy whether the government under Barco was really committed to the anti-narcotic effort. Then Barco got really tough and let us have extradition for a while before a constitutional amendment stopped it. Barco sort of became our hero in a way.

When Gaviria came in the same thing happened. It seems like one of the characteristics of Colombian politics is as a person takes power they usually try to unify the country, reach out and touch everybody. So, Gaviria appeared at first to be making concessions to the narcos. But some of us who had been there long enough, and I certainly was one, remembered we used to say the same thing about Barco and he got really tough, so we shouldn't necessarily assume that because Gaviria was trying to make some concessions to show that the government was being reasonable, we wouldn't later on get more support.

I remember they had worked out this deal where the persons who were accused of narcotic traffic could confess and turn themselves in and get a reduced sentence for doing that. If they cooperated and gave the government information they could get an even more reduced sentence. So, someone who was caught and tried could get up to 30 years, but by turning himself in and cooperating and with good behavior get off with three or four years. That seemed to us to be excessive. But, the Colombians felt they needed to show that they were not just fighting the Americans' war for them but were acting in a Colombian context. That is why I think sometimes the Colombians get the rap of being very violent, but in a way they are not that violent. A lot of violence goes on, yes, but they kind of look for compromise, concessions to make things work without confrontation. So, we had that going on during the first years of the Gaviria administration.

There was constitutional reform going on which was very mischievous because the narcos were deep into that process. They were influencing the congressmen to get a constitution that was more to their liking. It was very hard to get the Colombians to see that and to accept that. They had a hard time understanding how deep the corruption was, how deep the penetration of the narcotic traffic had become. Early on they tried to kid themselves by believing drugs were an American problem, they were only selling them. They didn't realize that once you get into a drug situation with such a large mafia that they would end up suffering the consequences themselves. And one of them was violence.

So, we always had this tension with Colombia. They were trying to do the right thing. They had a very good anti-narcotic police that worked very hard with us to try to crush drug trafficking. There were military who were working very hard to try to do the right thing. It was a very mixed message. You would get victories and defeats every day.

My personal belief was that our huge security apparatus was more than we needed. Certainly the ambassador had to be protected, and I suppose the head of DEA, but the narcos really didn't want us. I don't think they would have taken the ambassador out, although the guerillas might. They were shipping enormous quantities of drugs to the States and we were burning crops, smashing labs, and seizing narcotics on their way out of the country and into the country, but the price was not going up or quality down, so it led you to believe there was still enough in it to deal with the market. So, that being the case and with profits being enormous, why would they want to take on the United States by killing the ambassador or some other official American.

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN
Deputy Chief of Mission
1987-1990

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogotá, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Why don't we talk about the security problem first? How did you live, and how did it work out?

McLEAN: As I say, the security problem had already been building up in previous years. By the time I got there, the DCM himself was already much more highly protected than most ambassadors were. It's something that bothered me as a newly single person a little bit, but after a while I got used to it, and it was part of our life. I had bodyguards with me at all times. My apartment had bodyguards. We trained continuously so I would make sure I knew how to use the guns that I had at the apartment, and we trained also on the road and how we would handle ourselves. I had an armored car. When I first got there, my armored car was painted yellow, and I said, "That's very strange. Why is it painted yellow? That would draw a lot of attention." They said, "Oh, we repainted it. It used to be painted red." I had it painted sort of cream color. We were very interested in everyone in the embassy's security and very sensitive to the fact that it wasn't good for the ambassador and myself to be seen protecting ourselves but everyone else was...

Q: Who was the ambassador?

McLEAN: When I got there, it was Tony Gillespie, Charles A. Gillespie, who himself was a very security-conscious individual.

Q: His background was a security officer.

McLEAN: Early on. But Tony was the best manager I ever worked for. He very much delegated and told you what he wanted done and then stood back and let you do the job. I had had experience in security in Milan. I had drummed into myself the ideas of varying your routes and times and all that. But a big problem was making sure that the embassy, which was beginning to grow because we were getting more people coming in for this anti-narcotics program, how to get them to take care of themselves, so we involved it in training, we involved it in having regular security meetings. I adapted a security style. I discovered early on that if you said to people, "What should we do?" you got just a cacophony of people discussing their own inner fears and various bright ideas, so I adopted a system that said, "Let's spend the first half of this meeting discussing what is the threat. What are we being threatened by?" And each of these meetings usually was because we had some new threat information. And then we would discuss it until everyone got comfortable that they understood what we were being threatened with. Then I took the second half of the meeting to discuss how do you design a response to those particular threats. It always wasn't easy, because they always wanted then to jump off onto some other threat. But how do you define that particular threat? And that worked pretty well. It worked both in terms of being able to have out of each of those meetings a telegram that showed Washington that we were looking hard at each and every threat and all the possibilities that were coming up, but it also showed programmatically what we were doing, which was changing our profile, getting DEA not always to go to the same bar every night. We adopted a system where my people were driven to and from work, and their pick-ups in the mornings were randomly chosen. We had a computer program that would generate on a random basis the schedule for each person so that they weren't picked up at the same time every day, and design the routes for the vans to pick people up. At various times we had additional guards that we put on to our people. We built up the diplomatic security unit. I think it had 12 people at the maximum. I think most of the things were basically trying to drum into people to be aware of it without trying to scare them. We limited travel. At that time nobody could go to Medellin. There were some few, very minor exceptions. There was at least a minor exception or two that was unauthorized by certain agencies, but by and large we kept to it. I've never been to Medellin, as much as I know about Colombia. We even had a live fire exercise one time. We were out playing tennis and suddenly guns went off. I thought that was a bit extreme. We all hit the grounds and we did an exit, just to make sure we knew what we were doing. One of the more interesting and effective things I think we did was the Department of State would send down teams that would do fantasize exercises and crisis exercises that I think were very useful in terms of getting us to work together. Eventually we did counter-surveillance teams because we were getting so many..., well, we actually were being attacked, we had two rocket attacks. One was not effective at all; it was a made-up piece, broke some windows. But one was an anti-tank rocket that luckily went off after hours and hit a piece of concrete up on the top side of the building. We dismissed it at the time, but the next morning when people went into that area of the upstairs, they discovered that there was a small hole but it had blasted, like anti-tank weapons do, through the inside and would have killed people. So we did have threats, and we did have specific threats. We had a counter-surveillance team we brought in one time. I was a little

reluctant to have that, but, well, okay, you've got to do everything. There was a tendency, if security people told you you had to do things, there was a tendency to say, "Okay, we've got to do that." It's hard to pull them back a little bit. But I will say in that particular case, after they had been there for several days, they brought the camera to me, and rewound the camera so you could look in and see what the camera had seen, and they showed me how the ambassador had been surveilled, and you could see people at certain places looking and taking notes and the rest of it. And then they said, "Look here. Here's your car. See what happens. Your car comes in. See this guy over here. He walks up, and the next day when you come by and see that same person walks up," and I said, "Yes, yes." I remember I put down the camera and I began to talk, and yet no sound came out. My voice is very light anyway, but I had no liquid in my throat anymore. But you recognize the fact that these things you're always thinking of, in fact they're very real, something was taking place. So it was a constant concern. The ambassador and I both did leave the country a fair amount. We took full advantage of our leave. As a consequence I was left chargé a lot or I was out of the country a fair amount, but in fact I think that was good for relaxing tensions, because at the time things were going on. The narcotics traffickers had decided to launch a reign of terror to scare the government and to get them to stop the policies of extradition. So there were periods when you would wake up in the night and hear bam-bam-bam-bam as the bombs went off in various parts of the city. I can remember twice hearing very major explosions and going to the curtains--I had a penthouse apartment that looked over the city--and seeing these big mushroom clouds rise up. One of them was the newspaper, a major newspaper, *El Espectador*; and another was one that was on the route, the principal route you used on the way to the embassy just below my apartment. I later met a lady whose father was blown apart in that bombing. And there was a third one in which the secret police's, Colombia's FBI's, headquarters had blown apart leaving a hole greater than the size of this room in the pavement, breaking the back of the building. These things always happened when I was chargé. So the next day I went over to see the chief of police who was determined that he was going to stay in the building. So he stayed in this building, locked in. It was like walking into a building under construction. The plaster and tiles from the halls and stairways had just been torn off. We walked up, and way in the back of the building we found this guy seated and determined to hold on and to give us a sign that he wasn't going to be threatened by this. The explosion blew up and blew away and destroyed other buildings nearby including a piece of the debris landed and destroyed a warehouse where we were at that time working on armoring vehicles for the judges. It was one of the programs that we were doing, and we were secretly putting this armory together, but it was one of the ironies that this debris landed on the very building and we had to start all over again.

Q: How did this security affect your operations? You're not there just to protect yourself but obviously to exude American policy and do what embassies do.

McLEAN: I think we did pretty well. Clearly we didn't get on the ground as much as we would have in a place like Medellin, and I think that threw off a little bit our interpretation of events, but we traveled pretty widely through the country. You know, you only had volunteers there. It was a constant question I was always being asked by the

press--I did a lot of press interviews--"Aren't you putting people in danger?" In fact, I remember one night CBS stood in front of the embassy and said, "The people in this building are in danger," and that night my daughter calls me from Seattle saying, "Daddy, are you all right?" But, no, we tried to function pretty normally, and I think we did. We had ways to conduct ourselves. We tried to keep the numbers low. At one point, I think mistakenly, we had a drawdown of spouses and some others, but generally I think we tried to show that we could do the job but we were prepared to take people out, prepared to shut the embassy down if that was what it came to. As I say, there was always this tension on the diplomatic security side of things to always want to take a further step. I would often have to say, "Well, okay, are you ready to take these consequences? If you are not, then you have to put it against what are the dangers, because we're not going to lose anybody in this operation," and in fact I'm proud to say that in the whole time that I was involved in it from Andean Affairs to the time that I left being Deputy Assistant Secretary, to have anything to do Colombia, there were no Americans killed or kidnapped even though the threats were continuous.

McLEAN: The narcos at that time were trying to weaken the government and remove the government's willingness to act. In some ways they succeeded. They certainly scared the pants off a lot of people and caused major difficulty for us to get our job done. I can remember one time the cabinet appearing on television when the president reinstituted extradition, and I wish I had a tape of that, because they were scared to death. It was written all over their faces that they were frightened to death that this was occurring, because people were dying, and people were dying. By the time I left, eleven people that I knew were dead. Within a few years the number I could have counted had gone up to 14 or 15, and these were people who were assassinated in one way or another and didn't die of natural causes or even accidents; they were people who were subject to somebody trying to assassinate them, including several presidential candidates. One was the leader of the UP (Patriotic Union), the civilian communist party. I had him in my apartment, and we were supposed to be talking about what the UP wanted and we did talk about that to some degree, but I was mostly talking to him about his security. By that time I had become somewhat of a security nut, and I was telling him how he was mishandling the security and how he had to do it better--and my God, if he wasn't assassinated two weeks later. It was terrible. In fact, the next case was then the most dramatic. It was the leading presidential candidate by the name of Galan. It had invited him to my apartment. I remember it was July 3rd, and I invited the ambassador and his wife, and I invited the lady who is now my wife and one of his aides and he and his wife, Gloria, to my apartment, and we discussed security. He told us how he was being threatened. We offered assistance to him. So he knew he was being threatened, and we knew some of that, but then he gave us a better, clearer idea of it. I, foolishly in retrospect, said to him, "You know, you really should make narcotics much more of an issue, because that's the way to face these guys down." President Barco's popularity had always gone up when he stood tough. He told me quite frankly, "Phil, I can't do that. I cannot do that. It's just too dangerous." What occurred was about six weeks later. In fact, in the interim he called me on a visa problem. It was very typical, and he talked to me about this offer of protection or help on this protective unit he called me about, helping one of his relatives get a visa. But he went out on the campaign trail, and he was assassinated. It was a deeply emotional

thing for all of us, for Colombia, the trauma. In effect that is when President Barco reinstated extradition and began a program that showed that we wanted to move ahead. It was a time when I worked out so that the helicopters came in and the C5, and Bush at that point declared an anti-narcotics program in a very dramatic way. But these were sad events. I had another instance: the narcos blew a plane right out of the sky, blew a 727. That's very dramatic. After the investigation of looking at this metal, a type of metal I recognized, because I don't know if I mentioned it at the beginning, but for a brief time after I dropped out of college, I was a Boeing mechanic, and I recognized the skin and how it's put together and the rest of it. You could see where the bomb had blasted through. They were probably again trying to assassinate the major presidential candidate. We had the information. I was due to be on that plane but in fact didn't do it. I knew one of the people that I mentioned was assassinated was on that plane. It was very dramatic. But these guys, as I say, developed their technology. They probably got it through--here again you have the guerilla connection, and the guerrillas that we knew were getting training. They were bringing back this training, and then they were defecting over to the narcos, going to work for the narcos, and they designed these remote detonation things. You hear the most incredible stories of close calls, and then we'd hear from time to time cases of people falling down and dying.

Q: When you left there in 1990, what was your impression of whither Colombia?

McLEAN: Well, I probably thought things were going pretty well. They had just elected a new president, a young man whom I knew, and I thought they were beginning to get their act together at that point. We had a major shift in terms of instituting new programs. Colombian opinion was beginning to come a little ways towards us in the sense that Colombians were no longer saying it was just the United States' problem and beginning to see that there was some problem on their own. They were beginning to see the violence at times had nothing to do with what we were doing; it was simply that the narcos are violent people. There were examples of them going into things like the used tire business, but as soon as they went in with their own investment and their open money, violence began to increase. It was just an interesting factor. So Colombians were beginning to turn, and I thought we had the embassy together in a pretty good programmatic way, and I was pretty happy about it. It turned out to be obviously over-optimistic, which is not unusual in those circumstances. The narcos, particularly Pablo Escobar, in my time, before I got there, later had been captured and brought to the United States and tried and convicted. During my time another one of the major and one of the most violent people was brought down with not our direct assistance but our indirect assistance. Then the one outstanding was Pablo Escobar, but then he began a campaign of kidnapping in the period just after I left Colombia, which was recorded by Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his book News of a Kidnapping, and he did a series of them, and he designed it in such a way as to really get to the Colombian governing political class, which made it very difficult for them to keep their game going, so that in the constitutional convention which was designed to reform government, to improve their government, then nine months later the political class caved and agreed no extradition, which left them holding the bag with "What do you do with these guys if you can't send them out of the country and you can't credibly keep them and try them in your own country?" In fact, one of the

things I haven't mentioned up to now that I should mention, which I was involved in as early as the time I was in Andean affairs, was a focus on the justice system. I thought if we're going to do anything in this area, we have to do something in the justice area.

Q: I'd like to stop at this point, because I've got to move on. So we've talked on Colombia. We're going to finish it off by talking in some depth about what our policy was with the Colombian justice system, and then we'll move on to your next assignment.

It's the 26th of February 1999. Phil, you sort of got disorganized, so do you want to start putting it together?

McLEAN: Let me start by just saying that justice and how justice systems work was really at the heart of what we were trying to do in these countries. Maybe it wasn't the heart; if it was a heart, it was a weak heart, one with a lot of disease in it. In effect, narcotics put enormous amounts of pressure on legal systems in Latin America, which weren't really equipped to handle it. The system of civil law, which requires finding an honest man, a judge, to go out and investigate and come to some good conclusion, doesn't work well in a system where you have corruption and intimidation, and it gets harder to find that honest man who can do it by himself, so a theme that runs through all of this was the failing justice systems and their inability to deal with these questions and then the U.S. role in trying to find a way to deal with these countries when their justice systems couldn't handle it. I might begin by something that occurred when I was still Director of Andean Affairs. On one of my visits to Colombia, Ambassador Gillespie had taken me in to see the Justice Minister, and this was in the period after the murder of his predecessor, and he was in a closed room, a drawn tightly office, and he was clearly a man who felt very threatened, and he felt threatened not just by the forces outside but the fact that he did not feel he could find the truth inside his own government, and he didn't feel he had the instruments to deal with these things. Yet, despite that he was a person who was speaking out on the narcotics traffickers. Eventually the pressures got to him, and they sent him off to Hungary as ambassador to get him out of the country. Well, in Hungary the narcotics caught up with him, and here it was in the days when you had the so-called iron curtain and the narcos sent an assassin to kill him. They came very close to doing so. He came out of his house one morning on a snowy day and caught lots of bullets in his body, and that was a big shock on everyone's part back in 1986. I remember my involvement in it was the fact that we tried to be helpful. We felt that this was an incredible act by the narcos, and I managed to get the U.S. military to send a plane into Hungary. I'm told it was the first U.S. military plane that had gone into a Hungarian airport, a hospital plane, and picked him up and took him out. The other humorous side of that is that about six months later I got a bill personally--it was addressed to me personally--for that particular operation. I must say it made me a little uncomfortable, and I guess somebody else figured out how to pay for that thing, because I didn't do it. But I think it was a point of support by us. When I went to Colombia as DCM then, right away I was involved in these issues very deeply. It was both a justice question and a security question, because although we had seen the extent that these folks would go to threaten the institutions of the government, in one of the first meetings that I remember, Senator Lawton Chiles came through. I took him to see the Supreme Court, and the acting head of

the Supreme Court at that point had us meet in their temporary chambers, temporary because just the year before a group of guerrillas, who I am convinced were working for the narcos, went into the Palace of Justice and held the whole supreme court in hostage. In the counter-attack which we authorized that night--I authorized from Washington, in fact the year before, getting U.S. explosives in to help with these things--this particular confrontation ended up with the death of a large number of the members of the Supreme Court. Here it was a year later I'm meeting in the Supreme Court and Senator Chiles, and we meet in a room that has on its walls large portraits of all of the justices who had died dressed with black mourning around it, which as the senator and I came out we commented from the content of the conversation but also, more importantly, the place and the way that it was set up indicated these people were deeply threatened and were not about to do anything to confront the narcos. So that was very much the atmosphere in which we were involved. We then tried, and we were always trying, to find ways to be helpful, but the justice systems are very resistant to outside play. I had even found that back in my days in Scotland, when I discovered that the most radical Scottish nationalists were lawyers because of their legal system being different than England's, and this was true there. When we tried to extend a helping hand to the justice system, they basically turned us down, either because of the natural phenomenon that I speak of but also because some of them clearly were being affected by the narcos directly. Our first effort at offering them a program of assistance to improve their justice program was turned down by their legal institutions. We found then the AID director or the one AID person that we had in the embassy had developed a relationship with a private foundation, and we used the relationship with that foundation to channel our money in the beginnings of the program. It turned out to be a very good program, because it didn't have quite the onus of being government to government and allowed this foundation to bring in people from the government but also from the society as a whole and to work in a very nonpolitical way in trying to strengthen the justice system. On my side, my personal contribution, because of my experience in Italy, I had come to admire the Italian judges despite the clear problems of the Italian justice system. I had seen them struggle to find ways of reforming it.

Q: Working on the legal system, was Colombia in a way, when you were looking at the area there, a unique situation as far as justice and the narcos, or were they having their effect in Bolivia and elsewhere?

McLEAN: I think in all of these countries there is this problem. In the Colombian case it was worse because the Colombians strangely are a very legalistic country, somewhat different than these other countries. It's almost an exaggerated legalism, and yet ironically the legal institutions were quite weak. But the work that we did on justice reforms and some of the things I got started in the Andean affairs office, we in fact were also applying to Bolivia and Peru specifically.

There is still a major problem in all of these countries. In Peru, for instance, it's really not clear that the judges are independent from the government. Their sensitivity to human rights issues is still very weak, so in all of these countries it's very hard for the judges to take on major parts of the political institutions, and they generally don't do so. Colombia

is doing a number of things but in ways that are confusing. They have basically three supreme courts. They have in fact three or four major parts of the government that do prosecutions. The system is always falling over itself one way or the other, but they have done something. They have increased the salaries of judges, they've increased their training, and they are giving them some protection, which was new. In this period just after I got to Colombia, the judges were being killed on a regular basis if they stood up. These are judges, and when we talk about judges, we think of dignified men in robes, if not in a wig, but in fact in the Colombian case it's a fairly low level of civil service, and they would be waiting for the bus and would be assassinated. Our Congress, congressional staffers, came through one time and were horrified by this, and so the next thing we know, we have a million dollars to spend for protecting judges. Then thereafter every time a judge was killed, we would get a Congressional inquiry, "Why haven't you spent that million dollars? Aren't you responsible for the death of these judges?" So we scrambled like crazy trying to do something, but again, just throwing a million dollars at the problem doesn't necessarily solve it. As I think I mentioned earlier in part of the presentation I talked about, we actually began to armor cars. We used a little bit of money to bring in some armored cars from the outside for the most endangered judges, but one of my ideas was to try to build up the capability inside the country to armor cars. There was nobody who did that at that time. It's now a big business in Colombia, but at that time it wasn't anything that was done locally. We tried to give training in security procedures and trained guards. But again, all of these things didn't work automatically. I know that at one point the guards that we had given to one judge, I discovered they were being used as personal servants to them, so those are the types of things, that just because you have a program, just because you spend money doesn't mean you have immediate impact, but over the longer term, I would say, it is beginning to happen, is beginning to have some effect. On recent trips that I've made to Colombia, I've actually seen instances where I thought there was good protection being given to endangered people that had never been done before. Again, this was with money that they themselves are now putting forward. We in effect did some seed money, and they in fact have taken up the idea and become more sophisticated about it, even in the communications for protection and creating a part of the police that would be permanently in charge of looking after these people. But the problem is just that, that you have a very weak system of deciding who's guilty, and you have a very weak investigating system. I know one time we had an American, he'd landed at the airport and disappeared. One of the most shocking things to me was that our own diplomatic security people, with a little bit of police training, actually went out and solved the case, whereas the local police couldn't do it. They found the body of the man and were able to reconstruct what happened and identify who the killers were. Here was the American embassy doing a murder investigation because the police didn't have that type of capability to do it. Those are really shocking types of things, but it wasn't unusual because when you looked at their offices, they were crowded, they didn't have a typewriter even for each person, the judges went out to investigate murders on the bus. They took a bus to go out and do these things. It was really a shocking type of activity. As I was leaving, we were beginning to get more money from the U.S. Congress for these types of things, and we moved away from this foundation, channeling money through the foundation, and began to do it more directly. I oversaw this from Washington but I think with a little trepidation. I wasn't sure that in

fact our first way wasn't the better way, because once the United States got involved in it, we tended to want to do it our way and, as you say, we tended to want to talk. Thoughts about legal systems are something almost deeply embedded in people's sense. We in the United States watch Perry Mason and think that's the way it should be, whereas, as I say, they had a fundamentally different approach to it. I know that in some of the discussions that we had early on when I first got there about extradition, I would sit there with groups. On their side and our side people had some international experience, yet they were lawyers and when they talked, they had a very hard time with one another. As a non-lawyer I would watch them just talk past one another. They wouldn't have common grounds to communicate, and it was a very worrisome thing. But we kept on it. After Lo Murta left and was assassinated, I kept going. I had a subsequent anti-narcotics meeting. Again when I was still DCM in Bogotá, I went to Madrid. Frankly I had gone to Madrid on vacation but got dragged into an anti-narcotics convention. I was trying to get the European, the Spaniards, the Italians, the French and the Germans to do something and help. We got big promises that were little delivered on at that point. But I arranged a side meeting with the new minister of justice, with my contact, and with a very famous Sicilian prosecutor, who just months later was then assassinated in Sicily, showing they were giving a lesson to the Colombians that here these people I was trying to force on them as models in fact did have their problems of the very same nature.

Q: Within the President's staff, entourage or ministry, were there people who were trying to find a way?

McLEAN: There were people, and luckily they were. Barco himself was known to be very pro-American. In fact, that wasn't quite accurate. He was also supposed to speak good English, and that also was not accurate. He was married to a woman who had American citizenship when they were married, and he'd lived in the States for a good time, but his English was not really good. I think he basically wanted to be friendly to the United States. As I say, his closest intellectual aide was a man very close to the American embassy, and the Secretary General of the Presidency was a former head of Ford Motor's subsidiary there and a very pragmatic, practical man, and he and I developed a close relationship when I discovered I could go and see him late at night and sometimes Barco would stop in and we would talk. In fact, I understand later Barco thought pretty well of me, but not in his early days. But the problem was the public as a whole was quite convinced, and many are still convinced, that this narcotics was a U.S. problem, not a Colombian problem, and that any political leader had to battle that particular problem. Then they also were terribly threatened individually by all of these things, there's no question.

McLEAN: I may mention just a couple other small things. As a part of this thing, we were beginning to have concerns about human rights. I know that I was given a medal on my last days in Colombia by the police in a very dignified ceremony, but as I stepped to the side with the ambassador and the three generals of the police, we unleashed a lecture to them about human rights and about how this whole thing was going to collapse unless they got their human rights effort together. Obviously there was a whole part of this in the time about their peace program which we began to show the Colombians and they

began to understand and accept that narcotics was part of this phenomenon of strengthening the guerrillas. We also began a program of trying to deny visas to people who we had reason to believe were in some ways associated with the narcotics traffickers.

Q: I would have thought that, Colombia being so oriented towards Miami and all this, putting the families of the Escobars and other cartel people--I mean the kids couldn't go to school. If we just keep them out of the United States, it would be far more effective than, say, if you would do it to the French or something like that.

McLEAN: And it's surprising that that really wasn't done. One, there had been on the books for several years a law which said that visas could be refused if you had reason to believe that someone was abetting. It was a very low standard that you could use, and in fact we weren't using it. We were the first ones, in Bogotá, to do this. I will say that we tried to do it very carefully. We tried to lay down... David Hobbs was the consul general when we first did it, and we made sure that we had both sides of the law covered, that we had reason to believe and that we had indication that there had been an exchange made between something the person did and the narcotics traffickers. It was very hard to go the next step, which you mentioned, and it disturbed me at the time, that many of these narcotics traffickers had their children in school in the United States, in one case in Harvard. And yet it was very difficult. We had two consular officers in Barranquilla, and the people in Barranquilla, because they just would know the community so well, were able to put together files that did just what you're suggesting. They began to refuse visas to family members as well as to known traffickers, and they were able to do it by way of showing that the flow of money was in fact benefiting these people for their education or their shopping trips or whatever it was, but it took very careful work. The young lady that did this, that led this program, vice consul, she was threatened. They began to identify that she was in fact the problem. I tried to get similar programs going out of the consulate in Bogotá, but it was much more difficult because people didn't have the knowledge of the community in the same way that they did in Barranquilla, where you had local people indicating to the consul general information that was helping them make these justifications. My own sense is that probably the visa system went on beyond us, that the things that we began then they began to do much more after we were there.

Q: Then you left there in 1990, is that right?

McLEAN: That's right.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover?

McLEAN: I think that's most of it. A couple positive things that we did that weren't narcotics: We got a scholarship program going, which was very hard to do. We discovered that the Fulbright program, because of the cost of education in the United States, was becoming really a vehicle for very rich parts of society. So we got a program going, and got it through Congress, to get scholarships for lower class, lower middle class people. It was very hard to keep on track, because there was always a tendency in

Colombia for the favored goods to go to the rich. I remember one very powerful person in the Colombian community calling me up and pushing for a scholarship for a certain person. He said, "He's a member of the country club only because he inherited that." But that was a good effort. And the other thing, I guess, is the fact that we struggled to get the embassy site where it is right now. They were building new embassies under these new programs...

JAMES F. MACK
Director, Office of Andean Affairs
Washington, DC 1989-1991

Ambassador James F. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin America, where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Where to?

MACK: Well I went back to Washington. And I became the Director of the Office of Andean Affairs.

Q: Andean Affairs consisted of what?

MACK: Of five Andean countries. Which were Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. There were five. Chile was handled by South Cone Affairs.

Q: You did that from '89 until?

MACK: Until '91. The Office of Andean Affairs was a very busy place. Remember Colombia was not in the best of shape. The drug cartels were very strong. Shortly after I arrived, the Liberal candidate for president, Gaitan, was assassinated at the behest of Pablo Escobar, one of the notorious Medellin drug cartel king-pins. Colombia was in very, very bad. The Government of President Virgilio Barco was really shaken by the drug cartels which were enormously powerful to the point where they were electing people to Congress. In fact at one point, a quarter or a third of the Colombian Congress were ineligible for US visas because their links in some way to narcotics trafficking or money laundering. Their power went up to the Supreme Court. It was a pretty serious situation.

As a result of the Gaitan assassination, President Bush (the father) and his National Security Council decided we needed to take a hard look at Colombia and come up with a proposal to provide a massive amount of assistance for Columbia. This was almost 10

years before “Plan Colombia”. This was a reaction to the assassination of Gaitan and the power of the drug cartels.

Over one weekend we in the Office in Andean Affairs were asked to come up with a proposal to spend several hundred million dollars in support of Colombia. And in addition, we were asked to come up with something that would the attention to show that the U.S. really supported the government of Colombia and the other Andean countries in their war against drugs.

At this point I can’t recall who actually came up with the idea for all of this, but the Bush Administration agreed that they would propose an Andean drug summit involving President Bush, Jaime Paz Zamora of Bolivia, Alan Garcia of Peru and Virgilio Barco from Colombia. It was to take place in February, 1990. I had come on board in the fall of ’89 and my office had been given the lead in preparing for a summit. That’s what we did for my first four months on the job. Anybody who has been involved with this kind of thing knows that Heads of States don’t just show up. A huge amount of prior planning and inter-agency coordination is involved.

Q: So how did the Summit turn out?.

MACK: Well it actual came off quite well. The Summit launched substantially increased U.S. support for the Andean countries. It was quite a show. US Chinook helicopters from the US Naval ships off the horizon, a huge protective detail for Bush.

Q: Well, when you were charged with this, doing something about this, what were you looking at?

MACK: Well we were looking at the protection of Colombian judges. That was one thing. Judges were being assassinated by the dozens by the cartel. They were afraid to hear cases involving drug trafficking and to render verdicts. So one of the first things we focused on was physical protection for the judges. Armored cars, secured court buildings, secure communications. The Colombians also borrowed a concept of “faceless judges” from Italy by the way from Sicily to protect their judges. The judges heard cases behind a screen so their faces could not be seen by the defendants. That was a major area that we looked into. There were other kinds of systems as well.

CHARLOTTE ROE
Deputy Political Counselor
Bogotá, Colombia (1991-1992)

Ms. Roe was born and raised in New York State and educated at the University of Colorado, the Sorbonne and Ohio State University. During and after her university training she was involved in political and labor activities. In 1983 she joined the Foreign Service. In the course of her career with the State Department, Ms. Roe served in La Paz, Santiago, Tel Aviv, Budapest and Bogotá, primarily in the political and labor fields. In

Washington, she served on the US Mission to the OAS and in the International Organizations and Environmental and Scientific Affairs Bureaus. Ms. Roe was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Then you went to Colombia. You were there from when to when?

ROE: I was there from July 1990 to August 1992.

Q: Who was our ambassador in Colombia at the time?

ROE: Ted McNamara. He was succeeded by Morris Busby. The DCM was David Hodges. Janet Crist was the political counselor. Phil French and I served as deputy counselors. Matt Kaplan and Phil Goldberg were junior political officers.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you got there in 1990?

ROE: The climate was a bit spooky. Embassy staff left for work in an armored vehicle with an armed follow car in a shifting schedule that would range from five to eight in the morning. The guards got out at every stop and flaunted their machine guns. Ironically, if we went home late, we were on our own. So more often than not I took public transportation home. Go figure! Colombia had its share of upheavals. Luis Carlos Galán, a beloved reformer and the leading candidate for President, had just been assassinated on the campaign trail. He was a Robert Kennedy type figure. Cesar Gaviria, Galán's campaign manager, was elected President the summer I arrived. Pablo Escobar had not yet been taken prisoner—

Q: The drug lord.

ROE: Himself. The drug cartels of Medellin and Cali had tremendous power. The guerilla movements – the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) – controlled significant parts of the countryside. The M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril) and the EPL (Ejército Popular de Liberación) responded to the peace overture of the previous government to lay down their arms and become part of the political process. They were a both small movements. The M-19 achieved dark fame with its bloody seizure of the Palace of Justice in 1985. They moderated their actions after 1987 and eventually became seriously engaged in the political process. I'd been exposed to little positive about Colombia before moving there, but the country grew on me. Colombians, like Chileans, are highly educated. Their intelligentsia has strong ties with Western Europe, particularly Spain. The government's common cause with the U.S. in battling the drug lords created new connections.

Q: What was the labor movement situation?

ROE: The trade union movement was weak and highly politicized. A relatively larger confederation, the CUT (Central Unitario Colombiano), included the main political tendencies as well as the small Communist party. Of the two smaller confederations, one

had a fairly close relationship with the AFL-CIO. The Embassy had no contact with the CUT. There was a modest-sized AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development) project with an able Colombian coordinator, Guillermo Virracachá. Guillermo had informal relations with all the confederations. Unfortunately, the leaders of the federation in AFL-CIO's sphere were patriarchal and most likely had ties to the drug mafia. Instead, I cultivated close contacts with the CUT. When I traveled to the provinces or explored a labor issue, their affiliates would often be helpful. The CUT secretary general, Jorge Castillo, later became the chief labor advisor to Alvaro Uribe. Our central concerns were the endemic violence in the labor sector, the blacklisting and lack of protection for those trying to organize, and widespread discrimination against women workers and other minorities, including Afro-Colombians and indigenous workers. We also worked with industrial relations experts and human resource officers to help promote best practices in labor-management cooperation.

President Gaviria's boldest initiative was a participatory movement to rewrite Colombia's constitution for the first time in 105 years. This was a risky venture with major implications for U.S. extradition policy as well as for Colombia's chances for political stability and a whole subset of social equity issues. The U.S. was worried the drug lords would seize control of the process.

Q: Stand up to the drug lords?

ROE: Well, they do. After the most egregious assassinations, Colombians turned out in huge demonstrations demanding peace. They were saying "stop the violence." Many would take risks we couldn't imagine. A prosecutor, judge, journalist, mayor or independent political figure realized that any point he or she could be kidnapped or knocked off, and that happened with grim frequency. They saw colleagues gunned down doing their work, some right in the halls of the university. Business people pooled their resources for rescue funds because they were kidnapped so frequently.

Q: Looking at the issue of extradition to the United States, I take it we were pushing this because if a Colombian drug person was involved in pushing stuff to the United States, once they got into American jail, it was going to put a crimp in that export. How did this play in Colombia?

ROE: This was a heated issue in the Constituent Assembly. We lost ground, though less than anticipated; several years later Colombia passed legislation legalizing extradition again. Attitudes were shifting. Colombians were becoming more conscious of the social costs of drug addiction and cocaine production, particularly as it affects Colombian youth, rural communities, and the economy as a whole. There's widespread skepticism whether we're using the right approach to the problem. One U.S. officer directing the Embassy's anti-narcotics program acknowledged that if we spent a portion of the drug war budget on programs to help get homeless kids off the streets of Bogotá and on rehabilitation in the U.S., it would generate far better results. As long as the U.S. and European demand for drugs keeps up, the trade may shift geographically, but it will stay alive and healthy.

Q: Was our policy towards Colombia completely dominated by the drug problem?

ROE: The drug issue was not the only focus, just the elephant in the room. The criminality fueled by the drug trade is like an occupying power. It undermines the rule of law and fragile democratic structures. It replaces local harvests with cash crops that cause addiction and death. It threatens the extinction of Indian tribes. Indigenous leaders that resist the drug gangs that cut down their forest are killed. In other areas the narcos corrupt members of the tribe by giving the young men motorcycles and guns. This totally undermines the authority of the elders. Rural villagers get caught in the crossfire between the guerrillas and the paramilitary thugs, two forces that finance themselves with drug money. Many drug processing places operate a form of slave labor. They recruit young people telling them they'll earn big money and will be free to go home on weekends. When they try to contact their families, their overseers kill them and dump their bodies in the river. Many who operate the homemade cocaine processing labs die in explosions caused by the chemical reactions.

Q: And the violence in the labor sector -

ROE: Starting in the late 1980's, Colombia experienced a renewed wave of violence directed against trade unionists and other political targets. A decade later, hundreds of worker representatives were being assassinated or disappeared. The victims were campesino leaders, teachers, banana workers, factory advocates. Hundreds of peasants also lost their lives, just for being caught between warring sides. Trade unionists were often targeted by paramilitary forces that were linked to rogue army and police elements. Others were killed by drug and guerrilla mafias that don't tolerate anyone getting in their way. For example in 1991, FARC militia executed leaders of the palm workers union following mock trials accusing them of helping the peace process. In the mid-'90's, the AFL-CIO began sponsoring a small program through the George Meany Studies Center to get high-risk trade union leaders out of Colombia for a year at a time.

Q: It seems some Colombians in the United States have been prone to really nasty violence, not being discrete about it but taking out automatic weapons and going after each other in the streets of Miami.

ROE: The movies have dramatized the violence that surrounds the drug culture, depicting some of the worst nastiness on the planet. The Colombian outback reminded me of the Wild West of our frontier days. Parts of the country had never bowed to any government authority. Until several years ago, around 70 percent of the countryside was under the control of the drug lords or the guerrilla bands. But there so are many other sides to Colombia. In recent years the government has made real strides to curb the violence and demilitarize the no man's lands. It has some of the oldest universities in the Americas. Its cultural life is strong, nourishing writers like Gabriel García Márquez, painters like Botero, scores of other artists and intellectuals.

Q: Well, you left Colombia in '90?

ROE: 1992.

WARD BARMON
Deputy Director, Narcotics Affairs Section
Bogotá (1992-1994)

Ward Barmon was born in Huntington, Long Island in 1943. He graduated with a double major in American and Chinese history from Yale University and then studied at the University of Madrid for a year before coming into the Foreign Service in 1967. In 1992 he served as Director of the Narcotics Affairs section in Bogotá, Colombia. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Belize, Taiwan, Thailand, El Salvador, and Honduras. Mr. Barmon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Then we return to Colombia, 1992. What was the job and situation at that time?

BARMON: As for the job, again being a tandem couple, we had to look for a place we could both go together. The possibility of going to Colombia in the Political Section came up for my wife. The position was Labor attaché, but also covered the Liberal Party, the party in power, as well as the Congress. Then, I was able to get a job as the deputy director of the Narcotics Affairs section. This sounded like an interesting thing to do in Colombia.

Q: What was the situation in 1992 when you got there? Politically and drug-wise?

BARMON: Well, President Gaviria had been in power for a couple of years. He had a good reputation and was fighting the drug war vigorously, or at least gave the impression of doing so. I think he did within certain constraints. The situation in Colombia, particularly in Medellín and Cali, was a bit dicey because there was a great deal of violence, more than normal. Colombia had always had, in the last 40 years, a high level of violence per capita, just as El Salvador has had a very level of violence per capita. That was intensified and augmented by the drug-related violence, particularly by Pablo Escobar. He was taking out his frustrations against the government by sending randomly detonated bombs into Bogotá, and having them set off around the city. He was trying to intimidate the Colombian government. He did not succeed in doing this. It made life interesting in Bogotá, because you never knew when or where the next bomb would go off. This was compounded by the fact that there was a very serious energy shortage. For our first year in Bogotá, our electricity was rationed. We would only have electricity for a few hours in the morning, and a few hours at night. It was a strange experience being driven home in the dark with the streetlights being out. Some people had generators, but basically, the city was blacked out at 6 or 7 o'clock at night. It was an eerie feeling.

Q: Who was the ambassador and how was the drug side of things?

BARMON: The ambassador was Morris Busby. He was totally focused on the drug problem. That is why he was sent there. Unfortunately, but perhaps understandably, he paid very little attention to the rest of our bilateral relationship, such as cultural, economic, etc. But I think it was forced upon him. He spent 98 percent of his time fighting the drug war, leading our efforts, and working with the Colombians. I think he did a good job.

Q: Your exact title was what?

BARMON: I was deputy director of the Narcotics Affairs Section.

Q: Who was your guiding bureau in Washington?

BARMON: The Bureau of International Narcotics. It became known as INL when it added law enforcement. When I was there it was still INN.

Q: Could you describe some of the types of work that you were doing, and also talk about the effectiveness of what we were doing, and what the police were doing?

BARMON: Let me try and separate the two. As I said, we had four American officers, who were specialists. They were hired to do drug work. The head of the section had a military intelligence and DEA background, so he was ideally suited. He had served previously in Colombia in the mid 1980s. So, he was wonderfully experienced. He and the other drug specialists basically concentrated on working with the police. The other officer was the administrative officer and he did administrative and personnel work for the section. I, as the deputy did a number of things that no one else did. I ran the demand reduction program, that is helping Colombia deal with their own internal consumption problem. I worked with the local drug Czar, with whom I became close friends. Their drug czar's office reported to the Ministry of Justice rather than directly to the President. They basically ran the government-financed demand reduction programs. I am not talking about the department programs or the city programs. For example, Bogotá City had a major program. They coordinated all of those programs. They funneled foreign assistance such as ours, into the various programs, like the media, against using drugs. There were drug treatment programs. We sponsored a lot of training in the U.S. and also brought people down from the States to run demand reduction seminars, and how to set up and run a treatment program.

Then, some of the other things I did, I worked on a project that we started a number of years before to supply judges and prosecutors with armored vehicles. We had already provided the vehicles, but we needed follow up and needed to keep track of them. They needed repair. The vehicles had been dispersed all over the country. Some of them were already destroyed. Some had not had proper repairs. I spent some time working with the relevant people at the justice ministry trying to track down vehicles and get them repaired. I spent time to set up a central repair operation which we were never able to do. At least we did track down most of the vehicles to get some of them repaired. This was a very important program because it managed to keep a number of judges and prosecutors

alive. Several were ambushed in their non-armored vehicles and were killed. One famous female judge was ambushed and killed in her car. She was not using one of our armored cars. So, I spent a fair amount of time trying to follow up on all of these vehicles. Then, AID had a program to supply some new armored vehicles. I worked with the AID people on that.

Another program I did, I ran the environmental monitoring of the Colombian Anti-Narcotics Policy project to spray opium poppies. We paid for a Colombian scientist who went out to the field and took surveys of the soil to determine if any damage was being caused to the soil, flora and fauna. He was hired by the Colombian drug czar's office. However, we paid his salary. Iran that program which was politically very important because there was a great deal of criticism by the environmental groups, but frankly, much of it orchestrated by the bad guys to discredit the spraying. They were claiming the spraying was killing the animals, killing people, causing abnormalities, etc., in order to try and get it stopped. The media campaign by the "druggies" had some success. This was probably the reason why the Colombian government resisted our pressure to spray coca plants for years and years. I played a small part in working with the drug czar's office finally to persuade the government to permit the spraying of coca, not just the opium poppies. The Colombians had sprayed the marijuana crops in the 80s with a toxic chemical, then switched to Roundup, which was much, much less toxic. That campaign had a certain success. There was a great deal of political resistance to spraying coca, but the Gaviria government finally overcame that resistance in the Congress. Toward the end of my tour, they did in fact start spraying coca with a certain amount of success.

Q: What was the mood in the embassy when you were there? What was the feeling with the drug problem? Were we winning, losing?

BARMON: Again, I think most of the people that worked in the fight against drugs in the embassy (and that was most of the country team) were believers in the effort. Not necessarily that we were going to win the war, but that we had to fight it, and that we had to fight it various ways. Most of the people in the country team were concerned with the interdiction side. The DEA, CIA, the military, working with the various agencies in the Colombian government, and with the equivalent of the FBI, the Secret Service, and the CIA which is their Department of Administrative Security, which we funded to a certain extent to help train and equip their people. Basically on the interdiction side, on the ground, in the air, working with the U.S. military in Panama (SOUTHCOM), and in the Caribbean. Customs (very active), FBI, Coast Guard, everybody was involved. Again, it was almost totally on the interdiction side. Very few of us were very involved in the other aspects of the drug war, such as helping the Colombians deal with their own problem. Internal consumption of illicit drugs was not a major problem but was becoming worse. We had a special narcotics country team that used to meet twice a week and just talked about narcotics issues. We also had a regular weekly country team meeting where you had the non-players in the drug area as well. However, the focus of the embassy's attention definitely was the drug war.

Q: The way I understand it, in Colombia, the big people, Escobar, and others were making so much money off of the American market. They could buy almost anything they wanted and if they wanted. If they did not want to buy it, they could kill. They probably had more sophisticated arms than the Colombian Army. Colombia was in jeopardy in those days, and maybe still today of losing to this corruption.

BARMON: That is right. The other factor was the guerrillas who began to feed off of the drug war as well. They expanded into cultivation to a certain extent, protecting fields and labs out in the countryside. So, they began to feed off of these huge profits. You had a terrible combination of guerrillas and druggies, and the right wing militias. The politicians, police, military, and other people were either bought off or intimidated, or both. That combination was very difficult to fight. You did have some honest, legitimate, and honorable people in the government who either would not be intimidated, or would not be bought off. Many of them were killed or had to leave the country. I am convinced there were some who were not corrupt or intimidated. Some of the people in the embassy, particularly the head of the DEA, felt that everyone in the government was corrupt. I think that was a vast exaggeration. Although there certainly were corrupt politicians and people in the Armed Forces and Police who had been corrupted, I think we were fortunate in the Anti-Narcotics Police that good people were selected. If anybody was found to have been corrupted or intimidated, or gotten to in any way by the guerrillas, they were immediately cashiered or returned to the regular police. They were prosecuted if there was any evidence. I think the Anti-Narcotics Police was basically pretty clean and excellent to deal with. They were very committed people.

Q: Did you get a feel for Colombian society having these drug lords and these guerrillas. I mean, sounds like a society that is not typical of almost anywhere.

BARMON: Operational effect, no. This happened in the last couple of months that I was there. I am sure it had a negative effect later. We were always able to continue working very closely with the Anti-Narcotics Police.

BARMON: Yes, and that was a legitimate argument. One of the ways we tried to turn it around was say "look at your own problem." You have a growing problem with consumption and a problem with all the violence resulting from the trafficking. Yes, we were a lot of the problem because we were the demand. There was also a growing demand in Europe for drugs and it was an uphill battle. I think the Colombians finally recognized it as their own problem as well. For a long time, they preferred to say, "It is not our problem; it is yours."

JAMES F. MACK
Chief, Colombia Task Force
Washington, DC (2000)

Ambassador James F. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department

and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin America, where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: How was most of the vast amount of Plan Colombia money going to be spent?

MACK: Well a significant part of what came to INL was actually then funneled to other implementing agencies, much of it USAID for alternative development or to the Department of Justice for legal and judicial reform. Alternative Development programs were aimed at providing alternative livelihoods for people who had been growing coca. INL itself executed very large programs to support aerial coca eradication in Colombia and to train specialized police units to go in and bust big drug labs often defended by and later also run by guerrillas. In fact the guerrillas, especially the FARC, actually pushed aside many of the traditional narcotic traffickers and took over much of the businesses themselves. And of course many anti-guerrilla paramilitaries groups got heavily involved in the drug trade as well. So there were the three major areas: narcotics control, alternative development and legal and judicial reform.

Q: So then you moved. You were then working with the new administration?

MACK: Correct. Bush came in January of 2001. It was at that time that I moved from the Plan Colombia Task Force to INL. In 2000, we had negotiated with the Government of Colombia, the conditions under which we would provide the Plan Colombia assistance. The biggest issue was getting the Colombian Government, the Pastrana government, to agree to specific targets for eradication. And after an enormous amount of back and forth during two weeks at the Colombian foreign ministry in Bogota, the Colombians agreed to reduce their coca cultivation by 50% by 2006. That is what has happened if you use the UN coca figures. According to the CIAD figures, there is as much coca as there ever was, but the CIA keeps discovering new coca areas that have been there all along, which distorts the figures. In any event, these results made were possible because of aerial eradication. I should note that while then President Pastrana would occasionally place temporary restrictions on spraying for political reasons, or as a sign of good faith in his on and off again and eventually fruitless negotiations with the FARC, the current Colombian President, Alvaro Uribe has been unwavering for his support for coca eradication.

Q: There was quite an apparatus by this time in the Department of State for drug trafficking wasn't there?

MACK: Indeed. The Bureau of International Narcotics of Law Enforcement Affairs maintained large apparatus. That apparatus included an Air Wing which we sometimes joked was the seventh largest air force in the Western Hemisphere. I don't know if that was true, but we had over 100 aircraft including helicopters fixed wing. The helicopters, armed by the way, rode shot gun for the Air Wing and Colombian spray planes. In

addition we had supply aircraft. And of course we had to have the contract people who flew them and maintained them. With Plan Colombia money we also bought 300 million dollars worth of helicopters for the Colombian police and military. So all this required an impressive effort to make it work.

Q: Was this all concentrated in Colombia? What were we doing in Bolivia and Peru?

MACK: When I was in INL, we only sprayed in Colombia, both of coca and opium poppy. In the 1990s we had sprayed poppy in Guatemala. Peru and Bolivia did not allow aerial spraying of coca. They depended on manual eradication. But we did support the Peruvian Police Air Wing and the Air Force in Bolivia which were involved in counter-drug operations. We also supported Peru's aerial intercept program with aircraft. And of course INL financed local government manual eradication operations in both Peru and Bolivia.

Q: How long did you have that job?

MACK: I had that job until the summer of 2002 when I retired.

Q: During that time did you find any change in focus on the drug issue between the Clinton and Bush Administrations?

MACK: Actually not. Our Assistant Randy Beers, who started during the Clinton administration remained in his job until the summer of 2002 when he went to the National Security Council. By the way, Randy resigned his NSC job not much later and went to work for the Kerry campaign as a senior foreign policy advisor. I am sure you have had an interesting conversation with Randy about the things we are discussing now.

Q: We haven't come up to that point yet!

MACK: The bottom line is that there was very strong program continuity between the Clinton Administration and the Bush Administration with respect to narcotics control in Latin America. I would like to believe that Kerry would have followed the same path.

Q: Sometimes Colombia has been portrayed as turning into a narco state

MACK: Well that is an unfair characterization and obviously I have seen a lot more sides of Colombia than the average person. Yes, the narcotic traffickers and the cartels gained enormous influence in Colombia, and even apparently made a substantial campaign contribution to a former president, Samper. They probably controlled a quarter of the Colombian Congress at one point. They had infiltrated people into much of the government.

However, many brave Colombians didn't fall prey to this and sacrificed their lives. They were in Executive branch, the army, police, the judiciary, and they were also in Congress. We were able to make common cause with these people.

Those people are in power in Colombia today. They were in power when I was working there as well. Colombia's mistake was letting things go too far before they decided to address the problem frontally. For many years they thought it was America's problem but it turned out to be much more a threat to their country if everything is considered. Now a large number of Colombians are fighting quite hard and sacrificing an awful lot to get their country back and I think they are having some success. But it is not easy.

COSTA RICA

CURTIN WINSOR, JR.
AMBASSADOR
Costa Rica (1983-1985)

Curtin Winsor was born in Philadelphia, PA in 1939. He received his BA from Brown University, his masters in 1964, and his Ph.D. from American University in 1971. Dr. Winsor entered the career US Foreign Service in February, 1967. His positions included the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the Office of Congressional Relations. He resigned from the career Foreign Service in 1971 to take a Professional Staff position on Capitol Hill. He was Special Assistant to Senator Bob Dole. He was Special Emissary to the Middle East in 1980 and Ambassador to Costa Rica from 1983 to 1985. He served as Senior Consultant on Central America to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 1985 to 1987. Ambassador Winsor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.

Q: Did you feel that we treated Costa Rica in a different manner than we do the other countries? Because I'm thinking here's a democracy and one can upset a democracy whereas you can ride a little bit tougher with a country that has a military dictatorship.

WINSOR: Well, to some extent that's true. Yes, we did treat them a little differently. I always jokingly referred to Costa Rica as the Vestal Virgin of Latin America for that reason. But on the other hand, I think that doesn't mean you don't have thieves in Costa Rica, too, who would like to abuse the aid that we give them--or for that matter their own people.

You have a former President of Costa Rica right now who is a drug lord, who is the godfather of all the drug activity in the country. I can't say his name or I'd get my tail sued, because we only knew it through illegal but still very convincing means.

But Costa Rica has enormous problems. But it does have a history of true democracy that is flawed, in my view, only by the abuses of government that has become too perverse in its economy. We have changed that a bit, and I think that Oscar Arias is following very much in Monge's footsteps, in terms of what he's doing for the economy. He's privatizing it to the point not where you lose the social justice and the safety net but we lose the

really bloated, inefficiency and thievery that had been occurring at the level of the parastatal enterprises and at the level of government bureaucracy at the extent of service. Mexico, of course, is the ultimate example of where you have a country evolve into a true kleptocracy, as one of my friends calls it. Costa Rica could evolve into a kleptocracy very easily. And that is the great danger to the country, particularly with the narco-traffickers being in there to the extent that they are.

Q: Did you have trouble with corruption?

WINSOR: Not overly. There is venality in Costa Rica, especially through this one former President, who's Vice President of the Socialist International and fairly well known. But, I would say that Costa Rican corruption was within manageable bounds while I was there.

Now, I've heard that it's gotten worse, but again, I don't believe that you have anything like the kleptocracy that you have in Mexico. And I think one has to make certain cultural--at the risk of sounding more righteous than I feel--you have to make certain cultural allowances for that kind of thing. But, having said that, I would say also that because it is a rather egalitarian democracy and the Costa Rican people don't put up with corruption beyond a certain point. They have a vigilant media and they're fully prepared to ride a would-be Lopez Portillo [former President of Mexico] out of town on a rail.

Q: Moving, again, to a different field, what were your relations with our military attaché?

WINSOR: We didn't have a military attaché in Costa Rica.

Q: Really?

WINSOR: We had what we call an Office of Defense Cooperation, because Costa Rica had no military. Although they have, in effect, a civil guard or militia. We did, in fact, try to help them build up a capacity to protect themselves, particularly from the point of view of the Nicaraguans on the border, and dealing with the ever-rising flood of narco-trafficking.

This led me to bring in the idea of a semi---they use the term elite, but very advisedly, within the Costa Rican's function these would be trained as opposed to the presently, relatively untrained Costa Rican draftees who served in the Guardia Civil and Guardia Rural. We trained about 800 of them in techniques that would enable them to preserve and hold the border short of an outright attack by the Sandinistas. There's an awful lot of Sandinista incursions, Sandinista abuse of the border area.

RICHARD H. MELTON
Director, Office of Central American Affairs
Washington, DC (1985-1987)

Richard H. Melton was born on August 8, 1935 in Rockville, Maryland. He received his BA from Cornell University in 1958. He later attended Wisconsin University where he received his MA in 1971. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961 and served in many countries throughout his career including Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Portugal, England, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. Mr. Melton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 27, 1997.

MELTON: The situation in each of the countries was different. There were some common threads, but the differences were quite significant.

I don't think our personnel selections for Costa Rica were the best choices. Curt Winsor and Lew Tambs, both non-career ambassadors, were very, very conservative. Oscar Arias was a liberal in the classical sense. Tambs did not have the warmest of relationships with Arias. Tambs was aggressive in his ideology; he had been our Ambassador in Colombia where he had made a reputation as a vocal opponent of the drug traffic. His strong position on drugs may have led people to overlook some of his deficiencies--e.g. lack of subtlety. I went to Costa Rica as Chargé after Tambs abruptly resigned during the Iran-Contra hearings, and had considerable contact with Arias. I found him to be a very sophisticated, urbane individual with views about politics and other matters which were quite subtle. I don't think the nuances had been captured by our Embassy; they certainly were not fully conveyed to Washington.

THOMAS J. DODD
Ambassador
Costa Rica (1997-2001)

Ambassador Dodd was born in 1931. He served in the US Army, Military Intelligence Detachment with the 49th Armored Division. He received his B.S. from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. His M.A. and Ph.D. are from George Washington University. He was a professor at Georgetown University and a lecturer at several institutions, including the Foreign Service Institute, the Defense Intelligence College, the National Defense University, and the Instituto Tecnológico de los Estudios Superiores in Guadalajara, Mexico. He served as ambassador to Uruguay and Costa Rica. Ambassador Dodd was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: How did you find your embassy when you arrived?

DODD: It was a fine team of people really. It was a large embassy, by the way. There were several other departments represented at the embassy along with the Drug Enforcement Agency, Commerce for example, the Central Intelligence Agency. In other words, it was a large embassy for its regional role. In other words, just as important as working with Costa Rica, we had to work with its neighbors on drug enforcement, on interdiction, for example. So I would describe it as a fine team of seasoned and

experienced people with a considerable amount of service in other parts of Latin America. These were not people who had been earlier assigned to China or Afghanistan, or who were brought in from way outside. There were good linguists helpful to me over the four years. There was a very fine and maybe, according to State Department assessments, the finest Foreign Service nationals. These were really first-class professionals with considerable service. We're talking about 30 years, 40 years service. They were called FSNs, Foreign Service Nationals.

Q: Tom, could you explain why we'd been spending all that money and then we weren't spending any money?

DODD: Basically we were spending that money because this was back in the '80s, this was Cold War diplomacy. We would spend as much as needed to fend off either dictatorships, insurgencies that Washington felt were alien or inimical to the interests of the United States in the area. The Cold War abruptly ended that policy of propping up neighbors because we wanted stability at all costs to basically an era where we perceived no challenges to our security which meant, of course, that Congress was not about to underwrite essentially checks for a U.S. mission abroad unless it was obviously of great significance. The emphasis changed then - or the term 'security' - from essentially external threats to basically regional threats like drugs. Drug interdiction became defined as a new type of security threat to the United States, so that monies then flowed fairly frequently and in substantial sums in that direction.

Q: Of course, you were up against an even more insidious force than anything else, and that is the drug business. You're not that far from Colombia and you're on the route. Tell me about what the situation was.

DODD: When I arrived in 1997, all the estimates that I had been briefed on was that the drug trafficking by land, sea and air had passed the danger point in Central America and could easily transit by land, by sea, along both coasts of Costa Rica and its neighbors. At that point in 1997 there had been preliminary discussions about negotiating a bilateral ship rider agreement which would allow United States Coast Guard and naval vessels to enter Costa Rica's territorial waters to pursue fast boats from Colombia coming up both the Atlantic and the Pacific coasts and getting into the rivers and estuaries of Costa Rica, unloading their drug supplies to local drug dealers. I didn't fare very well initially. In fact, when I first looked at polls that we had issued to be done, well over 75 or 76 percent of the Costa Rican population opposed any kind of ship rider agreement that gave the United States the right to jointly pursue fast boats from Colombia within their territorial waters. Lawyers, judges, members of the National Assembly were all opposed to it. Then something very interesting happened. The Minister of Public Security, a man named- I had enormous respect for him - and I became good friends. I liked him. He was a nice person. He liked history, and we used to trade stories together. But to get to my point, I give him really great credit because he realized that the drug trafficking using Costa Rica as a transit site was having a profound and significant impact on drug consumption by Costa Rican college, high school, and grammar school kids. He did his own poll and discovered it was more alarming. It had reached an epidemic stage. What Lizano did -

and our strategy was basically that I would not as U.S. ambassador try to turn around public opinion in Costa Rica by saying they needed a treaty. On our urging, he went to the National Assembly, briefed members of that body on drug consumption in Costa Rica. He turned the issue around. We were able to negotiate a ship rider agreement. We got the full and unqualified support of members of the National Assembly and press. His ministry signed an agreement allowing U.S. Coast Guard and Naval ships to come into those waters. What I had to do was every time a U.S. Coast Guard ship approached the territorial waters of Costa Rica following or pursuing a fast boat, I had to get on the phone, call the Minister of Public Security and the President of the National Assembly to get their approval. Now we were given four months to six months without permission to go ahead approval to one of those vessels to pursue a joint operation after a United States vessel entered territorial waters. I can tell you, sadly, fighting drug interdiction was not my favorite subject by any means, but I have to tell you we were able to reduce drastically the shipment by sea, by fast boats from Colombia to Costa Rica's coastal waters. What was happening was El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras were, when I left this year, negotiating, in a process negotiating with those countries to sign ship rider agreements, too. My hope is that all of these Central American countries will combine these bilateral agreements with the United States into a regional compact of some kind and have joint action, so once a fast boat, if it did escape, left Costa Rica on either one of its coasts and went to Nicaragua's coast, the Nicaraguans could pick up the operation and do so based on a bilateral ship rider agreement or a joint drug interdiction operation. So, again, not a very nice subject, but obviously we had to deal with it and confront it. It was not easy for me because Costa Rica without armed forces, without military services, any agreements, contracts or whatever with our Navy or Coast Guard conjured up there the worry that it's territorial sovereignty would be in jeopardy. In fact, today Costa Rica has a small academy at work creating a professional coast guard prevent not only drug trafficking, but to protect marine resources of Costa Rica. The tuna and the other resources of Costa Rica's coast now have been taken or seized by this small but growing coast guard force that can capture poachers and seize ships and sell them and make money on it. So it's more than simply drug interdiction, although that was the principal objective; it was also to help the country capture and control its vast marine resources and protect them.

Q: A question I forgot to ask: With the drug traffic, was drug corruption, which is the real poison of this whole thing - with people getting addicted to drugs, it's a tragedy, but almost greater is the power of money that corrupts things - was this showing its head?

DODD: No, it did not. We simply did not have a problem of drug barons appearing in Costa Rica. The problem in Costa Rica was transit, getting it to the bigger and more lucrative markets north, Guatemala, Mexico and, of course, the United States; and second, it was the growing domestic consumption in Costa Rica. Now you're looking down a road. I don't know, we don't know, the answer to that, whether it will create a culture of drug barons, but certainly not in Costa Rica. Corruption in Costa Rica was minimal and low, low level but not in any case alarming. Although through our public diplomacy, public affairs section, we worked hard with the judiciary in anti-corruption efforts, at least creating safeguards to prevent this kind of thing, such as money

laundering. While I suspect it was going on, it was an area that the embassy was just beginning to look at with the Treasury Department, for example.

Q: What was your impression of the Costa Rican diplomatic service, particularly their representation in Washington? Do you feel there was a good communications channel between the foreign ministry and the embassy? What was going on?

DODD: I would describe it unqualifyingly: the Costa Rican foreign ministry deals with Washington and the embassy there in a very open and effective way. I preferred working with the Costa Rican Foreign Service professionals. During the President Rodriguez administration his foreign minister, Roberto Rojas, who was a businessman, has made a special effort in recruiting, training, and creating really a professional foreign service there, and only during my time did this happen, or at least any noticeable development in that area. Number two, I also learned - and I noticed that this was a major change - that the Costa Rican embassy here in Washington, whether represented by a professional ambassador or a political appointee, certainly knows how to operate in Washington, and maybe a little better than its neighbors - I can't make a judgment there. For example, the Costa Rican embassy during my four years always worked very closely with the U.S. Congress, sometimes to our annoyance. Because the Costa Rican embassy would invite members of the U.S. House of Representative to Costa Rica and we didn't know about it. The Department of State didn't know about it. And it was very annoying, I can assure you, to run into a Congressman walking around Costa Rica in a souvenir shop. He was down there not just to play golf but on business, to learn more about the drug war, interdiction, or to look at a land expropriation case. Those were matters that were my responsibility. I should have known about it. So I'm revealing here a complaint that they were very good at it.

But sometimes I think they stepped over the line. Of course, I had to know, the embassy had to know, if a member of Congress went to Costa Rica on a matter that we were dealing with - if it was to go down to play golf, that was their business, which they did do. The Costa Rican embassy is very good at that. They get their message out, and they didn't wait for the U.S. embassy down there to help them, and sometimes our messages were at cross-purposes. In so doing, as I say, there were sticky times, but I guess you might say they're just getting better at what they do. You can't blame them. That's what the ambassador's job is up here, just to get his message out, but it sometimes gave me heartaches.

Q: Is there anything we haven't covered?

DODD: I mentioned the environmental issues because I wanted to get that up-front for you, because not to talk about 25 percent of my work there would be a gross omission on my part. But I would say really the area of foreign policy that was of great interest to us was the issue of human rights. Costa Rica was always the mediator, the arbiter of international disputes. With no armed forces it's posed some problems, as I mentioned, in the ship rider agreement. But the biggest challenge really for me and the embassy was to help Costa Rica redefine the word 'security' and to help Costa Rica modernize its

security forces. Sixty percent of the police consisted of political appointees. You have to professionalize this institution with better pay and training. We were trying to work with them in modernizing their state structure. I'm not saying we're pushing them to overturn policies dealing with the role of the state in the society but trying to help bring them up to the 21st century on security issues, redefining security issues. It's not the Soviet Union anymore; it's drug consumption and it's street crime. These are the things that are of concern to them and to us. Domestic issues in Costa Rica and the U.S., like so much in the Western Hemisphere, are converging. We all have the same problems.

Q: Then you left, as ambassadors do, after four years.

DODD: Yes.

Q: A good four years?

DODD: They were truly, I think, the best years of my life. As I mentioned several weeks ago in my interview with you, when one of my students said, "Why doesn't he put his money where his mouth is?" I felt that I had done something that I was somewhat hesitant to do eight years ago, but I found that I could do it. I worked with some wonderful career people, and we got some things done. I put teaching Latin American history to the test!

CUBA

JOHN A. FERCH Chief - US Interests Section Havana (1982-1985)

Ambassador John A. Ferch was born in Toledo, Ohio on February 6, 1936. He received his BA from Princeton University in 1958 and his MA from the University of Michigan in 1964. As a member of the Foreign Service, he served in countries including Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Cuba, and Honduras. Ambassador Ferch was interviewed by William E. Knight on September 27, 1991.

FERCH: Anyway towards the end of my third year in Cuba I began to look for an assignment. Now my aspiration was for another mission, but this time with a title. One day Tony Motley called up and asked if I would like to go to Colombia as ambassador. He wanted an honest answer. Going to Colombia with the drug situation meant that my kids could never visit, and everyone in the Embassy there lives in a very constrained world. I thought about it and said, "Yes." Later he called me back and said he was changing the assignment if I didn't mind. They were going to send me to Honduras. The guy who was going to go to Honduras had trouble with the White House and they had to shuffle people around.

HARRIET C. BABBITT
Representative, Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1993-1997)

A lawyer by profession, Ambassador Babbitt was born in West Virginia and raised there and in New York and Texas. After attending the Universities of Texas; Madrid, Spain; Arizona State; as well as Sweet Briar College and Mexico City College of the University of the Americas, she entered law practice in Arizona, the home state of her husband, Bruce Babbitt. She continued her law practice throughout her husband's political career until being named US Ambassador to the Organization of American States in 1993. Ambassador Babbitt was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Why don't you explain what drug certification was?

BABBITT: Drug certification was a federal law which in effect requires the Secretary of State to annually certify which countries in the world... Not just Latin America, but since most of the drugs come from Latin America, it impacted Latin America the most... Which countries in the world are cooperating with the United States in the battle against narcotics trafficking? The response from the Latin American countries was outrage that it was graded by the United States, and while we were this enormous magnet. They were sellers, but we had this enormous country full of buyers, where selling wouldn't be a problem, if there weren't all these buyers. So, how did we get off grading them! Then there was the Helms-Burton legislation.

Q: Would you explain what that was?

BABBITT: The Helms-Burton legislation was legislation introduced by Senator Helms and Dan Burton, which basically had the United States punish other sovereign countries whose nationals did business with Cuba. The rest of the world, not just Latin America, thought that was none of our business.

Q: Yes, the Canadians were particularly outraged.

BABBITT: My unhappy lot in life was to be ambassador at the point at which those issues were at their most red-hot. It was different than being a bilateral ambassador, because the other 33 countries in the case of Helms-Burton disagreed with the United States. They didn't just not think much of it, they really hated it. In the case of drug certification, there were a few countries around that didn't care very much, because they didn't actually export.

Q: How about Cuba? Did the subject of Cuba come up much in the OAS?

BABBITT: People were always trying to get in on the agenda. Other countries, I felt, were not useful. I was already in the position where the organization was lined up, more or less, thirty-three to one, on drug certification, and more or less, thirty-three to one on Helms-Burton. The last thing I needed was a more or less, thirty-three to one. It was another one of those issues. So, I was happily successful in beating back all the attempts at the OAS to deal with Cuba.

JOHN J. (JAY) TAYLOR
Chief - US Interests Section
Havana (1987-1990)

John J. Taylor was born in Arkansas and attended Vanderbilt University before joining the US Marine Corps and eventually the Foreign Service. Overseas Taylor served in Ghana, Taiwan, Malaysia, China, South Africa and Cuba. He also served in INR, the NSC, as the deputy assistant secretary for intelligence coordination and as the chief of mission in Cuba. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: In 1989, events in Eastern Europe raised the possibility that some of the communist regimes could collapse. What was the view about Castro's position at that time?

If this conclusion was true, it followed that the United States should increase pressure on the regime in any way possible and minimize its dealings with Castro. In the then existing political environment, some Foreign Service officers and some senior people in the CIA absorbed this view. I am told that even my successor in Havana, a fine officer and not an Abrams *proto-neocon* (Aronson was then Assistant Secretary), told the USINT staff in 1990 that Castro's days were numbered. That was 4,000 days ago. After the trial and execution of General Arnaldo Ochoa in 1989 for drug smuggling, the CIA National Intelligence Officer for the Western Hemisphere insisted that the Cuban Army would soon revolt. Although working-level CIA analysts on Cuba did not share this view, an official Agency assessment at the time, concluded that the collapse of the regime was imminent. A Miami journalist, Andres Oppenheimer, wrote a book entitled, "*Castro's Final Hour*." Today, when they meet him, Oppenheimer's friends point to their watch.

Q: How did you as a professional deal with this political maze? Did you become cynical?

TAYLOR: I just kept plugging away. I was a professional and I called the shots as I saw them. The worst they could have done would have been to fire me - which CANF did try. It was a fascinating experience - to be in Cuba at that time and to be involved in the heated internal struggle over Cuba policy. Actually, except for the African, ARA, and Human Rights Bureaus in State, the Miami exiles, and rightwing politicians, no one else in the nation seemed to care. In the George Bush Administration, ARA was understanding and cautiously supportive. I should say that all the concerned departments of the US Government, except USIA, at the principle level supported my

recommendations on TV Marti. But none wanted to make an issue of the counter decision made by the political leadership. On some other issues, for example, cooperation on drug trafficking, I was alone in floating alternatives and presenting what I thought was an objective interpretation of Castro's situation, his intentions, and our related interests.

Q: What was the story on cooperation on anti-drug trafficking?

TAYLOR: Early in 1988, the Coast Guard and other American law enforcement agencies began to report that drug traffickers were making airdrops over Cuban waters. The drops were picked up by speedboats, which continued to U.S. shores. In January, I suggested that we enter into a dialogue on this issue with the Cuban government. I thought that we should at least test to see how far they were willing to go. ARA and CANF felt that this was the wrong approach; it was assumed that Castro and his government were probably cooperating with the drug traffickers. Shortly after I made my suggestion, several people were indicted in Miami for trafficking. The accused confessed that they had picked up the drugs in Cuban waters and even in some cases in Cuban ports. I received instructions to approach the Cuban government to describe these events and the confessions of the traffickers. After my first presentation to the foreign ministry, I was told that I should contact Politburo member, Carlos Aldana, on the subject. At our first meeting, Aldana expressed great doubts that any smuggling through Cuba was going on, blamed the exiles in Miami for starting the rumors, and suggested accused traffickers were trying to get lighter sentences by dragging Cuba into the story. But he promised to investigate.

At some point in 1988 or 1989, the case of Robert Vesco, the fugitive American financier, also arose. He had absconded in the 1960s after being charged with a multimillion-dollar fraud and eventually ended up in Cuba. We had information that indicated that Vesco from his residence in Cuba was also somehow involved in drug trafficking. The Cubans also expressed skepticism about this story, but promised to investigate it as well.

At several meetings with Aldana I passed detailed information from the US Coast Guard - giving time and date of the airdrops. At one point, Aldana told me that Havana was conducting its own serious investigation. Within a few weeks, the Government announced the arrest of a General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez. Aldana, I believe, briefed me before the public announcement, although I am not certain. The arrested General was a Cuban hero; he had led the Cuban troops during the successful fighting in Angola a year or so before and in the 1970s in Ethiopia. It is fair to say that he was the most famous Cuban General at the time aside from Fidel. He was also personally close to Fidel; according to some, Castro thought of him as a son. Ochoa, his aide, and several officials from the Ministry of the Interior (MININT), were charged with treason - collusion in drug trafficking - supposedly without the knowledge of their superiors. The trial was televised. The General explained that his aide had learned that MININT was raising US dollars by facilitating drug drops and that he, the General, had foolishly approved the aide's suggestion that they do the same thing in order to raise dollars for hard currency needs of the army corps he now commanded in Cuba. Ochoa said that in Africa he and all other Cuban commanders had normally engaged in black marketing to raise hard

currency for critical equipment and supplies. He had thought the drug venture would be in the same class. In any event, the one operation he had approved was fouled up and never took place. All the accused were found guilty and Ochoa and three others were sentenced to death. They appealed. Most thought Castro would save them from execution. But a day or so later, the morning news announced that Ochoa, his aide, and two MININT types had been shot at dawn. People were amazed.

Q: Are you confident the case did not go beyond drug trafficking?

TAYLOR: Many observers did speculate that Castro viewed the general as a potential threat to himself or his plans for the succession and that this was the root of the problem. That was the speculation in the early days of the trial. But after having talked to innumerable Cubans, including those who knew Ochoa well, I came to the conclusion that Ochoa was probably not a political threat nor perceived as such.

The government claimed that the Minister of the Interior, Abrantes, did not have any idea that his people were running the drug smuggling operation. That did not seem credible to me and many others. A few weeks after the trial and executions, the Minister himself was dismissed and arrested on charges unrelated to drug smuggling. Did Castro or his brother know about the drug shipments? Possibly Raul knew, but I doubt Castro did. Maybe so; but he was probably too smart to become involved in something that was almost bound to come out.

Q: While you were in Havana, did you see any reason why Castro would have wished to have better relations with the U.S. - in light of his virulent anti-Americanism?

Castro wanted to assure that his Revolution would outlast him. Thus, he could have believed that normalization of relations with the United States would give an important element of legitimacy to his regime in his final years and carry over into the succession. Economically, he could also have foreseen major benefit in improved relations with North America. But he would have wanted to carefully control US investment and business presence in Cuba to minimize the political impact. People like Aldana seemed to believe that major changes in the economy and movement toward something of an open society, *a la* China, could only come after a real relaxation of relations with the United States. Possibly, this thought also lingered in the back of Fidel's mind and was the reason he gave Aldana approval to begin some changes toward limited Incentives in the economy.

Before the Ochoa trial, Aldana told me that Cuba was interested in closer cooperation with the U.S. in controlling the drug trade. As I recall, he offered to have DEA agents enter Cuba to interview foreign drug traffickers in Cuban jails and to exchange information on the subject. I proposed that we consider the Cuban offer and returned to Washington for an inter-agency meeting on the subject. Many in the US Government believed that Castro was fully aware of the drug trafficking that had taken place in Cuban waters. I said we didn't know for sure but suggested that we test the Cuban government

to see whether it would cooperate in the future. I had no takers. I suggested the Coast Guard send an officer to talk with its Cuban counterparts, but the interagency group thought that what I was suggesting might be interpreted as a major change in U.S. policy. Politically, the U.S. government did not want Castro to be seen as anything but “evil.” Consequently, the existing pattern of limited cooperation continued on an ad hoc basis: the US Coast Guard would radio the Cuban Border Guards about a suspicious flight or boat sighting in Cuban waters and the Border Guards would presumably follow up.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Latin America
Washington, DC (1989-1991)
Post Retirement Activities
Washington, DC (1999-2003)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: Were you getting from people who had been following Cuba for some time a reading on Castro that was saying, “look you can do what you want but you really have to wait for the demise or decrepitated Castro”?

COWAL: I think most of us felt that we shouldn’t allow Castro to be the only point of this policy. There were many reasons to suggest that the United States ought to be reaching out in any way that it could to establish good working relations in areas like drugs. We have narcotics agreements with every country in the Caribbean save one and that’s Cuba. Therefore, if you were a drug trafficker wouldn’t you seek to use the one place that doesn’t have an agreement with the United States to ship drugs? We felt that by flooding Cuba with American tourists we would send out lots of ambassadors for America who could present their own stories to Cubans in ways that they are not able to receive because their media is so censored and they are fed a constant line of propaganda about what the United States is all about. These kinds of things would begin to establish the basis for a new relationship whether that happened before Castro’s demise or not until after his demise. That American commercial companies being involved in Cuba and having agreements and selling things, and receiving money would begin to pave the way for a new kind of future. But it would be like oxygen spreading around the planet, these things would be “not containable.” As the Cubans began to -- much as has happened in Mexico which began with NAFTA, very commercially orientated agreement, but which most people would say was the beginning and end of the Pri, an authoritarian rather than

a communist regime, but that economic freedom does lead to political freedom. We have President Bush out there preaching that all the time as he sponsors and supports the growth of the Free Trade Agreement for all of the Americas. These are lines which he would use: “that economic freedom leads to political freedom”. It is very clear that the reason we don’t use that litany with Cuba is because there are important interests in Florida who don’t wish this relationship to change.

JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN
Principal Officer, US Interests Section
Havana (1993-1996)

Ambassador Sullivan was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts, Georgetown and Yale Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1970, he served in the Department of State in Washington, DC as well as in posts abroad. His foreign posts include Mexico City, Lisbon, Tel Aviv and Havana. Mr. Sullivan served as US Ambassador to Angola from 1998 to 2001 and as Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2001 to 2004. Ambassador Sullivan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Well did we have any leverage on the Cubans?

SULLIVAN: Well we had the ultimate leverage, if we were willing to improve the broader relationship. The Cubans wanted that very much but they wanted to do it in a way that did not diminish the Communist Party’s and Fidel’s control of the island and its people. The Clinton Administration wasn’t prepared to enter those negotiations. On more discrete issues, there were things, such as narcotics, on which we could have cooperated more. But there I would say that the Administration’s concerns about the Miami community trumped in most cases any willingness to expand official contacts much beyond regular meetings on migration which had begun with the migration accord. So it really was a little dance that never got very far and at the end of the day the Cubans, I think, concluded that this was not going to work in their advantage and they became increasingly more interested in doing everything they could to assert their domestic control and not prepared to do anything in the interest of having an improved relationship with the United States that would diminish their internal control.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

JOHN A. BUSHNELL
Economic & AID Officer
Santo Domingo (1964-1967)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogotá, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National

Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997

BUSHNELL: At first all my time was devoted to BCCI as I took the lead in developing charges against the Saudi backers of BCCI and others and then negotiating settlements and restitution. I still work on major white collar cases. I also work on what I call strategic planning, trying to find ways we can discourage crime or punish the criminals with less effort and cost. For example, I found we were prosecuting literally hundreds of young Dominican men who were caught on the streets of New York selling drugs. We would prosecute them, and the second time they were caught they'd be sent to jail for eight to ten years. We were filling up the NY jails, but additional young men from the Dominican Republic would immediately appear on the street selling drugs. We were spending a lot of law enforcement and prison money without accomplishing any reduction in crime. I said we needed to go up the chain and start prosecuting those in the organization that's putting these kids on the streets.

I arranged to talk with a few of these Dominican drug sellers. Some would not say much, but one told me his story. He came from a big family in a poor rural area. The family desperately needed money so he went to the factory in Santo Domingo. I did not understand what this "factory" was so I asked what he did there. He explained. First they talked with him and asked if he could carefully follow directions. Then they cut his hair; they gave him pants and a shirt and told him to grow a bigger mustache. After a few days they gave him an American passport with a picture that looked pretty much like him – the clothes, haircut and mustache matched. They put him on a plane to New York. He was told to look for a man in a yellow hat after he got through the customs and immigration using the US citizens line. The yellow-hatted man took the passport and sent him to an apartment in town, where he was instructed on selling drugs. We worked hard to break up this business. Despite my many hours with Immigration and other Justice officials, we got little cooperation from the Federal authorities who have the responsibility of controlling immigration. Eventually we indicted several of those running the New York operation and even a few of the bosses in the Dominican Republic, a couple of whom unwisely made a visit to New York which turned into a one-way trip to a New York jail. We are still prosecuting Dominican drug peddlers, but not nearly so many.

Often I am surprised at how things work out. Mayor Giuliani was and is gung-ho on reducing crime, and he has made great progress in reducing crime in New York City. His theory is that efforts should be made to enforce laws against minor crimes because breaking the criminal habit is the best way to reduce all crime. At one point he wanted the police to pick up and he wanted us to prosecute people who went into the subway without paying – the turnstile jumpers. Well, our young lawyers were in a great uproar because they would have to go into court with these turnstile jumpers and spend a couple of hours. Then, if the arresting officer came to court, the person would be found guilty and fined maybe \$35.

ROBERT ANDERSON
Ambassador
Dominican Republic (1982-1985)

Ambassador Anderson was born on January 6, 1922 in Massachusetts. He attended Yale University until 1943 when he joined the U.S. Army, where he served as a 1st lieutenant from 1943 to 1946. Throughout his career he has held positions in countries including Thailand, China, France, Benin, Morocco, and the Dominican Republic. Ambassador Anderson was interviewed by Horace Torbert in 1990.

Now President Bush comes into office. They had these elections in Panama that, as we all know, were a total fraud. What did President Bush do about that? He did something that is almost without precedent, and I give him full marks here, and this is indicative of the way I believe he wants to try and handle our relations with Latin America.

We had our own views about what we might like to do, regarding these elections I don't think it was military action at all but rather certain political actions. So how do you go about trying to accomplish what you would like to see done? You talk privately with the key leaders of Latin America first, before you say anything publicly. The result was amazing. Carlos Andrés Pérez, the president of Venezuela, was in the lead here. But this highly controversial political subject was discussed in the OAS. The United States was not in the lead in the discussions. It was three or four Latin American leaders that took the lead. The U.S. would then support their positions.

The result was unusual. A commission was formed, headed by the secretary general of the OAS, and three or four members, and was charged to go to Panama and investigate what happened. Now it's very true that they went down, investigated, came back condemned what had taken place. The OAS then voted to condemn it. But, as expected didn't vote for action against a fellow Latin American country.

That's all right, as far as I'm concerned, as a starter. Through this action, the president was able to move the OAS back into the political ball game. So now if a subject dealing with the American continent comes up, it doesn't have to go into the U.N., where you face all sorts of other problems. The OAS can now be a channel for action. This is why that was an excellent move.

Now, you could very well say, "Well, what about the invasion of Panama?" Well, I personally feel that it was a correct move. There was no choice but to do that. I am not privy to the inner counsels of our government now, but I would be willing to wager a bet that there was prior consultation, quietly, with certain leaders. I just feel it in my bones.

Q: There must have been, yes, obviously; or you'd have had much more criticism.

ANDERSON: I can tell you that, privately, Carlos Andrés Pérez had no problem with it. I also noticed one other thing. The president of Peru, you may remember, came out after the invasion and excoriated our president saying: "This is the most imperialistic move I've ever seen." Of course, he has an election right now, (and I don't think he's going to win, either). But you know, with an election going on; he had to say something like this. He also said: "If you think I'm going to go to this drug summit in Cartagena, with that president who's invaded one of our fellow Latin American countries, you're crazy." He was the first one to meet him at Cartagena; threw his arms around him, cooperated fully. [Laughter]

So you see why I think that the way the president's handling our relations with Latin America is quite different than before. The way, for example, he comported himself at the drug summit. He didn't go down there the way, probably, some of his predecessors might have, and start telling them how they should do things.

First, he went down and said: "This is a two-pronged problem. There's a supply side and demand side. The demand side is my fault, my responsibility. We have to do better. I'd like to hear any thoughts you have."

Then he said: "The supply side is your problem." Then he didn't start saying all the things that they weren't doing right. He said: "Now, we're trying to help you now. Is this help useful? Is there any other way that you feel we, together, can try and work on the supply-side problem?" Approached it in a collegial, not dictatorial way. I think that that is a very good approach.

ROBERT S. PASTORINO
Ambassador
Dominican Republic (1992-1994)

Ambassador Robert S. Pastorino was born in San Francisco in 1949. His career included positions in Caracas, Lisbon, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and an ambassadorship to Santo Domingo. Ambassador Pastorino was interviewed by David Fischer and Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: What about the issues? Were there many? How complicated were they?

PASTORINO: A little bit about the issues. We had about ten or eleven issues. The Dominican Republic is a small country but we have a relatively large Embassy because of a huge visa workload, their economic dependence on the U.S. for trade, assistance, and finance, and the one million Dominicans who live in the US, most in New York City. There were a lot of American assembly plants, in pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, data entry and processing, and textiles and clothing. Much of the investment in the assembly plants was American, from Puerto Rico. There were also many Dominican Americans who had retired back to the DR, and so there were social security considerations. Sugar was still a major export, and the Dominicans were always very

concerned to conserve their sugar quota. It was interesting because much of it would be lost should Cuba get a quota again.

And, there were incipient drug problems, given the DR's geographical location and potential as a shipping and transit point. I was proud that we did a fairly good job of keeping the drug problem to a minor scale although I understand that now might have changed. The narco-traffickers did not take over the DR, allowing them to send drugs to kill Americans, under my term in Santo Domingo. We did a lot of work with the Dominican equivalent of the DEA, and with the Dominican Attorney General, to increase their capabilities to fight drugs and to help them maintain the fight. I was very active working with the authorities, helping to manage our joint drug enforcement programs, and in keeping up a public discussion of the threat. I used the visa tool to fight drugs in a very public way by not granting visas to drug dealers, or lifting them if they already had them.

Other major issues became Haiti, and the Dominican Presidential Elections of 1994, which became in some ways tied together.

Q: How Haiti?

PASTORINO: Before I turn to Haiti, let me add another reason for the importance of the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo: the one million Dominicans living in the U.S., a great number in Harlem and the Bronx in New York City, and also some in Miami. There is tremendous traffic back and forth, both of persons and of money and even some drugs. It was another reason for having a large Embassy.

PASTORINO: Certainly the DEA and Customs had large responsibilities, and scarce resources in Santo Domingo, so they were also very busy and had many dealings with the Dominican Government, and in some cases with US Authorities in both Washington and San Juan. I remember working with their representatives in both Miami and San Juan on issues of interest to these agencies. Of course, anything which I did had to be supported by many hours of their preparation and operational activity.

All of the sections of the Embassy were relatively small sections. I don't remember any complaints that they didn't have enough to do. I had an agreement with them. Be creative, give me your ideas, go ahead and follow through once a decision has been made, and you'll get a good efficiency report. I believe several section heads received promotions.

Thus, the Embassy ran pretty well and Manuel and I didn't have major problems, except with the Consular Section. I'm not going into details. Basically, some of the middle level officers didn't want a heavier workload, especially if it involved anything non-consular in nature. For instance, I wanted all sections to be involved in the drug fight against the traffickers, whether it be intelligence, the sharing of information, or in the case of the Consulate, extra precautions against giving visas to drug dealers. Admittedly, this last task made the consular officers' life more difficult. They had thousands of applicants

which they had to process daily, and needed to do extra checking to determine drug ties, whether it be longer interviews or more detailed document searches and verification, or better knowledge of the drug culture and trafficking *modus operandi*.

This extended their day and put pressure on them. But, I considered it part of their job, and once greatly embarrassed them when in an extended interview I actually obtained a confession from an applicant that he had been convicted in New York for dealing cocaine on a New York street corner. When I tried to install better interviewing techniques, or a better background data base on the drug traffic, I was opposed by middle level officers. I thought the Junior Officers were more than cooperative. This whole issue somewhat poisoned the relationship between the front office and the Consular Section and actually ruined one friendship which I had maintained for several years.

Going back to Haiti – the first task was to keep the Dominicans on board with the US and OAS policy. The next stage was an operational one when the OAS finally voted and implemented the trade embargo. There were two ways of shipping goods into the Haiti. One was by sea, which was the route for much of the contraband; that method did not generally involve the Dominican Republic although there might have been some off-loading into the DR and then marine shipment around the border in shallow waters.

The second route was over the land border. That was not easy but it was a traditional smuggling route for small shipments and had been used for many decades, with the Dominicans making big money. Both main roads to the border were two lanes and paved, but not very good, especially for large trucks. One became an unpaved road on the Haitian side. The DR/Haitian border is about two hundred miles long. It was mapped but not much more. There was very little easy access through the mountains and jungle away from the roads, but goods and products had always crossed readily. Much like any border in the world, and especially where there is an economic disparity between the two sides, as there is in this case, there are great incentives for smuggling. Haiti is basically an economic basket case. The Dominican Republic is a little more advanced.

ECUADOR

FINDLEY BURNS, JR.

Ambassador

Ecuador (1970-1973)

Ambassador Findley Burns, Jr. was born in Maryland in 1917. He received an undergraduate degree from Princeton University and later attended Harvard University and the National War College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1942. In addition to ambassadorships to Ecuador and Jordan, Ambassador Burns served in Spain, Belgium, Poland, Austria, Germany, and England. He was interviewed by Henry E. Mattox in 1988.

Q: By 1972, according to my information, drugs and drug smuggling came to be a problem.

BURNS: Yes, that's correct.

Q: Was this the kind of thing that you became involved in on instructions from Washington at all?

BURNS: I didn't get too many instructions, but we were concerned. The Ecuadorian government was concerned, too. They were about as much concerned as we were. Washington sent down a drug officer from DEA to be attached to the embassy. We had to help him a lot at the beginning because he had no contacts at all. Then we helped the Ecuadorians out with money to fight drugs. We'd help finance their helicopters to destroy poppy fields wherever they could find them.

Speaking of drugs, the coca leaf has been chewed by the Indians on the west coast of South America since time immemorial. The effect is to reduce the pangs of hunger and cold, and help them endure the hard life that they have led ever since the days of the Incas. Under the Spaniards, they probably needed coca even more. Today the Indian population still chews coca leaves. Ninety percent of the population of Ecuador has got Indian blood, and 50% to 60% of the population is pure Indian.

The drug problem that bothered me the most was in the Peace Corps.

Q: Among volunteers?

BURNS: Yes. That did disturb me, because I could just see that any element in Ecuador hostile to the United States could accuse us not only of using drugs but of introducing drugs to Ecuador. We cleaned up the Peace Corps, but it was not a pleasant job. Not only the Peace Corps, but I found that an officer of one American voluntary agency was also on drugs. That got cleaned up, too.

DOUGLAS WATSON
Administrative Officer
Quito (1973-1975)

Mr. Watson was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area and was educated at California State University at Los Angeles and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966, he served in a variety of posts throughout the world, including Cairo, Athens, Madrid, Saigon, Quito, Islamabad and Port au-Prince, Haiti, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in the State Department in Washington, on Capitol Hill in the Pearson program and was a member of the US delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1991. Mr. Watson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 2000.

Q: Tell me about your problems there. Did we have any drug problems in Ecuador at that time?

WATSON: Not at all. There might have been an occasional marijuana problems with a volunteer or two, but with private American citizens, not at all.

RICHARD BLOOMFIELD
Ambassador
Ecuador (1976-1978)

Ambassador Richard Bloomfield was born in Connecticut in 1927. After serving in the U.S. military during World War II, Ambassador Bloomfield attended the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and joined the Foreign Service in 1952. He subsequently served abroad in Bolivia, Mexico, Uruguay, Ecuador, and Portugal, specializing in Latin American economic affairs. He was interviewed by Richard Nethercut in 1988.

Q: During the period you were that you were there, under this military junta, were there any issues involving human rights, or involving drugs?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes, to both questions. Already, by that time -- and we're talking about more than ten years ago -- already the drug problem was a serious problem. The cocaine problem. As you probably know, although Colombia is the largest manufacturing area for cocaine, the raw material comes mainly from Bolivia and Peru, and Ecuador was a transshipment point. Ecuador, being just on the border of Colombia, a lot of cocaine would come up from Peru through Ecuador into Colombia. So while there wasn't, in those days, any coca grown in Ecuador -- not very much -- it was a transit point and so there was a lot of interest in Washington in that. And this is sort of a typical situation. The people in Washington who were concerned about the drug problem were single-minded about it, of course. They were impatient if the host government didn't seem to be doing everything that they thought it should be doing, and didn't take into account the fact that we were dealing with a society, and a government, and political institutions, which were far different than our own, and which were less efficient, which were very often corrupt. And that, therefore, without invading the country and taking it over, it was not always possible to do everything the way the Drug Enforcement Agency thought should be done.

At any rate, I was under a great deal of pressure to keep pushing the government at the very highest levels to do more on drugs. Now, it was quite obvious to me that there was a loop here. I mean the DEA agent in the embassy was obviously feeding information back to his headquarters saying that, "Well, you know, the Ecuadorians aren't doing this, and they're not doing that, and gee, if we could only get the Ambassador to weigh in more heavily..." DEA would then insist on that through the inter-agency group. But, more importantly, I think, they would go to their people in Congress, their Congressmen. And we had one guy from New York who was chairman of whatever subcommittee it is that deals with narcotics -- I don't think he's around anymore. In fact I think he's one of the

people who ended up with some problem of his own, if I'm not mistaken, eventually. Wasn't re-elected. But, while he was there he was a very obnoxious character. He came to Ecuador at one point, and, you know, called me on the carpet, and claimed that I wasn't being diligent enough about following up on these things, which was not true. I mean I actually had taken it up with the President. I took it up periodically with the Minister of Justice who was a military officer. We did everything that we could, but you can't order another government around. But that little detail is always lost on these kinds of people. So that was the drug problem.

WADE MATTHEWS
Consul General
Guayaquil (1980-1982)

Wade Matthews was born in North Carolina in 1933. He attended the University of North Carolina and served in the US Army from 1955 to 1956. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1957, he served in countries including Germany, Brazil, Mozambique, Trinidad, Tobago, Peru, Guyana, Ecuador, and Chile. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 19, 1991.

Q: There was a modus vivendi on this. Did you get involved at all in the banana business or did that take care of itself?

MATTHEWS: It pretty well took care of itself. We were very involved in the drug business, that is the interdiction business. One illustration of how bad it was going from Peru to Ecuador, you see coca was not really grown in Ecuador. Ecuador was a transit country between Peru and Bolivia where it was grown, there was a little bit grown but it was negligible, and Colombia. The Colombian Mafia was deeply involved in this. Talking about bananas, there was one banana plantation that I visited that is illustrative of the problems. The American said, "Oh here is our airport." He joked and said "I could really make some money off of this if I wanted to." I said, "How's that?" He said, "We use it only sporadically when we have a flight. Normally nobody is there. It is just a strip. A person called on me and said look, are you going to be using your airstrip tomorrow night or whatever." "No, why?" He said, "We'd like to rent the airstrip from you for the night. There is a plane coming in about dusk. It will be gone by dawn. There is \$10,000 in it for you if you will let us rent it for the night." He said, "No, I'm sorry." He obviously knew what they wanted it for. "You might have to make sure that some other people aren't there and give them a little money. We'll give you \$10,000 plus \$10,000 more for expenses." He turned it down, but that is illustrative of the problem. We had three DEA agents assigned to my consulate at Guayaquil. They operated very closely with the Ecuadorian counter narcotics service. As always when you have such a situation, some people are corruptible, and with the source of money we are talking about it was very difficult for them not to be. Our people were not. I'm absolutely convinced they were straight shooters. Some of the people they dealt with were straight shooters; some weren't. They would generally participate in busts. They were always instructed to stay on the outskirts. The bureau was not to get involved in the actual stopping and searching

and interdiction of drugs. They were authorized to carry weapons essentially routinely. Everybody in Ecuador carried a weapon practically. We never had any real problems with that.

CHARLES W. GROVER
Consul General
Guayaquil (1982-1984)

Charles Grover was raised in Gloversville, New York. He majored in American History at Antioch College in Ohio and then received his master's in history from the University of Oregon some years later. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956 and in 1971 served as principal officer in Medellin, Colombia. In addition to Colombia he was posted to Bolivia, Spain, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador. Mr. Grover was interviewed by Henry Ryan in 1990.

Q: Well, now we're pretty well into the 1980 zone. Was the drug issue-- is that an issue with American relations with Ecuador?

GROVER: Not so much at that time. The neighboring countries, both Peru and Colombia – there was a major problem in both countries. We had a DEA office in Quito, and there was a branch office in the consulate in Guayaquil. But it was not as large a problem, it was really trying to handle transient issues, and also concerns about drug laundering to some extent. But the DEA guys had a good working relationship as far as I could determine with the police. It was not a major issue at that time in Ecuador. Maybe mostly by contrast, it was so bad in Peru, and so bad in Colombia that this was simply not a priority area. Nonetheless, the DEA guys were involved in cases all the time. And some of the provinces of Ecuador that were most distant from both Quito and Guayaquil, were involved. Those that were on the frontier of Colombia, Maldries__ (?) and another that was on the frontier with Peru.

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Labor Officer
Quito (1982-1985)

Frederick A. Becker was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1943. He attended Washington College in St. Louis followed by the University of California, Berkeley where he pursued his graduate studies at Claremont Graduate School. He entered the Foreign Service in 1975 and as a member of the Foreign Service, served in countries including Romania, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and Nicaragua. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 16, 2004.

BECKER: The period also saw the beginnings of an incipient terrorist movement in Ecuador. There had been episodic terrorism in other countries, most notably the Shining Path insurgents in Peru, and of course the emerging narco-political insurgents in

Columbia. With Ecuador's two big neighbors heavily affected by civil conflict and insurgencies, it was surprising that Ecuador appeared to be an island of tranquility. Everybody wondered why, because the conditions that bred the insurgencies in the neighboring countries were certainly there in Ecuador. Ecuador was, if anything, poorer than either of their two neighbors. There was a large, impoverished indigenous population in Ecuador as in Peru. The descendants of the Incas, largely Quechua-speaking, had been historically passive but now seemed susceptible to radical appeals. Yet Ecuador during the time I was there was largely free of serious political unrest and violence. In the last few months before I transferred, there appeared a group that called itself "Alfaro Vive Carajo!" Eloy Alfaro was an Ecuadorian president -- almost everybody was at one time or another president of the country -- who had been assassinated by democratic insurgents on the presidential portico in 1911. "Alfaro Vive, Carajo!" translates as "Alfaro lives, damn it!" When a name like that scrawled on a wall, you think it's a bunch of thugs, kids, or whatever. And while they were quite inept at first, the police did find safe houses and bomb-making equipment. Certain assassinations of mid-level and indeed one high level political leader, as well as occasional kidnappings for ransom, were attributed to this group. The group's activities really took off about the time that I was leaving in '85. Concerns over terrorism, spillover from Colombia's drug trafficking and general criminality were on the increase. When I arrived in Ecuador in '82, you could walk almost anywhere in the city and while you had concern over pick pockets here and there, the threat of violence against even foreigners was fairly remote.

WILLIAM JEFRAS DIETRICH
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Quito (1983-1986)

Q: We were talking off-mike a bit, but having come from Israel, which is in continuous crisis, and go to Ecuador, didn't you find that to not be very challenging?

DIETRICH: No, I didn't feel that way at all. Remember, I had been in Bolivia and lived through two coups d'etat in Bolivia, and served in Argentina in a very exciting time, with the return of Peron after all those years of exile. I had been in Brazil at a time when issues of nuclear power and the drug trade were becoming very serious, so I didn't have that feeling at all. I didn't know what was going to happen in Ecuador, but I had never been in a boring Latin American country.

Q: How about drugs?

DIETRICH: Drugs were an issue that took a lot of my time. There was a lot of press work on publicizing what the DEA wanted, and what U.S. drug programs were in Ecuador and why we did them. Also, a lot of work on the cultural side, on encouraging local anti-drug organizations in Ecuador.

The absolutely correct theory behind much of the information work we did is that if a country begins to participate in the drug trade, even as a transit point, it would end up being a consumer. You not only become consumers, you become consumers of the industrial detritus of the trade. That is why young Colombians were killing themselves

smoking *basuco*, which was made from the leftovers of the cocaine trade, laced with all sorts of chemicals, might well kill you before you became an addict. We were beginning to see that sort of stuff in Ecuador.

Also, we had people important in the government whose kids picked up drug habits, often in the United States. I remember doing some work with a nonprofit outfit which was running drug clinics, mainly for children of the middle class who were in trouble. I thought it was a good thing to do because you were hammering home that message to people, "This is not something you are doing to the Americans, it is something you are doing to yourselves."

Q: On this election, how did we see the issues as far as American interests were concerned?

DIETERICH: We had not done badly. The main interests were, "Will American investments be treated well? Will they follow our lead on drug issues? Will they behave reasonably on human rights?" We did have a modest AID program in Ecuador and wondered if we would be able to continue those programs. All these are issues that occupy the thought of Foreign Service posts throughout Latin America.

The fun of dealing with Latin America is that it really is important to the United States and in ways that are fairly immediate. When Ronald Reagan said all that silly stuff about the tanks rolling into Harlingen, Texas, he obviously didn't know much about Mexico nor much about tanks, and he certainly didn't know much about Nicaragua. But behind that, like a lot of things that Reagan said, was a real truth. What happens in Central America affects Mexico, because Mexico by nature is vulnerable, and what happens in Mexico affects the United States right away. Whether it is drugs going over the border or people going over the border, or sewage spilling into the bay in San Diego, or whatever, what Mexico does really is important to the United States and vice-a-versa. Our interest in Latin America, and especially in Central Mexico, are not some theory about dominoes, it is stuff that happens every day. Now how did I get off on that tirade?

Q: Well, I'll go back to my original question. Did we see any American issues in the elections?

DIETERICH: Yes, we wanted good government and stability, good behavior on human rights, progress toward democracy because if we didn't get those things we couldn't pursue the more down-to-earth programs we really needed to pursue. Otherwise, our commercial interests, fishing interests off the coast of Ecuador, even environmental interests in the Galapagos, and the drug issues could not be handled efficiently.

We wanted the cooperation of Ecuador to help us stem the transit of drugs out of Bolivia through Ecuador into Mexico and into the United States. It is in the nature of American politics that if you are going to cooperate with somebody financially, if you are going to help him pay to solve problems that we cause, you have to have a certain level of acceptance on the part of the American body politic, and to get that you have to have a

pretty good human rights record and you have to have a reasonably democratic political system, and you've got to have a military that is efficient but under civilian control. Those are issues upon which we can't very well compromise. Oh yes, and you don't beat up on religious folks. Those were our interests.

Ecuador is a small country, but it is really a big country. There is a whole lot of countryside area out to the east, going down into the jungles, that we don't know much about, and there aren't very many towns down there. That is where a lot of folks live, but we don't have much contact with them. Every now and then they get mad and come roaring into Quito and raise hell. Then they go home. That is what happened in this last coup. The problem is, they go home, and there is almost no way to get a handle on the political organization because there is no place to go. If you send a political officer down - where does he go? Where does he paddle his canoe? Ambassador Rondon did a good job in getting in tight with Febres Cordero. I think Febres liked him. I don't remember big problems coming up, but I do remember doing a lot of work on drug stuff.

LEON WEINTRAUB
Political officer
Quito (1984-1986)

Mr. Weintraub was born and raised in New York City, educated at Hunter College, Brooklyn College and the Universities of Pittsburgh and Wisconsin. After service in Liberia with the Peace Corps he entered government service, first with the Navy Department and then with the State Department Foreign Service. His service in Washington and abroad involved him with a variety of countries and issues including African Affairs, International Organizations, Narcotics and Peace-Keeping operations in Africa. His foreign posts were Bogotá, Tel Aviv, Lagos, Quito and Geneva. Mr. Weintraub was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well then, '84 whither?

WEINTRAUB: Well, in 1984, I forget what the bidding process was and where we wanted to go, but we ended up being assigned to Ecuador, to Quito, Ecuador. I may have bid on, actually I believe at one point I wanted to extend for a year in Nigeria, but I think I put that request in a bit late and they already had assigned someone. But I would have stayed. I was in my element; I really enjoyed it. I don't know if I bid on some other African countries or not, but anyway I figured I would build on the Latin American expertise I had after serving two years in Colombia.

Q: What- how stood American-Ecuadorian relations during the period you were there?

WEINTRAUB: They were fairly good. Ecuadorian petroleum was starting to come on-line. Of course, there were serious problems with drugs, mainly spillover from Colombia.

We had mainly the marijuana from Colombia and other drugs from Bolivia or Peru. We had a guerrilla movement in Colombia, which was also spilling over into Ecuador, so it was a country that welcomed some of our security assistance. There were starting to be some hostage incidents, some incidents of terrorism against the pipeline. There was a leftist movement in Ecuador, obviously much smaller than in Colombia, but there was a leftist underground movement. Some of it was allied with or used the rhetoric of saving the indigenous peoples from the destruction of their environment by the petroleum exploitation within the country.

At one point, we were planning to take a drive to Colombia, to visit some of the Colombian friends we had made during our assignment there in the late 1970's. Unfortunately, a couple of weeks before we were to travel, there was an incident concerning the so-called "drug lords" and the United States – it may have been the passage in Colombia of a revised extradition law. The drug lords made a threat that if any extradition process were to begin there would be American blood on the streets, or something to that effect. The U.S. Embassy in Bogota quickly sent out a "Travel Advisory" strongly urging American tourists and all non-official visitors to review and possibly reschedule or cancel their travel plans. We cancelled our travel plans and that was that.

ROBERT B. MORLEY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1985-1988)

Robert B. Morley was born on March 7, 1935 in Massachusetts. He attended Rutgers University, Central College in Iowa, and the University of North Carolina. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962 and as a Foreign Service Officer, he served in Norway, Barbados, Poland, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Mr. Morley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 1, 1997.

MORLEY: Ecuador was not a major narcotics producing or trafficking country, but it was surrounded completely by two countries: Peru and Colombia, both of which were and remain heavy hitters on the drug scene. We discovered some coca production up north. We estimated there was probably 2-3,000 hectares up along the Colombian border managed by Colombian cartel members. These plantations were, in essence, an adjunct of the drug production efforts in Colombia. Since the border was ill-defined and policed practically not at all, the drug lords of Colombia had started to move into northern Ecuador to enhance their production capabilities. As far as I can remember, there was no refining taking place, just production of coca paste.

Q: Did we make any representation to the Ecuadorian government to go in there and clean that out?

MORLEY: Yes, we did. While I was there, I was in charge of our narcotics effort, which seems to be the lot of every DCM worldwide. We persuaded the Narcotics Bureau in the

Department of State to appoint a narcotics coordinator, a State Department employee whose full-time job would be to look after narcotics, to coordinate activities with DEA people at post, to liaison with the government on operational matters and, in effect, to manage U.S. assistance and support for the narcotics effort in Ecuador. We got the military involved. We leased their helicopters. We used the military for eradication purposes. The army would go out in helicopters and land on the middle of plantations, secure the area, and then destroy the crop. This went on for about a year and a half.

Toward the end of that period, DEA concluded that, for all practical purposes, coca cultivation in Ecuador had been eliminated. There was no serious resistance to the government effort. From the point of view of the Colombian drug lords, Ecuador was a minor sideshow. If they lost a couple of plantations, they weren't worried about it because it represented very little of their total production. Their people apparently had instructions to just take off, leave, if helicopters came and soldiers were landing. To the best of my knowledge, they never offered any resistance. For about three months, we enjoyed a place in the sun in being the only country that had eliminated coca production within the borders of a given country. We had a fairly good stream of congressional representatives, DEA, and other politicians from Washington coming down, all of whom wanted to get their picture taken pulling up a coca plant by the roots. They all got their photos.

Q: I almost have a vision of sending your officers out at night to plant coca plants for them to pull up.

MORLEY: What we did was chop the roots so that the plant could be easily pulled out. You don't pull coca out by its roots easily because the root structure is very strong. We got their photos. It was good public relations.

In addition, because it involved the military, the army, and because it involved use of their equipment, primarily helicopters, Ecuador and army personnel were getting operational training at our expense that they would not otherwise get. They had to plan an operation, go in, secure the area, eliminate the coca, keep their people in the field for two or three days, and then take off. Their helicopter pilots got operational training at a time when the military budget permitted almost no operational helicopter flying hours for active duty pilots. We were giving them this kind of training as well as using them for our efforts.

Q: I want to get to specifics. What type of work did you do? Here you are sitting in Ecuador with Ecuadorian and Peruvian troops shooting at each other. What were you doing?

MORLEY: One of the things we would do is act as liaison between the Peruvian and Ecuadorian government. We would transmit proposals back and forth between the two governments. We would use whatever leverage we had with either government to try to get them to agree to an interim solution to the immediate problem. In the case of the Ecuadorians, we had narcotics assistance to use as leverage. We had a number of things we could do for them in the military assistance area. We were providing them with spare

parts, training, and so on to the military. So that was something that the military in Ecuador valued very highly and it was leverage that they would respond to.

In addition, once every year or two, the Navy engaged in a joint exercise with the Ecuadorian armed forces. In essence, we sent about six or seven U.S. Navy vessels down with a contingent of Marines and we would exercise with the Ecuadorian armed forces, improving their capability in the military area, giving them practice on real life situations, teaching them various things. They valued this.

In the case of the Peruvian government, we were giving them a lot of development assistance and a lot of narcotics assistance. This gave us leverage. So, we did essentially two things. We acted as a moderating influence in the context of our liaison efforts and we used what leverage we had in terms of military and developmental assistance to get both sides to moderate their position with respect to any specific incident, but there was never a successful effort to get them to sit down and talk about a permanent solution. In addition, the other two guarantors were active, especially the Brazilians, whenever there was an incident.

FERNANDO E. RONDON
Ambassador
Ecuador (1985-1988)

Ambassador Fernando E. Rondon was born in California in 1936. He received his bachelor's degree from University of California (Berkeley) in 1960. His career has included positions in Tehran, Tangier, Lima, Algiers, Tegucigalpa, and ambassadorships in Antananarivo and Quito. Ambassador Rondon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 4, 1997.

RONDON: Ecuador waged a campaign against drug cultivation. Most of the coca plantings were eradicated while I was there. We helped fund the eradication project. Sometimes, when we flew to the Columbia-Ecuador border, you could see the cultivation on the Colombian side but there was none visible on the Ecuadorian side. I doubt that the eradication was 100% successful, but it was very significant. There were continual overflights and when cultivation was spotted, it was immediately destroyed. The President of Ecuador must be given credit for waging a winning war against coca cultivation. We were aware of trafficking and money laundering taking place, but there were no major prosecutions while I served in Ecuador. There were many minor criminal prosecutions.

DEREK S. SINGER
Development Officer, USAID
Quito (1989-1991)

Derek S. Singer was born in New York City on Staten Island. He received his B.A. from New York University in 1952 and his M.A. from the School

of Advanced International Studies. His career has included positions in countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Congo, Indonesia, Senegal, Zaire, Ecuador, and Cameroon. Mr. Singer was interviewed by W. Haven North on March 9, 1999.

Q: What was the situation in Ecuador when you were there?

SINGER: Not so bad. Today, I understand, the economy has dipped and the amenities aren't quite so nice. We were there from mid-1989 to the end of 1991. We left Kenya in 1989 and went directly to Ecuador after home leave. Anyway, I was again Chief of the General Development Office there. In Ecuador, we also had a whole potpourri of programs. Geographically, Ecuador is a small country tucked in between Colombia and Peru, two bigger countries in the Andean area and both deeply afflicted by the drug problem. Happily, Ecuador has not been badly affected by drugs. It is sort of a buffer state. The Mission did sponsor a drug program, actually a narcotics prevention and education effort which was aimed especially to stop young Ecuadorians from using drugs. We wanted to help this pretty sophisticated and developed little country improve and reinforce its anti-drug activities, both in school and out of school, through education and other prevention activities designed to turn young Ecuadorians away from drugs.

Q: What stood out among your programs in terms of your time and interest and what you thought worked?

SINGER: Probably the drug education activities and the fact that AID was beginning to get into democracy and governance work at this time. This is a field in which I had a long-term interest, given my educational background, my interest in political science, in public administration, and so forth. We began to get into improving both the courts and the legislature in Ecuador, and we were working with the national electoral commission to help Ecuador carry out free and fair national elections.

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Q: What was your strategy for the drug reduction program?

SINGER: There was a fairly big Ecuadorian group, a nongovernmental organization, actually, through which we worked on drug prevention and education. So, it was a question of giving them grants and then trying to follow how they were using our money. Basically, this was in drug education and prevention work, seminars they were holding,

materials that they produced, arranging for skits and theatrical presentations at schools around the country, teacher education programs, and general “consciousness raising” among the young people about the evils of using drugs.

Q: This was mainly focused on drug use within the country rather than the smuggling of drugs out of the country?

SINGER: Yes, absolutely. Fortunately, they don't produce drugs in Ecuador, or if they do, it's very small scale, indeed, and they don't export it. It is a drug “pass through” country, if you will, - stuff comes out of Bolivia and Peru, goes up through there and then is refined in Colombia. In most cases, it then, in most cases, goes north from Colombia up through the Caribbean or Central America to the United States. But, Ecuador is not directly involved in the drug trade. Just about everybody wanted to keep it that way.

Q: We weren't trying to interdict the traffic?

SINGER: Well, we had a DEA office at the Quito Embassy, but its job seemed to be largely to keep an eye on things, and help out to see to that things didn't change for the worse. So, anyway, there was drug prevention and education, and also a tax reform program - we actually had IRS people come on secondment to us who worked with the Ministry of Finance's Tax Division on their tax collection procedures. That is one of the big pains, of course, of many Latin American countries; they are simply unable to collect the taxes that they budget for. Therefore, they have many budgetary shortfalls. Just as, ironically as we speak, Ecuador is at this very moment, having a terrible fiscal time because it has an enormous shortfall in its projected budget.

SCOTT E. SMITH
Deputy Director, USAID
Quito (1989-1996)

Scott E. Smith was born in Indiana but graduated from high school in Brazil. He spent three years at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and then transferred to the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC, earning a B.A. and an M.A. Mr. Smith joined USAID in 1974 and served in Bolivia, Haiti, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. He retired in May 1996 and was interviewed by W. Haven North on January 14, 1997.

Q: Well, why were we there?

SMITH: Because of development. What I mean by that is the countries to the south, Peru and Bolivia, had the drug problem, and Colombia had the drug problem as well. Central America in 1987 was still an area of major conflict, and there were other issues in the Caribbean. Haiti by that time had eclipsed and gone into night. Ecuador, I think, was the only place in Latin America that had a program of significant size and yet really wasn't dominated by one of those political interests. Now, what accounted for its significant

size, in addition to its development needs, was the fact that the president of Ecuador from 1984-88 was Leon Febres Cordero, who was a populist but conservative leader from the coastal Guayaquil area who was a great fan of Ronald Reagan. Ecuador returned to a democratic government in 1979 and the first president was Jaime Roldos, who died in a plane crash while he was president. He was then succeeded by his vice president, Oswaldo Hurtado. Both of them were of somewhat leftist leaning and clashed philosophically with the Reagan administration. But Febres Cordero came in after that representing a pendulum swing in Ecuadorian politics.

Q: Through a fair election process?

SMITH: Yes. He was very much a fan of Reagan and the free market rhetoric, if not practice.

Q: Did he have a personal relationship with Reagan?

SMITH: I think there was one, but not a significant one. There were a couple of visits during that period by Vice President Bush. There was a real cozy relationship. Ecuador was viewed as a kind of ideological soul mate of the Reagan administration in South America, which embraced the private sector and began to carry out an export-oriented structural adjustment program. That, then resulted in a real increase in the amount of assistance that Ecuador got.

Q: What scale are we talking about now?

SMITH: \$50-70 million dollars a year, compared to \$20-30 million which had been the level before then, and the level we returned to not too long after. There wasn't a US foreign policy interest other than supporting Febres Cordero and the kind of policies he stood for. There wasn't a drug issue, there wasn't a civil war. There was enough interest to give a significant level of resources, but with little interference, so we were basically able to carry out a program that made sense on the ground without others putting on strings or overruling what we wanted to do. In that respect, for me it was an ideal situation of which there are not very many in the world, then or now.

SMITH: The Ecuador program also had a variety of little programs that were managed by the human resources and general development office, a little administration of justice program, a drug education program, various attempts, all magnificently unsuccessful, at civil service reform and public administration training.

Q: Why were they unsuccessful?

SMITH: There was just no real commitment to follow through on them. Occasionally you would get a motivated and dynamic new assistant secretary for this or that who would come in with lots of ideas and within three or six months would get worn down by the bureaucracy.

JAMES F. MACK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1991-1994)

Ambassador Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin American where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

MACK: Cocaine trafficking was also a big issue in Ecuador. It was coming out from southern Colombia through Ecuador. Early in my tenure, a major Ecuadorian Drug Cartel was taken down by an elite Ecuadorian police unit trained by us. It was a rather large operation. In addition, we were able to persuade the Ecuadorian Government to agree allow us mount a radar for them on a volcano on the Amazonian side to detect drug flights coming up from Peru to Colombia through Ecuadorian airspace. That proved quite successful. So the drug issue was very important.

Q: What about the drug business, while you were there?

MACK: Well I told you that cocaine was coming out of Columbia through Ecuadorian ports for transport by boat to the U.S. Also precursor chemicals used to produce cocaine came through Ecuador en route to Southern Columbia, as contraband. So drugs were a big issue. Then there was the case of a retired Admiral in the Ecuadorian Navy who had founded a bank in Ecuador and an off shore bank in the Caribbean that we were fairly certain was laundering drug money. The Admiral expressed outrage to me, alleging he had been falsely accused and was always trying to clear his name. And a major Ecuadorian drug smuggling cartel was taken down while I was there with significant help from DEA and another US agency. The Reyes Torres cartel. That was a little touchy because a daughter of one of the Reyes Torres clan was in my son's seventh grade class at Colegio Cotopaxi. In fact, she had attended a class party at my house.

So, yes, drugs were a big issue. Not as big an issue as Colombia but nonetheless a serious issue.

Q: Did you see then that drug money was beginning to corrupt the legal system and all of that?

MACK: Well, I can't say that drugs were the only source of corruption in the legal system. However, following Reyes Torres' arrest, it appeared to us that his associates were trying to move the courts to spring him on a technicality. President Borja's Minister of Government at the time showed a lot of courage in trying to keep Reyes Torres behind bars, and also putting him there. Beyond drugs, there was certainly a lot of corruption in

the legal system, and that preceded the drug problem. I am not suggesting that every judge was corrupt; I don't believe that is the case. But, there was corruption. And it impacted on US businessmen trying to work in Ecuador. So corruption in the legal system was a great area of concern for us.

Q: Were there elections while you were there?

MACK: Yes!

Q: Did they change anything?

MACK: Well through the elections, the government changed from Center Left under Rodrigo Borja to Center Right under Sixto Durán-Ballén. Ecuador was definitely developing even before Sixto. There was no question about it. Investment was going in because there was so much potential there. The early 90s were a period of the high tech boom. Cell phones were coming into their time. Ecuador was and still is a significant oil exporter, not in the league of Venezuela, but it certainly had the potential to export a lot more oil than it is exporting right now. It probably could export about as much as a million barrels a day if it developed its oil fields to the maximum, but is probably exporting half of that.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Ambassador
Ecuador (1996-1999)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well, what did you see as your task when you got there?

ALEXANDER: My principle political goal was to lend our efforts to those of the guarantor states in resolving the border dispute with Peru. This was our number one political objective. We had, equally as important, other missions including keeping Ecuador from becoming a haven for drug traffickers or a producing country. It was bordered by two major producing countries, Columbia and Peru. It had been spared that nightmare, but the pressures were always there. Economically, again, to protect and defend substantial U.S. investments in the country, which wound up being one of my biggest headaches because the government was so corrupt. They were always extorting

U.S. firms and that was a chronic nightmare for me. Headache, I should say, not nightmare. I was very, very busy there.

EL SALVADOR

ALAN H. FLANIGAN
Ambassador
El Salvador (1993-1996)

Ambassador Alan Flanigan was born in Indiana in 1938. He graduated from Tufts University in 1960 and served in the U.S. Navy from 1960 to 1966 as a lieutenant. After entering the Foreign Service in 1966, his assignments abroad have included Lima, Izmir, Ankara and Lisbon, with an ambassadorship to El Salvador. Ambassador Flanigan was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1997.

Q: Another issue that involves the hemisphere recently these days is narcotics. Was that something you were quite involved with in El Salvador?

FLANIGAN: El Salvador, because of the accidents of geography, is not a major conduit of the drug trade. As you can see, it only has a Pacific coast. If drug smugglers decide they want to get drugs through Central America to the United States, it doesn't make a lot of sense to go into El Salvador. It just creates another border they have to go across. That is not to say there wasn't a problem at all. Obviously there were efforts to bring drugs in through El Salvador and a couple of cases where major seizures were made by the Salvadoran police with the help of DEA. The Salvadoran police just went through this total reorganization, but one of the blessings of not having an Atlantic coast was El Salvador did not become a focal point for the drug trade during that very vulnerable period. It was much more of a problem in Guatemala, even Nicaragua and Honduras.

JOHN HELM
General Services Officer
San Salvador (1996-1999)

Mr. Helm was born and raised in Tennessee and educated at Carson Newman College. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he served in posts throughout the world, primarily in the field of Administration, including General Services, Communications and Foreign Buildings. His overseas posts include: Banjul, Gambia; Panama City, Panama; Seville, Spain; Quito, Ecuador; Mogadishu, Somalia; Tbilisi, Georgia; Bonn, Germany and San Salvador, El Salvador. His Washington assignments were also in the field of Administration. Mr. Helm was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Here you are a GSO. The war is over, El Salvador is now ranked in interest of the United States around 150th in order of priority, and you've got this white elephant of an embassy. What happened?

HELM: First thing we did was reduce our overhead a bit. We had a 26-acre compound. Two whole buildings. There were other offices in town. The Department of Agriculture had a small office. We brought them into occupy some of the space. There was a regional anti-narcotics office that was looking for a home, and we brought them in. We brought in a regional immigration office. Bit by bit we pretty much filled up the place by picking up some regional offices and closing down some things. But you're wrong about America's interest in El Salvador. You see, you have to remember that the second largest Salvadoran city is Los Angeles, California. Salvadorians can walk here, and did in great numbers. While our intelligence and military interest was going down, our consular and immigration interest was going up. Bit by bit we simply substituted intelligence officers for visa officers. The visa situation down there, the U.S. immigration policies: they were granted a special dispensation during the war for people who were political refugees to come up here, and they did so by the tens of thousands. In fact, if you took the Salvadorian out of the D.C. metropolitan area, I don't think there's a hotel or restaurant that could survive.

GRENADA

JOHN C. LEARY
Chief of Mission
St. George's (1986-1988)

John C. Leary was born in Connecticut in 1924. After receiving both his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Yale University in 1947 and 1959, respectively, he served in the United States Army from 1943-1945. His career has included positions in Cherbourg, Dusseldorf, Istanbul, Tokyo, Ottawa, Vienna, Sao Paulo, and St. George's. Mr. Leary was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in November 1998.

Q: Was there concern about narcotics traffic through Grenada and if so, did we do anything to try and deal with it at the time that you were there?

LEARY: Yes, that was a concern. Grenada was a little bit off the track because we were at the far eastern end of the island chain, but there was local concern about drug use by the young people in Grenada. Marijuana was used by many, but harder drugs had begun to make some appearance. Not a serious problem by any means at that stage. But there was concern that Grenada would become a transit point for some of these ships that were bringing drugs to the area and they worked closely with our DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] people on this. The Navy was also using some of their patrols in the area to watch for drug traffickers. Prime Minister Blaize's wife attended a meeting in New York with Nancy Reagan and met with the UN, and promoted the "Just Say No" program. Afterwards she came back to Grenada and organized a "Just Say No" program

there. I recall one day, that all the school children were out marching to a rally in the central park to promise that they wouldn't use drugs and so on. There was a concern, but at that point only an incipient one, not really serious. But they were concerned, as were we.

Q: Did you actually have a DEA representative in the embassy?

LEARY: No, not inside, but they came in from outside from time to time.

Q: Did you have a deputy chief of mission at the time?

LEARY: Yes, when we first went there, the title of the political officer was deputy chief of mission and then as we began to cut back in staff and so on, they decided that the title would disappear with the change in incumbency of the chief of the political section.

NADIA TONGOUR
Principal Officer/Chargé
St. George's (2001-2004)

Nadia Tongour was born in Turkey and raised in South Carolina. She was educated at William and Mary and Stanford Universities and taught at several colleges before joining the Foreign Service in 1980. Primarily a Political Officer, her Washington assignments were in the fields of Soviet and Soviet Bloc affairs as well as Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. Her foreign assignments include Brazil, Barbados and St. George's Grenada, where she was Principal Officer. Ms. Tongour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007

Q: I would think it would have been a prime place for drug money to go to.

TONGOUR: Some, because there are many inlets and harbors. This is not necessarily a place to stash money anymore since most of the offshore banks have closed in recent years, but it certainly serves as a transit point. If you consider drug routes, you'll see that Grenada is not that far from the northern part of South America, and with its extensive shore line, there are many places for drug runners in so-called cigarette boats to pull in.

To a certain degree there was close collaboration between the local government and our Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Narcotic Assistance Unit (NAS) based in Bridgetown. Our agents would come over and be very discreet in their dealings with the local coast guard units, providing them with various forms of assistance. This was one area where our assistance was very effectively deployed, namely our aid to the local coast guard in upgrading their boats and repairing them as well as training their officers in how to interdict the cigarette boats and other vessels entering the harbors. And there were some successes that came out of this.

One of our priorities at that time were cases of American citizens who had been defrauded by various scam artists operating in the region as well as money laundering

and the prevalence of off-shore banking, which I had previously mentioned. Drugs, of course, were always a concern. Terrorism, less so, except in Trinidad where a few years earlier there had been a small radical movement that had an Islamic orientation, and included among its membership Indians and Pakistanis then living in Trinidad. Since they seemed to advocate violence and other somewhat threatening objects, they had been a source of considerable concern and obviously a focus of attention. But this was not really an issue in Grenada.

GUATEMALA

ALBERTO M. PIEDRA
Ambassador
Guatemala (1984-1987)

Alberto M. Piedra was born in Havana, Cuba and raised in Europe. After a brief stint in Fidel Castro's government, he left Cuba to finish his degree at Georgetown. Piedra worked for OAS, then was appointed Ambassador to Guatemala. Some of his other posts included special advisor to the General Assembly of the United Nations and a appointment on the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Piedra was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: Was there any problem with drug smuggling or anything else at that time?

PIEDRA: Towards the end of my tour the drug problem began. There were rumors and talk, etc.

Q: So this was not on your priority list?

PIEDRA: It was beginning but at that time not a major problem.

Q: So you left in ...?

PIEDRA: August, 1987 and then I was appointed to the United Nations with Dick Walters.

JAMES MICHEL
Ambassador
Guatemala (1987-1989)

Ambassador Michel was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri and educated at Harris Junior College and St. Louis University. Joining the State Department in 1965, he served first as Acting Legal Advisor in the Department. His subsequent assignments were: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs; Acting Administrator for Latin American Affairs for AID; US Representative to the Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); and Counselor of the Agency for International Development (AID). From 1987 to 1989 he served as US Ambassador to Guatemala. Following retirement, the Ambassador engaged in Private Practice as Consultant for International Development. Ambassador Michel was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: What about immigration? Was there much in the way of... I can't tell one from another, but living here in Washington, I seem to feel that when I go to McDonald's to get my coffee, I'm surrounded by Central American Indians.

MICHEL: My successor in Guatemala, Tom Stroock, came to Washington to get briefed up, and I managed to be here for that. My wife and I took him and his wife to dinner at a French restaurant. We got to talking with the waiters, and they were both from Guatemala! I remember raising the immigration issue with my successor in that very visible way, but it wasn't something that we spent a lot of time on. I remember Diego Asencio headed a commission on development and migration. We didn't have a sense of urgency. We didn't see hordes of people; we knew there was a continuous movement. There was a movie, *El Norte* that came out about Guatemalan Indians working their way through Mexico and getting into California and so on. The thought generally was that we would keep working away to help these societies modernize, improve education and diversify their economies, create jobs, achieve political stability. We thought all of this over time will sort itself out. It was not seen as a front burner issue. One other issue of that nature that I'm still a little annoyed about is drugs. In Guatemala you had a little bit of marijuana being grown along the Mexican border on the other side of the mountain in little towns where the currency in circulation was more likely to be the Mexican peso than the Guatemalan quetzal. Our narcotics policy at the time was, "Go to the source!" That's what they were doing in the Andean countries, and that's what they were going to do in Guatemala. I said, from a Guatemala standpoint, that's Mexico. That marijuana never comes over the mountain to Guatemala. It's going north from there. Whether it's being grown there or in Nebraska doesn't make a lot of difference. If you're going to spend money and provide resources in Guatemala, let's worry about the fact of cocaine transshipment through Central America which has a potential to be a highly corrupting influence." They said, "No. We go to the source." I couldn't in those days get much enthusiasm for trying to look at the interdiction and breaking up of supply chains rather than attacking everything at the source. That's changed, but at the time, that was one of my frustrations, an issue that's become bigger on our screen than it was at the time.

THOMAS F. STROOCK
Ambassador
Guatemala (1989-1992)

A native of Wyoming, Ambassador Stroock was educated at Yale University. He was active in the petroleum industry in Wyoming and soon became engaged in Wyoming State government and politics. A member of

the Republican Party, he was appointed Ambassador to Guatemala, where he served from 1989 to 1992. Ambassador Stroock was interviewed by Andrew Low in 1993.

Q: Did you have any meetings with the President before you went down to Guatemala?

STROOCK: As I best remember he told me to remember that Guatemala is crucial to our entire Latin American program, and our Latin American Program is to expand trade there and to become really good neighbors. He was really concerned about the war on drugs, he was very concerned about the interdiction of drugs, and he was very concerned about the coming election in Guatemala. This now is in October of 1989, and there is an election coming up in Guatemala in exactly one year--in October of 1990. The President was concerned that the existing democratically-elected regime headed by Vinicio Cerezo, turnover control of the country to a legitimately, democratically-elected government. He was very strongly promoting democracy and very strongly promoting the control of drugs in Central America. Those were the substantive conversations we had.

Q: Can you list what things were high on his agenda? Issues for Guatemala?

STROOCK: Quite frankly I'm the guy who established the agenda of issues for Guatemala. The big problems in Guatemala when I got there were the concern about drugs; the concern about the two attempted coups from the military, were going to try to take over from the *facade*, of democracy that the country had; and the fact that the country's economy, which had been very sound, seemed to be teetering on the rocks, they were headed for big-time inflation; and, as well endemic corruption down there was a concern.

General Werner had been named the head of Southern command in Panama. General Werner was an extremely able officer, but in Panama there was this terrible problem with Manuel Noriega. He was the Panamanian army officer who at one time had been on our CIA payroll but had become a drug overlord and a gangster. Panama was the center of drug traffic, and thus was the center of terrible problems for the United States in many ways. While the sentiment in the Bush administration was that we had to use physical force to take Noriega out, Werner didn't want to do that. He felt that would reflect back badly on Nicaragua. Secretary of State Jim Baker and Aronson believed that they had to act firmly in Panama, otherwise the Nicaraguans would think they could get away with anything and probably would try to get away with anything, might even try to ally themselves with Noriega.

Q: You've listed a number of broad topics that sound like they were major issues at the time you arrived in Guatemala, and if I could summarize maybe you could add to my list if I've missed some: drugs, attempted coups in the past, the shaky status of democracy in Guatemala, the Guatemalan economy, and the somewhat shaky nature of the economy and corruption as a defect of the Guatemalan economy and corruption as a defect of the Guatemalan economy, the upcoming election in October of 1990, the inter-relationship between our relations with Guatemala on the one hand and our relations with Nicaragua

on the other hand and all of Latin America, and the developing problems with General Noriega in Panama.

STROOCK: When I first got to the State Department everybody was busy with their own particular piece of the Central American pie, and nobody had truly concentrated on the slice of the pie that said, "Guatemala." The "Guatemala" piece in the puzzle was still to be solved, and I rapidly realized that no one was going to do it except myself. So while it was "studying in", I decided that I would try and keep things simple--in accordance with that management style that you mentioned--try to concentrate on what in Spanish came to known as "Las Cuatros Ds," "The Four D's," They were drugs--of course not *for* drugs, but against drugs, democracy, development, and human rights. Human rights doesn't begin with "d" in English, but it does in Spanish, ("d..."). And drugs is ("drogas," and democracy is "democracia," and development is "desarrollo..."). So you can call them the "Four D's" in Spanish, and we did.

Q: Let's take one "D" at a time. You want to start with drugs?

STROOCK: Well, drugs was the one that most directly affected the average citizen in the United States. There were two drug problems in Guatemala. The first was the actual cultivation of the poppy flower in the narrow high valleys of the Northern Altiplano, the ones in Guatemala that lead up northward into Mexico. They're very deep; they're very narrow; they're ideal for cultivating poppy. The small farmers take the poppy seed out to Mexico where it's chemically treated and becomes heroin. We found only two chemical installations, you couldn't even call them laboratories, that would turn the poppy into crude heroin in Guatemala itself. Mostly what happened was that the poppy plant was picked, placed on mules and taken on back dirt roads up to Mexico to be treated and turned into heroin there.

We were very involved trying to stop all this when I got there. We had our own air force of six helicopters and six thrush airplanes, all under private contractors reporting to the Drug Enforcement Agency, the DEA, to fumigate, poison and eradicate poppy seed. We used to make large claims about how many acres of poppy we had eradicated. I went along on a couple of these airplane spraying trips. I never went in the thrushes because they would dive down into those valleys, and I wasn't sure they were ever going to come out. Those thrush pilots were brave guys. They would go into every valley and spray. I did go twice in the helicopter gunships flying up above as protection and looked down. Negotiating these efforts was tricky. An American plane had been shot down over Nicaragua running contraband to the contras. They didn't want the same thing to happen in Guatemala, which was why the U.S. armed forces never were involved. It was a very inefficient way to operate, but nevertheless that's the way it had to be. We had to secure permission from the Guatemalan government to allow us to run these secret contract operations in their country. We had to base the plane's pilots on Guatemalan air force bases, and we needed the cooperation of the Guatemalan army. Well the Guatemalan army is a part of the problem, not part of the solution in Guatemala. While they were and are very constructive and necessary to us in the war on drugs, they also are one of the big threats to growing democracy. They are one of the great causes of the violations of

human rights endemic in the country. Some of them were part of the drug organization. They have an enormous influence on the country's ability in every area because they are forty three thousand of them, they're disciplined, and they are the only agency in the country that really works. We can get into that later, but in many of these small, unstable societies it takes the military to make things happen--no other agency, public or private, has the necessary money or organization or manpower.

In any event they were the only people we had to work with. In the three and a half years we were there I desperately tried to move our drug enforcement dependency from the army to a civilian police force--the ("Guardia Civil"), the treasury agents. As I left we had succeeded in establishing some basic treasury organizations that were involved in seeking out those who would transport drugs and contraband into Guatemala, which was the second problem. We never succeeded in getting our program of spraying and fumigating and trying to kill poppy plants away from the necessity of cooperating with the Guatemalan army. We absolutely needed their logistical bases. We couldn't operate without them. We needed their permission to fly over the country because we couldn't do without that. We needed frequently to call on them for repairs to our equipment. They could have shut us down overnight, and they frequently threatened to do just that.

Q: Did they ever demand concessions in return for permission to operate?

STROOCK: That was the whole fight. My frequent conversations with the various officers in the Guatemalan army almost always carried the implied threat of cooperate or your drug effort will suffer. When we cut off military aid in December of 1990, which is another story, the thought was that we had just blown the poppy interdiction program because the military would shut it down. They didn't because we were working with them through the back door of the Central Intelligence Agency, which is again yet another story. But in our relationships with all Guatemalan government officials, and with the army in particular, we had constantly to keep in mind that we were interdicting and fumigating poppies in San Marcos province, at their sufferance, and they could shut down that program at any time. The farmers whose poppy was being fumigated didn't like it at all. There was a tremendous uproar all the time claiming that we were destroying and causing peasants to lose their legitimate crops, none of which was ever proven and none of which was true. Nevertheless at least once a month we got a complaint about that. It was a very involved and dicey situation.

Q: Was there any other aspect to the war on drugs in Guatemala other than eradicating poppy fields?

STROOCK: Yes. The biggest part of our drug problem was that Guatemala increasingly became a way station for transmitting cocaine from South America into the North American market. The coca plant itself is principally grown in Peru. It is shipped into Colombia where it is made into cocaine. Then the Colombians want to bring it into the United States. They used to bring it up in boats through the Caribbean, but our naval interdiction efforts in the Caribbean got very efficient, so they started shipping through Guatemala. The whole time I was in Guatemala we had five United States Navy cruisers

with radar and antenna and support, cruising off the coasts of Colombia attempting to track drug flights in airplanes and speedboats, leaving Colombia. They would come up to Guatemala and Mexico then transship and the cocaine would go up into the United States. Guatemala was an ideal place to do that because of the large farms, the large banana plantations, the large coffee *fincas*, the large sugar *ingenios*, and the large cattle ranches all had air strips. It was easy to drop into these air strips and transship from planes to either mules or human beings or trucks or other airplanes.

To patrol this interdiction effort we had a very large DEA presence in the embassy. We had a Guatemala City Office Chief, five DEA agents and two pilots. There was constantly the desire to expand the operation and to make the DEA bigger. We had something called "Operation Cadence," which had its own staff of people who were rotated in and out of Guatemala. The whole time we were there, I think we seized a total of maybe sixty tons of cocaine. Our biggest haul was one haul of about thirteen tons as I remember, which was towards the very end of my stay there. This caused a Colombian hit team to come into the country, so we heard, to try and kill me. This was why in my last month there, I made public appearances with a flak jacket on, which was very uncomfortable and very damned unpleasant. We were successful, I think, in training the Guardia Civil--the Treasury--Police to become effective in this area. We did succeed in getting the extradition of five drug traffickers under extradition treaties. That was an enormous political effort to get that to happen. We did have pretty good information on drug trafficking, and drug interdiction across all of Latin America became the number one mission of the United States Southern Command after Noriega was taken out of Panama, and after General George Joulman became the commander in chief of Southern Command succeeding Max (Thurman). That was the mission that George seized on as being the most effective thing he could do. I had several meetings with him, several in Guatemala and two in Panama where we got to be friends. George was right because he said, of all the things we did, this was the one that would affect most on American society and therefore justified the American taxpayer dollars being spent. He was hopeful that we could make a serious dent in the drug transshipments.

I wonder if we ever did. I am convinced after three and a half years that we did not win the war on drugs. It's still going on, and I think we're losing. I think we need to do something else, but at least a quarter of my time as ambassador was spent dealing with the interdiction problem, with the cultivation problem and with the extradition problem.

We would try to stop the poppy from growing, we would try and interdict the flow of cocaine through the country, and we would try and find out the people who were involved with it and extradite them to the United States. Sometimes we weren't even so delicate or diplomatically nice as to extradite them. There was a Nicaraguan citizen, a known drug Kingpin, named Gadea, who came into the country. We knew he was coming and we got the Guardia Civil to nab him as he got off the plane, and we got them to put him on a special plane that was flown down by the United States Marshal for Florida where there was a warrant out for his arrest. All of this was done outside the extradition treaty, because he was an undesirable alien. This was legal except the Guatemalans, in their hurry, forgot to go through all the legal steps they had to do

through the court. Where that guy is today, I don't know, but we got him out.

Q: When you say, "Got him out," you mean you got him onto the airplane...

STROOCK: Got him on the airplane and into the hands of the U.S. court in Florida.

Q: So he was arrested in court?

STROOCK: That's right. We legally extradited under a very complicated extradition treaty. It takes months to do. Some important figures, including Arnaldo Vargas, the mayor of Zacapa and a key figure in the old Cali cartel, a known murderer, a real thief had controlled (Zacapa) province for years. He had been involved in transshipping cocaine for years, and we proved it. We got him, we extradited him to the United States under the extradition treaties; and we got four others as well. Sue Patterson the Consul General, one of the most dynamic ladies I've ever met--she was not only attractive, but very bright and very hardworking; was crucial in getting those guys, and the Guatemalans were fascinated by having this very attractive, bright, petite American woman really pounding on their tables to get these extraditions accomplished. Again with the management theory we discussed, I would go with her when she wanted me to, and she would want me to go when it got really sticky with the Army. Otherwise she did it alone and she deserves a lot of credit.

So we did make a difference in the war on drugs, but it did take up a lot of time, and we didn't make enough of a difference. We won some battles, but we never did win the damn war, and I don't know if the war is winnable.

Q: Was the war on drugs linked in any way with the corruption problem in Guatemala?

STROOCK: Yes. Unfortunately, half the history of small Latin American nations is one of corruption, and drugs brought in a tremendous amount of money that flooded through the country. The claim in Guatemala was that the guerrillas were using drug money. The second president that I had to deal with, Jorge Serrano, used to claim that all the time, but he wasn't always right. I'm sure that there was some drug smuggling going on with the guerrillas, but the biggest amount of the drug smuggling that was going on was with the rich new entrepreneurs and the army, and we never could find out where that was done because they were very clever, very well connected and very organized.

Q: When you say, "going on with the army," do you mean the army was actually cooperating with the transshipping of drugs?

STROOCK: No the army as an institution was actively cooperating in suppressing it, but individual army officers and soldiers were bought indeed. There's no question about it.

Q: What were they actually being bribed to do?

STROOCK: Yes, to look the other way or help as drugs were transshipped in all parts of

the operation. Many of our pieces of our information led us to believe that lower ranking army officers--majors, lieutenants, colonels--were involved. Cerezo turned a deaf ear to that, but Serrano, the second president was a strong, born-again evangelical Protestant--really hated that idea in his guts. He really moved heaven and earth to try and shut it down, but even *he* wasn't successful. We got our best cooperation from Serrano in this area of drug interdiction.

Q: When you talk about "shut it down," are you talking about shutting down corruption or shutting down drugs or both?

STROOCK: Shutting down drugs. Serrano himself was terribly corrupt, so he wasn't at all good at shutting down corruption, but he did want to try and shut down drug trafficking, and yet it didn't happen. The huge amount of money available through drugs was a big part of the large corruption problem in Guatemala. Many money laundering operations took place. We held classes trying to train the financial institutions in the country how to recognize and handle money-laundering, but we never really did a good job because *we* don't know how to handle it ourselves.

Q: Did you speak out at any time about corruption?

STROOCK: Oh Lord, it got to the point where I think they were tired of it. I started out by saying that Guatemalans made a business out of, hell an *art*, out of not paying taxes. I would say that they couldn't expect United States taxpayers to support activities in their own country that their own taxpayers refused to support. I would talk about corruptions in generalities because there are some things that as an ambassador that you just can't say. To remain effective, you couldn't say that you were convinced the president was corrupt. You just couldn't do that. I had to maintain a relationship with him. I really had to try and be his friend. But you could say that some of his friends were involved. The first big drug incident that I got involved in, shortly after I arrived there, illustrates this conundrum. The President, Cerezo, appointed one of his buddies, a former colonel by the name of Hugo Moran, as director of the port of Santo Thomas. Just before I arrived in Guatemala, Hugo Moran had been involved in a drug transshipment at La Aurora, the main airport of Guatemala. He and two of his cronies were involved in drug trafficking up to their eyeballs. The CIA, the intelligence station, and the DEA, the drug enforcement agency, had the proof. They even had pictures of these guys carrying the stuff out of the airport. To get Moran out of the town, Cerezo named him as the chairman of the Port of Santo Thomas, which is the country's leading port. Eighty percent of the country's imports and exports go through there. A lot of drugs are transshipped. This was just an open license to conduct illegal activities. Many of our officers believed that President Cerezo himself was involved because his brother definitely was.

Q: Maybe its time to move to the second "D," democracy. That would have been heavily tied up in the upcoming election. . .

STROOCK: Yes. Well, at the time the big concern was that the Christian Democrats, who had controlled the congress--they had fifty-two out of the hundred deputies--and

who also controlled the Presidency had a candidate by the name of Alfonso Cabrera. He had been the foreign minister and State Secretary Shultz hated him because he lied to him. He was reputed to be heavily involved in drug trafficking. There was no question that Cabrera's older brother was a drug trafficker. He went to jail. There's no question that a large amount of drug money supported Cabrera's political ambitions. He flew around the country in a helicopter owned by a drug king named Escobar. He had known ties to both Cali and Medellin cartels. But I must say that *I* was never convinced that Cabrera himself was involved in drug trafficking. It's just that if he had become president, he had so many chits out to those who *were* involved in drug trafficking that it would have been impossible to control. Furthermore, the army did not like Cabrera. We had all kinds of information that had he become elected, they would have moved against him and overthrown the government.

Q: Was democracy still a major issue after Serrano took office or was that really the end?

STROOCK: No, no, no. It's always going to be a major issue. In fact Serrano fell off the wagon after I left. I left in November of 1992, and in May of 1993, Jorge Serrano tried to turn himself into a dictator. He tried to abolish the courts, abolish the congress, and muffle press. He tried that twice before during my stay there. He would convince himself that anyone who opposed his programs was in the pay of a drug lord, was a narco-trafficker, trying to destabilize his government and had bought off and bribed the TV and newspapers. He was a great believer in the conspiracy theory and believed that just about everything was a conspiracy against him. The newspapers would attack him in cartoons, or when they would publish that his family had taken up buying polo ponies and playing polo, or that he had purchased a (finca) and was trying to throw some poor Indians off the (finca) land in Rio Dulce. All of this was true, but he took these as personal assaults and personal attacks on him--the equivalent of lese majeste--trying to destabilize his state.

STROOCK: I pressed the whole time I was in Guatemala for someone to unscramble...This was a decision that was bigger than mine to make. I'm not the one to decide whether the United States government pays more attention to human rights violations, or to drug interdiction. But I was begging for someone up there to make that decision because we were sending totally mixed signals. Not publicly. Publicly--as far as the civilian population was concerned, as far as the government was concerned--we were squarely on the side of human rights and drug interdiction, and the two did not interfere with each other. But in the actual workings of the machinery of how these were accomplished, the people involved in it, we were giving terribly mixed signals and I think we still are.

PRUDENCE BUSHNELL
Ambassador
Guatemala (1999-2002)

Ambassador Bushnell was born in Washington, DC into a Foreign Service family. She was raised in Washington and at Foreign Service posts abroad

and received degrees from Russell Sage College and the University of Maryland. After working as a clerk at Embassies Teheran and Rabat, she became a Foreign Service Officer in 1981 and subsequently served in several posts before serving as Ambassador to Kenya 1996 – 1999. There she experienced the bombing of the Embassy by al Qaeda. In 1999 she was named Ambassador to Guatemala, where she served until 2002. During her career, the Ambassador served in several senior positions in the Department in Washington. Ambassador Bushnell was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well did you feel that the, was the tension because, the colonels wanted to have something, they're sent there to work with the military. What were they supposed to be doing?

BUSHNELL: I never told them they couldn't do their work, I simply wanted them to support the policies we had agreed upon in both letter and spirit. Understand that the Guatemalan military was involved in drug trafficking, alien smuggling, illicit trade, harassment and killing of human rights and reform leaders – to say nothing of the hold they exerted on the head of state. They wanted nothing more than tacit or explicit support from the U.S. That was not something I would be a party to.

On another occasion I intervened when our Defense Attaché was going to attend the promotion ceremony of a colonel we knew was a drug runner. I had to order him not to attend that particular ceremony.

We had an investment of \$300 million in the peace process from the AID side, and if you look, if you combined all of the investments of all of the agencies at post it would have been considerably more. One of the objectives we set as a Country Team was to address corruption. When I convened people from AID, DEA, INS, as it was called then, and other law enforcement agencies to chart the links between corrupt people in the Guatemalan government, we were able to identify particular individuals. We went back to Washington and received authorization to revoke their visas. This took some time because we had to follow the letter of American law, but what we accomplished was the revocation of visas of some of the members of the *fuerzas oscuras*, the “dark forces” that the president and others had talked about. After September 11, 2001 drug running and alien smuggling became an important national security issue for us and we did something about it.

Q: But we're also talking about people on your team, had money to hand out. Could we do anything on that, to make sure the money didn't go to the wrong people?

BUSHNELL: AID, which had the bulk of it, had very strong controls. We withheld other monies. As an example, we had representatives of ICITAP, which is the part of the Justice Department that runs police programs. They wanted to set up a forensic lab for the Guatemalan police. Unfortunately, the Guatemalans prosecutors and the police were in a bitter feud over the issue of evidence control. As a result, lots of evidence was lost. The

justice system was horrible to begin with and it was not helped by the turf wars between the prosecutor and the police. So I said that until prosecutors and police could come to agreement, no one would get the money. Alien smuggling was another big issue that got a lot of our attention, although it did not directly connect to any particular funding program.

Q: You left Guatemala when?

BUSHNELL: In 2002.

HAITI

ANNE O. CARY Economic/Commercial Officer Port-au-Prince (1978-1980)

Anne O. Cary was born in Washington, DC in September of 1952. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and entered the Foreign Service in 1974. Her career included positions in Brussels, Port-au-Prince, Paris, Addis Abba, New Delhi, Casablanca, and Washington, DC. Ms. Cary was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 30, 1995.

Q: How pervasive was corruption?

CARY: It was pervasive but not bloodsucking. If you were a businessman and wanted to meet Duvalier, for \$5000 you could meet Duvalier and probably get whatever it is that you need him to sign. But, you could also meet him by chance and get the same result. So, it was affordable corruption for those well-healed. For a peasant, even 100 gourd (\$20) was too high a price for the right stamp. Towards the end of my tour drugs became a part of the picture and changed the corruption situation. Haiti is strategically located for small private planes to refuel on their way to Columbia. There was an increase in the number of Lear jets coming in with drugs, having gone down to Columbia. This appeared to tie in with Baby Doc's marriage with Michelle; the Bennett family has been implicated in drugs.

Q: Baby Doc's wife.

CARY: After that we started getting Lear jets coming through and we had a couple of crashes. One was just disgusting. It was coming from the United States. The plane crashed outside the airport and the family came down and could care less about their son who had been the pilot. The important thing was the jewels or money that he was taking down to Colombia to bring drugs back. It was disgusting to see how eager they were to have access to the plane, while not seeming to care about their son's remains. As the drug culture moved in the corruption got worse. We were leaving just about that time so it was only by stories later I learned how much things had changed.

CLAUDIA ANYASO
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Port-au-Prince (1988-1990)

Ms. Anyaso was born and raised in North Carolina and was educated at Morgan State University and American University. She joined the State Department in 1968, where she specialized in Education and Cultural Affairs, with particular regard to African countries. She had several tours in Washington as well as abroad. Her foreign assignments include Lagos, Abuja, Port-au-Prince and Niamey, where she served primarily as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer. Ms. Anyaso was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

ANYASO: What I wanted to do more than anything else was to build up the speaker program when I was there because there was this fear when coming to Haiti that I wanted to get speakers down there to talk to the Haitians and get over this hump. So we did have quite a few speakers. Interestingly enough one of my first speakers was a Haitian American woman who was in social work but she had come down to talk about drug awareness. I believe her father, at one point, had been one of those quick presidents of Haiti, Hippolyte; sometimes you could be president for a month so I think her father had been one of those quick presidents of Haiti, they never quite got the leadership part right. Anyway, they have lovely museums; they had a couple of wonderful museums in Haiti. One was at the Place des Heroes, it was just for paintings and things like that and then they had the Museum of Haitian Art.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Deputy Chief of Mission, Chargé
Port-au-Prince (1991-1993)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

ALEXANDER: They appointed a prime minister, Marc Bazin, but he was viewed as being a puppet of the military and to a certain extent, he was. What I didn't know at the time was that there were people behind him. One of his own military officers, Michel Francois, who was a major, was probably the mastermind or the leader of the coup that ousted Aristide. He was a very ruthless man. He is now hiding out in Honduras. He's

been indicted in the United States for drug smuggling or something or another. But Cedras, even though he was the head of the military, wasn't a free agent either. He had to respond to these forces within the armed forces and those forces said absolutely and categorically: Aristide does not return, that's just not an option. He's just not coming back or over our dead bodies. So the military leadership found itself in a position that it frankly didn't want to be in. I don't think that Raoul Cedras was a conspirator. I don't think he knew about this coup. I don't think he would agree with it. I don't think he would have supported it. As part of the evidence for my feelings I would offer up his magnificent job of providing security for the presidential election that Aristide won. He provided that security mindful, as was everyone else in Haiti, that Aristide was the probable president. Had he not liked Aristide, I don't know if he would have done such a good job of ensuring a peaceful election. Again, this is in a country where, during the previous election in '68, they massacred people at the polling stations. So this is a big thing, to provide absolute security. It was never my sense that Cedras had any interest in being the president of Haiti. He was quite pleased being the head of the military, and I think that's all he wanted to do; but politics, forget it. It just wasn't his cup of tea. Be that as it may, he, as the head of the army, stayed as head of the army, and I told him on more than one occasion, "I'm sorry, but the rest of the world's convinced that you're the dictator." "Well I'm not. You know that I'm not." "Well then, why don't you have someone else run things?" "Well, that's what we're trying to do, we're trying to find." I said, "Or you could have Aristide come back." "No, no, no, we can't do that." I said, "Okay. You can't have your cake and eat it too. You can't, on the one hand, try to convince me that you're a decent guy and, even though you had nothing to do with this coup, you won't let the democratically elected president come back." "Well, we can't let him come, because he'll kill us." I said, "Well, maybe not. Maybe you can strike a deal." "No, no, you don't strike deals with Aristide." Well eventually he did strike a deal. But we'll get to that later.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
Ambassador
Haiti (1997-1999)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: What was the situation in Haiti when you went there?

CARNEY: If you look in the "New York Review of Books," you will see in the March edition a long description of what Haiti's all about taken in the guise of a review of a book that's just come out on "Haiti, Predatory Republic." It was in the presidency of Rene Preval who had been the alter ego in many ways of Jean Bertrand Aristide, and

selected for the presidency because the Haitian constitution will only let you have one term at a time. You can have another term, but it cannot be consecutive. Aristide was reinstalled by the U.S. in '94. That became a UN mission shortly thereafter. He stepped down in '95 at the insistence of the White House. His term had started 5 years earlier. Preval was elected and ran a non-government for 5 years, holding the place warm for Aristide to return. The country went to hell politically; in terms of drug transit center; and economically, and that's where it is now under Aristide's resumed presidency.

Q: What were our concerns with Haiti?

CARNEY: Our concern was no governance, no development, insufficient effort at stalling the drug transit trade from the Cali cartel in Colombia that would send its go-fast boats on a 10 hour trip with a ton of cocaine to Haiti to be transshipped through the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico and home free to the U.S.

Q: As the ambassador, did you feel you were doing more than keeping your finger in the dyke?

CARNEY: There were some things we were doing that were positively good - the humanitarian aspects of our AID project, for example. Half a million kids got lunch from our monies every school day. There were some efforts at micro credit underway to help bring together a much broader entrepreneurial class at the very basic level. Those were serious, useful things. The efforts by the U.S. Coast Guard to help mentor a Haitian coast guard that would have its role not only in saving lives but also in drug suppression was sound and well founded. But that's very few. The ultimate problem was the desire on the part of those who held power to use the police and the judiciary as a tool for their own self-aggrandizement. That's what Aristide is all about.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Ambassador
Haiti (1999-2000)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Did you have a feeling that Haiti had disappeared off the radar of U.S. politicians or not?

ALEXANDER: Oh absolutely, absolutely. I think the Clinton administration, once they put Aristide back on the throne, they immediately began to distance themselves from him. There was just too much out there indicating that Aristide was not the guy his supporters had tried to convince Clinton that he was. Domestic politics, particularly pressure from the Black Caucus, I think Clinton felt compelled to put Aristide back on the throne. After he did that I think he said that's it. I've done what you people want; I've got other things to do. And they kept an eye on Aristide. There were certain people like Tony Lake who felt a certain, not loyalty, to Aristide, but a certain commitment to him. But Tony was no longer the national security advisor and so his influence on the situation was very, very limited. Sandy Berger just wanted Haiti to be quiet. Basically, no boat people, nothing so explosive as to raise questions about why we invaded Haiti on Aristide's behalf. As it turns out, a lot of Aristide's critics felt vindicated because Haiti became what it was accused of being under the opponents of Aristide. It became, among other things, a dysfunctional state, a little narco country, all the things which the Black Caucus said it was when Aristide was in exile. Aristide comes back and becomes president and all of a sudden our Coast Guard and our DEA and everybody else is pulling out its hair because Haiti is involved up to its eyeballs in drug trafficking and Aristide is abusing human rights left, right and center. Didn't we invade Haiti to bring this guy back? And wasn't he Mr. Democracy? And what happened here? I think a lot of people had a lot of egg in their faces, but as long as Haiti was relatively quiet and didn't make the front pages, it was okay.

HONDURAS

MARI-LUCI JARAMILLO

Ambassador

Honduras (1977-1980)

Mari-Luci Jaramillo was born in New Mexico. Jaramillo was educated at New Mexico Highlands University. She then joined the faculty at the University of New Mexico and worked her way up to becoming an associate dean, vice president, and an assistant to the president of UNM. Ms. Jaramillo served as ambassador to Honduras and worked at the Pentagon. Ms. Jaramillo was interviewed by Ann Miller Morin in 1987.

Q: Oh Boy, that's a plateful, isn't it? Did you have many problems with drugs--drug trafficking--when you were there?

JARAMILLO: There were about four or five incidents; and it was very interesting. There were two ugly incidents within the country where they thought that it was because of drug dealings. There had been an awful murder, where they'd buried some people and just an awful kind of thing. I don't remember; it was two or three dead, but it was something--kind of a drug thing. They weren't using drugs in the country, but they had started using Honduran ships. Some Hondurans were willing to rent their ships to carry the drugs, and then the Hondurans would be caught with their flag on a boat that didn't have anything to do with Hondurans--or very little--you know, there'd be a few of them

involved. So, that was the one incident where there was the ugly torturing and burying of somebody with a fight; and then the use of two or three boats. Then we had a plane that came in from the United States that landed there that was involved in drugs. And then we had one of the big drugs guys--in fact, every once in a while I read his name in the paper--who was Honduran by birth, but has lived all over, and is into the big Mafia scene. People had pointed out his home to me in Honduras--a beautiful home--and had said, "Now there's a drug person." Then when there was this other killing and stuff, he disappeared, and they said he had disappeared--I've forgotten where--but there was a connection with that. But he's an individual that is connected.

Q: Moves all over.

JARAMILLO: Yes. I didn't feel at the time that there was the horrible drug problems that you were hearing in other countries, but there was the beginning of it; the beginning of the temptation of making money; making money.

Q: Did you have a narcotics agent there?

JARAMILLO: Yes. And then, we had a group that were in Costa Rica who kept coming. We were able to get that going all the way to Interpol, to really look into the drug situation in large ways. But there was starting to be movement; there was starting to--easy money. But they weren't growing huge fields of this and processing it; not yet. I doubt it. Even less now; I imagine that with many more Americans probably it would even be worse. But that was--when you heard what stuff was going on in other countries.

THEODORE WILKINSON
Political Counselor
Tegucigalpa (1984-1986)

Theodore Wilkinson was born in Washington, DC in 1934. He received his BA from Yale and his MA from George Washington University. He served as a lieutenant in the US Navy from 1956 to 1960. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961, and his postings include Caracas, Stockholm, Brussels, Mexico City, Tegucigalpa and Brasilia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 11, 1999.

WILKINSON: The military had given up power formally, but behind the scenes, before I got there, from '81 to '84, roughly, there was a general named Álvarez, who ran the military and the police, in effect, national security and internal security, with a very firm hand, and there were a lot of allegations of human rights violations, to the point where we - the United States - were accused of being associated with these forces of repression in Honduras because we were training the Honduran military and allegedly training even the people that were in the special forces battalions that went out and picked up suspected political deviants and insurgents and interrogated them in unpleasant ways. First of all, when I was serving in Honduras, the military commander-in-chief had been succeeded by the air force commander, whose name was Walter López and who, in my estimation, was

very enlightened and honest, a straightforward general who wouldn't tolerate that kind of activity and probably didn't, unless it was being done behind his back by the army. Once when we were talking about drug trafficking, I remember somebody brought up the question of Noriega: "You know, General Noriega is involved in drugs in Panama." And López said, "Wes, I know that Noriega, and he is involved in drugs, but I'm not, and we're not, and I'm clean." And I think people tended to believe that, that López was a clean and honest armed forces commander in chief in Honduras. So I didn't have the feeling that human rights violations were going on behind our back. Heaven knows, there probably were some isolated cases, but we had enough information in the embassy to know there was no "pattern" while I was there.

But at least when I was there the drug trade had not yet become a major problem in the Bay Islands. We used to go out to the islands quite a bit. Xenia had commercial contacts there - lobster exporters, hotel owners, etc. - and I learned SCUBA there.

WARD BARMON
Economic Counselor
Tegucigalpa (1988-1992)

Ward Barmon was born in Huntington, Long Island in 1943. He graduated with a double major in American and Chinese history from Yale University and then studied at the University of Madrid for a year before coming into the Foreign Service in 1967. In 1992 he served as Director of the Narcotics Affairs section in Bogota, Colombia. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Belize, Taiwan, Thailand, El Salvador, and Honduras. Mr. Barmon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: What were you getting from your colleagues in the Honduran government about changes in Nicaragua? How did they feel about it all along?

BARMON: I think the small groups in the government and the businessmen benefited from our involvement. I think the majority of the population and parts of the government that were not directly involved were happy to see the potential threat from Nicaragua reduced. The Contras were being disbanded, so the threat that the Sandinistas would attack Honduras was gone. Second, there was the hope that things could get back to normal with trading and commerce. There was a great deal of this. There was a bit of smuggling, so some people made money smuggling goods. However, the cross border economy had almost come to a halt.

Q: Was it the Contras and the Sandinistas who were doing the fighting?

BARMON: Some of the border area, not all of it. In the Gulf of Fonseca, there was not much fighting. Certainly inland and the mountainous area, which was a main coffee growing area. It adversely affected Honduran coffee production. So, it did have a negative impact in a number of areas.

Q: Were drugs at all a factor?

BARMON: No. There was some smuggling. Who was that Honduran who was finally captured working with the Colombians? Mate Ballesteros, I believe. So, there were stories about smuggling offshore in the Caribbean. Drugs were dropped and picked up by boat, and then re-exported. There was a small internal consumption problem. There was a small amount of marijuana grown in Honduras, but it was not significant.

DAVID MICHAEL ADAMSON

**Political Counselor
Tegucigalpa (1995-1998)**

David M. Adamson was born in Connecticut and educated at Swarthmore College and Tufts University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1974, he first served in Vietnam, following which he served in a variety of foreign posts in France, Panama, Portugal and Honduras. During his several assignments in the US Mr. Adamson worked on matters of a political-military nature, including arms control, nuclear proliferation and Soviet issues. In 1998 He served as Faculty Member of the Inter-American Defense College. Mr. Adamson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Were there any crises while you were there?

ADAMSON: There really weren't any crises. Perhaps once or twice, there was a concern on our part that the Honduran military might take steps against the political leadership. We had to make some effort to quash that. Generally speaking, our problem was getting the Hondurans to break out of lethargy to do things we thought were useful in terms of improving their own democratic institutions or moving on an international front to sign agreements with us on anti-drug or other functional issues that were a concern to us.

Q: Was drug trafficking going through Honduras?

ADAMSON: There was some going through or around Honduras. Generally, we had good cooperation with the Hondurans, but resources were always an issue, and we had to provide them a lot.

JAMAICA

KENNETH N. ROGERS

**Political Officer
Kingston (1968-1972)**

Kenneth N. Rogers was born in New York in 1931. He received his BA from Ohio State University in 1953, and his UJD from George Washington University in 1958. His career includes postings abroad in Hong Kong, Saigon, Luanda, Kingston, and Tangier. He was interviewed on October 21, 1997, by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Was drug smuggling or marijuana smuggling a problem when you were there?

ROGERS: Yes, but much less so than now. Jamaicans had been using marijuana for countless years as a medicinal supplement called "bush tea." It was said to be good for a toothache. The toothache didn't go away, but you didn't feel it anymore. It was an old traditional herbal medicine.

ELIZABETH ANN SWIFT
Consul General
Kingston (1986-1989)

Elizabeth Ann Swift was born in 1940 in Washington, DC. Her father worked for the International Red Cross, but died when she was very young. Her grandparents and uncle were all Navy world travelers. Her desire to enter foreign service was sparked by their tales of traveling abroad. She attended Stanford, but graduated from Radcliffe in 1962. She has served in the Philippines, Indonesia, Iran and Jamaica, as well as several other positions within the State Department. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 16, 1992.

SWIFT: The only problem that we were having while I was there, was the whole drug business, which I get incensed about when I look at what we have done to the rest of the world. But at any rate, Jamaica was a high marijuana producing area, and we had a big drug program which was not completely ineffective, aimed at destruction of marijuana. The problem was that many high ranking Jamaicans were involved in the marijuana trade. It was one of the major sources of income for the Jamaican economy, and, of course, it was illegal. There was huge traffic back and forth between the States and Jamaica of marijuana. It was just starting to move over into cocaine. It's not a cocaine producing area, but it was starting to turn into a cocaine transit area, or an area where the big drug dealers were using cocaine to purchase marijuana. In other words, they would come in and rather than paying for marijuana all in dollars, they would pay for a certain amount with cocaine, which was then starting to give Jamaica, at least in the higher levels of society, a cocaine problem. But at any rate this affected us in the visa section because we had to be very, very careful to make sure who we were allowing up, and we had a high percentage of people we would turn down because they were known to be, or suspected to be, involved in the drug trafficking.

And at the time I was down there, it was the time at which there was a big uproar up here in Washington because the crack cocaine distribution rings up and down the eastern seaboard, and across into Texas and Kansas City were run by Jamaicans.

Q: I remember. The word was Jamaican gangs are very dangerous, they kill a lot of people.

SWIFT: And indeed they do. The problem with that sort, and the reason you saw it all disappear off the front pages, was that it's very easy to speak of Jamaican gangs. The problem was that Jamaicans, like any other portion of our society, the Irish, etc., had been around a long time. So that a lot of these so-called Jamaican gangs were in reality Jamaican-American gangs. American citizens of Jamaican extraction. And there were a lot of immigrant Jamaicans, and a lot of illegal Jamaicans involved in this. But a high percentage of these people were Americans. So the black community in Washington got outraged by the way the press was treating this. It was like that...they turned off discussing the Jamaican drug running gangs still existing.

The problem with the Jamaicans, and the problem with Jamaican society, is for some reason or other there is a very, very strong streak of violence in it. There were a lot of sociological studies of the areas that the Jamaican slaves were transported out of whatever their cultural background was. The Jamaicans are fiercely, fiercely independent. Certain groups of Jamaicans fought the British to a standstill, and never were conquered. The slaves revolted and went up into the hills, and actually in some cases made treaties with the British that gave them hunks of the country under their control. It's as though the American Indians fought us to a standstill. The Jamaican blacks, some of them managed to rule parts of Jamaica without much interference from the Brits. So they are a very, very proud people. Unfortunately when I was there, in the early '80s, the various political factions had armed themselves, and had sort of hired thugs to do their guarding work. And when Seaga came in, they dismantled a lot of these private armies. And what this meant was that a lot of people were left without employment, but with guns. And what ended up filling the breach was the drug trade, where the drug traffickers took these guys on as their runners, and their controllers. And they're very, very trigger happy. So a lot of the shooting, and a lot of the very quickness to go to guns, was in that culture, and was transported into the States.

Now the Jamaicans would say that it is your drug trafficking that is misleading our good Jamaicans who go up there, our poor kids go up there, and get corrupted by your American gangs. And to a certain extent that was true. So it was a very difficult problem to deal with.

Q: From your point of view running the consular section as it impacted on the visa work, how did this drug thing translate?

SWIFT: Well, what it meant was that we had a very close working relationship, both with the intelligence community, and with DEA.

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency.

SWIFT: ...to track, and try to give whatever help we could from the Visa Section to DEA

to keep these people from getting into the States. Which meant that they would give us information, we'd enter it into our machines, and try and track some of this stuff.

The other side of this was, that the drug dealers were closely involved with the fake document industry in Jamaica. There were vibrant, charging, document production rings, which had their base in smuggling normal Jamaicans up to the States to be illegal aliens. But the narcotic rings got into that because they needed fake documentation, they needed fake passports, they needed all of this sort of stuff, and they were willing to pay huge prices for it. The Jamaican working class themselves would pay \$3,000, \$4,000, and \$5,000 dollars to get documentation which they thought would get them through the embassy, and get them a visa. But the smuggling rings would pay much more than that. So there was a close interconnection between the narcotics people, and the document rings.

Q: How did you deal with that?

SWIFT: It's very, very difficult to deal with alien smuggling and with document rings. We're not policemen, we're not investigators, although in our consular section we had a fraud unit. It was very hard to keep my fraud unit people from becoming real live police investigators. We had a very close connection with the Jamaican police authorities, and, as I said, very close relations with our intelligence agencies, and with our embassy security people, and with DEA.

Ordinarily at an embassy, for instance like in Athens, your intelligence agencies, and your DEA, really doesn't care much about the consular section, because there's not this close connection between what they're doing, and the visa section. In Jamaica it was very, very close. It was obvious to them that if they could get at the counterfeit document producers, they could stop some of this trafficking. So by convincing the intelligence agencies that it was in their interest to target the counterfeit document producers, I got help from DEA and things that would not be available to me otherwise.

Q: How effective did you think your section was in getting on top of the fraud problem?

SWIFT: Oh, not very effective at all. It's a very, very hard thing to control. When the ability to reproduce documents with all your fancy new modern FAX machines is so high, and when it was so easy for a Jamaican to change his name, change his identity, and come in with a totally new set of documents with very good documents to back it up. What we tried to do was pick out patterns. This kind of documentation is suspect. Therefore, when it appears in front of you, you look at it six times harder. But it was very difficult to do. As fast as we'd crack down and break one ring or scam, another one would leap into its place because the commercial advantage to producing these documents was so high. And the government itself...the other thing was convincing the Jamaican government that fake document production was against their best interest. There was a tendency by the Jamaican government, and should I say by the US government, to regard counterfeiting of documents as a civil offense, rather than a criminal offense. And your fines are low. Even in the United States, how many prosecutions do you see for issuance

of fake passports and fake birth certificates? Very few, and the fines are low, and the jail sentences are minimal if you get caught at doing this stuff. It's no different in Jamaica as it was in the States.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin America
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

COWAL: As it is, you have Jamaica with a couple of million people, Trinidad with just over a million, and it drops off radically after that to countries with 200,000, 100,000 citizens. You've got these, as I call them, sui generis little rocks, each with its own mechanisms of government, its own full three branches – an executive, a legislative and a judiciary. Tremendous waste and inefficiency.

Q: When you got there in '89, did we have a policy to try to do anything about this?

COWAL: Well, not really to rewrite history. I think we were encouraging and helpful. There had been some original Caribbean basin legislation passed, which was essentially giving them trade preferences, mainly for assembly industry, for the textile industry, which is important in the Caribbean. We sought to have all of them sort of hang together enough to do one trade agreement with the United States, and then to renew that trade agreement. That was somewhat helpful, then. As drugs became a bigger issue, we certainly tried to provide some of the fiber optic network that would allow the Jamaicans to talk to the Trinidadians or the Barbadians or the St. Kittians by radio and by fax and by phone.

COWAL: All roads lead to Miami, but the roads aren't very good that lead between Jamaica and Barbados. To sort of foster and to provide the infrastructure for a better law enforcement network, in our own interest – I think it was in our own interest – but I think what we've discovered with the drug business all over the world is it can't be just coming through you. The beginning, I think, of the whole war on drugs, going back to Nixon, probably, and certainly through Reagan, there was a tremendous dialog of the deaf, where the United States of course – still does, to a certain extent – blames the producer countries. The producer countries say, "Hey, it's not our problem. If your young people

didn't want to consume it, we wouldn't be growing it, would we? And besides, we don't have drug addicts. It doesn't affect us."

I think the shortsightedness of that point of view began to be addressed in the years that I was there. The Caribbean are not producers, but there are two ways for drugs to get to the United States. One is through Mexico and the other is through the Caribbean, so I was really handling both sides of that portfolio, therefore very drug related. I think that the transit countries, as well as the producer countries, began to understand the terrible effects, how distorting that amount of money to the Caribbean economies. Suddenly somebody is getting paid enormous amounts of money to close your eye when the boat goes through, or as paid mules and shippers.

They began to catch some of the really low-level folks, the poor Jamaican women who would take a few kilos in their suitcases and go to the United States. Of course, it's much harder to catch the real traffickers, because they're much more clever at what they do. At any rate, I think through our working with all of the countries of the Caribbean, both on trade issues and on law enforcement issues, we have done something to encourage a better dialog between us.

COWAL: What makes politics in Jamaica dangerous is that each of these quite respectable – I think Seaga ranged on being a Godfather type – nonetheless, all the people in his party did not. Quite respectable politicians are each identified with much less respectable elements who will seek in moments of local elections or national elections, to intimidate the followers of the other party by violence in the streets. So street gangs are associated with both of these parties. That all got worse with the drug trafficking also, because drug money inevitably tried to find its way into where it could have some influence. Convicted drug traffickers who spent some time in U.S. jails then got repatriated. When their jail terms are over, they get repatriated back to their country of origin. That's often Jamaica, and they come to little old Kingston, which may have been fighting it out on the streets with rocks and clubs, and introduce real weapons of mass destruction in the neighborhood way – heavy armaments. So the level of violence escalated dramatically.

HERMAN J. ROSSI III
Economic Counselor
Kingston (1989-1992)

Mr. Rossi was born in Florida and raised in Idaho. He was educated at Gonzaga University and Washington State University. In 1965, he entered the Foreign Service, specializing primarily in economic and African affairs. During his career, Mr. Rossi served in Kinshasa, Blantyre, Rome, Pretoria, Monrovia, Kingston and Libreville, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He was Economic Counselor at several of his posts. In his Washington assignments, Mr. Rossi dealt with both African and Economic matters. Mr. Rossi was interviewed by Peter Eicher in 2007.

Q: On to Jamaica. What year was this?

ROSSI: This was 1989. Michael Manley had come back to power a year or so earlier. In the '70s when he had been in power, he was something of a socialist and did not get along well with the U.S., and the U.S. did not get along well with him. The Jamaican economy had suffered a major decline during this period. When he came back to power in the late 1980s, Manley had become something of a born-again capitalist. I guess he's had seen the light from his previous problems and mistakes with the economy. He and the U.S. got along well during most of my tour. Among other things, we were cooperating on drug enforcement.

Jamaica does not produce hard drugs. It does produce a lot of marijuana which is grown up in the mountains. Some of it was grown for the local use, but some is for export. Marijuana is a bulk item, so it isn't a high value thing. One of the major problems was the island and its crime network was becoming a staging area for hard drugs coming in from Columbia and places like that. We had a large drug enforcement presence there working with the Jamaicans. DEA was there and other agencies.

Let me touch on my job there. I was economic counselor or head of the economic section. It was a period when Jamaica had gone through a long period of economic problems. It was very heavily indebted. Briefing papers would say it was the most heavily indebted country in the world per capita. It had borrowed a lot from various banks and international institutions.

LACY A. WRIGHT
Deputy Chief of Mission
Kingston (1991-1995)

Mr. Wright joined the Foreign Service in 1968 after earning degrees at Mendelian College and Loyola University. His foreign service took him to Vietnam both during and after the War. Other assignments took him to Milan, London and Bangkok as well as to the State Department in Washington, where he worked with International Organizations in matters concerning refugees, and UNESCO affairs. Mr. Wright was born and raised in Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Wright was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: One last question that I have on this, and that is on, during this time, the role of the narcotics trade.

WRIGHT: Jamaica, first of all, grows marijuana, and so our narcotics assistance unit was engaged in trying to encourage the Jamaicans to destroy marijuana and assist them to do so, and we had a DEA office there.

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency.

WRIGHT: A Drug Enforcement Agency office, which had about three people in it, which is a fairly decent-sized DEA office, and they worked with the Jamaican police and the Jamaican drug squad within the police to try to catch traffickers, and they did catch some. We were not very successful in seeing traffickers either prosecuted or convicted in Jamaica, and this was always a weak part of our efforts. We were engaged through AID in trying to assist Jamaica to upgrade its court system with the idea and the hope that—well, first of all it's a good thing to do in itself—but with the hope that it would assist in the prosecution of drug cases. One of the problems was not so much that drug cases were badly handled but that the entire system was extremely slow, was cumbersome, was one in which judges routinely did not behave very forcefully, so that defense lawyers had a relatively easy time of it in arguing for delays and that kind of thing, which disrupted cases, from our point of view. So on that score, we were not very successful. We were probably more successful in the case of marijuana eradication, although that gradually became, in our overall policy, less a matter of importance and urgency than stopping the cocaine trade.

Q: Well, wasn't marijuana or this type of hemp called ganja or something like that that played quite a role in one aspect of Jamaican culture?

WRIGHT: Oh, absolutely. Ganja is just marijuana. That's what it is. That's what Jamaicans call it. Yes, and of course, you have Bob Marley. Bob Marley, by the way, I think, is probably, posthumously, the best known popular musician in the world. Everywhere you go, all over the world, people who've never heard of Elvis Presley or the Beatles all know Bob Marley, so Marley's influence is just tremendous, I think hard to exaggerate. And Marley and all of the people in that culture, of course, were highly identified with marijuana, and one of the results of this is that a lot of people, Americans, tourists, young people, go down to Jamaica to do drugs. And I think some of them probably think that it's okay to do drugs in Jamaica because of all they've heard about it, and one of the things that we constantly had to deal with were a high number of Americans arrested at the airport for drug possession. And the Jamaicans really went after this with a lot of enthusiasm. And so at given times we had maybe a couple hundred Americans, couriers, in jail in Jamaica for drug possession.

Q: What were conditions like and how did you work it with the prisoners?

WRIGHT: I never myself visited any of these prisoners in jail. I don't think it was awful. I think there were jails in Jamaica that were awful, but I don't believe that these people were in them. In fact, I have the recollection now that some of these people regarded being in jail for six months in Jamaica as part of the cost of doing business. On the other hand, you had other really sad cases of young people talked into or cajoled into being a courier, with the promise of some money and a vacation in Jamaica, who ended up in jail to the horrible consternation of their parents, and all kinds of efforts made to get them out. We had both kinds of people. But it was clear to us that the people who were running these couriers and, by the way, who were often willing to pay a fine to get them out, regarded the losing some of them from time to time as one of their costs of doing business.

MEXICO

SERBAN VALLIMARESCU Information Officer, USIS Mexico City (1958-1962)

Serban Vallimarescu was born in Romania in 1922. He immigrated to the United States in 1940 and became a naturalized citizen in 1943. Mr. Vallimarescu worked at Voice of America before entering USIA in 1956. His career included positions in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, France, Spain, and Argentina. He was interviewed by Cliff Groce in 1989.

Q: What were some of the substantive issues between the United States and Mexico that you had to deal with during that period?

VALLIMARESCU: Other issues: drugs were at that time not prominent at all. Economic assistance. Cooperation on international issues was one issue in which Mexico was always dragging their feet because they didn't want to appear to be always responsive to what we wanted. I remember one of the things I was proudest of was when we were trying to get Mexico to go along with expelling Cuba from the OAS and in denouncing Cuba for violations of human rights. I had established very good relations with the editor-in-chief of a daily newspaper that was really the semi-official paper, and was pretty anti-American. I had become quite close to him, had luncheons with him, and had discussed this issue with him. They published an editorial very supportive of our position, almost as if I had written it myself. I was very proud of that particular operation.

TERRENCE GEORGE LEONHARDY Consular Officer Mexico (1959-1961) Consul General Mexico (1962)

Terrence George Leonhardy was born in North Dakota in 1914. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of North Dakota he received his master's degree from Louisiana State University. His career includes positions in Colombia, Denmark, Spain, Mexico, and El Salvador. Mr. Leonhardy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 1996.

LEONHARDY: And then of course, another thing we had a problem with is Americans dying down there. Say a couple comes down, they go to the... or the beach, or Mazatlan, and then you've got to have all these Mexican health certificates, and death certificates to get the body out and regulate possessions. So we had a funeral director on the Nogales, Arizona, side and he used to make out a death certificate that said, "Dead on arrival at the border." And what they'd do is they told them, "If your husband or somebody dies in the

family when you're down here, don't let them die and don't stop, just keep going until you get to the border. And so they'd get to the border and then they'd report to Customs, and so forth, "My dead husband's in the back," you know, "We've got the dog." And then they'd take care of it from then on. But it was just one of the things that happened down there. Then, of course, we were having the beginning of the drug problem, of course. That was especially down in Sinaloa where most of these drugs came from.

LEONHARDY: From the Washington prospective, a lot of our problem areas with Mexico concerned trade problems and we had a number of problems in the border area. We had this salinity problem on the lower Colorado River, and then, of course, we were beginning to have the drug problem, and then, of course, we had another thing was the vexing problem were all the Americans that were in jail down there on drugs and that was connected with the drug problem.

JAMES J. GORMLEY
Vice Consul and Rotational Officer
Mexico City (1964-1965)
Narcotics Officer
Mexico City (1986-1987)

James J. Gormley was born in New York in 1932. He received a bachelor's degree in management from Fordham College School of Business in 1954 and served in the U.S. Army from 1954-1956. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964. In addition to serving in Mexico, Mr. Gormley served in Paraguay, Vietnam, Thailand, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Who was the Ambassador then?

GORMLEY: The Ambassador was Charles Pilliod, who had been the chairman of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. They attempted to pretend that we were getting cooperation from the Mexicans, which we weren't. The Camarena case was sort of a centerpiece...

Q: This was a DEA agent who was kidnapped.

GORMLEY: Who was tortured and murdered by elements which included police. That is rather extensively and well-handled in a book by a journalist, Elaine Shannon, called *Desperados*. That book, I think, covers it very well. One of the things about the Camarena case that we later learned through tapes--I don't know how these tapes actually came into our hands but they did; the tapes of the interrogation--was that it included a lot of questions about what he knew about the Commander of the Mexican Army, the Minister of Defense, General, and what he knew about the Minister of Interior, Manuel Bartlett. These names--the Minister of Interior is the second most powerful man in Mexico and the Minister of Defense is awfully powerful--left little doubt that they had an

involvement with the drug lords. And what do you do about that in a country like Mexico.

Q: What about the Drug Enforcement Agency; what was your impression of how it was run and its effectiveness?

GORMLEY: I had very little use for most of the people involved in Mexico. The head of it is portrayed very unfavorably in *Desperado*, which is why I recommend it. He had been in Mexico too long, I think he was on his fifth tour there, maybe longer. He had just been there too long, was too much in bed with the Mexicans; he was an apologist for what they were up to. Since they have difficulty in getting good Spanish speaking people, very often they turn to Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and a lot of them seemed like time-servers to me, to whom the war on drugs was just a ticket to continued employment. I must say that I felt very differently about the organization in Thailand; I don't know why I keep coming back to Thailand, I guess because I like Thailand and I like the Thai people. The head of DEA in Thailand became my best friend; a really super guy. Of course he had a better police force to work with there than you did in Mexico. I think they were reasonably effective in Thailand.

Q: Just to nail things down, when did you serve in Mexico and when did you serve in Thailand?

GORMLEY: On the narcotics business I got into Mexico in August of 1986 and stayed until October of 1987?

Q: You were the narcotics officer?

GORMLEY: The counselor. And then from October of 1987 up until August of 1989 I was in Thailand.

WILLIAM N. HARBEN
Consul General
Merida (1966-1969)

William N. Harben was born in New York in 1922. He graduated from Princeton University and entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His career included positions in Germany, Indonesia, Rwanda, Mexico, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, Austria, and Washington, DC. This is an excerpt from an unpublished memoir.

HARBEN: I asked for my own post, be it ever so small. I was assigned as Consul in Merida, Yucatan, Mexico, a consulate with one American vice-consul and eight Yucatan employees. In addition there was the American director of the American library, cultural center and English language school who was, however formally independent though vaguely subordinate to me.

A consul's duties revolved mainly around immigration visas, visitors' visas (both issued according to regulations and requiring little work on my part), drug smuggling, aid to American businessmen and tourists in trouble, and American criminals wanted in the U.S. for crimes committed in the U.S. or who had committed, or were about to commit crimes in Yucatan.

I generally avoided the local aristocracy. Although very pleasant and exquisitely polite, they knew little of interest to the U.S. Government (drug trafficking, international fraud, desperadoes fleeing justice, etc.) and almost to a man belonged to the Partido Accion Nacional, more or less permanently out of power.

Pathetic drug addicts were part of my job. One pretty red-headed girl of Jewish extraction used to sit in the Cafe Express with a dazed expression typical of an addict. She had been abandoned by a boyfriend, also an addict, about whom I will write more later. I asked her if she needed help. She sneered and spat some insult. Day after day she sat there. I knew she stayed in the hotel a few doors away. One day she was absent, and I overheard a group of typical smugglers joking about "la gringa." One had just come from her room and said to another, "Go on up, it's your turn." A few days later she was back and a waiter handed me a note: "I want to go home." I called her stepfather and asked him to wire plane fare to Boston. "Tell me this," he said, "is she going to need a fix when she gets here?"

There were about 30 clandestine airstrips all over the peninsula from which small planes carried drugs and archeological treasures to the U.S. and to which they smuggled American appliances, watches, and guns in return. Some American shrimp boats, instead of catching shrimp, traded merchandise for shrimp caught by Mexicans in Campeche. Sometimes they would tie their craft together at anchor and engage in drunken parties off Campeche. Whores would go out in motorboats to add to the fun and were sometimes thrown overboard, unpaid. I refused to become engaged in these insoluble problems, other than to bury the occasional American shrimper shot to death by his roistering comrades in some brawl and thrown overboard. A Campeche woman we called "The Dragon Lady" had a lucrative business salvaging American shrimp boats deliberately scuttled in very shallow water by their captains, whom she bribed.

The vice-consul's next outrage involved the disappearance of two American airline stewardesses and a Mexican drug peddler/addict on a tiny rented hotel sailboat off Cozumel Island. The vice-consul was to spend the day in Campeche on a consular matter and I was to take our pouch to Mexico City. On the eve of his departure I reminded him that the post must at all times be manned by an American and that he must return before dark because the ambassador had prohibited driving by night. Next day, when I arrived at the embassy from my hotel in Mexico City I found the consular section in an uproar. Frantic parents of two girls lost on a sailboat had called the consulate and no American was on duty! The vice-consul had decided to spend the night in Campeche! The girls were never found, despite a search by Coast Guard aircraft.

EDWARD H. WILKINSON

**Vice Consul
Mexico (1967-1969)**

Edward Wilkinson was born in Indiana in 1936. Mr. Wilkinson received his bachelor's degree at Purdue University and served in the army from 1957-1959. His career included positions in Philippines, Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina, Taiwan, Ecuador, Korea, Thailand, and Germany. Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2002.

Q: Talking about those days, in the late '60s, an American gets into trouble. What kind of trouble and what did you do? How did the system work?

WILKINSON: Well, in those days, and I'm sorry to say it's not all that different today, many of our countrymen's problems were drug related. The difference is we tended to focus on marijuana, whereas today it's on harder drugs. But it's the same old business; too many people think they can just go down to Mexico and, with impunity, do whatever they want. Now, there is a great deal of freedom that exists in that country that we don't have in the States, but it is by no means a free lunch. So you had a regular, steady stream of people who went to jail, mostly for drug-related reasons.

Q: How about getting people in jail? Did you have any problems taking care of them?

WILKINSON: No, no, not at all. Many young kids who came to town got caught buying marijuana. They did a minimum of two years, and very often it was exactly two years. Often the sentence was four years, but normally the Mexican authorities would let the kids out after two. One exception I remember was an American citizen convicted for murder. I think he was in jail for life. He died of natural causes in jail while I was there. Except for him, I don't think there was a soul incarcerated in Mazatlán during my tenure there who was an American who wasn't in jail for some drug-related offense.

**ARNOLD DENYS
Consular Officer
Hermosillo (1967-1969)
Consular Officer and Cultural Affairs Officer
Tijuana (1981-1984)**

Arnold Denys was born in Belgium in 1931. He began studying at the Flemish University until he immigrated to the U.S. as a student in 1950. Once in the U.S., he continued his studies at Gonzaga University, Georgetown University, and the University of Pittsburgh. Mr. Denys became a U.S. citizen in 1955, served in the U.S. Army, and joined the State Department in 1960. His career included positions in Panama, Egypt, Greece, the U.K., Mexico, Canada, Belgium, and Washington, DC. This is an excerpt from his memoirs.

DENYS: As a Consul in Tijuana, I dealt with US-Mexico border problems of great proportions. The number of undocumented aliens from Mexico and Central America was

increasing. Tijuana was one of the largest nonimmigrant visa issuance posts in Mexico, and its strategic location near San Diego made it fertile ground for investors in border industries (the maquiladoras). It also became a site of heavy drug trafficking.

The first week after my arrival I visited the American prisoners at the State Penitentiary in Hermosillo. At that time we had five Americans there accused of drug smuggling. As Citizenship Officer it was my job to see to it that they were treated well. The conditions in the Hermosillo jail were adequate. Since this was my first Mexican assignment I had no basis for comparison. In Mexican jails most prisoners prepare their own meals. They are allowed to receive food supplies in jail as long as it is paid for. Some Americans received dollars and medicines from their families and did reasonably well. But there was a serious morale problem as few Americans were fluent in Spanish and many of the Mexican prison officials were not proficient in English. The American prisoners relied primarily on the Consular officer's visits to help communicate. I spent a couple of hours on this first visit to talk to each one personally. The Director provided a special room for the Consular visit. I decided to see them twice a month, and more if they had special needs, such as medicines and messages for their family.

I was again in Guaymas on October 27, assisting three jailed Americans. This time I got better acquainted with the local officials. I met Mr. Gordillo of the Ministerio Público Federal (District Attorney's office) and Mr. Villairne, Chief of Police of Guaymas. It became clear to me that personal contact would be a practical tool to resolve many of the American protection cases. At noon I was invited for lunch on board the oceanographic cruise ship *The Vega* of Stanford University. There I learned that my three incarcerated Americans were marine students from that ship. They had been caught in a taxicab that had packages of marijuana. Since there was no positive proof of their drug involvement I was able to obtain their release later in the day.

At the end of January, 1968, I had lunch at the San Alberto with the Federal District Attorney in Hermosillo, Licenciado Jaime Ortiz Sosa. He handled many federal crime cases in Sonora and was, of course, aware of drug violations of some of our American citizens. My contacts with him proved to be useful in evaluating the outcome of some of my protection cases involving American prisoners.

In September, 1969, diplomatic tensions were high between the United States and Mexico. The US government began a pilot inspection program of all vehicles entering at Nogales and Tijuana. They began to screen vehicles for possible drug smuggling. Mexican officials resented this and businesses on the US-Mexican border retaliated by not buying American products.

Others living below the border may work or go to school in California -- Southwestern College is a few miles north of the border. Many Mexicans cross daily to work -- both legally and illegally. ("Wetbacks" is a somewhat derogatory term for illegal aliens, but so called because they must cross the Tijuana River, which is dry part of the year and flooded during the rainy season. North of the border they can earn \$5 an hour as ranch hands, maids or nannies. Live-in nannies may earn \$100 a week if they speak English.

They can earn \$28 a week at a maquiladora (factory) in Tijuana.) And there are smugglers, of birds as well as drugs.

On July 13, 1983, I attended a Border Crime conference at the Luzern Hotel in Tijuana. Many police officials from both sides of the border attended the seminar. Vice Consul Lynn Allison went with me. We were assigned to a committee dealing with the recovery of stolen US cars. Many cars were stolen in the San Diego area and brought to Tijuana for sale or use there. Some of these vehicles were taken apart in Mexico, and the parts were sold to car dealers. To this day car theft is an epidemic on the US-Mexican border. When I was in charge of United States citizens' protection work in Tijuana, we had a special person on my staff handling US vehicle recoveries (autos, RVs, trucks and trailers). In the early 1980s there was a spirit of cooperation between the United States and Mexico on how to solve some of the outstanding border problems, including car theft, water pollution, and drug smuggling. At the conference, I met California Attorney General John K. Van de Kamp, Mr. Sausa of the Automobile Registration Office, and Governor Roberto de la Madrid, of Baja California.

ROBERT E. SERVICE
Political Officer
Mexico City (1968-1971)

Robert E. Service was born in Peiping, China in February of 1937. He studied in Oberlin College and later pursued his studies at Princeton University and Stanford University. In 1961, Mr. Service entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Nicaragua, Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Spain, Argentina, and Paraguay. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: What was your feeling toward the Mexican approach to narcotics then? Was this before the, big money and the really corrupting influence came in, or was it already a problem?

SERVICE: It was already a problem, but we were not sure what could be done about it. I suppose our feeling was it was that it was very difficult for Mexico to control what went on within its borders because of the poverty and the prevalence of corruption. There was also an attitude on the part of the Mexicans, rarely openly expressed, that it was okay to profit at the expense of the Americans. In retrospect, the elevation of drugs to a high place on the bilateral agenda was probably important in forcing the Mexicans to come to grips with the problems of their own governance, the lack of real democracy and accountability, the shortcomings of the courts, etc. But at the time it probably was unrealistic to expect a high degree of effectiveness against drugs. It doesn't mean you don't try. But, you don't go in feeling very optimistic.

Q: Was there a problem in the fact that at a small level, we had quite a few Americans in jail for dealing or carrying narcotics? We are not talking about big dealers, but we are

talking about all of them. So, middle-class sons and daughters of Americans were caught up in jail. Was this an inhibitor as far as pushing any anti-drug program at that time?

SERVICE: I don't remember that. I don't know how many Americans were in jail in Mexico at that time. I don't remember it being raised in our internal discussions. Our marching orders were to do whatever we could to get them, the Mexicans, to take more effective action, to provide greater cooperation in the battle against drugs.

ROBERT S. PASTORINO
Economic/Commercial Officer
Mexico (1969-1971)
Deputy Director of Mexican Affairs
Washington D.C. (1979-1982)
Economic/ Political Counselor
Mexico (1983-1986)
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico (1989-1991)

Robert S. Pastorino was born in San Francisco in 1949. His career included positions in Caracas, Lisbon, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and an ambassadorship to Santo Domingo. Ambassador Pastorino was interviewed by David Fischer and Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1998.

PASTORINO: The issue of crime in Mexico and how it involved tourists or Americans who went down there to deal in drugs was always on the front burner. In fact, it became much more important as the cultivation and production of drugs for export to the US increased. I believe we already had a Bilateral Commission sub-committee on criminal activity, an issue which was so sensitive because it involves both country's sovereignty.

On the drug issue, we used to have to argue vehemently to convince the Mexicans to do what we thought was needed to stop drugs and drug trafficking. I will say right here that drug production is wrong, and more importantly, harmful to the US. That is the bottom line and I make no apologies for following that policy. To do otherwise would have been to disregard the law and ignore US policy interests, and I would defy critics of this policy to justify their seeming support for the drug producers and traffickers, where ever they are, be it in Humboldt County California, Culiacan, Sinaloa, or Cali and Medellin, Colombia. But, we never convinced the Mexicans to cooperate fully; that was probably impossible to do. They did not see it as a high priority of their own. At that time the narcotics business was not hurting them. (That came to change drastically.)

During this assignment I did very little on the drug problems. I could talk about them and I did with Mexicans. I knew Colombia, I had lived in Bogotá and I saw the narco-traffickers and dopers take over whole parts of the country and look at Colombia now, or even five years ago. Now, teetering again on the edge of chaos and civil war, much of it controlled by the unholy alliance of the narcos and the Marxist guerrillas. Both are

despicable groups, no matter what some of their ideological or other supporters might want us to believe. Even five years later in the late eighties, when we really knew what happened in Colombia, we could not convince Mexicans that this was going to happen to them.

I also knew the narcotics situation from having lived in Northern Mexico. One of my responsibilities for commercial work was the state of Sinaloa, one of the first Mexican marijuana and poppy production areas. Between my Colombia experience and having seen what was happening in Sinaloa, I could tell the Mexicans what would happen to large parts of the country.

I also knew about the supposed heroes, for instance, Rafael Caro Quintero who had a major drug production area in Caborca, Northern Sonora, and who became a minor hero to some Mexicans because of his wealth; they even wrote ballads (*corridos*) about him. He was nothing but another gangster. For each child he gave a desk to in a badly supplied elementary school around Caborca, he probably addicted ten Mexican kids who saw their lives ruined.

Ambassador Gavin had some success in alerting people to the threat by going public, but we couldn't get much more cooperation, except in certain cases. For instance, when the Guadalajara drug cartels kidnapped, tortured, and killed the DEA Agent Kiki Camarena, the US Embassy and US Government put great pressure on the Mexicans to find Camarena, attempt to save him, or at least apprehend the killers. Mexican cooperation was greatly lacking during and after the kidnapping, although we did get them to search finally and find the body. In fact, a Jalisco state-owned helicopter probably carried the agent from Guadalajara to the farm nearby where he was tortured and killed. One of the kidnappers hid out in Mexico City near the Embassy and was not apprehended; some say he was allowed to escape, after the Government was alerted to his location. He later escaped to Honduras. As we shall see later, he finally paid for his crime and still is languishing in a Florida jail.

And there was the case of the Mexican medical doctor who participated in the torture by reviving Kiki Camarena before he could die, so he could be tortured further. Later the Mexican Government and its allies went to court in the US to get the obscene doctor returned to Mexico from the US where he had been imprisoned after have been lured to the US and detained. In what was a great travesty of justice, he was returned to Mexico by a US judge, where of course, he was released, probably to carry on his torture of others. I had little part in the developments surrounding the Camarena killing. I had met him on my trips to Guadalajara. Finally, I had to accompany the Ambassador to Calexico for his funeral with his family. One of my most difficult Foreign Service experiences, but worth it to honor a great American hero. And, before we snicker, Kiki Camarena was a DEA agent formally and officially invited to Mexico by the Mexican Government to work on the drug problem. This was no covert operation; it was a joint US-Mexican program.

PASTORINO: I was not seen as Mr. Mexico but I think I was recognized as someone to talk to in order to learn about Mexico, about the issues and especially about the history of the issues. I knew for a fact that there were not many people who had served twice before in Mexico, including in the interior and on the border, and had worked several years in Washington on US-Mexican relations and issues. I had worked on almost every issue: politics, trade, economics, welfare and protection of Americans, the drug war, the border, finance, cultural activities, etc.

PASTORINO: This was 1989 through 1991, the beginning of the George Bush administration. Again I would say that working for the Ambassador was easy and very pleasurable. I probably knew a bit more about Mexico then he did when we arrived. But Ambassador Negroponte was a very quick study. During the first year, I'd say he came to me for advice. After that he didn't need that kind of advice nearly as much. He allowed me to run the Embassy to a large degree. He gave me a say and input on everything. He turned over much of the drug program to me, the whole law enforcement thing. He also gave me a large role on everything economic and again I visited every corner of the country, especially visiting and supervising the Consulates.

I remember that we didn't have many policy differences. I did make one mistake in the beginning. Within days he called a meeting of the whole staff in the Embassy patio where he introduced me and I spoke to the Mexican staff as old friends; in fact, we had gone through a lot together during the earthquake and its aftermath. I mentioned those days, and I think there was some feeling I might be trying to upstage him. But, I think that went away quickly.

The issues were the same. The drug enforcement operations were more intense, larger and more complicated. There was more growing of heroin and marijuana in Mexico, more processing, and much more trafficking through Mexico from South America. Also money laundering became a major problem. Also, as the drug business grew, corruption grew and became more pervasive so it was difficult to know who one could trust and work with. Whatever you did in Mexico you had to worry about whether they were working with you or against you. I often feared I might give important intelligence to the wrong people who might use it for their own ends.

Q: How about the Consular posts? Mexico is a country that attracts enormous amounts of American tourists and American residents for that matter. Was there a problem of people getting killed? My mother for example died in Mexico. We got very nice treatment from the Consulate in Guadalajara. That kind of thing.

PASTORINO: Many Americans died in Mexico, almost all from natural causes, a few from accidents, very few from crimes, although the latter received all the publicity. These things happen to tourists and expatriates living in Mexico. Especially to older, retired people living in places like Lake de Chapala and Cuernavaca and in Baja California. But this was a problem that was manageable. This was a problem that happens in whatever country, it just happens more in Mexico.

So, there were problems but I don't remember that they very often got raised up to the country team level. I remember a couple cases where American citizens were killed or disappeared at the hand of the drug traffickers. There was at least one tragic case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Two young religious proselytizers knocked on the wrong door in Guadalajara; it was the residence of the drug traffickers and these two young people seemed suspicious; they ended up dead.

JACK B. KUBISCH
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico City (1969-1971)

Ambassador Jack B. Kubisch was born in Missouri in 1921. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947, serving at two posts, Brazil and France, before resigning to take a position in private industry for 10 years, from 1951 to 1961. He re-entered the Foreign Service as a senior officer, serving in Brazil, Mexico, France, Washington, DC, and as ambassador to Greece. Ambassador Kubisch was interviewed by Dr. Henry E. Mattox in 1989.

Q: '69 to '71, Mexico, yes. What were one or two of the major issues facing the United States in Mexico at that time?

KUBISCH: Well, one that hit me between the eyes right after my arrival there was something called Operation Intercept. I was assigned to Mexico, as I recall, in August of '69 and arrived there just as the United States Government virtually closed the border between Mexico and the United States of about a thousand miles as a result of a program designed in the United States to try and stop the flow of marijuana and other drugs coming into the United States from Mexico.

This was done without advance notice to the Government of Mexico or to the American Embassy in Mexico City. It was a program designed by a task force in Washington, following President Nixon coming to office in January of '69. The head of it was the Deputy Attorney General, Richard Kleindienst. Others on it were the Commissioner of Customs, Myles Ambrose, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Enforcement, Eugene Rossides, the head of the Drug Enforcement Agency, and others.

LOUIS P. GOELZ
Consular Officer
Mexico City (1969-1972)
Principal Officer
Mexicali-Laredo (1972-1973)

Louis P. Goelz was born in Philadelphia in 1927. After serving in the military, he graduated from La Salle College and Georgetown University. Mr. Goelz joined the Foreign Service in 1955. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Peru, Hong Kong, Brazil, Mexico, Iran, and

Korea. Mr. Goelz retired from the Foreign Service in 1992. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: What about the American citizen services? This was the height of the drug scene. I mean particularly for the young people here.

GOELZ: During that particular period of time, I was there from '69 to '72 in Mexico City, the number of Americans who were arrested just mushroomed--a lot of it because of the drug problem. We really wound up with an awful lot of Americans in jail, and it was as I say during that particular period of time is when it all started. We had to sort out activities, and establish relations with various officials in the Mexican government so that we could take care of our people.

Q: Did you find yourself in this situation that so many consular officers have where, on one hand we have a very strong anti-drug stance--we pushed other governments to take a strong stand on it-- but then as a consular officer you are sort of the advocate in a way of the American in jail.

GOELZ: That's it. You are there to represent and to assist the Americans who are in difficulties regardless of what the difficulty is. Some junior officers get to the point where they, you know, all this is a drugs, or he's involved in sex cons, we're not going to do anything for him. You can't do that. Every American deserves your assistance. In Mexico City during that particular period of time, we had an extremely strong DEA unit, and a very strong man in charge of it.

GILBERT J. DONAHUE
Vice Consul
Mexico (1971-1973)

Gilbert J. Donahue was born in Virginia in 1947. He received his bachelor's degree from American University in 1968. His career included positions in Mexico, Ivory Coast, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and Brazil. Mr. Donahue was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2000.

Q: What were you doing?

DONAHUE: I was a vice consul and we did all kinds of consular work except citizenship and immigrant visas. So, about half of the day, usually in the morning, we took care of non-immigrant visas. Virtually all of the applicants were interviewed. Then in the afternoon, much of my time was spent on American citizen services. During the period that I was there, we had about 30 or more American citizens in Mexico, mostly on drug charges. The reason the post expanded while I was there was the creation of the Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA]. It had been a rather small arm of the Border Patrol. With the importance of drug traffic, a separate agency was created and they needed to have an officer located in Mazatlan because the state capital, Culiacan, was a center for the drug traffic.

Q: Did you get involved in the drug business on the enforcement side or having to deal with the consequences of it?

DONAHUE: I really didn't. I think there were a couple of reasons. Even then, it was considered somewhat dangerous. People played for keeps. There were American agents who had a history of this in Mexico. But there had been some American agents who were literally on the firing line or had personal security problems because the drug lords were after them. So, the consul in charge of the post didn't want me to be directly involved. He would occasionally, on his travels around the district, pick up intelligence and he would find a way to transmit it to people in our embassy in Mexico City who were interested in that. I remember a couple of things. There was a strict prohibition from our ambassador, who was Robert McBride, against driving outside of the city on the highways after dark. It was not necessarily drug related. It was just general lawlessness and the possibility that people could come to harm. On one occasion, the consul was invited to a party at a ranch outside town. The owner or at least some of the people who were going to be there were reputed to be in the drug business. The Consul informed me that he was going to the party because he felt he had to. It was a kind of social obligation on his part. But he also wanted me to know where he was and to expect him back by a certain time. He would be coming back around midnight. I think he called me when he got back to town just to let me know he was all right. There was one occasion when I had to go out of the city at night on official business. Rather than drive myself, I got the consulate driver to take me. It was considered safer, but it was still a kind of unusual incident. I got a call very late in the evening from government people – I guess the police – in a town maybe 60 miles south of Mazatlan that there had been a really bad automobile accident involving an American couple and would I go down. By the time I got down there, the American man had died and his wife was very upset. I was able to spring her from the clutches of the police, get her back to Mazatlan and get her on her way back to the United States the next day rather than have her charged in the complicity of her husband's death. In those days, the Mexican government was very strict regarding an automobile accident in which blood had been drawn. It didn't even have to be death, but if somebody had shed blood as a result of an accident, the person who was driving was often held in jail.

Q: Did you have Americans in jail?

DONAHUE: Yes, we did. There were three major prisons in the consular district that had Americans. The federal prison in Mazatlan probably had the most at any given time. There would be between 10 and 15. Then there was a state prison in the state capital of Culiacan that had five to eight. There was another state in our district south of Mazatlan, the state of Nayarit. The capital, Tepic, had two or three Americans in its prison.

Q: How were they treated?

DONAHUE: Any prison is bad. The prison infrastructure, the prison conditions themselves, were certainly not modern and often not very clean and wouldn't be air-conditioned or anything. I'm sure it would have been quite uncomfortable much of the

year. That having been said, FBI agents occasionally commented that American prisoners might be better off in Mexican prisons than in American ones because they would have more freedom in some respects in a Mexican prison. In many ways, they were able to make money. They were able to teach English. They could write letters. Most of the American prisoners were a little bit better educated than the average Mexican in the prison. So, they could do things and they often did to make enough money so that they could buy many of the things that they wanted. There were American prisoners who were able to have an air conditioner or TV or whatever creature comfort. Nevertheless, Mexicans had the advantage of being fluent in the language and knowing the system so they could take advantage of it better. Probably, they would be better able to orchestrate an escape. As it turns out, there were a couple of spectacular escapes from the Mazatlan prison during the time I was there, but it was a prison that also went through about three or four different wardens. It was sort of so-so run.

CLARKE MCCURDY BRINTNALL
Military Secretary, Joint U.S.-Mexico Military Commission
Norfolk, Virginia (1971-1974)
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Affairs
Washington, DC (1978-1983)

Brigadier General Clarke McCurdy Brintnall was born in Omaha, Nebraska. He attended Wentworth Military Academy and the University of Nebraska, but graduated from West Point in 1958. Though his bachelor's degree emphasized engineering, he also studied American history, diplomatic history, and Portuguese. General Brintnall served in Brazil, Panama, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Drugs, I take it, weren't the...we weren't thinking in terms of major military support for suppression of drugs at this point?

BRINTNALL: Not at that point. We were just beginning to look at it but it wasn't the issue that it was seven or eight years later.

Q: Was there a willingness to work with this or was there a certain reluctance on the part of the Department of Defense in getting involved into the messy business of drugs?

BRINTNALL: There was a reluctance.

ROBERT A. STEVENSON
Country Director of Mexico
Washington, DC (1971-1974)

Ambassador Robert A. Stevenson was born in 1918 and graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1938 with a bachelor's degree in commerce. He subsequently joined the U.S. Navy Supply Corps in the

Pacific Theater. Ambassador Stevenson's Foreign Service career included positions in Washington, DC, Germany, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, and an ambassadorship to Malawi. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

STEVENSON: Emilio Rabasa was the Mexican Foreign Minister, a very likeable guy who had studied in the States and used to come up here and talk to Charlie Meyer. We could always talk to the Mexicans, that's for sure, and the Mexican ambassador, Juan José DeOllogui, and I became very good friends. They were always very frank, though, where they disagreed with us. The principal area at that time was the salinity question. On drugs, they were cooperating pretty well.

Dick Kleindienst, the Attorney General who got in trouble, got along well with the Mexican Attorney General, and took a great interest in the drug problem. I went down with Kleindienst and a group from his shop to Ciudad Juárez for delivery of some planes to the Mexicans to help them in their effort to control marijuana and heroin at that time, poppy-growing and marijuana. The Mexicans had confiscated a huge pile of marijuana, a great heap of the stuff, and the culmination of the whole visit was going to be the burning of that pile.

TERRENCE GEORGE LEONHARDY

**Consul General
Guadalajara (1972-1973)**

Terrence George Leonhardy was born in North Dakota in 1914. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of North Dakota he received his master's degree from Louisiana State University. His career includes positions in Colombia, Denmark, Spain, Mexico, and El Salvador. Mr. Leonhardy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Could you talk about... You were Consul General. Could you talk a bit about the problems you had and how you dealt with them with these medical students?

LEONHARDY: Well, the medical students, they were mostly... For instance, I can give you one good example: this one boy's father was a doctor in New York and the kid got in trouble with drugs or something and the Guadalajara University actually expelled him, I think. Then he calls me and raises hell, you know, about his kid getting kicked out of school and I said, "Well, you have to take that up with the university authorities. Then he said, "What do we got you down there for?" and all that type of stuff. "I'm a taxpayer."

Then I remember one time a bunch of them came to my door on a Sunday afternoon and one of them had been bitten by a rabid dog and they couldn't leave the country because their visas or their permits to stay in Mexico would expire if they went back into the States. I said, "Well, get your rabies vaccination here, get treated here." "Well, we don't like that type of treatment here. They have a new medicine in the States that we want."

And I said, "Well, if you're that anxious to get to the States and get treatment, I'd call our consul in Brownsville or I'd call the duty officer at our consulate and tell him to call Brownsville and arrange for you guys to cross over, or for somebody to come over to give you this special vaccination that you think you have to have." And I gave them the name of the duty officer, and so forth and they never went back. But they just rap on your door. I think they were on drugs myself, that was my feeling.

Q: This was the height of the American involvement in drugs, wasn't it, of youth?

LEONHARDY: Well, that was one of our major problems down there. When I was down there we had six states where we had more Americans, not only retiree types or older people but youth coming down there, especially in the summertime. Under Mexican law, if you were found even with a marijuana cigarette, you were accused of use and possession and charged immediately. Within seventy-two hours they either decided you were innocent or guilty and they'd throw you in the tank and you'd be there for a year, maybe, before you ever got out. It was a real problem for the Mexicans because, you know, they had to feed these people - meager rations, of course, but anyway they had to take care of them.

Some boy scout from Keokuk, Iowa, gets in jail, he never did anything wrong in his life and all of the sudden he's in a Mexican jail. And the same thing, we'd get piles of correspondence on each case. They'd get to their Congressman then you had the three day reply rule; you had to get back that you were investigating. Then you have to send in a new report, you know. So I decided that the way around this was to get the Mexicans in bed with me on this and I went around, I made a very intensive effort to become friendly with the mayors, with the governors, with the chiefs of police in the bigger cities, and with the prosecutors and the whole thing in the six states. I spent a lot of time on the road. I'd bring one of our younger officers with me and I preached the same sermon to all of these people. I said, "They're a problem for you and they're a problem for me." And I said, "The one way to resolve it is as soon as you pick up some young kid..." Most of these kids were innocent kids; they just come down there, and they think, "Well, we can do this in Mexico. Nobody's going to bother us." And all of the sudden they're in big trouble. And I said, "Then you bring charges against them and they languish in your jails for a year and you have to go through all these problems, and I have to go through them too." And I say, "The best way to resolve this for both of us is for you to just turn them over to your immigration authorities and have them kicked out as undesirables." They said, "Gee, that's a great idea." When I left Mexico, I think, maybe there were six people in jail in the six states in my consular district out of a hundred eighty-five around Mexico. But I also said, "If you catch some of these people involved in the trade, you know, throw the book at them. We don't like those people any more than you like them." So that's another type of problem.

Q: Who would be threatening or where did you feel the danger was coming from?

LEONHARDY: Well, the local police just said, "We've had some indications that some of these people want to do something to you." They never did come out with any particular...

Q: Well, I can think of two groups - one would be the drug people. I'm talking about the... And the other would be the anti-American extreme leftists.

LEONHARDY: Right, right. Getting back to that, we had a DEA office...

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency office.

LEONHARDY: And two of these fellows were very good friends of mine and we used to do a lot of bird shooting together. They had assignments in the States and then come to Mexico and one of them said, "When I first got there," he says, "I can't wait to get out of this place because it's so dangerous."

He said, "You know, they're all over the place." He told me about an experience he had when he first got to Guadalajara. He said, "Nobody knows who I am." And he went out to a bar which had a motel connected with it, out on the main highway, where a lot of tourists come in and out. This was also a hangout for big drug dealers. He knew that from intelligence, of course. He went out there, he says, "Nobody knows me. I'm going to go in the bar and just sniff it out." So he goes up and has a drink and he hadn't been there more than five minutes and one of these drug guys came up to him and told him what his name was. They said, "We understand you just arrived."

Anyway, both of them told me about raids that they would go on. They didn't participate actually in the raids, they would sit out in a car and wait until the local federal police went in and raided these places. Then they told me about how a lot of these people were paying off and just all of the sudden let them go, you know. "Oh, you belong to... Oh, go ahead." So they had the feeling that they were getting nowhere. One of the problems I had with this whole thing... We used to have these consular meeting up in Mexico city - consular get-togethers with consuls from all over - and I brought it up and I was very unpopular for having brought it up but I said, "What if an American is a drug dealer. He gets involved down here. My DEA guys tell me about the horrible torture these people go through. They use a cattle prod on them; they use all kinds of electric shocks and everything else on them." And I said, "We, as American consular officers, have to see that their rights are observed under Mexican law." All I got from our female consul general at the Embassy at the time was, "Go to the Generals and tell them not to be so mean." Anyway, I said, "One of these days, we're going to get somebody who gets involved in drugs - some American - who's going to have good connections in the States and all hell's going to break loose when the word gets out that they've been tortured." And so, just before I left Guadalajara, that actually happened. We had a young fellow who had influence and he was involved in drug trade - American - and they grabbed him and my DEA guys told me about the torture that this guy was going through. And we get a letter from a Congressman, from the State Department, an inquiry from a Congressman, and he'd gotten a letter out of the jail, he snuck it out some way and got it to his mother

who went to the Congressman and we get the three day report. "We understand this is happening." I had a very good second man at the consulate at the time, that I'd served with before.

Q: Who was that?

LEONHARDY: Ernie Gutierrez, one of the visa officers. You may have... Ernie went over and talked to the head government official who the consulates knew was involved in payoffs and stuff; and he got very upset that we should be protesting this thing. And I sent two reports up to the Embassy; one was unclassified saying we went to the top man and he says they're not doing it - denies it, you know. Then I sent a classified report up telling what we think really happened and I said, "You decide up in Washington what you want to tell the Congressman." But anyway, just before I was grabbed down there, the governor who was a very straight guy, I will always be convinced, a nice guy.

Q: Who was that?

LEONHARDY: His name was Arosco Romero. I used to see him a number of times and I had this conversation with him one day and he said, "If you ever hear about any of my people, you know, or officials around here, getting involved in drugs, I'd appreciate it if you could tell me." And I came home and told my wife about that and she said, "Oh, God, don't get involved." But about that time we had a consular conference up in Mexico City and we had a Deputy Assistant Secretary named Bob Hurwitz came down and he said, "Your marching orders now are, you've got to get involved in drugs - in stamping out drugs." And I said, "What about the DEA? That's what they're supposed to do. They're getting paid; those guys know what they're doing." "No, everybody's got to get involved." So one of these DEA guys told me one day, he said, "You know, we were in on a raid - we were waiting outside on a raid - and they went into this place, right near where I live, in a very fashionable area of the city, and they had all this marijuana stacked and classified like coffee, you know, high grown, middling, and so forth, and prices and money lying all over the place. They grabbed about five guys, the Mexicans did, and one of them happened to be a candidate for the government party for congress, the PRI. As soon as they found out who he was, they just let him go. I told the governor about this, and my wife just had a fit. She said, "Oh, God."

Q: Who was the Ambassador at this time?

LEONHARDY: The Ambassador was, I'm trying to think of his name, he was a career man, well, I'll think of it [Editor: Ambassador Robert McBride]. Anyway, he had turned the... When I had been in the Embassy before, we had a supervising Counsel for Consular Affairs, and he ran herd on all the consulates both on consular policy and administrative studies, and then, I think, they abolished that job or something, but then they turned the responsibilities over to the DCM [Editor: DCM in 1973 was Robert Dean]. Then when I got there, the Administrative Counselor - for whom I had very little respect - was in charge of this thing.

Q: Who was he?

LEONHARDY: I'll think of his name [Editor: Victor Dikeos]. But anyway, he later became head of Security in the Department of State, which was really amazing. But anyway, the Guadalajara consulate had two old cars. When I'd been in Salvador, the Ambassador and I used to change cars all the time. We never had one that looked alike. But down in Guadalajara, we had two old black Plymouths, always giving us maintenance problems and you couldn't switch from one car to another because they were both alike, you know. So we were easily singled-out, you know, going up and down the street. But getting back to this drug thing, I did inform the Governor about this incident and my wife, as I say, was upset, worried that the drug people would get at me.

Anyway, the next day, in the afternoon, our DEA guys had been working with the local police on a demonstration project to show the locals what the dangers of drugs were. They had a big exhibit down in the main police station and I went down to that. I should precede that by saying that I kept agitating about these cars. I also agitated about getting a driver because I had to go to all these functions downtown in the city and I'd have to spend a half hour looking for a parking place and all this stuff. We had a very inefficient administrative officer and the embassy told him we could hire a chauffeur so he hired one of the guards in the consulate who claimed to have had chauffeuring experience. But the first two or three days I had him, I was just nervous all the time I was driving with this guy; he obviously didn't have - if he had any experience, he'd forgotten it all. Anyway, that day, I went down to this police station. This was on the fourth of May; the next day, Friday, was a big Mexican holiday, Cinco de Mayo. I went down to the police station to participate and be there for the opening of this big exhibit. I went with the chauffeur and then he drove me back to the consulate and I said to myself, "I don't want to drive anymore with him." So I dismissed him for the day and I drove home. I'd invited these consular officers from the other areas of Mexico to a reception over at the house and I had it all set up. My wife had worked on it before she left and had it all set up.

DIANE DILLARD
Consular Officer
Monterrey (1972-1974)

Diane Dillard was born and raised in Dallas, Texas. She joined the Foreign Service in and served in Greece, Mexico, the U.K., and Lebanon. She was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: What was the situation consular-wise in Monterrey?

DILLARD: The post was there to do consular work. There was an economic/commercial officer. There were drug enforcement agents located there, as well as a legal attaché, but it all had to do with things which are consular, like drugs and criminals and all those tasks we deal with.

RICHARD SMITH

**Agriculture Department
Mexico (1972-1974)**

Richard Smith was born in Cuba in 1935. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. His career included positions in Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and Washington D.C. Mr. Smith was interviewed by Thad Smith in 1989.

Q: So you had no problem in convincing them of the importance of agriculture.

SMITH: Quite the opposite. They, particularly in Mexico, knew the importance of it. The key there was getting their confidence that you could handle the issues properly. And I think that probably continues today in Mexico - agriculture is so key there.

Q: I'm wondering because of your relative rank, et cetera, and I assume you were more involved in diplomatic and representational activities there than you had been, for example, in Bogota.

SMITH: Oh, yes. We were constantly accompanying either the ambassador or DCM to meetings with other cabinet officers in Mexico involving agriculture. I just recalled drugs was a big thing at the time and there was a major effort to try to substitute crops for drugs or work on various aspects of that. I got very heavily involved in that with the attorney-general office in Mexico and with the ambassador. So there was just a constant involvement.

**FREDERICK H. SACKSTEDER
International Boundary and Water Commission
Texas (1972-1975)
Consul General
Mexico (1975-1979)**

Frederick H. Sacksteder was born in New York in 1924. He received his bachelor's degree at Amherst College and served in the US Navy during World War II. His career included positions in Germany, France, Spain, Tunisia, and Mexico. Mr. Sacksteder was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: What about criminal activities other than.... At that time this was drug smuggling, we're not talking about something that developed later with big drug lords and all of that?

SACKSTEDER: No, this is petty drug smuggling. There were other cases. We had at least two or three cases of homicide, one of them involved a woman. I don't recall but there must have been some cases of assault, robbery, or burglary but the vast majority of the cases were indeed narcotics.

CHARLES ANTHONY GILLESPIE, JR.
Supervisory General Services Officer
Mexico City (1972-1975)
Executive Assistant, Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1981-1985)

Ambassador Charles Anthony Gillespie, Jr. was born in California in 1935. He received a B.A. from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1958. After serving in the military for four years, he joined the State Department in 1965. His career posts include the Philippines, Indonesia, Belgium, Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile and Washington, DC. Ambassador Gillespie was interviewed in 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy

Q: What had you been told about the job before you went to Mexico City? You always "pick up" both official and corridor gossip about both the job and what you really were expected to do.

GILLESPIE: Well, Mexico was hot stuff in the administrative area, for two reasons. Earlier, we had all thought that people like Tom Stern former Assistant Secretary of State for Administration and some others in the administrative area were modern managers. The concept of an Executive Administrative Counselor had arisen. It had first really come to the fore in Thailand, at some point in the 1960s, where you had the Ambassador, the Deputy Chief of Mission, and a huge mission below them. We picked up, as I characterized it, a little bit of the British Head of Chancery idea. This was a third-ranking person or almost co-equal with the second-ranking person. However, his or her job at the time was certainly the administrative management of the mission, so that the Deputy Chief of Mission could really concentrate on managing substantive affairs and inter-agency problems related to policy and diplomatic or other kinds of operations.

I guess that this system had just been imposed in Mexico in the late 1960s, which, at least without the military, was about on a par with the Embassy in Bangkok in terms of size and complexity. In addition to the Embassy itself there were these nine constituent posts, with tremendous immigrant and non-immigrant visa issuing responsibilities. There were also other agencies in Mexico, such as what was then the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs [BNDD] and which has since become the Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA]. There were other agencies represented in Mexico as well. Our mission in Mexico is unique because of Mexico's proximity to the United States and the nature of our activities there.

Q: Good. Were you there in Mexico when Ambassador Jova's son was arrested on a drug charge - in London, I believe? This was the time when young kids were doing this sort of thing. I have heard, and I have no evidence of this, that Ambassador Jova had been giving the DEA a difficult time in Mexico. There was some notion that the DEA was paying him back. Does this...?

GILLESPIE: John Jova was not pleased with U.S. anti-narcotics policy. There was no doubt about that. He was concerned about the heavy-handed, police type things that were going on. I know that he had a lot of confidence in what the FBI was doing in Mexico and the way they operated. I think that he had a degree of confidence in the Central Intelligence Agency and the way they operated. He did not trust the BNDD Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, later the DEA Drug Enforcement Administration type of operations. He felt that they were too heavy-handed.

Of course, this was all before the Camarena incident and the terrible things that happened. Ambassador Jova didn't know for sure but he thought that the BNDD/DEA might be joining the Mexican authorities in some of this heavily repressive activities in connection with drugs, being present at interrogations, and doing other things - which later turned out probably to have some truth in them. However, he didn't make any accusations. At his staff meetings he would say, "Is this the right thing to do? Are we doing the right thing?" regarding our policies on narcotics. We heard that story. I didn't believe it. I don't know whether it was true that, maybe, the DEA may have seen a chance to rub it in. I know that this incident involving their son affected John and Pamela Jova very deeply. They were disturbed by it. John made no great secret of this or talk about it that much. However, he didn't hide the fact that there was a problem. Their daughter came and stayed with them at the Residence for quite a while - before the incident involving her brother, and she came back and stayed with them afterwards. Like all kids, they were looking for things they might do, what they could do with their lives, and so forth.

GILLESPIE: It didn't always work both ways. The State Department was usually pretty good about letting us know what they did. The Department of Justice was horrible about matters of this kind. One of the major problems that we had with Mexico during this time was the case of Dr. Álvarez Machain. He was a gynecologist from Guadalajara. It was alleged, and I think that this was probably accurately asserted, that he was involved in keeping Enrique Camarena, an American citizen and a DEA agent serving in Mexico, alive and conscious during his interrogation by drug traffickers who had captured him. The object of the drug traffickers was to make sure that Camarena felt as much pain as possible during the time that he was being tortured by them. They eventually killed him. The drug traffickers were trying to find out whom Camarena dealt with, who his sources were, and all of that. Dr. Álvarez Machain was eventually snatched and taken to the U.S. in a way which was not coordinated formally with the Mexican Government. Eventually, he was put on trial in a U.S. court and acquitted. As of now, early in 1997, a U.S. Federal Appeals Court has ruled that he may now sue the United States authorities for improper arrest, wrongful prosecution, and a number of other things. So we haven't heard the end of this.

THOMAS M. RECKNAGEL
Senior Deputy Administrator of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Thomas M. Recknagel was born in New York in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University and later pursued his studies at the University of Virginia. Mr. Recknagel served in the U.S. Army during World War II and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His career includes positions in Israel, Germany, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Vietnam, India, Sudan, and Washington, DC. Mr. Recknagel was interviewed in 1986 by Victor Wolf, Jr.

RECKNAGEL: Mexico was another matter. The drug problem back in those days was growing by leaps and bounds, as it has continued to do ever since. Drug smugglers were a good deal less sophisticated then than they have become now. Colombia was then, as now, the primary source for drugs coming into the United States. One of the preferred means of getting those drugs into this country was to use young people who were vacationing or studying in Colombia or coming back through Colombia on their return to the United States, to get them to carry small amounts but, nevertheless, very valuable amounts of drugs into the United States with them. Initially, this worked quite well for the drug smugglers, because these kids simply weren't suspected. Later, after a few of them were discovered, our Drug Enforcement Agency people began to look into it and realized that this was a very major operation. These kids were being paid well in their terms, but nothing in terms of what the profit was for the drug dealer. As you may recall, "mules" was the term that was used for them. Many of them came through Mexico City. The place to change planes, or merely where the planes stopped coming back from Bogota was very often Mexico City.

Once it was known that there was considerable traffic of this sort going on, the question arose of how were we going to get at these people. The first thing was that these American citizens contended that when they were in the transit lounge they were immune from arrest by the local authorities. That, of course, has been fully resolved since, but it was not fully resolved at that time. Since then, it has been clearly established that there is no question that an airport transit lounge is part of the national territory of the country on which it is located, and a criminal can certainly be arrested in the transit lounge.

Q: I suppose that resolution, that legal decision, if you want to call it that, not only has implications for narcotics smuggling, but has implications for such things as terrorism.

RECKNAGEL: I should think very much so. Happily, we didn't have the terrorist problem in those days as it exists today. As soon as this decision was made, the Mexican police, with the full cooperation of our own DEA [Drug Enforcement Administration] people, moved in on these "mules," and there was quite a large number--80, 90, or more--arrests of these American kids in transit through Mexico. They were carrying significant amounts of drugs-- strong drugs, heroin, cocaine, and so forth--and were, of course, guilty under Mexican law of a very serious crime, just as under our own law.

The problem that we got involved in was a very typical consular problem. They were arrested, they were thrown into the jug, and then the question was: Were they really getting the treatment that we felt that they deserved as American citizens, or were they

being mistreated, denied basic rights, and so forth? The problems in dealing with these people were really traditional consular protection problems. The thing which makes it somewhat interesting, however, and worth noting is that it became a very real issue on the Hill. Certain congressmen, most notably one congressman, Fortney H. "Pete" Stark of California, championed these people and demanded something which was a very new concept. He argued that although they were arrested in Mexico and were guilty of crimes under Mexican law, they shouldn't be made to serve their sentences there. They were nice, clean-cut American kids, he contended, and should be allowed to come back to the United States, serve their Mexican sentences here, and under conditions which we would consider humane. Stark, at least, did not consider the conditions in the Mexican prisons very humane. As far as I know, this was the first time such a concept had been broached. We brought into it also some Americans who were in Turkish jails, also on charges of drug smuggling, also convicted in that country.

Although the matter was not resolved more than partially during my time in SCA, it was subsequently resolved both in the case of these kids in the Mexican jails and in the case of at least one of the Americans in Turkey. The decision was made that they could come back here. This was the point at issue: Could our American courts recognize a conviction in a foreign country? Could we put an American citizen in prison to serve a sentence which he had been given in a foreign court under foreign law? There was the question, first of all, whether we could even do this, that an American citizen should be subjected to this. Secondly, how would you do it? In other words, would there have to be a court order here, or how could it be handled? Finally, would we accept the same sentence? Would we have a new trial here? The decision was made that, basically, yes, if the person agreed that he would serve the sentence here, or that he would at least go into a period of probation equivalent to that in which his sentence would have required him to remain in jail in the foreign country, and if the foreign country would agree to release him on those terms, then we would take him back here and the states and local authorities would provide the necessary supervision. How this has worked out, I cannot answer. I simply know this was the point that we reached when I left SCA. Indeed, through your own experiences, you may know cases subsequent. But that was the point that we reached there. It was very interesting.

Q: The only thing I know about that is that the big issue in negotiating with the Mexicans and the Turks and other countries where this issue came up, was how to persuade the foreign governments to accept what really was a derogation of their own sovereignty.

RECKNAGEL: Absolutely.

Q: These people like Stark and others on the Hill or elsewhere who were taking the side of these young people, were they ever prepared to discuss with you or address the issue of the whole concept of drug control, drug enforcement, or did they simply try to keep themselves separate from that?

RECKNAGEL: To my mind--and I'm a little bit prejudiced against Stark; I found him particularly annoying and the way they were playing it to be annoying--they made it an

emotional issue. They would get some kid who had been arrested, an attractive, young college girl, and they'd get her family and these weeping letters that she would write to the family, and the family imploring us to do something to save their daughter, to bring her back. It was played much too much on that basis, to my mind, and I believe that I can say accurately that our own drug enforcement people within the Department, with whom I was dealing at that time, particularly Sheldon Vance, who was the Assistant to the Secretary on Drug Enforcement Problems, felt very much the same way, that they were detracting from, rather than contributing to, the basic effort.

JOSEPH J. JOVA
Ambassador
Mexico (1973-1977)

Ambassador Joseph J. Jova was born in New York in 1916. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. In addition to serving in Mexico, Ambassador Jova served in Iraq, Morocco, Portugal, Chile, and was ambassador to Honduras and the Organization of American States. Ambassador Jova was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: Before you went there Henry Kissinger was still the National Security Adviser. What was your feeling, because obviously this was not a routine assignment, about the interest of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger who were two very major players--both through ability and interest in world affairs. When you were going out did you get any, either discussions with them, or emanations from them about what they wanted from you?

JOVA: One thing, and one thing only. The drug problem, narcotics. There was also an acute demoralization in the U.S. government. Nobody knew what was going to happen in the presidency. Kissinger himself was affected, he was trying to maintain things on an even keel. My secretary was seconded probably for a period of a couple of months, or six weeks, to be one of Kissinger's secretaries, and she told me it was kind of horrifying the things she heard in that short period between Kissinger and the White House, and Kissinger's remarks about the then President Nixon.

Q: You were talking about American prisoners and the participation of the DEA people. And you were saying that you'd worked with the DEA, warning them not to get involved.

JOVA: I think I was a source of strength. I had access to them at any time, the Foreign Minister of course, but the Minister of Justice, Director General or whoever it was that was in charge of the drug problem. And I think we did great things collaborating together as a country team, and the ambassador is a very important part of it. But the mistreatment of Americans, sometimes it was unintentional. The jails were no good and in some places the jailers were mean. In other cases there were interrogations but we were in no way condoning torture, or illegal methods of interrogation.

I paid for it later. I'm not going to go into it here, but there was a resentment on this particular thing that perhaps caused me trouble.

Q: On this television interview, did a question come up about that?

JOVA: This interview was almost suspicious, I realize now. "There must be something good about this approach, about their being arrested, and imprisoned. Can't you come up with one good thing that flows from this?" This is after an hour. "Yes, I suppose if even one single person is dissuaded and discouraged from participating in the drug trade which is such a terrible thing. Its affecting the whole social fabric of the country. In that case, I suppose you could say yes, something good has come of it." "That's fine, that's just what I want." The interview finished. "Thank you very much"

Q: What about the prisoner situation? When you got there, and while you were there, did you find that you might say the enforcement side was the predominant side? Because there's this terrible dichotomy between the enforcement side, and we want to stop drugs, punish the people. And the other one is protecting the Americans.

JOVA: For the Mexicans this was an easy way, a cheap way. "We're strong on the drug war. We got these Americans at the airport ranging from young people, to grandmothers sometimes." Some American kids are so dumb they bring marijuana into Mexico to smoke during the two days they're going to be in Tijuana, knowing this is a paradise, and then get caught. Some were the couriers coming from Latin America with cocaine, for instance, and just transiting the airport. But rather than going after the real drug lords that were organizing the heroin trade, they would go after the marijuana stuff, and the cocaine that was brought from elsewhere, and yes, they'd collaborate on the heroin too, but they couldn't show statistics. That really wasn't affecting them in any way. Now, once this guy got captured the temptation was to get as much information as they could, in some cases very violently; and in some cases they were just badly treated in the jails. If you didn't have somebody to give you food, you didn't get food; or you had to get a good cell or you'd be sleeping out in the courtyard. But at the same time we must recognize that in many of the jails they were better off than they were here. Some jails were very nice, all wallpapered and that sort of thing, for women and for men also.

Now, my work also was with the Foreign Ministry, as well as with the enforcers. The enforcers didn't want to talk about it. "You're insulting, you're driving us crazy and here we have results, and this is the way a Mexican would be treated too." I remember the Foreign Ministry saying, "This is embarrassing. I can just see the embarrassment for this government, on a civil rights violation because this is really a human rights...these individual cases are interpreted as violations of human rights." In some cases they're no-goods, other times they may be no-goods but they come from good families, and that means they're related or they have access to the Congressman or the Senators, and that's why we're being driven crazy. And there are headlines in the U.S. press all the time, and the Department is getting all these complaints, and we're being pressed by members of Congress. Well, the law is the law.

Q: How did you find your dealings with the Drug Enforcement Agency? In the first place what control did you have over them as far as their participation in interrogations and things like that?

JOVA: They did their own housekeeping, and they sent down one of the big senior persons in it. How long it has lasted, I don't know, but at that time I said, "No, we can't put ourselves in the position where we're accused of something that goes against the U.S. constitution, and to say publicly that we can get information here that we can't under our system." So that was that. Later on I'll speak personally.

Q: Moving on, what about another problem that I'm sure must have been with you all the time, immigration?

JOVA: Oh, yes. At that time it got quite acrimonious because a Marine General had been appointed commissioner of immigration, and he wanted results. This was back in '74. "And we'll send them back by God." So for a while it was terrible to see these planes coming in; buses sometimes; but a lot of the time a plane; and all the passengers would get off; and then this little huddled group that had been returned with their little possessions, old rags and a few little...it really made a terrible public relations image, if you want to look at it that way. Here they had gone up there to work, and they'd been sent back--some of them after having lived there a long time, and some of them just captured. And, of course, the Mexican press played it up, and the Mexican government played on that greatly. It's a law of supply and demand. As long as there's a demand for it here, and actually its applicable to drugs also--as long as there's a demand for it here somebody is going to be producing it if the price is high enough. As a Mexican said, "I never saw a diving board without a swimming pool." And, of course, this is what we're facing now. I think education...just as we've turned people off about smoking tobacco. I'm not going to enter into that thing, whether it should be legalized or not.

HERBERT THOMPSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Mexico (1975-1978)

Herbert Thompson was born in California in 1923. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946, Mr. Thompson finished his bachelor's degree at the University of California. His career included positions in Spain, Bolivia, Argentina, Panama, Chile, and Mexico. Mr. Thompson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 1996.

Q: During your period there was it evident that Mexico was being used as a drug conduit to the U.S.?

THOMPSON: I think the Mexican role was more as a producer than a conduit at that time. Mexico of course was producing huge amounts of marijuana and was also cultivating other narcotic products, but it was not at that time a significant way station to the United States. I remember the drug problem was a major problem that we had

to keep an eye on because it, and our problem of Americans in Mexican jails on drug charges, were two areas Ambassador Jova asked me to be responsible for immediately [upon my arrival], since when one wasn't driving us crazy, the other was.

MICHAEL MAHONEY
Consular Officer, Consular Bureau
Washington, DC (1978-1979)

Michael Mahoney was born in Massachusetts in 1944. He received a bachelor's degree from Saint Michaels College in 1966 and later a master's degree in American studies from the University of Wyoming. Mr. Mahoney served in Liberia with the Peace Corps. In 1971, he joined the Foreign Service, serving in Trinidad and Tobago, Greece, the Dominican Republic, Italy, and Washington, DC. Mr. Mahoney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

MAHONEY: Again, I'll give you an example. By the middle of the 1970s, there were 600 Americans in jail in Mexico, most of them for drug violations. This was the direct result of a very intense application of American pressure to the Mexicans to do something about the drug trade. The Mexicans found that the best way of doing this was not necessarily to arrest their own people, but to arrest a bunch of Americans, virtually all of whom, by the way, were certainly guilty. Four hundred of the 600 were from the State of California, most of them the children of middle- and upper-middle-class parents, kids who thought it was a lark to carry six or eight kilograms of heroin or something else, for which they'd get paid \$10,000 to \$20,000, and were very unhappy when they were caught at the airport or someplace else like this and put in a Mexican jail for 25 years with no chance of parole.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Staff Secretariat, Narcotics Program Officer for Mexico
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well, then you moved over to the part of the secretariat that was dealing with, what? With criminal activities?

ALEXANDER: No, at that time it was strictly narcotics. It was an office that was created in response to Mexican brown heroin. Vietnam was over, the war had ended a year or two before, but a lot of the GIs came back with a habit and drugs were just running rampant. I'm not blaming the GIs coming back from Vietnam, but it was part of the phenomena. Drugs were found everywhere, or were being used to a degree on a scale that no one ever imagined, and all of a sudden we woke up to the fact that most of these drugs, almost all of them, were being manufactured outside the United States and imported into the country, and someone said, maybe we ought to start looking at this as a diplomatic problem as well as an enforcement issue. This office was set up to advise the Secretary and to coordinate with foreign governments to the extent that such things were being done in the time when possible assistance, aid, and the idea was to raise the issue from one of strictly legal and criminal to a diplomatic, political level. So, and Mexico was probably the catalyst, because most of the heroin that was coming into the U.S. was from Mexico. We were having so many border problems, so this office was set up. It expanded while I was there, in fact became a bureau shortly before I left.

Q: You were there from when to when?

ALEXANDER: I was there from February or March of 1978 until January of 1980; almost two years.

Q: What sort of things was your office concentrating on at that time? I mean, say, with Mexico?

ALEXANDER: I was the program officer for Mexico. That was by far the largest overseas drug program we had. We were funding the program to the tune of some \$80 million, which, in 1978, was a staggering amount of money. We were essentially trying to eradicate the poppy fields and, to a lesser extent, the marijuana fields. It was the marijuana eradication that got most of the attention because we were using an herbicide called paraquat that started the paraquat scare across college campuses in the U.S. and became quite the issue of the day. I don't think there was a week that went by that there wasn't a story in The Washington Post or The New York Times suggesting that the youth of America were being poisoned by paraquat on their marijuana. We were sued by a group called NORML which was the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws. I was interviewed by everybody from Rolling Stone magazine to the Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. It was rather amusing in a way. Our principle project was eradicating the poppy fields. We, the State Department, got involved in something which we had never done before. We essentially built an air force comprised of helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. We pioneered new aerial spraying techniques. We paid the Agriculture Department to do experiments with different types of herbicides. We were looking to have minimal environmental impacts, minimal health impacts. We were paying certain agencies to develop programs that we could use to spot cultivation of drug crops from the air, and a lot of this stuff was brand new. The technology didn't exist and I find it interesting to look at what we do today in Colombia and realize that hey, you know, you're responsible for the program that's in place there, you know, you and your

colleagues pioneered this stuff and you know, it's been refined over the years but the basic program was started back then.

Q: How did you come up with these programs? I mean, just a small group sitting around saying hey, we got to figure out a way to do this? Could you contract this? How did you operate?

ALEXANDER: Basically as you just suggested. We were a very small group, a handful of people who didn't really know much about this field. We had some old, and I don't mean old age-wise; well, yes, actually they were older than me, I was a kid, I was in my 20s, these guys were in their 40s and 50s. We had some old AID public safety types who were onboard with us and we had some liaison officers from DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) from Customs. But basically, a handful of people sit around a table and say, "well, you know, how are we going to approach this problem and what are we going to do?" There were so few of us, and this was so new, that despite my being at the time an old FS5, which today would be an FS3-

Q: Yes, which would be defined by, let's say a captain.

ALEXANDER: Yes, maybe something like that, yes, around that level, I'm not sure a captain, between a captain and a major maybe, or something. The point is, I was pretty doggone junior— especially so when you consider that, I mean, Secretary Vance called me down to his office and the two of us sat there and I ran through what I was doing, what my program was doing, with the secretary of state. And anyone who knows the State Department knows that FS3s, in today's grading system, don't sit down with the Secretary of State one-on-one for more than five seconds. To sit there for a half an hour or an hour, just you and the Secretary was, I think, well, it was a reflection of just how small the office was, but also how concerned he was. I even got a note from the president once. I did some night reading on something, I can't remember the issue, but I got back a nice little note from President Carter saying keep up the good work. Again, I was an FS3; FS3s don't get personal notes from the president. They don't have, again, one-on-ones with the Secretary, but I did. I took a chance when I went into this office because it was a new office. It wasn't a geographic bureau. My friends, my contemporaries, said no, no, it's too out of mainstream, this drug thing, you're going to ruin your career and blah, blah, blah. I shared those concerns, but I also saw it as an opportunity to get involved in something on the ground level; something that I sensed was going to get bigger rather than smaller; more important rather than less important. It was a gamble, particularly in those days where, again, the State Department was still pretty traditionally tied to political reporting, economic reporting. You serve in Europe and you do this kind of stuff but you don't do drugs and you don't do global issues and population, environment; those were just not things to do. I'm glad I did it because I think that's where my career began to separate from those that I came into the service with.

Q: What was the Mexican response to what we were trying to do?

ALEXANDER: I felt that the response was astoundingly positive. The degree of cooperation with the Mexicans, when I compare it to the relationship between the two countries today, was absolutely first class. The Mexicans took this issue as seriously as we did. They threw resources at it. Yes, there was corruption on their side, but they tried to assign elite units to the problem to go out and actually eradicate the poppy fields manually where we couldn't do it with the helicopters, and round up the traffickers. My day-to-day contact was the assistant attorney general of Mexico, who was a young guy not much older than me. In fact, the Mexicans and the Americans in the embassy used to tease us, because we even looked a little bit alike. We had a great, great relationship. Fernando Viesa is his name. His boss, the attorney general, was the same way. He would fly out with us on the helicopters and see what we were doing and we even got shot down once.

Q: What happened?

ALEXANDER: We were flying over a poppy field, I think it was in Sinaloa Province... I'm pretty sure it was Sinaloa Province. I flew out so many times that I can't remember every trip, but a couple of guys popped up out of nowhere as we were hovering over one of these fields and started unloading their weapons, discharging their weapons, firing at us. They put some rounds into the helicopter and we had to come down with a hard landing. There was a nasty little firefight that ensued, during which two or three people were killed. Anyway, for the Mexicans it was dangerous work. They did get killed, but I think they were as committed to it as we were. What happened over the years; the mutual recriminations and things, may have contributed in large part to where we are now. I'm not saying that the Mexicans don't cooperate, but the trafficking part doesn't seem to have improved. The production side has. To the best of my knowledge the Mexicans aren't in the business anymore, or certainly not on the scale that they were of producing brown heroin.

Q: How were relations with the DEA and the enforcement agencies? Frequently the DEA wants to go in and do things in a foreign country to which the foreign country says "wait a minute, don't you do it, we'll do it ourselves." There's this built-in tension, but at this point, how did you find it?

ALEXANDER: The tension existed then. The dynamic wasn't much different than it is today, I would imagine, but I think attitudes were different. There really was a feeling in those days that America was at war, that we were drowning in drugs. It was a national epidemic and people were afraid, they were frightened. There was a sense in government that we had to address this and we had to win this war or it would be the death of us, literally. I don't know whether it was the Carter administration or not, but the personalities, while strong, were not combative. I would have to go back and ask the person who became assistant secretary what her sense was, but my recollection was that we had very good inter-agency cooperation, DEA, CIA, Pentagon, all the folks involved. I mean, we had our occasional turf battles, sure, and there were missteps. You know, the DEA was an enforcement agency and they had to go and get the bad guys and things, sometimes things happened and the Mexicans would get upset but we usually would

defend the DEA and my recollection was, more often than not, they behaved appropriately and if they stepped on a few toes they weren't stepping on our toes and they were to be defended. So I would say that the cooperation was good and the relationship was good.

Q: Well, the businessman's cocaine, a couple sniffs had replaced the three martini luncheon.

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes. In fact, that's a good example. The cocaine phenomena, which came out of this marijuana thing, was more of an '80s problem than it was a '70s problem, but it was part of the same dynamic. There were a heck of a lot of people out there doing drugs and they were concerned about the quality of their supply. A lot of the people who were smoking marijuana— again, these weren't the throwaway people.

STANLEY ZUCKERMAN
Counselor, Public Affairs
Mexico City (1978-1983)

Mr. Zuckerman was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and educated at the University of Wisconsin. After service in the US Army, followed by newspaper reporting and a position with the Governor of Wisconsin, he joined the USIA Foreign Service in 1965. He subsequently served as Information, Press and Public Affairs Counselor in Congo, Belgium, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. He also had several senior level assignments in Washington at USIA and the State Department. Mr. Zuckerman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: OK, you were there from '78 until when?

ZUCKERMAN: 1983. It was my longest time at a post, and in retrospect the greatest opportunity I had had in my career to effect changes in perceptions in a complicated country. It was a time of great change in Mexico, in which there was great admiration for our democracy, as well as a strong underlying historical animosity. My time there spanned much of the terms of three ambassadors.

The Mexican relationship was becoming so important; oil and immigration, trade and drugs were major bilateral issues. There were so many issues that Lucey suggested that a meeting be held in Washington with the agencies that had interests and responsibilities for aspects of our relationship with Mexico. He went up there and he called me and said: "You want to know what happened when I walked into that room? There were 70 people there. Virtually every agency of the U.S. government had some part of this."

Q: I would have thought that American prisoners in Mexican jails, I mean there was a reverse side, but speaking strictly from the American side, yes there has always been a real problem for us because you know, an awful lot of people get caught in drug things and all. A lot of young people get caught in the system, and it is a difficult system to play

with, the legal system, you know, who do you pay off or not and how you are treated and then you are kind of left on your own once you are in jail.

ZUCKERMAN: Well there were more Mexicans by far in American jails than there were Americans in Mexican jails. Partly for the reasons you mentioned, there were extra judicial means of avoiding a prison sentence in Mexico, at least to a greater extent than might have been true in the U.S. But in that and on other issues, Lucey was of great help to the Mexicans in explaining to them how bilateral issues could be managed. He liked to do it without getting involved with the Mexican proclivity to shout first and negotiate afterwards.

ZUCKERMAN: There was one issue I had some flak on from Washington because of a decision we made when formulating the country plan. Drugs were a problem then as they are now in Mexico, but the Mexicans were most worried about marijuana because their kids were using it, and less worried about the cocaine and about poppies. We had very quietly gotten an agreement with the Mexican government in which we gave them planes and worked together so we would identify targets for their planes to spread crop destroying chemicals. I think it was a very quiet agreement that never appeared in the Mexican press, and the level of bilateral cooperation on drugs was never discussed lest it stir nationalistic protests. We were under pressure from Washington to have a major drug information program, but we thought better of it, that public information at that time on that issue would make it more difficult for Mexicans to maintain the kind of cooperation they were giving us. Because there was so much conflict in so many other areas, we thought that if this was working, we should leave well enough alone; leave it up to the Mexicans to educate their kids not to use drugs. That was the principal thrust of USIS anti-drug operations, to try to build resistance within that society to the use of drugs by their own kids, which was an inevitable by-product once they started producing them, as happened in Brazil. There we got governors' wives organized in each state's anti drug campaigns. But we didn't do it in Mexico. Later on, as things really became bad, I am sure that the post had to start waging the kind of anti drug campaign that we waged elsewhere, but hopefully with the cooperation of the Mexican authorities.

Our country plan raised eyebrows on another matter, because along with dealing with immigration, trade, economic and political relations, we also identified a program activity that others thought too broad, too much of an amorphous catch-all. But we defended it because we thought it was at the heart of our contentious relationship with Mexico, and that was mutual misconceptions about each others' society, history, and motives. There were things which happened in America which were read by Mexicans in a way totally different than how we read it, and the same was true as to how we read Mexican events. We felt that the way to deal with that was in creating programs that were fully bi-national in conception, participation and execution. In other words we wouldn't just program to Mexicans, but would act as intermediaries in bringing Mexicans and Americans together, as we did with the press, as we were beginning to do with university groups. These were seminars in which ideas were exchanged between groups, rather than us lecturing to a passive audience. That is what we worked on more assiduously than anything else -- to

try to figure out a means of communicating in such a way that people felt they were on equal footing, that we were listening as well as talking.

THOMAS F. JOHNSON
Assistant Information Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1981-1984)

Thomas F. Johnson was born in Illinois and was educated at Union College and the Free University of Berlin. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967 and has served in various posts in Paraguay, Germany, Liberia, Mexico and Singapore. In Washington, DC, Johnson served in the USIA as Inspector, Deputy Director of Acquisitions and Area Personnel Officer for Europe. Mr. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: Did Mexicans cooperate in interdicting drug smuggling?

JOHNSON: There were levels of cooperation and corruption. There were some completely honest "narcs". Smuggling went both north and south and, although under funded, the Mexican customs service developed some innovative means for catching the bad guys. Admittedly sometimes the confiscated drugs quickly found their way back onto the streets. As in Paraguay, smugglers used everything from single engine puddle jumpers to four engine jets. Typically smugglers headed north with a load marijuana would file a false flight plan or no flight plan, try to fly under Mexican and US radar and land in remote areas in southwestern states. The pot would be offloaded and luxury goods or blank cassette tapes would be put aboard. Again a false flight plan or no flight plan would be filed and the airplane would head south to an airfield in northern or central Mexico. If the machine was picked up on radar by the Mexicans, a customs plane with an Aero-Mexico pilot would be scrambled to intercept the smugglers, preferably over land. Once sighted the customs plane would attempt to contact the contrabandist by radio. If that failed, it would fly alongside the smuggler and hold up a sign ordering him to land at a nearby airfield. If there was no reaction to the attempt at visual or electronic communication, the customs officers were authorized to open fire with automatic weapons. The customs officers tried to disable the smuggler's aircraft by hitting it in the engine. Since the customs officer and the Aero-Mexico pilot received a portion of the value of the recovered goods, careful marksmanship was essential to their operation. The cassette tapes, by the way, would be dubbed with music in clandestine studios and sold in Mexico.

DEA agents were always telling us about the latest tricks the smugglers employed using automobiles and trucks. For a while steering columns were a favorite hiding place for cocaine.

Q: Speaking about the south of Mexico City, Chiapas and other places, or course you in Yucatan you had the ruins and all that, but the other parts, was this sort of a blank area

for American interests? In other words, did we have many people down there other than tourists?

JOHNSON: Other than tourism, no. In fact, the most dangerous areas in Mexico were the ones where drug trafficking was going on. Yucatan, Durango and Culiacan, were hot beds of drug dealing. Young Americans who saw “Easy Rider” might conclude that they could go to Mexico with a few thousand dollars, buy cocaine, bring it back to the US and make a bundle. Accordingly they would go into a buying situation with a briefcase of money and the Mexican dealers had a choice: take the money and give them the drugs, or take the money and kill them. We had a case of two brothers who disappeared in the state of Durango. We sent a consular officer up there, and the consular officer reported that the brothers had been last seen at the end of a long canyon. The Consul General looked at the map and said, “Don’t risk it.” We never found out what happened to the brothers. They were probably dead. How many Americans died in Mexico trafficking drugs no one knows.

THEODORE WILKINSON
Deputy Political Counselor
Mexico City (1981-1984)
Chief Political Officer
Mexico City (1991-1994)

Born in Washington, DC in 1934, Theodore Wilkinson received a bachelor’s degree from Yale University and a master’s degree from George Washington University. In 1961, he joined the Foreign Service, serving in Venezuela, Sweden, Belgium, Mexico, Honduras, Brazil, and Washington, DC. Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

WILKINSON: I wanted to move on to talk about a unique issue that transcended our bilateral relationship throughout this period and yet wasn’t directly tied to the NAFTA. That was an issue on which I spent at least half of my professional time in Mexico as political counselor, and maybe the toughest political issue I’ve had to handle, and it concerned a doctor named Humberto Álvarez Machain who was believed to have been present at the murder of a DEA agent named Enrique Camarena in Mexico in 1985.

WILKINSON: An American DEA agent who was working on exposing narcotics rings in the Guadalajara area and got too close to one of them, was kidnapped and tortured and died while he was being tortured. This doctor was considered by the DEA to have been keeping Camarena alive and conscious while he was being tortured by injecting drugs - a scumbag, in the words of some other Mexican doctors that I knew. So the DEA wanted him, and they got him in 1990 by arranging for him to be kidnapped from Mexico and smuggled across the U.S. border in the trunk of a car. And they wanted him brought before justice. So he was arraigned, was held prisoner, at the request of U.S. law enforcement agencies for complicity in the murder of Enrique Camarena and brought to trial in late ’90 or early ’91. And of course, the first issue for the courts was whether the

court had jurisdiction because of the way he had been brought before the court. He had been kidnapped. Was it legal to present an accused felon after kidnapping him from foreign country, and his lawyers, hired by the Mexican embassy, argued that the proper route to proceed with a felon in another country is to ask the law enforcement agencies of that country to arrest him and then to extradite him, which of course is true. But the DEA claimed that they would never get him back that way, that they had tested the waters of that extradition and been told that no way are you ever going to extradite a Mexican citizen, so the only route left open for them to achieve justice was to kidnap him. The case was appealed and eventually went to the Supreme Court, and in July of 1992 the Supreme Court ruled in a six-to-three decision that it didn't matter how he got to the court, he could be tried because the crime was a crime against an American and U.S. courts had jurisdiction. This was over the *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) briefs submitted not only by Mexico but also by Canada, which had the same concerns about people being kidnapped and tried in the United States and caused a cry of indignation throughout not just the Americas, but the legal world were all upset about this Supreme Court decision, which appeared to ignore the provenance of a felon before the court and just turn a blind eye to the procedural aspect of the whole case.

In reaction, the Mexicans called the ambassador in immediately - I went with him - and they said, "Your DEA has to get out of the country, now. We don't want any more DEA agents in Mexico." And the ambassador said, "Yes, I can understand your sentiments, but think of the signal that you are sending to Washington. It sounds not as if you are against DEA's misconduct; it sounds as if you are against their mission here. It will sound as if you don't want any help and you don't want to prosecute drug offenders in Mexico." Of course, all of this reverberates today because it's still very much an issue. And we argued for an hour with Andrés Rosenthal, the under secretary of the Foreign Ministry, about this, and eventually, I think, the ambassador was effective in talking him into going a little bit slower and at least reflecting on the situation before they threw the DEA out. We went back to the embassy that night and reported this angry discussion, and the newspapers the next morning reported that the DEA had been thrown out of the country because the content of the *démarche* had been leaked before the *démarche* itself, which made the situation worse.

We spent the next year and a half having weekly visits with Washington trying to save the DEA in Mexico, to change the rules of the game under which they operated, to rein them in, to make them more accountable, to curtail their freedom of action in the country, but to save their right to operate in Mexico, and in the end we negotiated new rules of the game which, I suspect, the DEA promptly threw in their desk and ignored, because it was very hard to tell them anything. But we did succeed in keeping them in the country. The Mexicans were still angry, and because of the fact that they had not achieved anything decisive in the area of retaliation against the DEA for illegal acts in Mexico, they went to international organizations and introduced a resolution in the UN asking for an international study of the issue, which we tried to block and failed to block, and the study was commissioned.

This work was so consuming that the entire Political Section was involved in various aspects of it, but we got a superior honor award, a group section, for having done what we did, which was partially successful. And of course, although DEA is still there, the drug situation in Mexico hasn't gotten any better, and we can't say that we've solved the problem because it's still there.

Q: Had there been precedents for extraditing both ways - from the United States to Mexico and from Mexico to the United States?

WILKINSON: There are very, very few cases of extradition. We have extradited recently, since then, one major notorious Mexican drug dealer and we were prepared to extradite one former under secretary of the Ministry of Justice, who was involved in all kinds of drug corruption issues. His name was Mario Ruiz Massieu, whose brother was murdered ostensibly by the Raúl Salinas, the brother of the ex-president - a very complicated situation. But Mario Ruiz Massieu committed suicide before he could be sent back. And we in turn have asked the Mexicans to extradite Mexicans. There is a legal provision allowing the Mexican president to waive the provisions of their constitution and extradite a Mexican citizen if the crime is sufficiently grave, but we have never been able to get the Mexicans to do that. Even today, I don't think there's any case of any Mexican president feeling strong enough politically to override that provision of the constitution that grants immunity from extradition to Mexican citizens. So that issue continues, and it's one of the major issues between us - one of the irritants that stimulates many in the U.S. Congress today to favor suspending Mexico's certification.

Q: Were you and your section monitoring the effect that drug money had on the political process? Not only the political process, but the judicial process and all that in Mexico, because it would seem that this was really becoming a matter of real concern.

WILKINSON: No. And the answer to that is that we didn't have the tools to monitor... We didn't know where... how much drug money was coming into Mexico, where it was going or even how many drugs were flowing through Mexico. I remember a case, even in the early '80s, when Congressman Rangel from New York, who was the head of the Joint Anti-Narcotics Committee of the Congress, came and was briefed in Mexico City and asked the question, "How many Mexican drugs are going into the United States?" And the chief of the Narcotics Assistance Section, Mike Yohn, couldn't answer the question. And the ambassador fired him. Gavin fired him because he didn't know the answer. Well, nobody knew the answer. And I don't think anybody knew the answer when I was there 10 years later. I suspect they still don't know. They can tell that a lot of it is going over land, but they can't tell how much, what percentage. And similarly, it was very difficult, even harder, to know what was happening with drug money. Now there was a sting operation in which we infiltrated the Mexican banks not too long ago, infiltrated them, used intelligence sources to find out what was going on, and arrested or indicted a number of Mexican bankers for illegal bank operations, which caused a great stir, which still resounds, in U.S.-Mexican bilateral relations because the Mexicans claim we were illegally operating an intelligence scheme without telling them. And of course, we don't trust the Mexican police, and with good reason, so it's very, very hard to deal with.

When I was working in Mexico last - and as you can tell, I'm still interested and keep up on Mexican affairs - I got to know fairly well the head of the Human Rights Commission and his deputy. That was Jorge Carpizo. He was the head of the Mexican Human Rights Commission, and his deputy was a man named Jorge Madrazo. Carpizo eventually became justice minister and became responsible for the administration of justice in Mexico and later, currently, Madrazo also became minister of justice, responsible for trying to do something about corruption among the Mexican police and, in general, of the Mexican Government. Carpizo is a brilliant intellect, former rector of the university, head of the law school, a man of total integrity - as is his former deputy, Jorge Madrazo, both of them. I got to know them particularly well at first because of an incident that took place on November 7, 1991, shortly after I got there, in which a plane loaded with civilian policemen from the national police landed on what appeared to be a small landing strip being used by drug smugglers in pursuit of a supposed drug smuggling scheme. The policemen got off the plane and were shot and killed by the Mexican army. And a second plane still in the air, a U.S. customs airplane, had taken pictures of what was going on on the ground, using infrared photography. It started late, just at dawn, and continued after daylight, but they didn't have regular photography; they were using infrared photography, which still works in the daylight. So this was a national incident, obviously, the army shooting the police and the army claiming that the police were in collusion with the drug smugglers and that they shot them because they were there to collect their money, and the police saying that the army was waiting to welcome the drug smugglers and as soon as they got on the ground took their load and disappeared with it, both of them pointing fingers at the other and saying they were in collusion. What really happened? And the Mexicans came to us and said, "Well, you must know, because you were the United States; you had this customs airplane operating under an agreement with Mexico, you were up there taking pictures." So we at that point took the pictures and went through them one by one and tried to figure out what had really happened, and the answer was you couldn't tell. They weren't clear enough in the infrared. They showed certain things - they showed some cows and they showed the airplane landing - but they couldn't tell what had happened after it landed. One of the things that the Mexican investigators were trying to establish was whether the airplane had been signaled in by somebody on the ground who was there beforehand who was in collusion with the alleged drug smuggling operation. So at any rate, they had to prepare a report on this, and they eventually prepared a report saying that the army appeared to have acted improperly. They couldn't say for sure that the army was working with drug smugglers, but they had certainly acted incorrectly in shooting these policemen on the ground. But in the process, both Carpizo and Madrazo were sucked more and more into the police work area, and eventually, Carpizo was asked to take over the Justice Ministry and clean up the federal police - Mexico's rough equivalent of the FBI.

This is sort of a long answer to a short question, but Carpizo tried to reform the Mexican police. He knew they were corrupt, so he said, We're going to set aside the whole existing police force, and we're going to create a new one, and we're going to call it the Institute of Mexican Police, and we're going to recruit new people and educate them and train them, and we're going to put the old people aside. Well, of course, it didn't work,

because the old people knew where the skeletons were buried, and pretty soon the new police, who were trained at this academy, started going to the old police and saying, How do you do this, that, and the other thing? And before you knew it the two services were so interrelated and interdependent that whatever infection had existed before had spread to all of the new people. And Carpizo, after a year in the job, was moved to another even tougher job - Minister of Interior. That effort has been tried several times since then, and then the Mexicans eventually turned to the army, because they gave up on the possibility of reforming the police; and now the army is corrupted by the same contagion - simply because the pay in government is too bad, and the money in drugs is too good. And so there doesn't seem to be an easy recipe for reforming the system or the situation. I mention that all because of what is the impact of drug money in Mexico? Well, the answer is it corrupts everybody who comes close to it. And the police were often all working for the drug barons, I mean, one faction of the drug smugglers' cartels would be paying one faction of the police, and another drug ring would be paying another faction, and you'd have police wars, with the two police forces shooting each other up in bars and on the streets. So much for drugs and drug corruption.

Q: - Green, how did you find dealing with somebody like that? You know, as a diplomat, you're up against the people who, fair enough, are nationalists, but also have a problem with the United States, a big chip on their shoulder. How does one work with someone like that?

WILKINSON: Well, the answer is that when you're at my level at an embassy you don't. It happened that I knew Rosario and had dealt with her, I'd say, as an equal in the '80s, when I was there before. I certainly was no longer at the same level in 1991-94 to be able to level with her, in effect, and tell her what I thought. And she recognized that, so we didn't have any... No, that's not true. We did sit next to each other at dinner one night and I had a long conversation with her mostly about the Álvarez Machain case, when she just told me how badly the United States had behaved, and all I could say was, "Yes, you're right." I mean, there was no question in my mind that our handling of Álvarez Machain was wrong. I didn't mention the ultimate outcome of that case, which was that, having been upheld on jurisdictional basis by the Supreme Court, the case went back to courts in Los Angeles, and the judge - I think it was the same judge who had initially ruled that it could be heard and had the supreme court sustain him, then took up the case on its merits and threw it out. He said there's no case against this guy. It may be that you have a right to try him, but you don't have any evidence to convict him. You have hearsay that shows that he went to the house at the time that Camarena was being held there. He went to the front door, and when he went to the front door, he says that he knocked and somebody came to the door and said, "You're not needed at this time." And he went away. And you, the DEA, had no evidence to prove that what he says is not true. And they didn't. They had some kind of a second-hand story that he had been present and administering drugs to Enrique Camarena, but they couldn't prove it. And I don't know, frankly, from what I know whether... I don't know who to believe. But at any rate, the case against him couldn't be proved, so he was freed and he went back to Mexico, where he lives now a free man. The Mexicans certainly won't be able to try him. So that's what happened in

that case, and you know, we took our lumps diplomatically for the activities collectively of our law enforcement agencies, which were... They were acting like cowboys.

Q: One of the things in looking at American diplomacy dealing with narcotics is that there really is a broad divergence between the Foreign Service and the DEA as far as procedure and all that, isn't there. I mean, the DEA sort of operates on its own, and you are constrained by international law and how we deal with that.

WILKINSON: That's right. They are too, when they operate abroad, supposedly, and the embassy has to answer to it, and there are times when we wish we didn't.

ROBERT L. CHATTEN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Mexico City (1983-1985)

Born in Kentucky in 1934, Robert L. Chatten received a BA from the University of New Mexico and an MA from Stanford University. He joined USIS in 1959 and served in the Philippines, Japan, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, and Ecuador. Mr. Chatten was interviewed in 1994 by Fred A. Coffey, Jr.

CHATTEN: At the conclusion of a year, PAO Zuckerman was supposed to leave Mexico. Wanting desperately to stay, he had thrown himself on the Ambassador's mercy and was told that, "Yes, you could stay for a fifth year." USIA management acceded. I really didn't have the stomach for doing it longer, if I had any alternatives. The answer to the dilemma was the Senior Seminar, a classic case of doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, a phenomenon in which life in Washington abounds. I knew I was taking the chance that Stan Zuckerman would get on the dark side of Ambassador Jack Gavin again, as he and many others in the Mission had. It was very easy to get on the dark side of Ambassador Jack Gavin in those days and get yourself thrown out of the country, quietly and unceremoniously. And if that were to happen in the middle of my senior seminar year I was going to be SOL for going to Mexico. It didn't. Whenever I did a Seminar study, or a paper, or I interviewed people and did my research project, I was able to focus it upon Mexico. It turned out to be an enormous benefit, a great leg up for me when I finally got there.

Q: Which was approximately what year, Bob?

CHATTEN: I was in Mexico from 1983-1985. Again, the externals and the internals of that were unique. I thought then and I think now that PAO to Mexico is the Ph.D. course in PAO studies, certainly for the area but maybe worldwide. Unlike relations with some of the other places that matter a lot to us, there is no end to the dimensions of the relationship. There is no major US domestic problem - education, agriculture, drugs, crime, welfare, you name it - that does not have a significant Mexican dimension to it. So your interaction with the United States is a terribly complicated matter. By contrast, compare it with the Soviet Union in those days, in which the relationship with them was a

life or death matter of security, but it was primarily one-dimensional. It didn't have a 2,000 mile border and Mexico's endless complexities mixed in.

Drugs, of course, constituted a huge overlay in the program. I found myself there, as I had been in two other posts, a member of the inner working group that met regularly, often weekly, to review what was new on the drug scene. And what was to be done about it. Narcotics related agencies aren't noted for cooperating with each other, but we could at least be aware of the direction that things were going. That period has come to be characterized by the abduction and murder of DEA agent Kiki Camarena, but that was just one dimension to it. There was tremendous interest on the part of the Administration and Congress, both on merit and in terms of the resources that we were trying to put into drug programs through the narcotics action unit and the DEA, and customs, and the station, and us and all the other dimensions of the mission that got involved.

Simultaneously, Mexico was dealing with the effects of a monumental devaluation and huge foreign debt. US banks and the USG had major interests in stabilizing the economy and seeing to it that their debt got paid or postponed. Socially, the economy's problems added complexity to the US private sector's problems in Mexico and a dramatic impetus to problems of immigration. All these, needless to say, were dynamic engines of public affairs problems we had to address.

Q: When did you check out of Mexico?

CHATTEN: In August of 1985.

LANGHORNE A. MOTLEY
Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Ambassador Langhorne A. Motley was born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He moved to Alaska while in the U.S. Air Force. During the Reagan administration, he was appointed ambassador to Brazil from 1982-1983, and later became Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs from 1983-1985. Ambassador Motley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: I would now like to turn your attention to U.S. relations with Mexico. How was it while you were Assistant Secretary?

MOTLEY: The relationship with Mexico was, as it has always been, distorted by different subjects. In my time, those were drugs, Central America and illegal immigration. Our relationships with Mexico were driven by those three issues.

While I was Assistant Secretary, the Mexicans were deficient on all three. The Camarena incident, which I mentioned earlier, was a manifestation of the drug issue. There was a significant feeling within the Administration that parts of the Mexican government had

been seriously corrupted by the drug traffickers. The Camarena incident led that corruption trail pretty high in the Mexican government.

The Central American issue was part of a total Mexican foreign policy which created an enormous amount of heart-burn especially among the "heavy breathers." I found that policy, although I understood the rationale, very irritating. Those who didn't understand why the Mexicans acted the way they did were even more frustrated. Aside from the "shadow of the gringo, the Mexican policy was driven by their perception that Central America was their back yard, not ours. They resent our being involved. It was just that simple. If you look at history, you will find that since the time of independence from Spain, Central America was a Captaincy-General domain, under the rule of Mexico. So they saw it as their back yard; it was not for us to meddle in. So whatever we wanted, they didn't. That is fundamental to understanding Mexico's views.

DOUGLAS WATSON
Administrative Officer
Mexico City (1983-1986)

Mr. Watson was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area and was educated at California State University at Los Angeles and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966, he served in a variety of posts throughout the world, including Cairo, Athens, Madrid, Saigon, Quito, Islamabad and Port au-Prince, Haiti, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in the State Department in Washington, on Capitol Hill in the Pearson program and was a member of the US delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1991. Mr. Watson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 2000.

Q: What about drugs? Were they a big problem when you were there?

WATSON: They were a big problem for DEA. But amongst our employees, national employees and American employees, there was no problem. You would think with so many of our younger officers growing up in a more permissive culture...thank God marijuana wasn't around when I was a kid. You would have thought that undoubtedly some of them were smoking, but certainly not to any noticeable extent. But if they had smoked in the past, why wouldn't they have smoked?

ALAN HARDY
Deputy Political Counselor
Mexico (1984)

After joining the Foreign Service in 1956 he served in the Army from 1957-1959. His career included positions in Canada, Madagascar, Italy, Somalia, Hungary, Mexico, and an ambassadorship to Equatorial Guinea. Ambassador Hardy was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker in 2001.

HARDY: I went from ambassador to Equatorial Guinea to the Deputy Political Counselor in the embassy in Mexico City. I was Deputy Political Counselor because my predecessor was Deputy Political Counselor, and he felt that the title had a nice ring to it even though there was no such thing as a Deputy Political Counselor as far as the Department of State was concerned.

Q: I've never heard of it.

HARDY: ...It would look better on one's calling card when passed out to Mexican officials. Anyway I was the second hand in the political section. For some purposes I took on that title, for others I didn't. People ask me how I could do that after being an ambassador. To which my answer was: once an ambassador, always an ambassador.

Anyway, it turned out to be a fun place. I'd never been to Latin America, so I wanted to do that. Very interesting to watch a lot of things going on, and make some contribution. Mexican-U.S. relations, had their own momentum, often very little affected by the Embassy, the Department of State or the Ambassador. Often times more affected by the U.S. Department of Treasury. There had been already one economic bailout, and since then another, second, bailout. A couple of bailouts of the Mexicans, you're talking billions of dollars here. So Treasury had a great role. They had their Treasury Attaché there. DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) by the same token, had a great quasi-independent role. I was liaison from the Embassy to DEA at post. An American drug agent was tortured and killed during this period. Quite a time. Some even wondered if the Minister of Interior was in the pay of the drug traffickers.

RICHARD H. MOREFIELD
Consul General
Guadalajara (1985-1987)
Economic Counselor
Mexico City (1987-19??)

Richard H. Morefield was born into a Mexican-American family in San Diego, California. He received degrees from the University of San Francisco and the University of California. Mr. Morefield joined the State Department in 1956. His career included positions in Washington, DC, Colombia, Norway, Uruguay, Iran, and Mexico. Mr. Morefield was interviewed by William D. Morgan in 1990.

MOREFIELD: I would say to the Mexicans, "Look, I was in Colombia at the beginning of the drug problems there, and you have a real problem. The one thing that can jeopardize the Mexican political-economic system is the drug traffic."

Up until then, the official party, the PRI, had the ability to obtain a consensus within the party by co-opting, by assigning things. Consequently, there was no power structure outside the PRI that could, in effect, develop a competing political consensus. I argued

there were only three organizations in Mexico, which had national representation. The PAN was not one. It was a regional political party.

I said the three nationwide organizations were the PRI, the Catholic Church, and the drug traffickers. And that if the drug traffickers ever parlayed their money power into economic power, and into political power, the ability of the Mexican political system to come to a national consensus was going to be destroyed.

Q: Through '88? You were CG in Guadalajara from?

MOREFIELD: For two years, from '85 to '87.

Q: And then went on to Mexico City. So you carried on your awareness of all this into Mexico City, where you were what?

MOREFIELD: I was economic counselor.

Q: Economic counselor. Okay. So you got to see the economy of the drug trafficking. But back to the point that you were saying.

MOREFIELD: Previously they had sufficient resources to co-opt and to bring everybody into the system. When that economic model for a number of reasons ran out of steam--and it had already run out of steam before the drop in oil prices--and then when you had the subsequent drop in oil prices, they were in real problems.

Q: Because that was an enormous chunk out of the economy, and the potential economy.

MOREFIELD: And to dedicate the resources to fight the drug traffickers at that time was a real statesman-like decision, and to the credit of the Mexican authorities.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Minister Counselor for Public Affairs
Mexico City (1985-1989)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: Well, while you were there, what were the issues that dominated your time? I mean, were you trying to get a point of view across?

COWAL: Well, I think we were very much in the issues of sort of free trade, or open trade, and trying to encourage openings in the Mexican government. We were certainly trying to encourage better observance of human rights, less corruption, more open government, selling off of this enormous para-statal structure which had been created, starting in the '30s, which totally dominated it. Then I would say that, certainly, dominating all of those issues was really drug trafficking and the increasing concern by the United States that Mexico was a center of production, but more importantly, of transiting. There was a DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency, agent killed in 1985, Enrique Camarena, who was kidnapped, tortured and eventually killed by one of the drug cartels.

I think that even heightened our awareness more. It has always been said that the soft underbelly to the United States is Mexico. Mexico is a dagger pointed at the heart of the United States. We think of ourselves, and we are, a continent or an island, but we're an island with an umbilical cord, and that umbilical cord is Mexico. It attaches us to another continent out there, which is one that produced increasing numbers of illegal immigrants. Migration was a big issue. I would say migration and drugs were probably the two most contentious issues, and the others were trade and corruption and political and economic opening.

THERESA A. LOAR
Visa Officer/Aide to the Supervisory Consul General
Mexico City (1986-1988)

Ms. Loar was born and raised in New Jersey. She was educated at Louisville University, Dartmouth, Rutgers, and she also studied in France. She and her husband entered the Foreign Service in 1986. After serving in Mexico City and Seoul she was assigned to the Office of the Undersecretary for Global Affairs in Washington, where she was involved in Human Rights and Women's issues. She subsequently became Senior Coordinator for International Women's Affairs. Following her retirement from the Department of State, Ms. Loar was the co-Founder and President of the organization Vital Forces Global Partnership. Ms. Loar was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Well, how did you find the prison authorities?

LOAR: Well, there are two prison visits that come to mind. One was visiting this one guy who was a former Assembly of God missionary, and who grew up as a missionary in a big family of missionaries. Then somewhere along the line he had crossed to the other side of the street and had become a major drug dealer, and had used his intimate knowledge of the transportation systems, and distribution routes, and where to find the product to become a big-time drug dealer. He was arrested, and he was now living in this prison in a very remote area. He seemed to be pretty much running the prison. There were

drugs everywhere. So that made me even more nervous, because you didn't know who the authorities were [laughter].

Q: Yes.

LOAR: Part of our services to him was to make sure he got his Social Security check delivered, so that his Mexican wife -- who was living, I don't think in the prison, but in the prison town -- could get the full benefits, which was another eye-opener to me [laughter]. I didn't know you could be convicted, and, while serving time in a Mexican jail, get your Social Security check, and be able to support your new family. But he was one of the more colorful people. I did say I was scared as hell when I was in there. But what he pretty much said was that he apparently had some ongoing relationship with people who sold drugs, so he had a lot of power in the prison. You would think he was a missionary with his long beard. He talked about how the heavy drug use calmed everybody down and kept them sedated, and how the men were able to bring women in -- their girlfriends, or wives at the moment, or whatever we would like to call those who provided those services -- and so there was not a great deal of sexual tension or sexual violence that there is in American prisons; that was very interesting. So, drugs and conjugal visits were kind of an accepted norm.

And then this other prison visit I remember. It must have been outside of Mexico City, which is why the driver was with me; and that was scary. It was just so sad to hear this story of this young woman from the Bronx who carried drugs for her boyfriend, and ended up paying such a heavy, heavy price.

Q: This, of course, is one of the great tragedies, because there are people, and elderly people also, who were used as mules.

LOAR: Right.

Q: Was her boyfriend still around?

LOAR: No. I don't think he ever even got caught.

Q: Yes.

LOAR: I do remember Colin Cleary, who was a really terrific Foreign Service officer, and his wife, now Susan Cleary. They're both in the Foreign Service together, and they both have red hair. They have three redheaded kids. They look like a GAP ad.

Q: [Laughter]

LOAR: They're just a great couple and wonderful talented people. Well, Colin did a report. We were all looking for substance, something we could get our teeth into, because we were doing these 30-second visa interviews - cheerfully [laughter] -

Q: Yes. [Laughter]

LOAR: ...seeing who had the most numbers, and socializing a lot, and enjoying each other's company, but looking for substance.

He wrote a very long, detailed report about a Mexican drug lord who was in prison. It was about where he was in prison in Mexico City, and what his arrangements were. Colin would ask questions, and they would tell him. "Well, how does this guy get food? Well, how does he run his operation? How does he get visits from women? How does this all happen?" I do not remember the name of the Mexican drug lord, but it was let's say, '88 – '89. He was the preeminent Mexican drug lord, and he was in a prison in Mexico City and living the good life. Colin wrote this really long cable detailing it. But, it was not cleared to leave the embassy, because that would be bad information for Congress to know that Mexican drug lords were living the good life and running their operations out of a Mexican prison. I'm not sure who made that decision, but I remember Colin being very frustrated, because it was well researched.

LOAR: But it was fascinating what was going on in Mérida. There was so much. Their political activity was so different; there were Cuban posts there, and there was heavy drug activity. I was able to do a series of cables, and get them to Washington, and get them to posts. They were concerned because they were not getting a lot of information out of posts at the time. They were concerned about that. So it was a really wonderful opportunity.

LARRY COLBERT
Consul General
Tijuana (1987-1991)

Mr. Colbert was born in Ohio in 1940. He attended the Universities of Ohio and Missouri. After a tour in Turkey with the Peace Corps and a year as an assistant on Capital Hill, he entered the Foreign Service and was sent to Viet Nam as Regional Advisor. His subsequent postings, where he served as Consular Officer include: Ankara, Turkey, Oran, Algeria, Dublin, Ireland and Manila, Philippines. At Tijuana, Mexico, Madrid, Spain, Ciudad Juarez, Mexico and Paris, France Mr. Colbert served as Consul General. Mr. Colbert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in November, 2006.

COLBERT: The family that ran the drug cartel in Tijuana hadn't really come to the fore when I was there. They were drug lords; we knew who they were. There was a mayor; there was a state government in Mexicali, which is another town. We had good relations with them. In constituent posts there isn't a lot going on politically. If anything happens it happens in Mexico City; it is a centralized state. While I was there the mayor of Ensenada who was a Panista, that is to say a member of the then opposition right-wing party, the PAN (National Action Party). He had been the first mayor who was elected and allowed to be elected. That is to say he was the first mayor who had ever won and been

allowed to win. He was very, very popular. He ran for governor and he was the first Panista, the first opposition non PRI person to be elected governor. I think in the past PAN people had won in the north, but the votes always came out differently than how they had been cast. Sort of there were lots of hanging chads and if they weren't those in charge always found some!

So we were there when that happened and we had a very good relationship with him and a person who I came to admire a lot. I think it was very, very hard to be totally honest in that environment. In Mexico they have this thing they offer you lead or silver. That's to say if you are offered a bribe it's silver, if you refuse a bribe they give you lead, hot lead. So I think it was not a totally honest society but most people we dealt with were trying hard to do the right thing..

Q: What about on the civilian side? You must have had a lot of particularly young Americans in jail didn't you? How did that work out?

COLBERT: We had a vice consul or an FSN visit the jail every day seven days a week and there was always somebody there. Most of the charges were drunk and disorderly; and people paid a fine and got out. At any one time we had maybe thirty people in prison for serious crimes which would be bringing a firearm into Mexico or more importantly drug dealing- being a mule or being involved in the drug traffic. While I was there we had an on-going program of prisoner transfers. This is our agreement between the two countries that your nationals can serve their time in your country and their nationals can go back to their country and serve their time. So we had then and we still have an agreement with Mexico to permit Americans in prison in Mexico to petition to come back here to serve their time closer to their families. While I was there, this was an on-going process and we would send the paper work for those people who wanted down to Mexico City and they would be vetted by the Mexican authorities and then they would be vetted by our authorities and in due course there would be an agreement and they would be bussed to the border and picked up by our authorities.

RICHARD H. MELTON
Assistant Secretary for Mexico, Caribbean, and Regional Economic Affairs,
Latin America Bureau
Washington, DC (1988-1989)

Richard H. Melton was born in Maryland in 1935 and studied at Cornell University and at the University of Wisconsin. He served in the U.S. Army and, in 1961, entered the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Portugal, England, Uruguay, Costa Rica, and Washington, DC. Mr. Melton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

MELTON: So in this period there was a new awareness of the importance of the relationship with Mexico across the board. Drug issues were becoming increasingly important; DEA agent Enrique Camarena would soon be murdered; Elaine Shannon had

just published her book arguing that we subordinated our drug policy to large foreign policy considerations. All of that headline material gave the drug problem more relevance. We worried about corruption and the responsibility Mexican authorities had for the problem--the same range of issues that are discussed now in deciding whether to certify Mexico as a cooperative partner in the war on drugs. We had considerable hope because it was clear that Mexico was embarked on a major economic development program--liberalization and modernization. But this was only part of the picture. Overall, Mexico loomed larger on the regional and global agenda. The negative aspects of the Salinas administration was not as clear in 1989 as they later became.

JAMES R. JONES
Ambassador
Mexico (1993-1997)

James R. Jones was born in Oklahoma in 1939. He received his bachelor's degree from University of Oklahoma in 1961 and law degree from Georgetown University in 1964. His career included being Deputy Appointment Secretary to the White House from 1965-1969, being a congressman from Oklahoma, acting as the president of the American Stock Exchange, and an ambassadorship to Mexico. Ambassador Jones was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 2002.

Okay, today is the 11th of March, 2003. Let's talk first about drugs. What was sort of the report on the drug war at the time you got there?

JONES: Well, let me backtrack. When I was in Congress, one of my colleagues from Oklahoma was chairman of the committee to try to stop the drug trafficking into the United States from Colombia and the Andean countries. This was about 1980. All of the drugs were coming in through the Caribbean to Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, and then moving into the U.S. market. It took them until about 1989 before all of the efforts at interdiction succeeded at essentially stopping the traffic through the Caribbean. What the drug traffickers did is just to divert and go through Mexico, which was an even more convenient place. So when I got there in 1993, a pretty sophisticated drug trafficking operation had developed. It developed a great deal of organized crime, particularly at some of the principle border cities, like Juarez, in the Tamlipas area, and then in Tijuana. They were some really big drug cartels. What had happened in that period of time just before I got there was that in the past, when they diverted drugs from the Caribbean through Mexico to the United States, basically they were paying a commission to these criminal organizations to get them across the border. Then the criminal organizations started realizing that they could do much better, they were really good entrepreneurs, to take product. So they would get a percentage of the actual drugs going across and they started developing their own drug distribution systems in the United States. By the time I got there, you had three major drug cartels that were a very corrupting influence and were sending three quarters or more of the cocaine going to the United States -through Mexico, originating in the Andean countries - through Mexico and into the United States distribution. A good bit of the marijuana. But it was really the

cocaine and those kinds of drugs. One of the big issues was drug trafficking. How do you stop it? When I got there, I tried to analyze the situation and talked to a lot of different people. I decided that there is no way to stop it. As long as the United States market is so vast and so financially rewarding, the most we can do would be to divert it. We devised what I called the “cucaracha” strategy, and I used to explain it, “cucaracha” being cockroaches. I used to explain it by saying if you move into a row house in Washington, you generally have a whole bunch of cockroaches. You exterminate the cockroaches and they’re gone. About a month later, they come back.

Q: The neighbors are very unhappy.

JONES: So then when you start exterminating every month, you don’t find them anymore and then you meet your neighbor five row houses down and he has this terrible cockroach problem. My theory was that as long as the market in the United States was so big and there was so much money to be made, the drug traffickers, the cockroaches, would find a way to get the drugs into the United States somehow. The best that we could do until we really reduced demand in the United States was to harass the cockroaches and move them around. So that was our strategy. It ultimately became relatively successful and now drugs are going back through the Caribbean and through other places.

It’s been my experience that wherever you have the Napoleonic code as the rule of law, you have a high degree of corruption because it’s very structured and non-transparent. In order to make anything happen through the legal system, you have to grease the palms of so many people just to get the wheels grinding. It becomes an endemic part of society. That’s true in Mexico, it’s true in virtually in every country that I know of that has the Napoleonic code, because it’s not transparent and it doesn’t have jury trials the way we have jury trials. You add on top of that what they pay their police, it’s such a pittance that the policemen have to buy their own uniforms, the gasoline for their cars, bullets for their guns, etc. They make very little money. It is not unreasonable that there’s going to be a lot of corruption in there. You further add that their training programs are such that they have no professional sense of what they’re supposed to be doing. I told the attorney general one time, I said, “Even if you assumed that the legal system was honest, it’s incompetent. It doesn’t know how to collect evidence, preserve evidence, present evidence, and therefore you don’t have competence in the system, so you have a ready-made system ready to be corrupted further.” The amounts of money that the drugs can spread around is really quite phenomenal. It’s such a big business. It was very hard. For example, one of the things we did in about 1990 – somewhere midway through my four years – we made a concerted effort to really train, equip, vet, continue to vet units strictly for fighting drug trafficking. We had the CIA involved, we had the FBI involved, the DEA involved, and this was kind of a radical departure for Mexico because if it was to get out that the CIA was training Mexican law enforcement would be politically very damaging, so it was closely held. We put it together. We had the units. We equipped them and what have you. Even with that, we had it penetrated. It was penetrated, first of all, by having assassinations of some of the elite units. Then it was penetrated further by having them corrupted, bought off. We targeted the heads of some of the cartels. One that had been the sort of the big daddy of them all was the Juan Garcia Abrego cartel, which

was in the northeastern part of the country, the Tamaulipas area, you know, east of Juarez. It had been the big one, ultimately eclipsed by the Tijuana and the Juarez cartels because they were even more vicious than the Garcia Abrego cartel. As you may know, or may not, we had more intelligence gathering apparatus in Mexico than any place except the Soviet Union – because, in the old Cold War days, Vienna and Mexico City were sort of the crossroads for spies and things like that, so we had a deeply entrenched intelligence gathering apparatus. We targeted Garcia Abrego and we had one intelligence interception that indicated he was going to have a face-lift. I think it was a San Diego doctor who was going to perform it. We knew the location of where it was going to be. His girlfriend on the Texas side of the border was going to meet him there. We knew the time and place, etc. I went to the attorney general of Mexico and said, “Here is the information. We can get this guy.” In fact, that attorney general told me one time, I said, “How are you finding it?” He said, “I think there may be five people in the entire PGR,” which is their Justice Department, “that I can trust.” So anyway, we decided to keep it very close, and just the two of us, then we expanded a little bit more and a little bit more. As we were going to close the noose on the guy and catch him right in the middle of having a face-lift operation, just before that, someone within the organization tipped him off and we missed it.

Subsequent to that we had another intercept that said that Garcia Abrego was going to teach the U.S. ambassador a lesson. He put a contract out for me, to bomb me. So there was about an intense 10 days there where we had significantly more security. That sort of sharpens the focus when you know you are a target for that. Ultimately, we caught him, partly by accident. A Mexican in, I think the city of Puebla, just happened to come across him and catch him. Apparently Garcia Abrego’s mother was quite ambidextrous because he was born simultaneously in Texas and Mexico and had a birth certificate in both places. So I already prearranged with the foreign minister that they would...because they had to go through all kinds of legal loopholes and legal hoops to jump, in order to extradite anybody who was a Mexican, and it had been very difficult to extradite anybody, no matter what they did, if they were Mexican. So we had prearranged with foreign minister that he would recognize the Texas birth certificate and instead of having to extradite him, he could expel him as a non-Mexican. When we caught him we already had a plane arranged. He was caught and put on a plane sent to Houston before anybody could say a hoot. He is now in jail in Houston for a nice long sentence.

Having done that, that shifted some of the drug...well, first of all, there was a bit of a leadership war in the Garcia Abrego cartel, and then there was a real battle between the two remaining big cartels. About that time, the Mexicans appointed a general, whose name I just forgot, to be the head of what would be equivalent to their drug czar. Our drug czar was Barry McCaffrey, also an ex-general. We had one of our bi-national commission meetings in Mexico and Barry McCaffrey met this General Gutierrez for the first time and was really enamored by him. He made all kinds of public statements and I said, “Barry, we don’t have anything bad on the guy, but down here it’s always good to do a little more due diligence.” Well, very shortly after that, General Gutierrez was arrested and convicted on being very aggressive against one of the drug cartels, but he

was on the payroll of the other cartel. So, fighting the drug business was an interesting business in Mexico.

Q: How were your relations with both our attorney general and with particularly the Drug Enforcement Agency? All of us in the Foreign Service have had dealings with this. They sort of have their own rules. They're cops, essentially. Diplomatic niceties are not there. Particularly in a place like this, I mean, it's a war. How did you find the way they operated in your relationship with them?

JONES: Because I had had this arrangement with President Clinton...since I had first declined the ambassadorship and then when I said that I don't work well with bureaucracy and that sort of thing, he said that if I ever had a problem with anything, to call him directly, which I never did, but I let the whole U.S. government know that I could. I went down there believing that the ambassador was the representative of the President and the entire U.S. government and that we were going to develop team concepts. If I caught anybody reporting directly and around me, or doing things without my prior approval, I would have them sent out of the country, removed, which was the ambassador's authority. I let them know firmly what I would do, but I wasn't doing it for the purpose of creating a hostile relationship but to say that we were gonna work as a team. We did indeed work as a team. I didn't have the problem, and I particularly met with the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) folks because they had the reputation for being cowboys and doing something and then thinking about it later. That just wouldn't work in Mexico, particularly with some of the things that had gone on there. So I did not have that problem. We had, for the most part, good DEA people there. I had to ask that one be removed because he was just clumsy as hell. It was not a big problem. My problem with the DEA and my problem with everybody in the law enforcement and the intelligence gathering business was the accuracy of what they were reporting to me. That went back, I think we may have covered it, to my days in the White House and Vietnam, where theoretically, the best and brightest that this country can produce, produced to the President of the United States information that was not accurate at point which decisions should not have been made regarding Vietnam. How that happened I'm still baffled as to how the system could create such erroneous misinformation. But I was a skeptic, and I was particularly a skeptic in Mexico, because Mexico, because of its closed non-transparent system of government and journalism, etc., in the past, it is probably the fastest rumor-spreading country that I've ever been involved with. Trying to figure out what's true from rumor is very difficult. We spent a lot of time in the bubble...

Q: This is the secure room where supposedly you can't eavesdrop in.

JONES: Right, right. Because when I would get information about this Mexican family was related to this drug family, or that someone in the President's office was laundering money for drug dealers and things like that, these were obviously very sensitive things. Before I would let them go back to Washington, I would bring everybody into the bubble. I was like a district attorney. I would really grill them and then if I was satisfied that they had done their homework well, it was not just some rumor that they were passing on, we would let it go. If not, I would insist either that it not be sent or that we add a skeptical...

Q: Did you find as you started this process that this sharpens the work of your people?

JONES: Absolutely. It was very interesting because - and I talked to Janet Reno about this...

Q: She was the attorney general.

JONES: She was two years ahead of my wife in law school. My wife knew her vaguely, but I didn't know her at all and came to really like her. She was very supportive of everything that we were doing. But I told her, I said that the biggest enemies law enforcement has in the United States is each other. They cannot work with each other and it wasn't going to happen in Mexico and it didn't happen in Mexico. So we worked as a team in Mexico. For example, I had a real knockdown drag out on one piece of information that came to me and I happened to know, and my wife knew, the families involved. I happened to know some of the circumstances surrounding the incidents and so they had put a twist on it. So we went in the bubble and I grilled them until we got down to and everybody agreed that they would send a different piece of information back and correct it. Subsequent to that, the head of the DEA in Mexico came in to see me and said that he was going to have to retract his agreement on that report. I said, "We had a very thorough conversation about this. What has changed your mind?" He says, "I've been ordered to, by Washington." That person subsequently left the DEA he was so discouraged with it.

Q: But essentially it came up with that there's no solution to this thing.

JONES: Really? The solution, I used to say, is that you're always going to have some, just like you have some alcoholics and things like that. The solution, to me, is to reduce the demand and to have as active a program making drug usage as anti-social as cigarettes, as smoking has become. Until you make it anti-social, I don't think you're going to reduce the demand. The second part of that is you have to put some money into the drug cultivating areas so that the families that are growing the drugs, these are peasant farmers, will find another reasonable means of making a living.

Q: Because actually they don't make much off it anyway. It's the manufacturers.

JONES: Then the third part is to do what we did, the "cucaracha" strategy. That is to have a multinational police operation just to harass the drug traffickers.

Q: How did you find, being ambassador for Washington, you have our bordering states, this is true of course in Canada too, where these relations are so close between the states of Mexico and the states of the United States, did this get in your way or was it helpful?

JONES: It was helpful because I knew most of the governors anyway. Fife Symington was enormously helpful to me.

Q: He was governor...?

JONES: Governor of Arizona, a Republican. I came to know him and I can tell you one period of time, because I was in Pueblo making a speech at the Universidad de Las Americas, and we were trying to prevent the U.S. Congress from declaring Mexico, under the annual certification process, of being uncooperative with the United States in the drug trafficking war and etc. There was a big movement to slap Mexico in the face on that in Congress. I did two things. Number one, I called Fife Symington, ex-governor of Arizona, and I said, "Can you help me with some Republicans?" And he said that John McCain was the one that helped Bob Dole because he's helping him in his Presidential race and you call McCain and I'll call, he had several governors in the Republican Party in the northeast that were friends of his, so he made those calls. I called Johnny McCain, who got Dole in the saddle. In that case, a border governor was helpful. A case when Bush was governor, I took...

Q: The present President?

JONES: The present President. I took, for example, Fox, who was governor of Guanajuato...in this whole goal of democracy I wanted to identify up and coming political leaders of the opposition parties that might challenge the system and Fox was clearly one of those. I took him to Texas. Bush was very helpful to me. I called Bush a couple of times on issues where we needed some help from the Texas delegation. He was very helpful. Pete Wilson had his own game he had to play, but I knew Pete, and his wife and my wife were in school together at Stanford, so those kinds of relationships actually helped.

EDWARD H. WILKINSON
Consul General
Guadalajara (1999-2001)

Edward Wilkinson was born in Indiana in 1936. Mr. Wilkinson received his bachelor's degree at Purdue University and served in the army from 1957-1959. His career included positions in Philippines, Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina, Taiwan, Ecuador, Korea, Thailand, and Germany. Mr. Wilkinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2002.

Q: How about drugs?

WILKINSON: Yes, drugs are a major issue in Mexico. They are readily available. I'm not really sure whether they are more or less available than in the U.S., or at least in certain parts of the U.S., but they're certainly available. And cheaper, I would say. The larger concern, though, is drug trafficking - something that concerned us Americans for obvious reasons. Our U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has many officers stationed at our embassies and consulates around the world. They work with the local authorities in this regard and yes, drugs remain a major concern to us.

Q: Wasn't it out of Guadalajara where there had been a very nasty case of one of our drug agents being kidnapped and killed?

WILKINSON: Yes, there was the case, I can't remember the year – I would say in the middle '80s - when a Drug Enforcement Administration officer, Enrique Camarena, stationed in Guadalajara at the time, was simply kidnapped then brutally murdered. This is, I would suggest, the sort of thing that our Drug Enforcement people have to contend with worldwide. It is a nasty, dangerous business. But their job is to get out amongst the people, find out what's going on regarding trafficking, and that's what they do.

Q: Did you get involved in that at all?

WILKINSON: Security was always an issue, yes, but I personally did not feel in the slightest that I was in danger. The state of Jalisco, where Guadalajara is located, provided the American consul general a full-time bodyguard. Augustine was a marvelous policeman whom I think the world of. He is the kind of policeman – and friend –you'd want anywhere, in anyplace.

DALE SLAGHT
Career Minister
Mexico City (1999-2002)

Mr. Slaght was born in Oregon in 1943. After serving in various capacities on Capitol Hill and in the Department of Commerce, he joined the State Department under the Commerce-State Exchange Program. As expert in commercial and trade policy, Mr. Slaght had assignments as Commercial Attaché and Minister Counselor at US Embassies and Consulates in Uruguay, Panama, Germany, Canada, Soviet Union and Mexico. He also served as Mexico Desk Officer at the Department of Commerce. Mr. Slaght attained the rank of Career Minister. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: How about corruption? One always hears about the police and all this. How did American manufacturers find this?

SLAGHT: It continues to be a problem, most sensitive in the war on drugs. You read every couple of months about some chief of police in a border town or somewhere in Mexico being on the take. Many of his staff as well. There were three containers of blue jeans that came out of a U.S. subsidiary southeast of Mexico City in 2000, heading to the United States, and the trucks were hijacked. In the final analysis, the perpetrators were police who knew the routes, knew what to do, and had people to sell these goods to. Is it better? Probably it's better than what it was. I have an older brother that loves to travel but refuses to go to Mexico because if he were ever stopped on the road, he feared the police would be more of a hindrance than a help. He visited us in Mexico. He rented a car and went all around, had no problems. He left with a different sense which was good. It is an issue, however. It is endemic in the society. These people are underpaid and view the

only way out of their situation is to take a bite out of someone else. Mordida they call it. It will take years for that to leave.

NICARAGUA

ROBERT W. DUEMLING
Humanitarian Assistance Officer
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Ambassador Robert W. Duemling was born in Michigan in 1929. He received both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Yale University. Prior to becoming a Foreign Service officer in 1957, he served in naval intelligence. His Foreign Service career included positions in Italy, Malaysia, Borneo, Japan, Canada, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Suriname. Ambassador Duemling was interviewed by Charles Kennedy in 1989.

DUELMING: There were other problems beyond the ones I have already mentioned. There were difficulties with the procurement practices of Contras. We had inherited a pipeline system which I used to a considerable extent although much of their procurement policy was seat-of-the-pants which we of course couldn't use. There were some suppliers we didn't use because we thought they were undependable. There were some other problematic areas. They had to do with flights because we had to charter aircraft and there were some allegations at one point that some of our flights were involved in drug running. What happened was that we did charter private flights from air charter companies, over which we had no control. We were simply hiring a plane and a crew to fly our stuff from New Orleans to Tegucigalpa, which then completed their obligation to us. Whatever else they did, we had no knowledge of or control over. It therefore might have been entirely possible that some of those private charter organizations could have been involved in drug running, but never to the best of our knowledge, did anything that involved us and they wouldn't have because we were moving goods from the United States to Central America in the opposite direction from the drug flow. When the flights returned to the US they were no longer under our charter. There were also some questions about arms drops and we had consulted with the House and Senate Intelligence Oversight Committees about whether we could be allowed to pay for "mixed" loads. We got some guidelines from those Committees because they recognized that if we were making air-drops in Nicaragua, you couldn't send in more than one flight to a single destination and therefore if arms had to be delivered, could they be put on board a flight that we had paid for? The Intelligence Oversight Committees agreed that some limited amount, without specifying how much -- I decided unilaterally on 10% -- would be permissible. So there were two flights that actually did drop arms -- two other were aborted -- but it was less than 10%, so that we stayed within the Congressional guidelines. (The arms were not paid for by us, of course.)

RICHARD MELTON
Office of Central American Affairs, Director

Washington, DC (1985-1988)

Richard H. Melton was born on August 8, 1935 in Rockville, Maryland. He received his BA from Cornell University in 1958. He later attended Wisconsin University where he received his MA in 1971. He entered the Foreign Service in 1961 and served in many countries throughout his career including Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Portugal, England, Uruguay, and Costa Rica. Mr. Melton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 27, 1997.

Q: Then in 1985, you were assigned to the Department as the Director of the Office of Central American Affairs. That was a quiet time--only a civil war and a counter-revolution simultaneously.

MELTON: The situation in each of the countries was different. There were some common threads, but the differences were quite significant.

Let me start with Panama, which also fell under my office. It was ruled by Manuel Noriega at the time--directly or indirectly. He was undoubtedly calling the shots. The main issue was corruption in the leadership. It was only later that the drug connection surfaced. Panama was available to the highest bidder. Noriega maintained relationships simultaneously with us and with Fidel Castro; Panama was ambivalent about which horse to back in the several struggles underway in the region. Noriega was not constant to any policy except the one of greed and avarice. Our main effort was to try to move the country toward more democracy and stronger political institutions. An election had been held and Nicholas Barletta, a World Bank official, had won the Presidency. We had high hopes that he would be the instrument through which democratic institutions could be strengthened. But he ran afoul of Noriega, who had him deposed by a pliant legislature. Barletta was pressured to resign; it was highly controversial and we had lengthy discussions about possible US reactions. It became much clearer later how Barletta was pressured to resign. Noriega took more direct control and then Barletta repudiated his resignation.

So in this period there was a new awareness of the importance of the relationship with Mexico across the board. Drug issues were becoming increasingly important; DEA agent Enrique Camarena would soon be murdered; Elaine Shannon had just published her book arguing that we subordinated our drug policy to large foreign policy considerations. All of that headline material gave the drug problem more relevance. We worried about corruption and the responsibility Mexican authorities had for the problem--the same range of issues that are discussed now in deciding whether to certify Mexico as a cooperative partner in the war on drugs. We had considerable hope because it was clear that Mexico was embarked on a major economic development program--liberalization and modernization. But this was only part of the picture. Overall, Mexico loomed larger on the regional and global agenda. The negative aspects of the Salinas administration was not as clear in 1989 as they later became.

RONALD D. GODARD
Deputy Chief of Mission
Managua (1991-1993)

Ambassador Ronal Godard was born in Oklahoma and raised in Oklahoma and Texas. He was educated at Odessa College and the University of Texas. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, he joined the State Department in 1967 and was posted to Panama, the first of his assignments in Central and South America. These include Costa Rica, Chile, Nicaragua, Argentina and Guyana, where he served as Ambassador from 2000 to 2003. His Washington assignments also concerned Latin American Affairs. During his career the Ambassador served with the Organization of American States, was diplomat in residence at the University of Illinois in Chicago and was Political Officer in Istanbul. Ambassador Godard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Were there any problems with El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, and that?

GODARD: There have been in the past, issues, there were some sort of flare-ups on the Gulf of Fonseca with Honduras. Little incidents of fishing boats encroaching and stuff like that. But nothing major. After I left, there were incidents. They have a contentious border with Costa Rica in the south, but during my period, border disputes were not a major issue.

Q: Drugs?

GODARD: No. Not particularly. I remember cases where we suspected Sandinista involvement in some drug trafficking, but that certainly wasn't a major route. There was one case as I recall.

Q: Did we have any military interest in the area?

GODARD: The fact that there was a military in Nicaragua that was controlled by an ideologically opposed group was kind of unique. Gradually we handed off to more normal military to military relationship with the army in Nicaragua. But beyond that, unless there's some threat there, or the real military concern was the Soviets and the Cubans using Nicaragua for their purposes, for teaching purposes, so that diminished our military interest. But we kept a close eye on the possibility of it becoming more important as a drug transit site. That didn't happen during the time that I was there. It was something that was going on, but it wasn't a major transit country.

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Managua (1994-1998)

Frederick A. Becker was born in Missouri. He graduated from Washington College in St. Louis, and Berkeley and Claremont Graduate Schools. After entering the Foreign Service in 1975, his postings abroad included Bucharest, Brasilia, Quito, Panama City, and Managua. He was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

BECKER: While some protectionist labor groups in the United States argued that much of the new job creation was a new form of wage slavery, and that American jobs were being exported overseas, in fact the creation of new manufacturing jobs represented progress for an increasing number of Nicaraguans. There was a boom in construction, mainly commercial centers and some middle-class housing. In retrospect, some of this seemed linked to the return from exile of prosperous Nicaraguans, who were basically taking care of their own needs, but there was some filtering downward to working people. Agriculture still languished, however. Markets that had been vibrant during the '60s and '70s, when the country had been the region's breadbasket and had exported beef, tobacco, cotton, coffee and other primary products, had been lost during the civil war, some irretrievably. Nicaraguans were still trying to find their way in terms of meeting the competitive demands of modern agriculture. Much of this early economic recovery was supply-side and filtered-down prosperity, but overall we kept seeing signs that more and more Nicaraguans at all levels were becoming a part of the new economy.

At the same time, we saw the beginnings of Nicaragua's integration into international criminal networks. It was in this period, after 1995, that the embassy was able to convince U.S. policy makers and law enforcement agencies, as well as the Nicaraguans, that it was time to enter into law enforcement cooperative arrangements to combat international criminal activity. The former Sandinista police, under reform-minded leaders, had already demonstrated growing professionalism by confronting party-inspired labor and political violence in the streets. We brought the DEA into Nicaragua to put together drug interdiction agreements with the Nicaraguan police, and had some fairly effective first-stage counter-drug programs. Nicaragua, like most of Central America, was on the major drug transit route from Colombia and Peru to Mexico and the United States. A lot of drugs we found were passing through Nicaragua using maritime routes off the Caribbean and Pacific coasts well as overland towards the north. Of course, we still were holding the Nicaraguan army at arm's distance because of its Sandinista tendencies, so our interdiction cooperation efforts lacked some effectiveness.

PANAMA

CLYDE DONALD TAYLOR
Consular Officer
Panama City (1964-1966)

Ambassador Clyde Donald Taylor was born in Columbia in 1937. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Wheaton College in 1959 he received his master's degree in interdisciplinary studies from American University in 1961. His career has included positions in Panama City,

Canberra, San Salvador, Teheran, and an ambassadorship to Paraguay. Ambassador Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 1996.

Q: The drug culture hadn't really hit at that point.

TAYLOR: No, I had never heard of drugs at that point. We had a lot of contraband activity.

Q: Contraband being what?

TAYLOR: Well, it was tobacco, liquor, and electronic appliances, because Panama had duty free zones in both ends of the Canal. There was a heavy trans shipment business and things would somehow (local corruption) leak out; goods would go from the duty free zone and be flown to Curacao or to other islands, other parts of Latin America, and enter illegally.

RONALD D. GODARD
Rotational Officer
Panama City (1968-1970)

Ambassador Ronal Godard was born in Oklahoma and raised in Oklahoma and Texas. He was educated at Odessa College and the University of Texas. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, he joined the State Department in 1967 and was posted to Panama, the first of his assignments in Central and South America. These include Costa Rica, Chile, Nicaragua, Argentina and Guyana, where he served as Ambassador from 2000 to 2003. His Washington assignments also concerned Latin American Affairs. During his career the Ambassador served with the Organization of American States, was diplomat in residence at the University of Illinois in Chicago and was Political Officer in Istanbul. Ambassador Godard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: How about ties to Colombia. Were they there anymore, did you discern them or not?

GODARD: No, Panama was wrested from Colombia. Teddy Roosevelt had a real strong hand in that. But back in those days, drugs, it was not an important conduit for drug trafficking.

Q: But also even the Colombia connection even before the taking over of Roosevelt, to me it was sort of kind of an appendage. There were mountains in between, and there really wasn't much back and forth anyway.

GODARD: It was tenuous. The geography is really, that's still the one gap in the Pan-American highway of the Darien jungles in Panama. So the ties between Colombia on the

continent of South America and the isthmus, that little piece of the isthmus with Panama were pretty tenuous.

ROBERT M. SAYRE
Ambassador
Panama (1969-1972)

Ambassador Robert M. Sayre became interested in the U.S. Foreign Service after serving for four years in the U.S. Army during World War II. He began his career at the State Department in 1949. Ambassador Sayre held positions in Peru and Cuba, and ambassadorships to Uruguay, Panama, and Brazil. He was interviewed in 1995 by Thomas Dunnigan.

Q: Probably came thereafter. Was there any evidence of Panamanian complicity in smuggling drugs to the U.S. while you were there?

SAYRE: Yes there was. We had a significant drug problem with people at the airport helping them. The U.S. agencies that were working on it dealt with it completely on their own and they didn't tell me what they were doing because they claimed they were in the Canal Zone, so they didn't have to tell me, even though they were also operating in Panama.

J. PHILLIP MCCLEAN
Political Officer
Panama City (1970-1973)

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogota, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: What about Congress?

McLEAN: Congress came through from time to time. Obviously in these times I imagine they came only into the Zone and never came to the embassy. We got involved with Congress a lot in drugs, because drugs was beginning to be a matter of interest during this period. Torrijos' brother, whom I had met through Noriega's brother, was implicated in a major heroin smuggling operation, and so Congress was suddenly coming to visit us. That was my first involvement with drugs, which is part of the rest of the story. I wrote the first drug implementation plan for the embassy, and I remember making it totally out

of my head, not knowing anything about drugs and trying to imagine what we might do. But the Congressmen came, and I recall that we used that for the script as to what our plans were for the future.

RUTH E. HANSEN
Political Officer
Panama City (1977-1980)

Ruth E. Hansen was born on February 18, 1946 in Illinois. She received her BA from Wheaton College in 1968 and her MSFS from Georgetown University in 1970. Her career has included positions in the Dominican Republic, Poland, Panama, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Ms. Hansen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 21, 2004.

Q: Was there concern within the embassy, and among people you talked to, about the ability of the Panamanians to run the Canal? One, did they have the expertise to run the Canal, and two, would possible future political instability or unrest in Panama render the Canal unusable?

HANSEN: As it turned out, the political situation in Panama in fact did deteriorate, and the U.S. had occasion to take advantage of that right to “intervene” some years later. By then, General Torrijos had died in a 1981 airplane crash, and one of his cohorts, Manuel Noriega, had taken charge of the country. In 1989 he invalidated Endara’s election as president. So there was a lot of political unrest, the U.S. had imposed sanctions on Panama and, perhaps most significantly, there was the issue of Noriega’s involvement in drug trafficking. He was indicted in the U.S. in 1988. Meanwhile, in Panama, a group of Panamanian soldiers tried in late 1989 to overthrow Noriega, but they failed. Tension was building up between the U.S. and Panama, and shortly thereafter, Panamanian soldiers killed a U.S. Marine lieutenant in Panama City. This incident together with the drug charges against Noriega essentially gave the U.S. a basis for the military operation in 1989 when Noriega was seized and brought to the United States to face drug charges. The treaty allowed us to do that.

MELVILLE BLAKE
Economic Counselor
Panama City (1979-1983)

Melville Blake was born in Lexington, Mississippi in 1924. He attended Mississippi State College. He joined the army and served for four years and then attended Georgetown University where he studied in the school of Foreign Service. Following his graduation he worked as an editor in the CIA for a year and then went to Germany.

Q: What about the strong man General Torrijos. We have read about his involvement in the drug problem. Do you know anything about that? Were you aware of that when you were there?

BLAKE: General Torrijos was never, to the best of my knowledge, associated with drug trafficking. His brother, Hugo, was, however, suspected as being associated with the drug trade. Hugo was Ambassador either to Italy or to the Vatican. In the early 1970s, he was to transit the United States upon returning to Panama. The Justice Department had plans to pick him up while in transit at a U.S. airport. Kissinger had instructions sent to the Ambassador in Panama, at that time it was Bob Sayre, that he should notify Torrijos of the likelihood that his brother would be arrested and suggested that Hugo re-route his travel to avoid the United States. This was done. Somehow it leaked into the press and caused a great deal of embarrassment to Bob Sayre who had simply been following instructions.

Q: Do you recall any other problems during your stay in Panama?

BLAKE: My last encounter with Noriega took place two days before I left Panama. The U.S. Government was about to start a new program on drug interdiction in the Caribbean Basin. A DEA officer and the State Department's officer for drug policy affecting Latin America wanted to visit Panama and brief Noriega. Noriega was head of the Panamanian equivalent of DEA. The Embassy's DEA officer was the action officer for the visit, and he thought that the meeting with Noriega would have more impact if I, as the departing Charge, sat in on the meeting. When Noriega expressed interest in the meeting but found it difficult to work into his schedule on such short notice, I invited him to breakfast. He came with a young Guardia officer whom he introduced as his aide on drug matters and a translator. The State and DEA officers gave an extensive briefing. Noriega asked questions from time to time. I was interested that he worked through the translator, but interrupted from time to time give, in English or Spanish, a more accurate rendering of comments. Clearly he knew English much better than he let on. Back at the Embassy, the visitors expressed pleasure over the meeting and Noriega's interest in drug interdiction. As one put it, "Tony is really on top of drugs."

While I was in Panama, I never saw anything to indicate that Noriega was involved in drugs. During my last year there, that is, 1982, the Embassy was visited by several Congressional staffers who asserted that they had irrefutable evidence that Noriega was facilitating drug traffic through Panama. They promised to send such reports to the Embassy, but we never received them, and the Executive Branch treated Noriega as a partner in drug interdiction as long as I was in Panama.

Given the comments I was hearing regarding Noriega during 1982, I began to think that we should exercise some caution in relations with him. I think that one incident confirmed the need for caution. In the summer of 1982, the Embassy's DEA officer told me that a boat would be putting into a Panamanian fishing port on the border with Colombia, on the Gulf side. DEA understood that a sizable shipment of cocaine would be loaded, and the boat would be seized when it got back into international waters. He felt an obligation to tell Noriega of the plan. If he didn't, Noriega would see that he had been cut out of the loop and would be angry. As his instructions did

not require him to inform Noriega, I advised against it, but he was new to the Embassy and felt that he should lean over backwards to maintain good relations with Noriega. He did tell Noriega of the plan and later told me that the boat was denied permission to dock as it approached the port. The planned seizure was frustrated.

I should note that there was probably a lot of flight capital from other, less stable Latin American countries administered through Panama, but no evidence was ever presented to me that would have shown that Panama-based banks were engaged in laundering drug money. Historically, Panama had been a refuge for Latin American political leaders who had to leave their capitals suddenly to avoid arrest or something worse during a coup. Also, Panama had good medical facilities by Latin American standards, and many prominent Latinos would come there for treatment. It was thus logical to try to develop the economy by taking advantage of the country's location and orientation on the services sector. It also meant emphasizing efforts to obtain third-party adherents to the Panama Neutrality Treaty, which had been neglected since it had entered into force on October 1, 1979.

EDWARD L. LEE II
Regional Security Officer
Panama City, Panama (1982-1985)

Mr. Lee was born and raised in Michigan, educated at Delta College and American University. After seven years service with the US Marine Corp, he joined the State Department as Agent in the Office of Security. Mr. Lee's entire career in the Foreign Service was devoted to Security matters in Washington and in diplomatic posts throughout the world. His postings as Regional Security Officer include Cyprus, South Korea, Thailand and Panama. Mr. Lee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

LEE: Trying to explain the role that I had in Panama, because of the influx of RSOs in the early '70s and '80s, the management of the Office of Security at that time felt it was appropriate to have assigned to each region a functional officer entitled associate director of security. This was generally a very senior officer that had had a number of RSO assignments at other posts who had the right communication and political skills to be able to talk to ambassadors and principal officers and what have you on a wide range of security topics. In many respects, the Assistant Deputy Secretary fulfilled a quasi-training responsibility in that he or she would impart guidance to the RSOs at a particular post if they were relatively new to the Service or new to the Foreign Service. It was a very useful office position to have. Ambassadors again often would confer with the Assistant Deputy Secretary in terms of the performance of the RSOs but just generally getting maybe a second opinion on a number of things. I found the position very interesting, very satisfying. In my role in Panama, although I was based in Panama City, I traveled extensively throughout Mexico and Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, an enormously large region. If we look at the early '80s, there were some interesting things happening. Manuel Noriega, the military dictator of Panama at the time, although it did have a nominal civilian president, later was apprehended in Operation Just Cause

when then President Bush engaged in military operation in Panama to apprehend Noriega on the basis of his connection to drug cartels. So, there was the experience of operating in Panama during the Noriega years. You've got to remember that in 1982 about the time I was going to Panama, the Sandinistas were alive and well in Nicaragua. There was literally a war throughout Central America with the exception of Panama and Costa Rica. The Contra period was somewhat controversial. Then there was the guns for hostages and all the interesting things that were going on during that period. Of course, in the early '80s, we still had Augusto Pinochet, the dictator in Chile. You had a number of countries that were moving from dictatorial governments to democratic during the period that Ronald Reagan was President. We were having a lot of threats against our people in probably 12 countries – Brazil, Argentina... In '82, the British and the Argentines went to war over the Malvinas islands. That was short-lived but was a military action. Central America was primarily our biggest concern.

Q: So often Mexico is a world apart. Was it part of your beat?

LEE: It was.

Q: We'll come to that. But let's talk about Central America at the time. Talk a bit about how Noriega was seen by you on the security side and your relationship with the DEA.

LEE: You could probably talk to 30 people and you might get 30 different explanations about Manuel Noriega. First of all, he really was a product of the U.S. military mystique. He was trained by the U.S. in different forms. He probably was a military access point for the U.S. Defense Department for a number of years. Probably when he was getting a lot of training in the United States and elsewhere, no one really thought that he was going to become this dictator who ran Panama, where we had a very heavily military presence to begin with. The drug trafficking allegations had always been there during the period that Noriega was establishing himself as a dominant figure in Panamanian politics. It became clear that he was working behind the scenes, manipulating civilian presidencies and what have you. During the Reagan and the Bush years, it became very clear that Noriega's connection with drugs was a real problem. It was a real problem for the U.S. because it literally had positioned Noriega to be where he was. At that particular juncture, it became appropriate from a foreign policy standpoint to sort of neutralize Noriega's involvement in drug trafficking. The DEA has always played a very active role in foreign policy in Latin America, particular insofar as drug interdiction and anti-trafficking programs. We could talk for hours about the effectiveness of it either in Latin America or Asia or wherever. It's pretty clear that drugs are produced in a number of developing countries throughout the world, much of it in Latin America. Colombia is a big transient point for coca paste in Bolivia and Peru and a number of other countries. What is interesting about the Noriega period is that while there was an awful lot of drugs passing through Panama under the control of Noriega and his relationship with the Colombian drug cartels, there was very little drug use internally. After Noriega was sort of neutralized, taken to the U.S., tried, put in prison, where he continues to be, drug use actually has escalated in Panama. There probably is as much drug trafficking as there ever was. It's just that other

people are handling the process. Whether you eliminate a Manuel Noriega or not, the realities of drug trafficking are always going to be there.

Q: Going to Mexico, it had such a close relationship with us. It's a big country, sort of the colossus to the south at least within the Northern Hemisphere. What were your concerns? We had such close ties at every level – FBI, whatever you think about. We have long-term relationships. The government at the foreign policy level seems to be one place where we have disputes. But in other cases, there is a lot of cooperation.

LEE: Mexico is an extraordinarily interesting country and not just in contemporary times but going back 50-60 years after the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Our embassy there has always been one of the dominant embassies in the world, mainly because of the amount of trade between the U.S. and Mexico. If we look back to the period that I was in Panama, things in Mexico were doing reasonably well economically. We had very few threats against our people in Mexico. The criminal threat in Mexico City was relatively low. And yet if we look at that period, corruption has always been a dominant concern of the United States. As years went on, we would find the drug connection to be interwoven in the corruption and in the way in which the country actually operates. The North American Free Trade Agreement [NAFTA], which unfolded in the mid-1990s-

Q: As you're working on security, did you find in dealing in Latin America, where corruption was getting to be major, did you find this spilling over into our operations? One, corruption is a political phenomenon that we observe and are concerned about. Two, corruption is one where if it starts tainting our people, then...Did you find that there was much of a spillover?

LEE: I think we were seeing it spill over from the standpoint of the consular function. When you begin to look at political corruption, assuming that there isn't a deterrent to that, you then begin to see it spill over into the issuance of visas, passport fraud. The one unique link to what was going on in Latin America was the increase in drugs. There is a correlation between drug trafficking and visas and passports. So, probably unlike previous years prior to '82-'85, we were beginning to see a sophistication level of fraud where people wanted visas, they wanted passports, and one way to do that would be to get to a local employee who could be coopted, who could either provide information or make a dent in the way the system works or ease the possibility of fraud occurring. The most obvious evidence of corruption that might be endemic to a political-(end of tape)

Q: I would imagine that since the rebel forces were so busy with each other, we were sort of to one side?

LEE: I think that's true. I would basically call many of our embassies in Latin America caretaker operations where there was not that much going on at a policy level in terms of either development within the country... When you consider that you have either wars or major insurgency in 2/3 of the region, you really could do very little development of an economic nature. The drug trade was beginning to really escalate. That was becoming a policy concern for us. Then of course the rebel violence, which was potentially

jeopardizing the safety of our people. You did have some major issues going on, but from my perspective, you just didn't see that much really going on from the standpoint of establishing democracies, although that was a major agenda of President Ronald Reagan.

Q: Ronald Reagan made a trip through Latin America. Was that during this period?

LEE: I think the last major event...Of course, Bill Clinton has been to Latin America. Richard Nixon was really the one president that probably visited Latin America the most. I do think Ronald Reagan made some visits.

Q: He made at least one, I think.

LEE: Yes.

Q: But it didn't raise any particular...

LEE: No. I think what many Latin Americans feel is that the U.S. government has never given them proper recognition as a neighbor, as maybe they should. We spent a lot of time in Europe and Asia, but Latin America is the kind of place that we always somehow forget about.

DAVID MICHAEL ADAMSON
Deputy Political Officer
Panama City (1984-1987)

David M. Adamson was born in Connecticut and educated at Swarthmore College and Tufts University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1974, he first served in Vietnam, following which he served in a variety of foreign posts in France, Panama, Portugal and Honduras. During his several assignments in the US Mr. Adamson worked on matters of a political-military nature, including arms control, nuclear proliferation and Soviet issues. In 1998 He served as Faculty Member of the Inter-American Defense College. Mr. Adamson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: When you got there in 1984, what was the evaluation of Noriega, by the embassy, your colleagues, and that you were developing, too?

ADAMSON: Noriega was a difficult guy to read. There were very different interpretations of him. He had had a close, direct relationship with the CIA. He still had that when I first arrived. He was on their payroll - I think he valued the symbolism more than the money, which would have meant little to him at that point - and would see the station chief with some frequency. He spoke with him pretty candidly. When push would come to shove, he would generally be helpful to the United States, but Noriega played all angles. When it suited him, he cozied up to the left. His primary concern, I think, in the end was not ideological, but simply maximizing his own power and influence. The

ambassador read him as highly undesirable. His connections to the drug trade became clearer over time. There was always the suspicion that he was involved in a range of nefarious activity, more than a suspicion. It was well-established that the senior echelons of the military were highly corrupt. I think the drug link didn't become clear until sometime after 1984. But there were always fears to that effect. Our relation to him turned, to some degree, on the traditional argument, "Well, he may be an SOB, but he's our SOB." Then, there were others who felt that he was not only an SOB, but someone who really wasn't in our interest to see remain in power.

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Regional Labor Officer
Panama City (1985-1988)

Frederick A. Becker was born in Missouri. He graduated from Washington College in St. Louis, and Berkeley and Claremont Graduate Schools. After entering the Foreign Service in 1975, his postings abroad included Bucharest, Brasilia, Quito, Panama City, and Managua. He was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: How about drug money and drugs? During this time was that an increasing problem or how was that seen?

BECKER: There was a very active and large DEA presence at the embassy. They were cowboys for the most part, in the sense that they operated from my perspective with pretty much a free hand, without a great deal of ambassadorial or embassy oversight. There were always innuendoes that senior government or military officials were involved in the drug trade, but there were never any real smoking guns. DEA was very much concerned about transit of drugs between the drug producing countries -- Peru, Bolivia and Colombia -- and the United States. Panama has been a transit country for drugs. It's always been a center for international commerce, both licit and illicit. Contraband drugs, illegal aliens, you name it, and Panama was a narcotics way station that DEA was intent on shutting down.

Q: Did any of these DEA operations sort of blow up in our face or not while you were there?

BECKER: Not that I recall. I must say I was not in the center of the counter-drug activity. I had other portfolios, DEA didn't cross my path that often, nor I theirs, except at the end of my tour.

Q: This is tape six, side one with Rick Becker. Yes, you were saying you had a DEA story.

BECKER: I have a DEA story. In 1987 U.S. policy took a fateful step after any number of initiatives to negotiate with Noriega. But let me back up and let's work toward the DEA story, okay?

I was preparing to leave. I wanted to sell my car. Panamanians didn't have any cash. I certainly wouldn't accept a check from a Panamanian. I didn't find any buyers in the diplomatic community, so I went to the local Mercedes dealer. The only time I ever owned a Mercedes and I couldn't sell it. I offered the dealer a commission if they found a buyer and they did. The gentleman showed up on my doorstep and said he wanted to buy my car. He had the cash to pay, and he didn't want to bargain. My antennae went up. I had expected a buyer to come from the diplomatic community, somebody who had access to money outside the country. But this was no diplomat. His dress was very flashy. He was wearing chains around his neck, rings on his fingers, and had an earring. He was a well spoken, smooth operator. I was as much a victim of stereotypes as anyone else in that moment. Instinct told me to have this guy checked out with our law enforcement people. They found out that he was a mid-to-major level Panamanian drug dealer. DEA and its Panamanian law enforcement counterparts had been trying to get this guy for some time. DEA proposed that the car purchase be set up as trap, with my car as the bait. I was assured that I would be perfectly safe and that I would be allowed to retain the proceeds of the sale. That was important to me even though who knows where the money came from. Once the sale was completed and I was out of the picture, Panamanian law enforcement would follow him and grab him. I felt I had done my civic duty. I had identified a major drug dealer and the authorities would simply observe the transaction and follow up. The day of the sale came. I went to the dealer to sign the transfer documents. I walked away. I had obviously been tailed by both DEA and the Panamanian police. Somebody got very itchy, and I had hardly gotten off the premises and they moved in and grabbed him as he was buying some mag wheels for his new car. Definitely bad taste!

I was irate. I was extremely irate, and quite nervous. I had a wife and two children, whom DEA and the Panamanian police had put at risk of retaliation by local drug lords. I felt that my agreement with DEA, that I would not be connected to this operation, had been violated. I took my complaint all the way to the DCM, who called in the DEA agent-in-charge for an explanation. I requested that my family and I be allowed to advance our departure from Panama by two months. I argued that I don't want to be around here when this guy's friends start putting two and two together and decide that the car sale was the critical element. All of my concerns were basically dismissed. After all, we had a significant drug dealer in custody, and our counter-drug cooperation with Panama was intact. My request to accelerate my family's departure from the country was rejected. One of the most whimsical if not the strangest element of this sale was that the buyer brought the money to the embassy and allowed our budget-and- fiscal officer to count it. There was no attempt at that time to grab him when he was on U.S. territory, which I didn't want anyway. I wanted the sale to take place as far away from the U.S. official presence as possible. To see a budget officer counting the dirty cash that the guy had brought in to pay for my automobile underscored the absurd reality that our sanctions were not affecting those who had illicit sources of U.S. dollars.

ARTHUR H. DAVIS, JR.
Ambassador
Panama (1986-1990)

Arthur H. Davis Jr. was born in Brockton, Massachusetts. After serving in the military during WWII as a weather forecaster, he worked for Pan American Grace Airways and United Airlines. After becoming active in local Denver politics, he was elected county chairman of the Republican Party in Jefferson County. He was appointed Ambassador to Paraguay by Ronald Reagan, served as a Latin American advisor to the US delegation for the United Nations, and served as Ambassador to Panama. Davis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

DAVIS: But then Senator Kerry from Massachusetts said, "Mr. Ambassador, there have been a lot of statements that the Panama Defense Forces (PDF) are neck-high in the drug trafficking," and so forth.

And I said, "Look, all I know is that I have seen nothing in all my briefings to show me any indication that the Panama Defense Forces are involved in drugs. But certainly, if anybody is involved in drugs, the embassy under my control will certainly make every effort to put a stop to it, whether it's drug dealing or money laundering." And I got to him there, he said I was interfering.

And so Noriega's Assembly (he had thirty-nine members of the sixty-five Assembly) got together and voted thirty-nine to nothing to declare me persona non grata. They asked the president to withdraw my name and cancel my agreement.

Q: Before you went out there... The assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs by that time was Elliott Abrams. Very controversial figure, particularly in dealing on the matter of Nicaragua and the so-called Iran-contra affair. How did you perceive him, and what sort of instructions did you have?

DAVIS: My instructions were very tough, because I was briefed one way by the CIA and the military, and by the State Department in another.

Q: Okay, compare and contrast.

DAVIS: Well, of course, Elliott Abrams and Ted Briggs both thought that Noriega was a monster, that he was up to his neck in drug trafficking and drug dealing. He and his men were into all kinds of corruption in Panama: they ran the Customs, they ran the ports, they ran the aviation, they ran the immigration, everything was done by the military, and more and more they were taking over the railroads. The only thing that he was smart enough not to get involved in was the Panama Canal.

Now the military asked me not to form any opinions until I got down there. And Noriega had always worked with them. And there were a lot of rumors going around, but they had never seen any proof of drug dealing. And please don't go down there with a negative approach.

Q: Well, what was your impression, as you were there and on the ground, and with your contacts and all, about Noriega and his activities?

DAVIS: Well, there was no doubt that Noriega was making a lot of money on a lot of things. And all I know is that, all the time I was there, Noriega and his drug person, a gentleman named Kiel, cooperated one hundred percent with our people. Anytime we had a ship that we wanted to be interdicted on the high seas and we asked permission, they gave permission. In fact, it was practically a blanket one; we did it out of courtesy. Anytime there was some prominent drug man coming up and we knew about it, Noriega would help us with it. And when we found out about things, the PDF would go over there and round them up and turn them over to us. In fact, they were almost too cooperative in some cases, because they'd bring them out to the airport and want them to be put on a plane and flown the United States. And, you know, a couple of cases we almost lost because they felt we'd kidnapped these people. And Noriega always stressed to me at every meeting, "I want to let you know that my people were never involved in drugs." We didn't know, but everybody there in Panama--everybody in the State Department, everybody in the military--were convinced Noriega and his people were letting these drugs go through. Every now and then things would pop up. And Noriega was laundering money, we knew that. But the proof was never really made public.

Q: How did you evaluate Noriega?

DAVIS: I didn't really see Noriega, for good reasons, for the first few months I was there. But there was no doubt you're not going to get much done or make much progress in Panama unless you did start to meet with Noriega.

And I said, "What I want is a democracy where the people rule and the people make the decisions. That's what is best for everybody."

And he said, "Well, we will work towards that."

We went back and forth. He asked me about why I'd made the statements I did. I told him what I had made. I said, "Look, when it came out in the headlines that I had made remarks about the drug trafficking by the Defense Forces, all I did was in answer to questions, saying that I had heard rumors about that, too, but I had seen no proof. And if you look at my thing, you'll find out I said I had seen no proof, but when I get down there, no matter who's involved in drugs, I certainly will do my best to stop them from doing it. I think you people will agree with that."

And he said, "Yes, we don't like any drugs here. We cooperate with you people on drugs."

They kept getting letters from Lawn, the head of the Drug Enforcement Agency, extolling their virtues for their cooperation on drugs.

Q: How were relations with Noriega from then on?

DAVIS: Well, as I said, I still met with Noriega. I went and argued about harassment and some of the things he did with the people; I asked him to have more concern. I met at the president's palace with Archbishop McGrath and a representative of the legislature and Noriega's people, urged them to let them go out on demonstration; they're not going to cause you problems, they're going to march peacefully. He didn't do it. They beat hell out of them. But we were still meeting, and we continued to do that. August was the last big thing, and after October, they quieted down.

But then, of course, they were working on Noriega's indictment. And so, in February, when the indictment came out...

Q: This was back in the United States.

DAVIS: Yes, in Tampa and Miami. Now President Delvalle had made a statement to the *Los Angeles Times*, in the fall of '87, that if Noriega or anybody on his staff ever got indicted for drugs anyplace in the world, he would remove them from office. So we immediately reminded him of that, and he made the decision to do it, but it took him a long time to do it. Finally, on the twenty-fifth, he removed Noriega from office. And, of course, Noriega turned around and held an Assembly meeting, and they threw out Delvalle, and they threw out Escavalle for good luck (he hadn't been involved) and put in their own man, Solis Palma. And so from that time on, I had no contacts with Noriega whatsoever.

It went on, and the blessing came at the end of '89 when the opposition got united, because we really didn't think all those different diverse groups would get united. But through the leadership of Arias Calderone and Billy Ford and Endara, they agreed Endara should head the ticket, and that helped, and they came in with a united slate and stayed united all through the election.

Q: Today is July 3, 1991, and this is the second interview with Ambassador Arthur H. Davis. Last time, Mr. Ambassador, we were talking about the events that lead up to sort of basically shutting off relations with the Panamanian government, although you were still in Panama. Noriega had been indicted and so on, and then everything just sort of ceased, although you were there. With this indictment of Noriega, were you sort of following this on a daily basis, and were you getting sort of legal advice from the Department of State, and what were your relations with the Department of State while this was developing?

DAVIS: Of course, this was developing through the entire year of 1987, and I think it was in September or October where they felt quite confident they would be bringing in an indictment. Then evidently they felt that they needed more solid evidence, because it looked for a while in the first part of '89 as if they didn't know whether the grand jury was going to indict. I knew that it was up, but both the State Department and the embassy received only a few days' notice that it was going to come down, I think it was on February 5th. So we did get that warning.

JOSEPH R. MCGHEE
Deputy Political Officer
Panama City (1987-1989)

Joseph R. McGhee was born and raised in Pennsylvania. He attended Yale and Columbia University and entered the Foreign Service in 1975. He served in Rome, Prague, Panama City, and Bonn. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: As the new boy on the block more or less when you arrived, what were you getting both prior to your going off from the desk in Washington and as soon as you arrived, what were American interests there?

There was a heavy tempo of operations out of the U.S. bases there of both supporting a variety of anti-narcotics and training missions further south in Latin America. Also there was a certain amount of activity involving DEA, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and quite frankly there was some Contra business being done there by the Agency. The Southern Command had about six or seven thousand personnel stationed in Panama plus three times that number of dependents, many of them living off base. I would say there were about 7,000 living off base. They had personnel scattered all over South America and the last thing that the Southern Command needed was to have its base of operations wracked by civil disorder. I would say that their view of the democracy movement in Panama was ambivalent at best. The Agency had a very close relationship with General Noriega who prior to becoming a commander of the defense forces had for 12 years been the chief of intelligence for the Panama defense forces. That meant he had worked closely with them on any number of things.

Q: What was your job? You say you were number two in the political section, what was your job? What were you doing?

McGHEE: For a country of its size, the political section was quite large. We had a labor officer whose job was to really follow labor issues involving Panamanian unions that worked in the former Canal Zone. We had a pol-mil section with two officers, then we had your classic political section doing internal and external. I was in charge of the internal and external although with the upheavals that occurred in the months after I arrived at post, my role changed somewhat because the United States undertook an effort to negotiate Noriega's departure from Panama.

Unfortunately at about that same time a couple of prosecutors in Florida indicted Noriega for drug trafficking. It rather undermined Washington's contention that we were prepared to offer Noriega a safe retirement somewhere abroad. Noriega was no fool. He realized that his safest place was right where he was right now running Panama. Nevertheless the State Department continued to pursue this negotiation effort and pursued it through a special envoy, a guy named Mike Kozak who was selected to do this essentially because he had worked on the Canal treaties and then therefore was held to have known Panama.

JOHN A. BUSHNELL
Chargé d'Affaires
Panama City (1989-1992)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogotá, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997

BUSHNELL: While the embassy, as a matter of policy, had no contact with the Noriega government, these other US agencies had hundreds of official dealings daily with the Noriega government, governed by the treaties under which we managed and defended the Canal and the military bases. Moreover, there were hundreds of social and other informal contacts daily. Part of the Treaty arrangements provided for a transition during which the US and Panamanian military occupied some bases jointly. Thus their offices or barracks were sometimes in adjacent buildings or in a few cases in the same building as the US military. The civilian government Noriega controlled, but did not micro-manage, was neither incompetent nor regularly violent. Most Americans found the Panamanians they worked with and had been working with for many years nice and reasonable people. Most American residents of Panama opposed the Treaties because the Treaties would eventually end their jobs and way of life, and they generally did not understand why the U.S. was so opposed to Noriega. His services to the Colombian drug lords were of course not generally visible. Yes, he had cooked an election, but almost every election in the history of Panama had been cooked in one way or another. Thus I quickly saw I had an immense job to get the US side in Panama lined up and sending a consistent message to Noriega and his people. Noriega, of course, was not formally head of State. He was just the commander of the Army, which included the police. There was a civilian government with a Congress and a President which was elected periodically. Previous to May 1989 Noriega had managed to have his candidates win the presidency and a majority in the Congress, partly by financing the strong political party Noriega had inherited from Torrijos and partly by dividing the opposition by means fair and foul. But in 1989 the three main opposition parties had gotten together, with some help from us, and run a single list for president and the two vice-president positions against Noriega's candidates. When Noriega saw his people were about to lose, he stopped the vote counting. This interference with the election and the violence that followed provoked the U.S. and many other countries to remove their ambassadors and curtail relations with the Noriega government.

Q: So then Noriega took over.

BUSHNELL: He didn't immediately take over. Then Lt. Colonel Noriega was head of intelligence in the last years of Torrijos – most of his career he was as an intelligence officer. There were several officers that were more senior and held command positions in the Panamanian Guard as contrasted with Noriega's staff role. But Noriega had been increasing his power at the expense of Torrijos for some time, and after the death of Torrijos Noriega took advantage of every opportunity to increase his power as the more senior officers struggled with each other and in various ways self-destructed, sometimes helped by the invisible hand of Noriega. Noriega finally took over as commander of the Guard in August 1983. In late 1981 and early 1982 after the death of Torrijos, although I was no longer a DAS in ARA, some of my Central American and Panamanian friends urged me to get the U.S. to work actively in favor of alternative Guard officers because of Noriega's close ties to the Cubans. I raised the issue a couple of times with Assistant Secretary Enders and DAS Bosworth. They authorized me to arrange a few small things, but Noriega effectively disabled any opposition to himself in the US government at that time by providing support with the Israelis for the Nicaraguan contras.

Q: You said that he was a drug trafficker. Just what did that mean?

BUSHNELL: I never learned the details of Noriega's arrangements with the Colombian drug lords. He was convicted in US courts of cocaine smuggling to the U.S. with several witnesses indicating that Pablo Escobar, head of the Medellin cartel, paid Noriega so much per kilo of cocaine shipped through Panama (\$400 was a common figure). He made long-lasting deals with the drug lords allowing them to use Panama to move drugs and money; the Guard he commanded provided protection, as did his thugs. The drug lords with whom he cooperated paid him well. Others who tried to use Panama in the drug business were prosecuted or turned over to our DEA.

Q: Money laundering mainly or moving drugs.?

BUSHNELL: Moving drugs northward to the U.S. and laundering plane loads of drug cash through the banks in Panama back to the Federal Reserve in Florida. Noriega's relations with the drug lords were not always harmonious. At times he was afraid they would have him killed. At some times he tried to reduce the scale of drug operations to reduce US pressures.

Q: And was there conclusive evidence of that?

BUSHNELL: Yes, everything he had done could not be laid out in the Florida court, but there was enough evidence of his role in the drug trade that an American jury convicted him; he was sentenced to 40 years, and his appeals have failed, although the sentence was later reduced to 30 years.

Probably the big change in the Panama internal situation came not with Noriega taking over the Guard in 1983 but with the killing of Hugo Spadafora and then the firing of President Barletta in September 1985. Spadafora was a physician-revolutionary from a

leading and well-known Panama family. After getting a medical degree from the University of Bologna, he joined the guerrillas in Guinea-Bissau in the late 1950's; he returned to Panama to write a book about his adventures while taking up leftist causes. He was an outspoken critic of Noriega for many years both in public and in private. He was probably the first publicly to accuse Noriega of drug smuggling. Torrijos supported and protected Spadafora, but when Torrijos died, Noriega had Spadafora detained so he could not attend the funeral. Spadafora left Panama in 1982 to fight with the guerrillas in Nicaragua. But soon he was attacking Noriega in statements to the press from Costa Rica. In September 1985 he announced he was returning to Panama with lots of evidence on Noriega's corruption, much of it supposedly from American government sources. Noriega's people picked him up soon after he crossed the border and soon beheaded him, delivering the body but not the head to his family. There was a great outcry from right, left, and center because everyone assumed Noriega had had this Panamanian hero killed. Noriega was in Europe at the time, but of course in touch with his people by phone.

Q: Certainly by the summer of 1989, about the time your assignment came through, the Bush Administration was thoroughly disillusioned with Noriega?

BUSHNELL: Yes, absolutely. The Bush Administration wanted Noriega out; it wanted to stop the narcotics business using Panama as a base; it wanted a return to democracy. During 1988 and 1989 the Administration had tried everything anyone could think of to change the situation in Panama. There was a long secret negotiation trying to strike a deal with Noriega under which he could go to a European country and live comfortably and undisturbed. Arrangements were even made with a country, and plans were made to avoid the pending court cases in the U.S. making a problem. Finally, he refused, claiming the drug lords would kill him if he stopped protecting their operations and the "golden bridge" would not protect him in Europe. There was then hope that uniting the opposition for the regularly scheduled 1989 election would install an independent civilian government. After the election failed, we intensified efforts in the OAS to bring pressure. There was a lot of cooperation; almost all the Latin countries recalled their ambassadors at least temporarily, and several resolutions were passed. But Noriega controlled the guns in Panama except those on our bases, and he paid little attention to the international opposition. Within Panama the three brave men who had won the election continued opposition as best they could. Endara staged a long hunger strike in the display window of a store on the main street. As he was a large man many kilos overweight, his public extreme diet was somewhat of a joke at first; but he persevered long enough to keep Panamanians reminded that, but for Noriega, they could have a prosperous and democratic future. The U.S. blocked Panama government funds in the United States. The Panama Embassy in Washington was opposed to the Noriega government and was financed from the blocked funds. The Panamanian economy was declining fast as the political situation discouraged investment except by the drug lords, and even they stopped buying apartment buildings and other assets in such an uncertain country. Unemployment was growing fast, and the Torrijos safety nets for the poor were breaking down. However, Noriega was distributing ever larger monthly loyalty payments to the senior Guard officers, at least \$20,000 a month for majors and above, usually delivered in cash US dollars. Of course he thus needed more drug money to finance his corrupt

enterprise while still building his own fortune abroad with the help of the corrupt middle-eastern bank, BCCI.

Q: And what kind of instructions did you have when you went?

BUSHNELL: Not much. I was well aware of what the NSC deputies and even the principals were thinking. But there was no diplomatic plan similar to the military plans. The objectives were to stop the drug trade and help reestablish a functioning democracy in Panama. It was clear Noriega would have to go to accomplish these major objectives, and bringing him to trial in the U.S. was an additional objective. If Noriega were to venture on to a US base or go to a country where we could extradite him, there were contingency plans to grab him, but even these plans were pretty general. There was more policy on what not to do than what to do.

Q: Who was Girolodi?

BUSHNELL: Major Moises Girolodi was the head of security for Noriega's headquarters. He seemed to be exceptionally loyal to Noriega. He had played a major role in blocking a coup attempt in March 1988. He was reported to be a quiet officer. He had had a dispute with Major Sieiro, Noriega's brother-in-law, about which of them should run a Guard training academy. Normally Noriega would have fired him, but instead he promoted him. He was one of the few Guard members allowed to carry a submachine gun when with Noriega.

Girolodi's wife had made contact in early September with the U.S. through a friend who was an American secretary working in the CINC's intelligence unit. Arrangements had been set for mid-September for two or three Guard officers to meet secretly with a couple of CIA officers; Mrs. Girolodi had asked for a meeting with Southern Command decision-makers. However, General Woerner's staff was leery of Girolodi as it knew little about him. In Washington we paid little attention, particularly when no one showed for the meeting. This was not the first approach about a possible coup, and Noriega, the master of dirty intelligence operations, was prone to bait the Southern Command even while trying to befriend some of its officers. Moreover, since every senior Guard officer was benefiting from large amounts of drug money and most did their share of dirty tricks for Noriega, in Washington there was concern that a coup against Noriega might not accomplish our objectives – just substituting one Guard dictator/drug-runner for another.

I met with many bankers to urge them to stop laundering drug money, and I even implied that the U.S. was looking at potential sanctions against laundering banks. The banks had many problems; all were losing deposits because of the political uncertainty. To overcome people's fears that the security situation could deteriorate any time, many banks, including branches of American banks, transferred all their sight deposits to their Cayman branches or associates each night, bringing them back the following morning. In December I did a very restricted circulation cable suggesting that we announce we would ban any bank in Panama we believed was laundering drug money from making any wire transfers through the Federal Reserve system and that we try to get cooperation from the

Europeans for a similar ban on the Swift system. Almost all wire transfers worldwide use one of these two systems, so such a ban would largely put a bank out of doing international business which was the big profit center for banks in Panama. Our military action resolved the issue before my proposal was fully staffed in Washington.

Now, to go back, you asked about my instructions. It was clear from all the policymakers I had talked with in Washington that the objective was to get Noriega out so we had at least a chance of stopping the drug and money laundering business and a chance to work with a friendly democratic government on canal issues. Everyone's gut reaction was that we should increase diplomatic isolation and tighten the economic sanctions to force economic decline. Although I worked in these directions, I also reported that we were about to lose ground. Several countries were about to bring back their ambassadors, and our efforts to get the OAS to authorize tougher steps was getting nowhere. Noriega seemed to be able to get increased amounts of drug money and, more important, borrow from the banks in Panama to slow or even halt the decline in the economy. Thus our measures were not likely to do the job. We could hope and pray that there would be another coup from within the Guard. I had even been approached very gingerly about such a coup, but Noriega was very brutal with any opposition, and his good intelligence was not likely to fail him again as it had in October. Moreover, the Cubans were playing a greater role in supporting and protecting Noriega. The only plan I knew of that would end the Noriega regime was the one General Thurman had developed.

I was concerned that Noriega was getting more sure of himself while at the same time he seemed to be more in the hands of the various mystics to whom he gave great credibility. The existence of the democratic opposition and the civic groups that would bang their pots and pans was more than a minor annoyance to him. He was trying to clamp down on the opposition. Digbats would confiscate the banging pots, for example, and several opposition activists were imprisoned. I was concerned that Noriega would decide to get rid of one, or all three, of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, who had really won the election. We had arranged for personal bodyguards and for limited security training for their security details, and we provided communications equipment. But these men lived in Panama; in the final analysis they were at Noriega's mercy. Also once I was in Panama, I began to understand that the digbats were a bigger problem than anyone in Washington seemed to realize. There were a lot of them, although we did not know how many. Intelligence placed 600 on the payroll of the electric company alone; several other state enterprises and even a couple of ministries had substantial numbers. Moreover, there seemed to be others, perhaps some part-timers, who were completely outside the government framework and paid from the drug money, and the number was growing as Noriega hired digbats as a way of limiting unemployment in the two main cities. We began to get reports of Guard officers, and even Cubans, training the digbats and providing them heavier weapons, even rocket launchers.

Q: In the Congressional briefings were you making it clear exactly what our ends and options were?

BUSHNELL: The tack I took was to describe the political and drug situations and say that we were trying to find some way other than a major military operation to solve this problem. I said it was hard to find effective options especially as diplomatic isolation was not tightening and the economic decline mainly affected the middle and upper classes which already opposed Noriega. I welcomed any suggestions, but members generally agreed we were between a rock and a hard place. Noriega won't leave; he won't change; he won't let Endara take office. I would tell them I was very worried every time there was a maneuver and we had our 19-year-olds with their guns aimed at their 18-year-olds lined up with their guns aimed at our troops; that's a very touchy situation. Every member agreed war was just a finger slip away. Some would ask, "Why do these maneuvers?" Other members would reply that we had a national obligation to exercise our treaty rights, strengthened at the insistence of Congress. I would point out that maneuvers were an additional way of putting pressure on Noriega, as well as of keeping our troops fully prepared should something happen. The Congresspersons left with an appreciation of the difficulty of the situation and of the nefariousness of the drug and money laundering activity and its effects on US streets. None ever suggested that they would favor a different approach, although some commented that our military should have seized some earlier opportunity to oust Noriega.

Q: That's a lot of money.

BUSHNELL: Right, and its not one-dollar bills. It gives you an idea of the extent of the drug money laundering in Panama. If you look at the data, Panama was shipping US currency to the Federal Reserve at the rate of something like 75 to 100 million dollars a month. Moreover, Panama was the cheapest place for central banks in Latin America to get US bills. Panama, of course, is unique because it operates with US money. The US dollar is the currency there. Aside from one-dollar and smaller coins, there is no Panamanian currency; it has been a completely dollarized area since Panama separated from Colombia. The rest of Latin America has a great demand for dollars because, not only do people buy dollars to use when they travel, but many Latinos buy dollars to keep in a mattress or a safe to protect value from local inflation or restrictions on convertibility. Because Panama had to pay to ship the money to Miami anyway, the Panama banks would pay part of the cost to ship to Buenos Aires, Lima, or Bogotá, making Panama the cheapest source, although some central banks preferred to buy dollars from the U.S. even at slightly greater cost. In fact, I tried to come up with some ideas or get somebody to give us some ideas how we could refuse to take all this cash from the Panama banks which we knew was mainly from drug money laundering. But it's awful hard for the Federal Reserve to refuse to take genuine dollars, so nobody ever came up with a plan.

This incident was just one dramatic example of what was going on. We knew from many sources that money was being flown into Panama direct from collection points run by the Colombian drug lords in the United States. However, our enforcement effort was on planes bringing drugs into the United States, not on planes taking the dollar proceeds out. Congressmen would say, "Those are the dollars from the drug trade that is killing the kids in my district, and we have to do something." They hadn't decided just what had to be

done in Panama, but their visits to Panama prepared them for whatever had to be done. Thus there was almost universal Congressional support when President Bush did launch the large scale military operation.

The next morning I checked with Thurman to see what additional information intelligence had produced, basically nothing. I suggested that he and I review all the bits of intelligence that afternoon. When we got into the sources with the intelligence staff, I learned the report was from a DEA source in the States, and the only local intelligence corroborating any part of it was a report given the embassy by a source of the FBI agent who had been removed in the draw-down. This report claimed a welder, who had been brought in from Colombia to prepare compartments in cars of departing soldiers for drug shipments to the United States, was now preparing five car bombs. I suggested the obvious – that the source be pressed hard on the precise whereabouts of the explosives. That evening Thurman called me to come back to the tunnel where the SOUTHCOM command post was located well underground. A report from the same source had just arrived indicating where the explosives might be – a warehouse or light industrial plant in Panama City. Thurman's question was what do we do. The intelligence suggested the explosives belonged to Colombian drug lords, but we knew Noriega was closely linked to them. I thought Noriega would have to be involved for anyone to bring that much explosives into Panama. Among other things, Noriega would have had to worry about someone blowing him up. The intelligence staff wanted to go to the Guard and get the Noriega police or military to check out the facility where the explosives were supposed to be. They argued that, even if the Guard already knew about the explosives, our approach would result in the operation being called off. I argued the Guard did know and, while our approach might delay any planned operation, it would result in the explosives being moved to another site unknown to us where it could be used against us a little later. We could at least observe this site.

But what else should we do? We could stage a maneuver in the area, but that would not tell us what was in the building and at best would delay the operation only for hours. The military could not break into a private building in Panama even if it were unoccupied, and we did not know it was unoccupied at night. I assumed that any criminal with that much explosive would guard it 24 hours a day. I asked if someone had contract Panamanians who could enter the warehouse. A couple of men, not US government employees, did get into the building late that night. They did not find explosives, but they did find cars being modified with secret compartments. We were not solving the problem. Thurman asked to have the DEA agent who filed the original report come to Panama, and I arranged to join Thurman's meeting with him the next afternoon. Meanwhile, we had another day of intense security on the bases and at the embassy.

By this time Washington was very seized with this problem. Aronson asked if we should close the embassy and move everyone to a base or even send many employees home. At about this time the Colombian drug traffickers had blown up several buildings in Colombia with large explosive charges, and State seemed to see this threat as related. State authorized me to close down the embassy, but I thought this DEA report may have been a Noriega trick to close a bothersome embassy.

Q: On Sunday about five-thirty in the afternoon you got a call from Jim Baker.

BUSHNELL: I spent the afternoon in the embassy working on my plan to deny Panama banks which laundered drug money access to wire transfers. I needed something to keep my mind off the discussions I imagined were going on in Washington and the potential results any decision would have in Panama. I got a call from Secretary Baker on the secure line. He said, "John, you seem to know more about all the military planning than anybody in the State Department does, than I do, but the President has agreed to launch something called Blue Spoon late Tuesday night. There are only two people in the entire State Department who are going to know about this, and we are on this phone.

Operational secrecy is essential to success. Your job is to have a government standup as the troops land. Can you do that?" I said, "I think so. Those that were elected are brave individuals; they want to rule, but they don't want to be killed. When they understand the concept of Blue Spoon, they will do their duty." He said, "There are going to be a lot of things you're going to have to deal with, so I'm your desk officer. You can't talk to anybody else about this. Anything you need, anything you want done, call me anytime. Thurman knows about this obviously, and there'll be a few others who will know the thing's set, but very few people will know that it's a go." That night I got together with Thurman, just the two of us, to make the necessary plans.

Q: Did you sleep well?

BUSHNELL: I slept pretty soundly four or five hours a night, because that's the only time I had to sleep and I was pretty tired. I don't recall any problem sleeping, but there was an awful lot to think about as well as pursuing the normal routine. I really had to adopt a schizophrenic personality. For example, on the Tuesday we had a meeting of the Panama Coordinating Committee which had been scheduled a couple of weeks before. McAuliffe was there; Thurman came for the first few minutes, then left his number two in charge. There were maybe 15 people at this meeting, and only two or three of us knew Blue Spoon was on. This was expected to be an important meeting because we were moving to a decision to put US troops into the housing areas where American Canal employees lived. Most of these areas were adjacent or close to US military facilities, but they didn't have US military protection, and both crime and harassment incidents were increasingly frequent. The Panamanian Guard and police were responsible for protection and were providing less and less. Thus the proposal was to have regular and frequent military police patrols under our treaty maneuver rights through these areas. Such action would be an insult to Noriega and might generate a strong reaction. However, failure to improve canal employees' sense of security for themselves and their families would soon result in fairly massive departures of American employees, some of whom were essential for smooth operation of the canal. Thurman's deputy, an admiral, and myself were the only people that knew the entire main subject of the meeting was irrelevant because things were going to change very quickly. But we had to go through with total seriousness discussing this plan in great detail, making the decision to recommend it to Washington, setting up committees to perfect the planning, and another committee to work on the public presentation.

Also on that Monday, I was scheduled to attend a lunch organized by a group of Panamanian businessmen, who were generally opposed to Noriega but also very concerned about the deteriorating economy. I had accepted the invitation because I wanted to use this event as well as several others to try to get responsible Panamanians thinking about economic policies and actions any post-Noriega government should take to speed up economic activity and substitute legal productive activities for the drug business. In short, even before the events of mid-December I had wanted to get the Panamanian opposition thinking about what they would do if they came to power. I was trying to get the President and the two Vice Presidents to think about people who might be in their government and getting small groups doing some homework, working with the numbers, getting some policy ideas so that, if a change came, they'd be ready to go. A second advantage of promoting such concrete thinking about governing was that it raised the morale of the opposition. Guillermo Chapman, who organized this lunch at his home, was probably the strongest Panamanian on the detailed workings of the economy and the meaning of the economic statistics. Some of the other guests were close to the elected but denied officials. Some I did not know.

Q: What happened on Tuesday evening?

I had arranged with the Secretary that, once I had obtained the agreement of the elected leaders to take over, I would telephone him and he would tell President Bush. I did not think the operation would be called off in the unlikely event that they refused to take over, but it would still have been possible. One of the tasks in the top secret military orders in support of the embassy was to have a secure phone available to me at the Officers' Club. About 7:45, once it was clear we had a new government, I excused myself and went to call. "Where's the secure phone?" Several communicators were there, but they had not yet gotten the secure line working. I went back to the table, and we continued planning. Technicians would come to the safe house at 10:00 to record initial messages from each of them for broadcast on an AM radio station that was being prepared as we talked. They discussed what each would say. In 15 or 20 minutes I went to the phone again. It was still not working. I said, "I really need to talk to Washington. They're sitting on pins and needles waiting for me to call. Call me as soon as it's working." We continued planning. The new leaders would write a letter to President Bush laying out their program of government, especially their commitment to stop the drug business.

Q: What was the biggest problem you were working on at that time?

BUSHNELL: By Thursday afternoon and evening the biggest problem, other than not having Noriega, was establishing some law and order in the city. The Panamanian police force had been an integral part of the Guard. Many officers moved from Guard to police assignments and back as did some lower ranking personnel, although many of those directing traffic and chasing the pickpockets did police work most or all their careers. With the attack, police had disappeared from the streets. The digbats and common thugs, and it was hard to tell the difference, had taken over the streets. Leaders would break into

a store or factory, steal the money and some other valuables, and then invite the general street population to help themselves. The US military did not want and was not equipped for a policing function. The military had limited Spanish speaking capability; their weapons were too deadly; we did not really want our soldiers shooting kids who seemed to be stealing groceries. My plan before the operation was that those guards who normally performed police functions would be retained. Few, if any, of them were involved in Noriega's drug business or dirty tricks. I proposed this to the new leaders. In their division of responsibility Arias Calderon had justice, security, and the Guard; Ford concentrated on economic matters; Endara focused on foreign and political affairs. It was a good division of responsibility. Keep in mind that during the first few days there was no depth to support any of them.

Q: This is Thursday, December 10th, 1998. Last time we covered the period up to Christmas 1989, but we did not deal with Noriega who was on the run. Despite your explanations, I remain utterly baffled about the character of Noriega and changing US attitudes toward him. Once he was a staunch US ally. He remained on the CIA payroll apparently for years after the US government discovered he was helping the drug lords. How do you explain that?

BUSHNELL: I don't think Noriega was ever an ally of the United States. If you are in the intelligence business and you want to get information about scoundrels, the main place to look is other scoundrels. This talk about his being on the CIA payroll is misleading, but he was paid for information. At first he was paid as an individual; later he was paid for cooperation while for many years he was the head of intelligence in Panama. Noriega developed a large intelligence system which reached well beyond Panama, and he provided reliable information on things beyond Panama to the United States. He knew more about scoundrels in Panama, of whom there are many, than anybody else and sold this information to other intelligence agencies, not just the United States. Of course he doctored what he sold to others to protect his operations and his friends. I think the best way to look at Noriega is that he was always an intelligence operator, double, triple, quadruple agent, playing his games and making his way up quickly through the military in Panama.

After Torrijos' death he was not immediately a contender for the top spot in anybody's view but his own. It was only after several other officers had the top job but encountered various sorts of problems, some of which people think Noriega had a role in causing – I don't really know – that he, more by default than anything else as the last senior guy around, moved into the top position in the Panamanian military. Then he proceeded to consolidate his position with the advantage of his many years of intelligence operations and dirty tricks. It was his background in intelligence which gave him entree to the drug cartel, to the Cubans, to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, to the CIA. His many years of developing his contacts and information exchanges with people all through the hemisphere served him well when he moved into the top job in Panama and increasingly into the hands, or at least acting as though he was in the hands, of the drug cartel.

BUSHNELL: It was not the result of a change in US administration. There was a cumulative effect as he took more and more dictatorial actions and as his links with the drug lords became both greater and clearer to us. During its last two years the Reagan Administration worked hard to get Noriega out of Panama once it was clear he would not separate his government from the Colombian drug lords. As I mentioned earlier, I had no success in late 1981 and early 1982, while in over-complement status, in getting Enders and Haig to devote some effort to building up what would have been reasonable alternatives to Noriega. Recently I learned Casey and Dewey Clarridge during that period were strengthening the CIA relationship with Noriega which was weakened during the Carter Administration. Of course the focus of Washington during 1981 and 1982 was on Nicaragua and El Salvador, and Noriega probably was helpful on these issues while using increased US support to advance his power quest at home. At this point he and Panama were minor factors in the drug business, and the USG thought he was largely on our side. For a long time there had been reports that Panama was being used for drug money laundering and for the movement of drugs. It was only in the mid-1980's that Noriega greatly expanded the Panama drug business and these reports became more credible and the reported volumes became much larger. Then the Reagan Administration had to go through the process of learning that Noriega would not really work against the drug lords and that he was himself at the heart of the Panama drug problem. By 1987, as the Federal court in Florida was preparing his indictment, the Reagan Administration realized that Noriega himself was personally responsible for killing American kids in the streets with drugs.

Q: If the Reagan Administration saw what a problem Noriega was, what did it do about it?

BUSHNELL: There was a major effort bilaterally, with a few others such as the Venezuelans, and finally through the OAS and economic sanctions, to try to get him out. For many months Kozak and others tried to negotiate, as they put it, a golden bridge that would permit Noriega to live in a European city and benefit from his money without US efforts to extradite him if he would just have free elections and leave. These efforts involving a deal were of course not public. Thus by the middle of 1989, on the one hand it was increasingly clear no diplomatic option was working, while on the other hand there was increasing evidence of Noriega's anti-democratic and murderous actions and his assistance to massive money laundering and large scale drug smuggling. Moreover, it was increasingly clear that we would be endangering the smooth operation of the canal to continue the treaty program of turning it over to a Noriega-controlled government and that Noriega was an increasing threat to American citizens in Panama. Thus the Bush Administration was forced to look for something else, including improving war plans in case they became necessary.

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BUSHNELL: There was a major effort bilaterally, with a few others such as the Venezuelans, and finally through the OAS and economic sanctions, to try to get him out. For many months Kozak and others tried to negotiate, as they put it, a golden bridge that would permit Noriega to live in a European city and benefit from his money without US efforts to extradite him if he would just have free elections and leave. These efforts involving a deal were of course not public. Thus by the middle of 1989, on the one hand it was increasingly clear no diplomatic option was working, while on the other hand there was increasing evidence of Noriega's anti-democratic and murderous actions and his assistance to massive money laundering and large scale drug smuggling. Moreover, it was increasingly clear that we would be endangering the smooth operation of the canal to continue the treaty program of turning it over to a Noriega-controlled government and that Noriega was an increasing threat to American citizens in Panama. Thus the Bush Administration was forced to look for something else, including improving war plans in case they became necessary.

Q: Operation Just Cause was a stunning military success, but what were the political consequences?

BUSHNELL: The full history isn't written yet, but I would say it was also a political success. The international objections to our use of the military died down within a few days, especially as we very quickly withdrew our forces and it was obvious we were turning all power over to a civilian government which had been elected by the Panamanian people the year before. The Endara government cooperated in slowing the drug business, for example agreeing to a tough judicial assistance treaty. I was disappointed that DEA had much less evidence than I had hoped so we could not move

effectively to punish the banks in Panama that had been laundering money. The Endara government was a coalition of three of the four major Panamanian political parties. Once they had power and Noriega was gone, there were more and more disputes among the three parties, especially when elections approached after three years. The coalition did not hold together for the election, and the opposition party of Torrijos and Noriega won. However, after the arrest of Noriega and the dismantling of the Guard that party was taken over by moderate politicians who made it a middle-class democratic party appealing to the poor – not much different from two of the other mainline parties. Democracy was working and consolidating.

Q: How did you resolve the problem of reestablishing law and order in Panama?

BUSHNELL: Two days after the attack the situation was chaotic. There were no police; many criminals had been released or escaped from jails; poor people, and some not so poor, were looting everywhere; various neighborhoods had organized for self-defense and were shooting at approaching unidentified people; private guards and potential looters were killing each other; the fire department would not go into the dangerous streets to fight fires. The biggest immediate problem for the new government and for the US government was reestablishing law and order. I discussed earlier how the new government invited members of the Guard who had experience as policemen to come back to work after swearing an oath to be loyal to the new democratic government. Some officers returned from exile and/or retirement to provide leadership, and later junior Guard officers who had not been involved in Noriega's illegal operations were added. I had arranged with General Thurman for joint patrols of the new police and our military. Despite the heavy fighting at the Traffic Building where I had been Friday morning, numerous police were sworn on Friday afternoon. Joint patrols began operating by the Saturday after the Wednesday morning attack. These patrols stopped the worst of the looting, but they were not equipped to recapture those who departed the jails, nor to deal with family problems and the many everyday issues handled by any police force. The American MPs who, along with special forces, were assigned to joint patrols generally did not know the language and did not have civilian police experience.

One afternoon as this soldier/police operation was just starting, Thurman called me to ask that I telephone the mayor of Phoenix, Arizona, who was distraught that he was losing 5 or 6 policemen. I called and explained the chaotic public safety situation we faced and what we were doing to resolve it to make sure the drug business stopped and there were no problems for the canal and other US interests. His main concern seemed to be that we were taking his best policemen. I said, "Precisely, only the very best can do the tough job here." I promised that we would not keep his men more than a couple of months. Finally he said, as one politician to another, that he needed to quote me so he could justify the situation to his constituency. I was told Thurman and Cheney had numerous such calls, not to mention all the difficult family situations caused by activation of these reservists. During January and February we did let some reservists go home early for family reasons; one offered to work two shifts a day for 20 straight days if we would then let him go home; we agreed. In fact at first most reservists worked double shifts; some lived in the police stations.

Q: Even after you got the government basically functioning, of course, there were big economic problems. The Panamanian economy was in pretty bad shape even before the invasion. Were there a lot of big problems getting the economy moving again?

BUSHNELL: Yes, sometimes we had conflicting objectives. By Christmas I wanted to get the banks open, get government employees back and paid, and let market forces move the economy. However, the DEA agents, who were arriving in force, wanted to keep the banks closed while they looked for drug money. Someone in Washington suggested paying the government employees in cash which we would fly in from the States. Remember Panama uses our dollar as its currency. I agreed as soon as I clarified that the US government would fully pay for the money and pay the shipping. A large shipment of small bills was made from Texas. I recall sending an embassy officer to accompany a major security operation Thurman organized to bring the money from the US Air Force plane to the Central Bank where it was sent to various ministries to pay the year-end bonus to government employees. Washington struggled to get economic sanctions against Panama lifted. This sanction lifting should have been routine, but some sanctions were legislated and required Congressional action and/or Presidential waivers and other time consuming procedures.

Q: As a matter of fact, some Panamanians had apparently expected a quick infusion of financial aid from Washington. That didn't really happen. Congress finally passed a so-called emergency aid package toward the middle of 1990, but it was a relatively small amount in comparison to what Endara expected.

BUSHNELL: I don't know what Endara expected. The big thing the U.S. did for Endara was to allow him to take office. Of course Endara welcomed any assistance in getting the economy going and replacing the drug business with productive economic activities. None of the new government leaders ever suggested to me that the U.S. owed them anything for taking over the positions for which they had run and been elected. In our discussions we addressed together problems and how to solve them. At first the U.S. had lots of resources and the Endara government was not yet really functioning. As time went on more and more solutions were found in Panamanian government actions, and the US role was reduced. Of course Endara and his colleagues expected the U.S. to lift all sanctions and return to a normal situation. Probably they also expected economic assistance of an emergency nature given the chaotic situation they inherited. They felt some reimbursement for war damaged and looted property would be just.

Q: On what major issue do you think you personally made the greatest difference?

BUSHNELL: Without doubt the biggest and most important long-term issue on which I was the fulcrum was the decision to abolish the armed forces, making Panama only the second Latin country without a military. Of course the purpose of Just Cause was to destroy the Panamanian military which was the tool used by Noriega to control the country and the drug business. The assumption in the US military was that we would reconstitute, train, and probably equip a new military to protect Panamanian national

security and defend the Canal. In fact the military had been identifying so-called “good” officers in the Guard to be the core of such a new force. CIA had been working with some exiled officers with the same end in mind. Needless to say, I did not have much confidence in the military’s or CIA’s ability to identify “good” officers given their long history of working with and being used by Noriega. On the Panamanian side there had been little thought on the military issue. Certainly the new government and civic action groups did not want a military that might ever again hijack democracy, but most Panamanians, like most Americans and other Latin Americans, seemed to work on the assumption that countries have military establishments, much as they have a currency, a flag, courts, and foreign embassies.

STANLEY ZUCKERMAN
Director, Latin American and Caribbean Affairs, USIA
Washington, DC (1989-1992)

Mr. Zuckerman was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and educated at the University of Wisconsin. After service in the US Army, followed by newspaper reporting and a position with the Governor of Wisconsin, he joined the USIA Foreign Service in 1965. He subsequently served as Information, Press and Public Affairs Counselor in Congo, Belgium, Mexico, Canada and Brazil. He also had several senior level assignments in Washington at USIA and the State Department. Mr. Zuckerman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: Let’s turn to Panama. When you arrived, what was the situation particularly with Noriega and all that?

ZUCKERMAN: This is hard for me to remember because for a long time Noriega was one of our favorites, despite his corruption, until he ran afoul of our concern about the growing drug problem. It wasn’t long into my tenure that in the middle of the night I got a call saying that we had gone in with military force. I had to call the then deputy director, Gene Kopp, wake him up about two or three in the morning. He wanted to know why we weren’t given a heads-up by State. It was an embarrassment for me, but all information had been very closely held. Edward R. Murrow once said to his counterparts at the State Department when he was director of USIA: “You have got to let us in on the takeoff and not just the crash landing.” And that was never truer than in this instance. Certainly the invasion of Panama was having repercussions all over Latin America. We just played catch up. We got someone before dawn over to the task force, and had someone on that task force throughout that crisis. It was not that difficult a public affairs problem within Panama after it was over because Noriega didn’t have that great a following in his own country. It was a plutocracy and everybody knew it. I don’t know how much better off it is today, but presumably the drug matter is somewhat more under control. Drugs were the issue as far as we were concerned in Panama, but also in many countries in Latin America where drugs were either grown, manufactured, or transported.

Q: Could you do anything to respond to the problem?

ZUCKERMAN: In most places we were aiming our efforts at the widespread phenomenon that countries involved in the drug trade inevitably found the epidemic spreading to their own children. In Brazil, before I arrived there and while I was there, the post had developed a strategy of enlisting the efforts of the wives of state governors to head a campaign warning young people of the dangers of drugs. The program was started by our post in Sao Paulo, and they got a number of governor's wives involved to good effect. But nonetheless, drugs were flowing into Brazil, at that time, from Bolivia, and found their way throughout the country. Rio was probably the most affected. There were materials produced in USIA which reflected the same theme – handle the stuff and your children will suffer – but in truth, I don't know how much an effect our efforts achieved.

Another effort we made was to enlist the energies of the governments of the Andean and other countries, but first of all the Andeans, in coordinating our information efforts to curb drug use. I think we succeeded in five countries in signing memorandums of cooperation between our government and theirs. Peru and Colombia were the first to sign, and several others came along later. It was not a transformative undertaking, but we were able to help them by sending our materials to them in Spanish so that they could use them as a basis for their own campaigns, modifying them to address their own situations more precisely. We also used speakers from the appropriate US agencies, either as traveling speakers or on WorldNet, to bring audiences of professionals in the field up to date on what our thinking was on how to turn the tide. But the DEA and others responsible for the effort were in very close contact with their counterparts abroad, so we didn't try to program to the professionals.

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Panama City (1999-2002)

Frederick A. Becker was born in Missouri. He graduated from Washington College in St. Louis, and Berkeley and Claremont Graduate Schools. After entering the Foreign Service in 1975, his postings abroad included Bucharest, Brasilia, Quito, Panama City, and Managua. He was interviewed in 2004 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: While you were there, did you have anything, I mean let's say they took a cruise ship or something, was there any police force or something that had SWAT teams or something of that nature?

As the problems of Colombia worsened, and as we intensified our training of Colombian armed forces and police to go after the drug lords, the leftist insurgents and the right-wing paramilitaries, Panama became much more important to some of us at least as a potential staging area for these violent groups. Panama was an area where these groups had established branch offices, shall we say, were collecting money or were operating businesses, the profits of which were funneled back into Colombia. These Colombian groups were deeply engaged in international criminal activities of various sorts,

particularly drug and arms trafficking, auto theft, smuggling and all kinds of profit making activities. Panama was a safe haven in one respect, because the Colombians who were conducting illegal activities in Panama did not want to upset the apple cart by targeting Panamanians or others on Panamanian soil, but simply wanted to use Panama as a base of operations, a very profitable base of operations. We felt that one of the best and most effective ways of strengthening Panama as a bulwark against international terrorism and terrorism was to help train their law enforcement community -- their land forces, their maritime service and their air forces -- as well as their intelligence gathering capability and judicial process, because the fault lines were in the area of criminal conspiracy rather than actual military threat.

Q: Well, then how did you find the government of Panama at the time from the president on down?

BECKER: The Panamanian government that I dealt with then is now out of office. We at the embassy, and in Washington, shared the general perception that that government, although basically pro-U.S., was inept, corrupt, and largely devoid of direction or vision. President Moscoso was the widow of a longtime Panamanian political *caudillo*, who had been deposed by the military four times after having been democratically elected president. She had been groomed as a First Lady and probably perceived herself as the rightful heir to privilege, even though she herself was not a child of privilege. She was narrowly partisan, and proved incapable of reaching across partisan political lines within Panama in order to build a consensus. She treated government as a source of patronage and self-aggrandizement for herself and her party. She had a few very good people working for her, but she also had some advisors and ministers with their own personal agendas. It was exceedingly difficult to establish a relationship with that government based on trust, reliability and mutual interest between sovereign states. I may seem unusually harsh towards that government, but it was extraordinarily difficult at times to get things done, even when we agreed on a common outcome. Frequently our most reliable, forward-leaning interlocutors were either not in positions of highest authority or their good-faith efforts were stymied by the machinations of others. The embassy tried to work closely with the maritime authority director to strengthen port security in the post-9/11 period, but we continually ran afoul of self-interested second-echelon appointees to the authority whose primary goal was to extract personal profits from the transit of vessels and the registration of Panamanian flag vessels. Panama has the largest merchant fleet in the world, and the sale of registrations is a major revenue generator for the government and for the officials who do the paperwork. It was very difficult to get the Panamanians to clamp down on their own registration process so that it could not be corrupted or used for nefarious purposes.

That said, we established some very fruitful law enforcement relationships in other areas. The embassy had six U.S. law enforcement agencies under its umbrella, and they generally worked very effectively and harmoniously with their professional counterparts in Panama. Despite the passive resistance of the Panamanian immigration service to fundamental reforms, we eventually made progress in helping the Panamanians to strengthen airport surveillance and security. The Panamanians were highly embarrassed

when three Irish Republic Army activists transited through Panama and ended up in Colombia, where they advised the leftist guerrillas in bomb making and other techniques that the Colombians had not used in the past. The Panamanian authorities had no way of knowing who was crossing their territory and for what purpose. Panama's international airport was a transit point for international flights to at least five, maybe seven, U.S. cities. We knew that ships transiting the canal also presented a potential threat to U.S. ports, and we worked very vigorously with private port operators, some of whom were American firms, to tighten port security measures. We worked very closely with the Panamanians to clamp down on drug and stolen auto trafficking through Panamanian territory, and we negotiated several agreements that strengthened cooperation between our law enforcement agencies. The U.S. Coast Guard was a major player in developing the capabilities of Panama's maritime service. During my tenure in Panama, we transferred a half dozen used U.S. Coast Guard frigates that were excess to our own needs. With our assistance, the Panamanian maritime service became one of the most credible law enforcement units of its kind in the region, even though the political leadership above that institution was less than reliable.

Q: By the time you left there when?

BECKER: I left Panama in the summer of 2002. We still had no ambassador.

PARAGUAY

THOMAS F. JOHNSON
Rotation Officer/ Student Affairs Officer
Asuncion (1968-1971)

Thomas F. Johnson was born in Illinois and was educated at Union College and the Free University of Berlin. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967 and has served in various posts in Paraguay, Germany, Liberia, Mexico and Singapore. In Washington, DC, Johnson served in the USIA as Inspector, Deputy Director of Acquisitions and Area Personnel Officer for Europe. Mr. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: You were the new boy on the block, what was our feeling toward Stroessner?

JOHNSON: He was a sort of caudillo. "Big Al", as many of us in the embassy called him, had grown with his job. He was an excellent politician with a common touch. Even the lowliest "campesino" could show up at the "Casa Presidential" and wait patiently. Eventually he would get his interview with Stroessner, who was not himself corrupt. He lived modestly. He attended state functions with his homely wife and spent the nights in a small house out near the airport with his mistress, whose photo was never in the papers. A single jeep with a couple of bodyguards followed him to and from home.

When a subordinate got too greedy he might find himself transferred to the a lonely station in the Chaco or perhaps a meaningless post abroad. There were, however, several figures in the government- including a general who later became president- who were completely above the law. Paraguay was rapidly becoming a major transit point for narcotics.

Q: Regarding narcotics, how big a role did Paraguay play in narco-trafficking during your time there?

JOHNSON: First an aside about a little cloud that hung over my position when I arrived. My predecessor and the State Department junior officer trainee were kicked out of post for bringing in marijuana seeds through the diplomatic pouch. They shared a house and for some reason fired their gardener who got back at them by telling the administrative officer, who doubled as the post security officer, that they were growing more than petunias in their garden.

One of my political contacts told me that a general was growing a lot of marijuana on his farm. I was skeptical and asked for proof. A few weeks later when I returned to my office after lunch, my secretary told me that my contact had stopped by and, finding that I was not in, left a bag on my desk. I read the newspaper for a while ignoring the bag. Finally my curiosity got the better of me and I opened it and found about of 100 grams of marijuana. Fortunately the Marines, who had swept my office for unsecured classified material, had not opened the bag. I announced to my secretary that I had forgotten something at home, and with the bag securely tucked under my arm, headed for the airport- a long lonely road. When no cars or pedestrians were visible I dumped the bag into a ditch and returned to the embassy. I asked my political pal not to leave anymore presents on my desk.

As for drug trafficking in and out of Paraguay, until 1971 the embassy was apparently unaware that one of the biggest smugglers on the continent was operating at the edge of Asuncion. Frenchman Auguste Joseph Ricord, a former Nazi collaborator, was smuggling a ton of pure heroin to the USA annually through Paraguay. I don't recall how the embassy found out about him. We did not have a resident DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) agent. Ricord was living in an unassuming home and, as I recall, operated a restaurant as a cover for this operations. He was arrested by Paraguayan authorities in early 1971. The U.S. wanted him extradited to face trial in our country however we had no treaty with Paraguay governing drug trafficking. Ricord was an embarrassment to the government in Asuncion and the Frenchman's demise probably could have been arranged without too much trouble. "He tried to escape and...." However Washington wanted him alive for interrogation. Ironically the case was assigned to the judge who was the husband of the embassy Spanish teacher. This particular judge happened to be one of the really honest men on the bench in a country where justice was often for sale. Meanwhile, Ambassador Ylitalo was a by-the-book former FBI agent. Thus as far as Ylitalo was concerned everything had to be perfectly legal. Meanwhile Washington was going nuts trying to get its hands on Ricord. I don't know how extradition was arranged because it occurred after I departed for my next assignment. The story had a happy ending: Ricord

was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 1973. I hope he did every day. [For details on the case, read Evert Clark's and Nicholas Horrock's Contrabandista, Praeger Publishers, 1973.]

ROGER C. BREWIN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Asuncion (1969-1972)

Roger C. Brewin was born in Columbus, Ohio. He entered the U.S. Army in 1944. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami in Ohio in 1948 and a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1950. Mr. Brewin joined the Foreign Service in 1951. His career included positions in Switzerland, India, Bolivia, Paraguay, Iran, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: What were American interests in Paraguay in the early '70s?

BREWIN: One interest which came to the fore was the drug interest. We had an interesting case. The Embassy became for all purposes a "one issue" Embassy. We tried to get our hands on one man -- August Ricord, a Frenchman -- whom we thought initially was being protected by the government. This became a real problem for the Ambassador in terms of his relations with Washington and for the Ambassador in terms of his relations with his staff. It was a difficult time. We got our man after sixteen months of badgering the Paraguayans. He was given a thirty year sentence by a court in Miami, of which he served about seven and then returned to Paraguay. It was a difficult period.

Q: The Ambassador during this period was J. Raymond Ylitalo. What were his problems with Washington and his staff?

BREWIN: The problem with Washington was trying to convince it that he was being as vigorous as it thought he should be in getting the suspect turned over to the United States. Washington's view was that Stroessner ran the country and therefore he could give us the man we wanted. The issues of due process and the Paraguayan courts and the extradition process that the Paraguayans kept raising were not credible, in Washington's eyes. Eventually Washington had to acquiesce and had to let the Paraguayan court system do its will. But Washington frankly felt that Ylitalo was not being zealous enough in pursuing this interest. Washington was absolutely stunned as we were at the post when the court found in the first instance in favor of Ricord. It found that the extradition treaty between The United States and Paraguay didn't apply to drug offenses. This was impossible for Washington to believe that such a decision could have been made without it first being cleared with Stroessner. We finally got over that hurdle and eventually we got our man, but not before we had to break some crockery.

GEORGE W. LANDAU
Ambassador

Paraguay (1972-1977)

Ambassador George W. Landau was born on March 4, 1920. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942-1947. He joined the Foreign Service in 1957. Ambassador Landau's career included positions in Uruguay, Spain, and Venezuela, and ambassadorships to Paraguay and Chile. He was interviewed by Arthur Day on March 11, 1991.

Q: This would have been the first embassy since the break?

LANDAU: That is right, we had a chargé, and I would have been the first ambassador. I wrote my wife from the Defense College trip that there were only two places that I would rather resign than go, one was Dacca and the other was Calcutta, and here I get this offer. So I came home and told my wife about the great honor that was bestowed on us -- tentatively -- and she pulled out the postcard I wrote to her. I said "Well, I will just have to swallow my statement because you don't turn it down if you get it offered." As it turned out the White House did not look with favor on this for reasons which had nothing to do with me, it had to do with that Bangladesh and Pakistan had to be filled at the same time and the White House did not like the man who was recommended for Pakistan so the deal fell through. I was not all that unhappy because about one month or six weeks later I was nominated for Paraguay where I spent five years. It was an interesting post. There my former military relations came in good stead. I had a good relation with President Stroessner. This is one of the basic things that people do not seem to understand. When you are assigned somewhere you may not like the government, you may not like the person you deal with, nevertheless you must have a solid relationship if you want them to do things for you. All I wanted to do, all I was instructed to do was either deal on narcotics matters or deal with human rights violations.

Q: That is one of the questions I wanted to ask you about your assignment there. What instructions were you given before you went?

LANDAU: When I left for Asuncion in 1972 I was sent there because the Department was unhappy with my predecessor who had not wanted to go there. He was an excellent Finnish speaker, but Finland was filled with a political appointee so they gave him the next available post. Paraguay was the hub of drug traffic, but not the drug traffic that we know now, it was still the European-Corsican connection. There was a Corsican drug smuggler by the name of Ricord whom we wanted extradited. It was very difficult. My predecessor got him extradited, but at great cost and the Department decided to change him and I was sent instead. The only instruction I got in 1972, and I went over to the White House had to do with cleaning up the drug traffic. In 1972 the words human rights were never mentioned. When I got to Paraguay I found out that a lot of people were in jail without charges and some had been there for fifteen or twenty years, but I must say I did not get a single inquiry from the Department or Congress for the first year and a half. Then all of a sudden it became very, very much the new thing.

ARTHUR H. DAVIS, JR.

**Ambassador
Paraguay (1982-1985)**

Arthur H. Davis, Jr. was born in Brockton, Massachusetts. He served in WWII where he received training as a meteorologist leaving the service as a warrant officer and weather forecaster. Later he was elected county chairman of the Republican Party in Jefferson Count. Davis served as the Ambassador to Paraguay in 1982 and later served in Panama. Mr. Davis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: There wasn't really a concern about a Communist uprising or takeover or that sort of thing?

DAVIS: No, no. I tell you, our big concerns, of course, while I was down there, were Mengele, and drug trafficking.

Q: Well, you said the Mengele case was one thing, and what was the problem?

DAVIS: Well, then, of course, with the northern outlets for Bolivian cocaine, we had a serious problem with cocaine being brought down through Paraguay into Argentina or into Brazil, and we had to, you know, keep on our toes on that.

Q: Well, did you have a sort of a narcotics unit at the embassy?

DAVIS: No, we had one in Argentina and one in Brazil, who came in periodically.

Q: What sort of reaction were you getting from the Stroessner government about this problem?

DAVIS: Well, Stroessner kept telling me how he was ready to fight any way he could against drugs. He never mentioned this to me, but his boy, Freddy, was involved in drugs and still feeling the effects of a bad drug experience, way, way back, probably in the '60s or '70s. And, although he always pledged his support, we also had great indications that many of his military people were involved in it.

**CLYDE DONALD TAYLOR
Ambassador
Paraguay (1985-1988)**

Ambassador Clyde Donald Taylor was born in Columbia in 1937. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Wheaton College in 1959 he received his master's degree in interdisciplinary studies from American University in 1961. His career has included positions in Panama City, Canberra, San Salvador, Teheran, and an ambassadorship to Paraguay. Ambassador Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 1996.

TAYLOR: So there was plenty to do, even though we didn't have big trade or many other policy issues. We had the narcotics issue to work on, certainly, because it was a transit country for drugs and chemicals used in drug processing. It was also a country where there was a lot of laundering of money. We bordered Bolivia, so both Argentina and Paraguay got a lot of the overflow of its drug trade.

So when we left, we felt that we had, taking into account the rather complicated environment, accomplished our goals of encouraging and supporting those who were being courageous in the human rights/civil rights area, building the apolitical programs, defending our interests, advancing the narcotics questions and the like. Oh, yes, we got the DEA office reinstituted. And, although it was a turbulent period, I took with me and continue to have some terrific friendships. President Stroessner was overthrown three months after I left, and the subsequent Congress invited me to come back, sent me a beautiful letter, so it was, I still have very good feelings about that country.

JAMES F. MACK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Asuncion (1986-1989)

Mr. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin American where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: How did we deal with the Government itself. Did we go to the various Ministries and other active services?

MACK: We would seek Foreign Ministry support on various international issues, which I cannot remember at this point. We were always politely received, but as I recall we were not particularly successful in pushing our brief. One big issue we did have was narcotics smuggling. Paraguay was a transit point for Bolivian cocaine because of the porousness of the borders, the availability of landing strips all over the place. This was complicated by having a corrupt government and military that was complicit in smuggling. If you could smuggle whiskey you certainly as heck could smuggle cocaine or whatever you wanted to smuggle.

In fact, while I was there I took it upon myself to convince the DEA to reopen its office due to Paraguay's role as a narcotics transit point. So drugs were an increasingly sensitive issue for us. To say that we solved any major problem at the time, I would say no. Paraguay was not the location of major foreign successes of the U.S. at the time.

Q: Well then '89 you left?

MACK: '89 I left.

JON DAVID GLASSMAN
Ambassador
Paraguay (1991-1994)

Mr. Glassman graduated from the University of Southern California and Columbia University. He served in numerous posts including Madrid, Moscow, Havana and Kabul. He was named ambassador to Paraguay in 1991. He was interviewed by Peter Moffat in 1997.

GLASSMAN: It produced cotton and had an abundance of electric power. One of its primary features is that it served as a kind of entrepôt for contraband entry into high tariff countries such as Argentina and Brazil which are its neighbors. One of the principal functions of the military was to protect this traffic and derive protection payments for this. In this contraband traffic, in addition to whiskey, cigarettes, perfume, electronic goods, and computers, we kept hearing persistent reports that narcotics were included. In Paraguay, there's no cultivation of narcotics but it's immediately adjacent to Bolivia which is one of the two principal coca sources in the world, and we of course were trying to press the Paraguayans to control this traffic. They said all the right things, they said they were doing it but we came to notice procedures were notably below that of their neighbors. For instance, one of my years there, the Brazilians seized seven tons of cocaine, the Argentines had seized one ton and the Paraguayans had seized 47 kilos. They were seizing a lot of marijuana which was a lot less valuable commodity, so we would bring this up with Rodriguez, urge him to cooperate and he would say the right things again but again, but it looked like they were turning a blind eye to the trafficking. We were later to discover exactly how this contraband traffic worked on electronics. They would bring it in from Miami, break it down in smaller loads, drive them out in trucks to the clandestine air strips in the eastern part of Paraguay where they were put in warehouses and re-pack the smaller lots, which were put on small planes which were then going into the outskirts of Sao Paulo and Rio, then transported over to Argentina as well. Now in Brazil the traffickers, Nigerians and others, would then transfer it into West Africa and then move it into Europe as well.

This was an interesting transit route.

Rodriguez, the President, had overthrown the 35 year dictator Stroessner. He had been clearly part of Stroessner's group, one of his daughters was married to Stroessner's son, so the idea that he was making some real change was far-fetched. Because of his tawdry past and possible connection with narco-traffic, we thought it would be better if he departed the Presidency. First of all, Rodriguez, of course, wanted to stay on. He tried to delay the election and we organized a sort of campaign which brought in the church and business people who pressed for holding elections on time. We were successful in generating that kind of popular mood, then a constitutional amendment passed, not by our

instigation, but preventing him from running again for reelection. He contemplated a coup but didn't do it. Things looked like they were going swimmingly, so the ruling party had a primary election at the end of 1992. Rodriguez, after recovering from this terrible disappointment, said, "I'll hand pick a successor, I'll arrange the military hierarchy in such a way that I'll continue to have control even when I'm not president, and we'll hand pick a successor." He chose one of the wealthiest men in the country who had benefitted from the corruption. They held the election, the primary election. Even though they wanted it to be fixed, that didn't quite work and the wrong man won. This was a terrible thing, and they stopped counting; one of the key players in the military told me that they're going to fix the count. They couldn't do it, they had to stop things, just terrible and this was New Year's Eve at the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993. I received someone in the office who said, "The military is going to do a coup, they're going to put in the right person who should have won." So I inquired around, and confirmed the coup report with four or five people. We contacted the Department and were instructed to approach President Rodriguez and the leading figure in the military General Oviedo and tell them that this should not happen and if it happens we're going to cut off all United States support. We did that, and the Paraguayan military seemed intimidated. In fact, General Oviedo, when we called on him, said, "The only thing I presume is that the United States must be landing troops at the airport." Finally, the coup didn't occur; however, a statement was made in which the Paraguayan press suggested that the United States was behind the coup. So I issued a public statement that the United States not only did not support a coup but condemned one. The State Department got very upset at this because they said I'd been authorized to make a behind-the-scene approach but not authorized to come out publicly. So I was censured on that, told to stop appearing so much in public. This was still under the Bush presidency.

In the meantime within the ruling party, instead of having a coup, payments were made by the military and the "right man" won the primary nomination. As these events happened, Clinton was inaugurated. They had to move some of the Ambassadors but I was mentioned as one of the people that would stay on.

In Paraguay, the ex-President was sent down to observe the general election. There were some attempts at intimidation but the ruling party sent out some of the Generals who told the people that they would lose their civil service positions if the opposition won. They were able to mobilize what appeared to be a credible majority. The new president-elect was a wealthy man named Juan Carlos Wasmosy. We had a dinner with him to talk about the narcotic trafficking problem. He said, even though Rodriguez had played a clear role in his victory, he was prepared to cooperate with the United States and crack down on the narcotic trafficking. No one would be out of reach. We of course welcomed that. He also mentioned to me that he was going to change the military so that Rodriguez' hold on the military would be removed. He was inaugurated. The Administration sent down Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala. They had a nice meeting. Everything looked like it was moving along. President Wasmosy told us that, not only would he crack down but he'd allow the United States to choose the new drug czar. We gave him three names, and he chose an honest General. Things for the first hundred days

looked very good and the new drug czar was starting to investigate a lot of really high level involvement.

It looked like a very promising situation, but one day the President called me over to his house.(It's right across the street from our compound.)He told me, "You know something strange, there's an officer out here from the counter narcotics directorate that says they're starting to investigate me and General Oviedo." I said, "Well, I could possibly understand Oviedo but I'm sure he's probably not investigating you Mr. President." He said, "You check." I checked, they were looking at the military and Oviedo but not particularly the President. The President said, "Fine, we continue." Then a few weeks later he called me again, he said, "You know this drug czar we put in there is talking to my opponents within the ruling party." So I checked it out through the DEA," and told him, "No it's not true." I said, "Mr. President why don't we have a meeting in the Palace, we'll have your military advisor, you, let's bring in the drug czar, you can ask him anything you want." He did and he said, "Are you meeting people in the oppositions?" He said "Absolutely not, Mr. President, I'm a hundred percent behind you." So the President said, in my presence, "I can tell you that no one here is immune. You investigate, you have total freedom of action." He said, "That's fine." So three weeks passed and the President called me up, he said, "You know, I'd like you and Francesca, your wife, to join me and the Ambassador of Brazil and the Papal Nuncio on a special family occasion. We're going to fly to the southern part of Paraguay where we're going to a monastery where my son is buried. He died at 17 prematurely; we'd like you to participate with me in a Mass. It was really an intimate family occasion. We flew down there and it was a terribly moving thing, the President's wife produced these letters from their son and there was crying. We visited his grave, then we went to this little airport to board the President's plane and somebody ran over to me and showed me a piece of newspaper. The article said the Deputy head of the counter drug forces had been removed. I said, "Mr. President, please explain." He said, "Not to worry. I'll explain to you when we get back to Asuncion." We went back and the following day they removed not only the deputy but also the head drug czar. We held a country team meeting and said, "What should we do? This shouldn't take place with the United States remaining silent." The press came up to me at an event during the day and I said, "It's a pity if honest people are being removed." So, of course, they went to the President. They had this mammoth headline "The American Ambassador doesn't rule, we rule." A very nationalist reaction of course. I was called into the foreign ministry. The State Department asked, "What are you doing?" I said, "You have to make this public."

President Wasmosy next said to me, "Not to worry, we're going to name an honest man." For example, he said, "I have this other man named Rodriguez, another civilian, perhaps he could be named drug czar." I said, "Mr. President, this man was a campaign advisor to one of the leading traffickers in the country, the Governor of the Eastern Province." Wasmosy said, "Not to worry, we'll get someone else." So he came to me about a week later and said, "How about my private secretary?" I said, I'd be happy to look into it. He said, "Please do." We looked into it and it turned out that this man not only had been involved in illegal money transactions but he had represented an airline which belonged to one of the members of the Cali cartel. I said, "Mr. President you can't name persons

associated with a cartel as a drug czar." "Not to worry, we'll do it again." About a week later, he produced the name of a retired General who we knew was close to the head of the armed forces. But we had nothing against him in the drug area. The State Department, in the meantime, was calling up and saying, "You're interfering in this young democracy." Wasmosy's nominee Ramon Rosa Rodriguez was made drug czar but it turned out he was killed about nine months later. In any event, that's how we got a new drug czar and, of course, progress on drugs really stopped. When all this happened we of course sent in a yearly drug report on status, and we mentioned this.

There was some progress earlier in the year but it turned sour at year-end when the honest drug czar was removed. This is all happening, we sent this in and in February 1993, I was called up to Washington to be interviewed for the position of Vice President of the National Defense University. The Assistant Secretary at the time, Alexander Watson, called me in. Also in the room was Michael Skol, the Deputy Assistant Secretary. Watson said, "I have to tell you we received complaints from the Paraguayan government about your conduct, your constant confrontation with the President. On this drug czar thing, you had another confrontation. You're in constant confrontation there. We considered this and we decided we should curtail your term. You should be there until July, instead we want you out of there by April 1." I said, "Who authorized this?" They said, "We told 'them' you're going to be out of there." I said, "You know it's going to be sort of hard to pack, may take a few extra months." Watson said, "Just you and your family should be out of there by April 1." I was upset. I must admit I thought I'd done a great job and here I was being sacked in fact, on the basis of complaints from the Paraguayan government. I said, "Have you looked into this carefully? Do you know what this General Oviedo is about? Do you know anything about the drugs, that we tried to get rid of Rodriguez because of the drug issue?" Skol and Watson said, "No, drugs is not a problem. Paraguay has no trafficking." I proceeded back to Paraguay to pack my bags. This was in mid February, I was leaving in a month and a half. On April 1st, the annual Presidential certification thing comes out and Paraguay is certified and not only that, the report that comes out is our report that we sent in minus all the negatives. They removed all the negatives. So I sent a cable to Strobe Talbot who I knew a little bit. I said, "Mr. Deputy Secretary, this is based on our report, except you eliminated all the negatives and I think that on a Presidential certification that's not the thing to do." Then comes back a cable, "We took this into account."

Q: Did you ever determine the exact approximate reasons that the President sacked all those people?

GLASSMAN: No, why he sacked the drug people?

Q: Yes.

GLASSMAN: Oh yes, they were getting too close to General Oviedo, the man who by the way continues to be a very important man in Paraguay. He later, after my departure, attempted to precipitate a coup in Paraguay and the President took refuge in the American

Ambassador's house. Finally President Clinton and the OAS Secretary General intervened and helped block the coup.

Q: Grim tale?

GLASSMAN: Yes, the bad part of the tale was that Washington at least at that early stage was ready to go along with emissaries from people who are obviously corrupt and also tied with narco-trafficking. In the Department, I tried to find out who authorized my dismissal and I've never been told. I went to the Director General of the Foreign Service and gave a memo describing the scene which I told you about and she said, "We don't know who authorized this. You should ask Alexander Watson." I doubt they did know although somebody mentioned somebody in the White House might have put out a word that this had gone on long enough.

ROBERT E. SERVICE
Ambassador
Paraguay (1994-1997)

Robert E. Service was born in 1937 in China to American parents. He received a B.A. from Oberlin College and an M.P.A from Princeton University. His postings abroad have included Managua, Salvador Bahia, Mexico City, Santiago, Madrid, Buenos Aires, Brasilia, and Montevideo. Mr. Service was interviewed in 1998 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: During the time you were there, 1994 - 1997, how did the democratization of Paraguay seem to be going?

SERVICE: I think a considerable amount of progress was made. One of the things that happened soon after I got there was reform of the Judicial Branch. It had consisted previously of five Supreme Court Justices. The new constitution expanded that number to nine. They had a rather elaborate selection procedure. People nominated themselves, which was an interesting idea. Then a commission looked at these nominations and came up with 27 recommended persons for nine positions. Then the Congress selected the nine, which then had to be approved by the President. The Supreme Court in its new form was made up of four people who were viewed as members of the Colorado party, four who were members of the opposition parties, and one who was considered an independent. That constituted another important institutional brake on arbitrary power by one party or by one individual. There was also reform of the electoral system, so that elections would be as free as possible. Again, the people who were chosen for that Commission were one Colorado, one Liberal, and one something else. In various ways the monopoly power that had been held for so long by one party was breaking down. There were other reforms, but a lot of things didn't get done also. There were ambitious plans to rewrite numerous laws. Some of them had been around for decades and were outdated. A great deal was left undone because of divisions within the Colorado party. One thing that should be pointed out is that Wasmosy, who was the President, and still is the President (1998), won in a very contested primary to be the party candidate. In fact, he probably did not win, and

they stopped the ballot counting. Three months later, they declared he had been the winner. So, the guy who probably won - a guy named Argaña, pulled out his supporters and basically there was bad blood and enmity between the Argaña faction of the party and the Wasmosy faction of the party for much of the time I was Ambassador in Paraguay. And there was a third important player, who was a military man named General Lino Cesar Oviedo. He had been instrumental, one of the key people, in the coup in 1989. Then, he had been moved up. He was a Colonel at the time, and was promoted rapidly. When Wasmosy became President, he made him head of the Army. Oviedo is a very charismatic person. He speaks Guaraní fluently. That is the Indian language. He claims to be a man of the people. He clearly had political ambitions. He was contesting power with Wasmosy from the start of the Wasmosy administration. He claimed credit for having made Wasmosy president. At the time of the contested primary, it was probably Oviedo who said, "We are going to make sure that you win." There was a lot of tension between Wasmosy and Oviedo the whole time I was there.

There was discussion at various times of what to do about it. Sometimes, the President would discuss it with me. One time he said, "Well, I think I'll make him head of the party." He would suggest to the general that he retire and become head of the party. I said, "Won't that ensure that he is the next candidate for President?" The President said, "Not necessarily." He may have offered it, but Oviedo did not want the job. Oviedo gave us concern. We believed, I still believe, that Oviedo was involved in the profits from drug trafficking, if not drug trafficking itself. He certainly got some of his money from contraband of various types, including pirated merchandise. He had protective relationships with various border businessmen who looked to him to be their man in the government, and to make sure that they got a good deal and were not prosecuted or harassed in any way. I remember, one time, we had a trade dispute with an American company in Chicago, named COBRA, because there was a local company which was making their products. Actually, they were just imitations of them. I mentioned this to Oviedo one day when I was visiting him for some reason. He said, "Oh, yes, I had the two people in my office yesterday." It was a very surprising statement because why would this head of the Army have these two people in his office. He had them in the office because he was the one who was providing protection to the pirate. He was trying to work out, I suppose, some sort of deal where the Americans would stop complaining and yet his man wouldn't be harmed. Anyway, Oviedo was a constant source of concern to most democrats in Paraguay, and to me as U.S. Ambassador, and to the U.S. Government more generally. The crisis finally came in April of 1996. It was rather unusual how the crisis developed. At the Embassy we had no particular reason to think a crisis was imminent. We thought things were going along their normal up and down course. We started getting calls from Washington about possible unrest, possible coup attempts, this, that and the other thing. We didn't know what to make of it. Finally, we figured out, by talking to people in the Department, that some of Wasmosy's intermediaries had been going up and talking to people in the White House or elsewhere and pushing these ideas. Wasmosy and his staff had not been telling us, I'm not quite sure for what reason. Anyway, we got that straightened out. There were a couple of meetings. The Ambassador from here was down there with Wasmosy. Wasmosy said, "Look, we are going to force Oviedo into retirement sometime in the next three, four months. This

country just isn't big enough for both of us. We are going to have to move against him. This was in early April, 1996. I jotted that information down and informed Washington. They had said similar things before and nothing happened.

Q: Turning to some of the other things that you had to deal with - drugs.

SERVICE: Drugs were a continual issue, a headache, problem. It was the question I was asked most frequently whenever I saw the press, which was very frequently. If I went to a government office, there would usually be some press when I left. If not initially, then very quickly, they would ask about the drug effort and whether the U.S. believed that Paraguay had made an adequate effort.

Just to give you some background, we have a process called certification by which our President has to certify each year that Paraguay is cooperating fully in the battle against drugs. Paraguay is included on the list of major drug producing or trafficking countries. Paraguay was always certified until I went as Ambassador. Then, the first time it came up while I was Ambassador, which would have been March 1st of 1995, Paraguay was certified only on the basis of the national interest waiver. There are basically three categories: you can be fully certified or you can be "not certified," or you can be certified on the basis of a national interest waiver, which means that you wouldn't have been certified except that it is in our interest to do so. Paraguay was in this grey area, along with the three major producers: Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. This made Wasmosy very unhappy. The press focused on it a good bit. We tried to motivate them to do what was necessary to restore full certification. It was a hard job for various reasons: (1) Because some people in government profited from the drug trade, if not in the national government, which I can't totally rule out, then at least at the local and regional levels. I've mentioned Oviedo as a person whom I think indirectly profited from the drug trade. Governors in the border areas also undoubtedly received money from it. There was a vested interest in maintaining it. And (2), the Paraguayans have practically no history of a capable investigative force able to find out who is doing what. Historically, there has been very little interest in that kind of capability because it might point fingers at the wrong people.

Q: Also, they are sort of like Andorra (a smuggling state).

SERVICE: A smuggling state, certainly. So, there has been a lot of live and let live and don't ask too many questions and maybe some of the money this guy is making will come to you, etc. Also, I would say, because of its history as a smuggling state, if we may call it that, there is very weak law enforcement, very little tradition of being willing to stop a bullet. They had very little experience in trying to uphold the law, and fighting corruption. Nobody wanted to go out there and get his head blown off. There was not much tradition of wanting to do that. It was hard to get them to do what was needed. There is another factor which in all fairness should be mentioned. Paraguay is no worse than a lot of Latin America countries. Each year, when it came to certification time, you had to have somebody on the list. We have much more extensive and important relations with larger countries, Mexico for example. So, what do you do? You end up with Paraguay, and

maybe Belize, and maybe Panama, occasionally, countries for which there are not many defenders in Washington who would say that you can't do that because we have other important interests with them. I think Paraguay suffered on that account as well. Anyway, the first year they were certified only on the basis of national interest, the second year, the same. The third year, they were fully certified. But, then the fourth year, after I've left, they were put back in the national interest waiver category. So, have they learned anything, have they done much? I don't know. We were quite hopeful at one point after Oviedo had been fired. They put a man named Ayala, an ex-general, in charge of the drug program. He had been an opponent of Oviedo, supposedly because he was honest and Oviedo wasn't. That hasn't produced the results we hoped for either. I don't know if they are going to make much progress, or how soon.

Q: Were they essentially getting their raw product through Bolivia?

SERVICE: Yes, most of it comes down from Bolivia in planeloads of 100 or 200 kilos, or by truck or bus, down through the Chaco. Most of it moves onto Argentina, Brazil, the markets there, or onto Europe or some to the U.S. But, I don't think much goes to the U.S.

DAVID N. GREENLEE
Ambassador
Paraguay (1999-2003)

Ambassador Greenlee was born and raised in New York and educated at Yale University. After service in the Peace Corps in Bolivia and the US Army in Vietnam, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. In the course of his career the ambassador served in Peru, Bolivia (three tours), Israel, Spain and Chile, as well as in the Department of State, where he was involved in Haitian and Egyptian affairs, and at the Pentagon, where he was Political Advisor. Three of his foreign tours were as Deputy Chief of Mission. He served as United States Ambassador to Paraguay and Bolivia. Ambassador Greenlee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

GREENLEE: Things started to change, I would guess, when Jimmy Carter became president, and human rights became a main feature of our policy. Pressure against Stroessner built up, and in 1989 he was overthrown by the army commander, General Andres Rodriguez. There followed a period of transition, a somewhat difficult period because Rodriguez was known to have been involved in drug trafficking, as well as other kinds of contraband. But the U.S. was pleased to see movement toward democracy. Stroessner went off to a gilded exile in Brazil, where he died, a very old man, in August 2006.

Q: What about drugs?

GREENLEE: Drugs were an issue and a problem. Paraguay is into contraband—it's a wild-west kind of country. There were parts of Paraguay that were of great interest to

DEA. There's a place called Pedro Juan Caballero, on the border with Brazil, that was heavily involved in trafficking. It was an entrepôt for drugs and arms from Bolivia en route to Brazil. Paraguay was not a producer of cocaine. It was prime producer of marijuana, however. The Paraguayans wanted our help with that, but marijuana wasn't of much interest to us. It was consumed locally and in Brazil. But eventually we got to the point that we would help them with their marijuana problem to leverage more cooperation on our interest in blocking the trafficking of cocaine and arms.

PERU

JOHN WESLEY JONES

**Ambassador
Peru (1963-1969)**

Ambassador John Wesley Jones was born in Sioux City, Iowa in 1911. After graduating from George Washington University in 1930, he joined the Foreign Service. He was first sent to Mexico and Calcutta before serving over thirteen years in Italy and on the Italian desk in DC. Jones served as ambassador to Libya and Peru in the early 60's. He spent several years at the Naval War College before retiring in the late 60's. He was interviewed by Horace Torbert in 1988.

Q: Drugs had not raised their ugly head by that time, I suppose?

JONES: No, not really. Where I first learned of and was introduced to the coca plant was in Peru because it grew wild in the mountains of Peru. Its leaves were something that were brewed and either drunk in tea or chewed like tobacco by all of the peasants in the high Andes because it gave a certain amount of strength and endurance - let's say like coffee does or tea, to the peasants and of course most of them walked. In those high altitudes they had enormous chests; they were rather short people, their legs were not very long and they were used to carrying heavy burdens. But they needed something to sort of give them that extra heave. Now in leaf form it's not a drug anymore than coffee or tea is because it was not ground down to the fine powder that cocaine is, but it did have this medicinal effect of giving one a little more energy and a little more strength. When they were carrying their packs over the mountain trails, from the days of the Incas, coca was the sort of thing that they chewed. Then of course later, it was not during the time I was there, but later, it became very popular crop because they could sell it to drug dealers and get enormous fees for it.

ALAN H. FLANIGAN

**Consular Officer
Lima (1967-1969)
State Department; Officer in Charge, Peruvian Affairs
Washington, DC (1969-1971)**

Q: The other thing we think a lot about Peru in recent times is terrorist activity, insurrectionist groups, all of that has come much more recent since your period.

FLANIGAN: After I left. When we lived there it was a relatively peaceful country. The population was less than half of what it is now. The population of Lima itself was about two million. I believe it is close to 8-10 million now. The problems of urbanization were evident then, but they have become much more dramatic. Also, although there was coca was commonly grown in parts of the highlands, but it was not normally processed into cocaine. People in the highlands used it. It was a problem for them, but Peru was not considered at the time to be a major threat from the drug trafficking point of view.

Q: Not a supplier internationally of any significance.

FLANIGAN: Cocaine simply hadn't become the problem it became later.

WILLARD B. DEVLIN
Consular Officer
Lima (1970-1974)

Willard B. Devlin was born in Massachusetts on September 30, 1934. He obtained a B.A. from Tufts University and went to Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy where he received his M.A. and completed his doctoral residence in International Relations. He served in Baghdad, Lima, Hong Kong, and Santo Domingo. He also served in the Visa Office in Washington, D.C. He retired in 1980. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 15, 1986.

Q: How would you describe the officers dealing with the visas that you had, both immigrant and non-immigrant? Were they well trained? Were they prejudiced? Were they completely swamped or in command of the situation?

DEVLIN: All of the above and none of the above; depends entirely on the individual. I had one officer there who was congenitally, apparently, incapable of reaching any decision on any visa. Therefore, each time an applicant came and the application wasn't completely satisfactory to the officer, the officer would ask for my opinion -- and more paper and more paper and more paper, instead of reaching a decision. Others were more able to cope with the decision making process.

At the same time that we had this great increase in the visa workload we were also running into major protection problems because we had a steady increase in the number of Americans being arrested, primarily for drugs, and we had an airline crash that killed 49 American high school students. So at this time that I divided the authority within the consular section to create a visa operating section, put that under the charge of the next ranking officer, and just told him to make whatever changes he could, in addition to whatever changes I could make in the procedures, to get the process done as quickly and as efficiently as possible. But the statistics were, for myself and probably just about for

all the other section chiefs, a requirement to examine ones shop and find out why they were taking X number of hours to produce an immigrant visa, while such and such other place was taking X minus hours. There was something very competitive in basing this whole system on these numbers.

HARRY W. SHLAUDEMAM
Ambassador
Peru (1976-1979)

Ambassador Harry W. Shlaudeman was born in California on May 17, 1926. He obtained B.A. from Stanford University. He was in the USMC overseas from 44 to 46. He served in Barranquilla, Sophia, Santo Domingo. He was D.C.M. to Santiago. He was ambassador to Caracas, Lima, Buenos Aires, Brasilia, and Managua. He was Desk Officer to the Dominican Republic, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Inter-American Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State, Executive Director to the Commission of Central America and Ambassador at Large. He was interviewed by William E. Knight on May 24 and June 1, 1993.

Q: At that stage, were we trying to channel our help increasingly through the international in order to avoid the bilateral problem?

SHLAUDEMAM: Yes, and we still had immense bilateral problems with the Peruvians. There were a number of problems, including the drug issue. In fact, I spent a good deal of my time there on the issue. By the time I got there, the cultivation of coca in the upper Huallaga Valley was already an extensive industry. Already had attracted great attention from the Congress in particular. We did have a substantial bilateral aid program, which I thought was a very good one. It focused particularly on the poor suburbs of Lima, the issue of housing and infrastructure. I've been amused to read as much as ten years later about the innovations in the drug business, the innovation of crop substitution. We were involved in the innovation of crop substitution back in 1977 and it never worked. In fact, one of our schemes was to substitute the cultivation of tea in the upper Huallaga for coca.

CECIL S. RICHARDSON
Chief, Consular Officer
Lima (1980-1983)

Cecil Richardson was born in New York in 1926, and graduated from Queen's College. He served in the US Army from 1944 to 1947, and overseas from 1951 to 1952. Entering the Foreign Service in 1956, he was stationed in Dakar, Saigon, Lagos, Niamey, Paris, Accra, Brussels, Quito, Tehran, Lima, St. Paolo and Bahamas. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 5, 2003.

Q: Well now, how about, what were sort of the, were you having some of the same troubles you were having in Ecuador about Americans being foot-loose and fancy-free and hiking along the Andes?

RICHARDSON: No. That was pretty mush past, but at one point I had something like 22 people in prison, all for drug smuggling. They created some excitement for us when they went on a hunger strike. It lasted a couple of weeks.

Q: Were these real smugglers or were these kids?

RICHARDSON: No. These were adults. But not professionals. One guy came down with his golf clubs and stuffed his golf bag with cocaine. No, they weren't very smart. But I also had druggies, people who came down simply to indulge in drugs.

Q: Well, tell me when you get that, were there effects to them playing around with these drugs or were they essentially just sitting there and ...

RICHARDSON: Getting happier and wasting themselves, but eventually they moved on. I didn't have anyone die on me from drug overdose. I don't understand, there was one couple, they came to me begging for help, there wasn't anything I could do for them unless I take them into a hospital which they refused. They were gray. The only gray color I've ever seen on a European type person, she was dead several days.

JOHN D. CASWELL
Narcotics Control, Deputy Director
Lima (1982-1984)

John Caswell was born in Massachusetts in 1947 and educated at Franklin & Marshall College and the Fletcher School at Tufts. He entered the Foreign Service in 1974. His career included posts in Rio de Janeiro, Sofia, Lisbon and Brasilia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: '82 whither?

CASWELL: I went off to Lima, Peru. I had decided for a variety of reasons, some of them personal, owing to the fact that I had a Peruvian wife, to bid on a job at the American embassy in Lima that was the deputy head of the narcotics control office, and I was quickly accepted into that. I do not know how many people had actually bid on that job. I found myself on a direct transfer to Lima.

Q: You were there, I guess, from '82 to '85, weren't you?

CASWELL: Actually '82 to '84, a two-year job. The first year I was the Deputy Director, and then the Director, who was an 01 level officer, was leaving and I was considered to have done such a good job as the Deputy I got sort of a "battlefield promotion." I moved

up to become the Director, and they brought in another guy the second year to be my deputy.

Q: In Peru in 1982 what was the situation there?

CASWELL: The situation essentially was that they had emerged from a military dictatorship which had ruled the country from the late '60s, and it had been a leftist military dictatorship, a leftist sort of populist dictatorship, unlike the one in Brazil. But the military had badly mismanaged the economy, and so they were coming out of a period of economic isolation and deprivation and everybody was fed up with the military and their leftist Third World posturing and their nationalizing of whatever industries Peru had and the way they disrupted the agricultural sector, all of which caused production to plummet and national income to plummet. So the Peruvian military, I guess the generals who had been running the show, all either died or went off to retirement, and the next generation said, "We've got to get ourselves out of this. It's time to turn the government back to the civilians." So they had elections just before I got there and elected Fernando Belaúnde Terry, who had been the last elected president before the coup, and had been booted out by the generals. Well, he was voted back into office, and there was still very much kind of a honeymoon atmosphere and people were feeling pretty good about themselves with the restoration of democracy. It was also a period after many years of economic stagnation where they were opening up the economy again to trade, and Peruvians managed to get some credit so they could afford some imports for the first time after many years, so this also made people feel a little bit better. But it was also a period of increasing challenges, because at the same time that people felt kind of good about Belaúnde Terry and for the first time there were new cars on the road and things were available in the shops in Lima. The Sendero Luminoso terrorist movement was seriously underway in the southern highlands, and the narcotrafficking problems were growing and were becoming more serious. People had traditionally grown coca, which is the raw material from which cocaine is derived. It's a shrub, and the leaves are harvested from this shrub. It had been traditionally grown in the Peruvian highlands. As a matter of fact, it may have even been a native plant to Peru or the Bolivian highlands. Dating back to ancient times, the Indians would chew these leaves together with some calcium, lime-like material, and by chewing a big wad of these leaves, kind of like a chew of chewing tobacco, they would get kind of like a mild narcotic effect from chewing these leaves. It was something that helped stave off the effects of cold, hunger, and altitude sickness and gave people energy to work long, hard days. It was a traditional sort of thing. But what happened was that the entrepreneurial narcotics traffickers in Colombia had been coming down and saying to the Peruvians, "Well, this traditional crop you guys grow, if you grow it for me, I'll pay you a premium for your crop."

I was talking about how they could use the coca leaves, and in effect the farmers were taught that you could harvest the leaves and, instead of just selling the leaf for chewing purposes, you could begin to do a little bit of elementary refining of it with kerosene and a little bit of sulfuric acid and so forth, get a precipitant which was called coca paste - really you could do this in your back yard with a bathtub or even a hole in ground in effect lined with some plastic - you could get this intermediate product which is called

coca paste and would reduce the bulk and the weight of the leaves. The Colombians would fly down and buy this coca paste and then fly it back to Colombia for further refining into cocaine hydrochloride, which is found on the streets of the United States. Well, with this demand, all of a sudden a lot of farmers decided, hey, it makes a whole lot more sense to be growing coca leaves than it does potatoes or tomatoes or whatever else. So there was an expanding production of coca much beyond what was needed for the traditional legitimate uses, and it was beginning to result in addiction problems, crime problems, social problems in the Peruvian cities. What was happening was this coca paste wasn't all being bought up by the Colombians. Some of it was finding its way into Peruvian towns and then ultimately into Peruvian cities, and the Peruvian young people were beginning to smoke the coca paste mixed in cigarettes, tobacco cigarettes, and getting highs from this. So they were beginning to have social ramifications in Peru itself. It wasn't just a problem for the foreigners. It wasn't just a quick way to make a buck. So these two threats, if you will, the political security threat posed by Sendero Luminoso and the growing threat of the narcotics trafficking, together with the underlying weakness of the Peruvian economy were the major challenges to Peruvian society and particularly to the Peruvian administration.

Q: Could you explain what the Sendero Luminoso was and what it was doing. This is the so-called 'shining path'.

CASWELL: Right, that would be the translation to English of Sendero Luminoso. Essentially it was formed by some alienated university professors who were Marxist-Leninists who looked at Peruvian society and its domination by a small elite of European ethnic origin and said, "This is corrupt, this is rotten, this is bad for most of the Peruvians. What we need to do is create a society in Peru which is good for the majority, and to do that it needs to be a Marxist-Leninist state as opposed to a capitalist exploiting state." It harkened back a lot to mystical Indian values and it was communitarian. I don't pretend to understand its ideology very well, and it wasn't part of my job to learn in depth about Sendero Luminoso, but the key thing to remember about them was that they were fanatical, they were very secretive, they went off to the highlands. Actually their intellectual gurus that formed it were alienated, underemployed, grossly underpaid university professors at the University Ayacucho which was this colonial city isolated down in the southern highlands of Peru, and they set up this movement far away from the central authorities. And there wasn't much of an effective presence of the Peruvian government or authorities down in that part of Peru, so this cancer, if you will, could grow in these local circumstances and was not seriously challenged. These people were fanatical and real true believers in what they were doing. Essentially they believed that their objective had to be achieved by any means necessary, and if you were not with them, you needed to be killed and all of your family needed to be killed. They were just absolutely ruthless, and they basically terrorized people in isolated communities down there. They were stronger in the countryside. They didn't really control even a provincial city like Ayacucho, but in the surrounding countryside they would march into little Indian communities and tell them their vision and, "Are you with us? If you're not with us, well, chief and the local constable or whatever, we're going to chop off their heads right in front of you. This is what we do to people who are not with us. Now, who's with us?" Of

course, everybody put their hands up. And they grew and became very powerful down in this redoubt of theirs. They were difficult to get to and, as I say, the central institutions of Peru weren't particularly strong, to start out with, so they weren't very capable in responding to them. They didn't really get to the point, in the time period that I was in Peru - and subsequently they really never did - get to the point where they could threaten to overturn the government and take over the entire country. But neither was the government really capable of coming to grips with them and attacking them effectively in the whole time period that I was in the country. So they weren't about to take over the country, but the government was not about to eradicate them either.

Q: Did they intrude into the narcotraffic?

CASWELL: This was one of the things that we were watching, that we were concerned about, that we thought would happen. In the time period that I was in the country, I wasn't really convinced myself that it was happening, in part because where the Sendero Luminoso guerillas were located was not the prime area where coca was being grown. Not that much coca was being grown, period, where they were, and certainly it was not the prime area of expanding coca production for export. Coca grows on what they call the high jungle where on the eastern slope of the Andes goes down into the Amazon jungle. Coca requires a good deal of rain and it requires warmer temperatures and it requires good, well drained soil. The roots don't like to be too wet, so Coca does not grow well in low, moist jungle. It does not grow well in the very high sierra where it's too dry and too cold. The Sendero Luminoso was located in the high sierra in the south-central portion of the country. Where the prime coca area was located was an area called the Upper Huallaga Valley and that was northeast of Lima on the eastern slopes of the Andes going down into the jungle, in effect the eastern foothills of the Andes. So Sendero and prime coca country were in two different areas. On the other hand, there was the argument that Sendero Luminosos might not get involved because the Senderistas, the Sendero leaders and most of the cadre who were the true believers, were very puritanical in their outlook, so there was the feeling among some people that this might keep them from getting involved in narcotic trafficking. Other observers said, nah, they'll get beyond that and the opportunity of money to support their political objectives will be a temptation. In the two years that I was in the country, towards the end - we're talking about mid-1984- there were indeed signs of Sendero slogans being written on walls [in the Coca producing region of the Upper Huallaga], threats to local officials saying, "We're going to come get you," signed, "the Sendero Luminoso". We know all about you," etcetera, etcetera. There was considerable debate at that time as to whether it was really Sendero or whether these were just narcotic traffickers who were trying to terrorize the authorities into not messing with their narcotics trafficking activities, and saying they were Sendero because they wanted to sow terror in the hearts of these people, but they really weren't. They were basically criminals who were looking to make a buck, and anything that could scare the police away, that was a fair tactic. I'm not quite sure subsequently whether more convincing evidence emerged to say that indeed Sendero was in there and a second locus of legitimate true believers, true Senderistas, had established in the Upper Huallaga, but I suspected there probably was a bit of both going on, that there were some opportunists who were basically narcotic traffickers who said they were with Sendero Luminoso just

to scare people and there were other people who were in fact the Sendero Luminosos who [were getting involved in drugs trafficking or charging protection money to traffickers] to raise money for the organization.

Q: How did you go about your job, first number two and then number one in the narcotics business? What were you all up to?

CASWELL: Essentially our program fell in between what DEA was doing and what AID was doing.

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency and the...

CASWELL: Agency for International Development. So we had a kind of continuum of programs and activities which we were doing, for example, the narcotics problem in the country which affected American interests. The DEA essentially were down there to exchange intelligence with the police and give them some advice, gather intelligence for our own purposes. Maybe they could learn something in Peru about somebody who was going to be taking drugs up to the United States. But they were doing essentially police work, and while they were doing police work, they might give some informal advice to the Peruvians, like, "If we had a problem like this in the States, this is the way we would do it, guys." But they didn't have big bags of money to pay for training, they didn't have big bags of money to help support Peruvian police in doing operations in Peru, they didn't have big bags of money to pay for training of the Peruvian police. That's where the State Department programs came in. In effect we had three pots of money, if I can call them that. With one pot we funded training programs for the police, purchasing equipment for the police, helping build up the infrastructure in the form of buildings and barracks and things like this that would help the Peruvian police to establish a presence in the coca-growing and drug-trafficking areas. So equipment, training, presence essentially was what we were paying for. Also, we had money to help pay for operations. Many times what would happen was the Peruvian police - they had a *Guardia Civil*, which was the uniformed police in Peru - would have a drug section and their headquarters were in Lima. Well, they might get information that led them to believe that an operation would be worthwhile in a certain provincial area, but to do that they would have to send officers from Lima up to this provincial area. They wouldn't trust the local police because they figured the local police were already being bribed, so they had to send in police from Lima to do that job. Well, who was going to pay for the travel of that officer or those officers to go from Lima to Tingo Maria, for example? Who was going to pay their per diem costs while they were living in a hotel in Tingo Maria? Well, Peruvian police would say, "We don't have the money for that. We can pay their salaries, but we don't have the money for the operation." Well, if we became convinced, and the DEA was convinced, that, yes, there was reasonable cause to believe that such an operation was worth pursuing, we could help bankroll that operation. Those sorts of programs had gotten underway when I had arrived.

The second major area that was still on the drawing boards and had not begun, was crop eradication. One of the ways to get at the problem was to go to the source and to try to

destroy in effect the illegal plantations where the raw material was being grown. This was the heart of the problem, this was the toughest nut to crack, but arguably it was a whole lot more efficient than playing cops and robbers and chasing all up and down the Andes trying to catch the bad guys. If all of the raw material could be destroyed, then you wouldn't have to worry about it. So we had programs/projects that were funded which we were going to work with the agricultural ministry in paying for the location and then the eradication of illegal plantations. Easier said than done, this was a very big problem in, one, trying to find generally small plantations in areas where there weren't very many roads; two, actually physically getting to them; and then, three, providing security for the people who were doing the work so they wouldn't be shot while they were eradicating the crop. Also we had to pay for a certain amount of research about what was the most effective way to kill the plants, because they're pretty hardy plants and at least at that time it wasn't clear that an aerial spraying would be effective, so we ended up hiring some agricultural scientists to do some research on what was the most effective way to use an herbicide to kill them. So there were tremendous organizational, logistical, and security problems associated with actually getting a crop eradication program up and going, and it would have to work hand in glove with the police. The first thing you have to do is you have to get the police in the area where the stuff is being grown to establish some law and order, equipping them and making sure that they do the job. Then once you've sort of established at least a police presence, then you could begin to address the eradication.

The third area of what we did was in effect consciousness raising which was aimed at persuading the Peruvians that it was not just an American problem, this was not just easy money for Peruvian farmers but that there is a blow-back effect, that this has deleterious effects on Peruvian people. So these were lesser programs. We also had some support for the justice people and in effect trying to see to it that people charged with crimes in narcotics trafficking actually came to trial. But, as I said, we sort of worked in the area between DEA, which was working with the police but didn't have any money to help the police, and AID, the Agency for International Development, which dealt with the third part of the problem, and that was, if you were trying to put the farmers out of the business of growing coca, that's not the same thing as saying you want to put farmers out of business altogether. There would be an enormous social and political and economic problem if you just drove all these farmers out of business and then they had no other legitimate livelihood to turn to. So AID had projects that fell under the heading of crop substitution. What they were trying to do was first do research to learn what might be the most attractive and economically feasible substitute crops that could earn the best income for the farmers, maybe not earn as much money as they could get for growing coca but might be better suited to the local conditions and earn a pretty good return, better than, say, growing potatoes. So there was a certain amount of a research-and-development aspect to those projects, and then helping the farmer - not only the farmer but also the processor, the agro-product processors. It appeared as though one of the most possibly favorable products to encourage was the production of cocoa, which is the basic raw material for chocolate. The conditions were pretty good for growing cocoa in the Upper Huallaga Valley, but then the question was: How do you get the raw material from there to the marketplace? [So to encourage farmers to switch from coca to cocoa] you would

have to develop refining facilities for cocoa, and you had to pay attention to quality and you had to be to teach these people how they would fit into the whole international chocolate industry.

Q: How did you find working with the Peruvians in all this?

CASWELL: The police loved us because we had money and they saw, I think, getting into the counter-narcotics business as a fairly popular thing to do in the Peruvian police in those days. I think you could be cynical and say they wanted to get into it so that they could collect the bribes, the corruption that was associated with it. I think they also saw it potentially as a high-profile place where one could build a career and maybe get ahead quickly, kind of a growth industry, if you will. Because the Americans were willing to pay and buy equipment, you could get access to better equipment. You could travel, you could get per diem to go off to do operations. It had a kind of a “sexiness” to it, where some gung-ho officers and people thought it was the place to be, and so they were enthusiastic. We helped set up within the police a special mobile anti-drug unit which was called UMOPAR, an acronym meaning it was a mobile police unit, and they were kind of an elite unit of the *La Guardia Civil*. They were established up in a base in Tingo Maria, which we basically built for them from scratch. Morale there was pretty good. So I felt pretty good about dealing with the people in UMOPAR. There were other elements of the police which seemed to be rather ineffectual and bureaucratic, fat old police officers sitting around Lima talking about doing stuff, but really never did it.

Furthermore, the police were riven with rivalries. The police force I mentioned before and have been talking about up till now was called the *Guardia Civil*, which was kind of a national, uniformed police, kind of cop-on-the-beat kind of police, but they also had an FBI of sorts called the PIP, the Peruvian Investigative Police, and they were generally speaking a little more intelligent. Some of them had university educations or at least partial university educations. They seemed to be a little bit more suave but they were also generally considered to be more corrupt and duplicitous. Nevertheless, but you had to deal with them. They did get some things done, but you wondered what was the cost-benefit analysis there, were we getting as much benefit or more benefit for the corruption that was going on. Of course, there were always rivalries going on. The *Guardia Civil* guys would always say, “I wouldn’t support that project with the PIP because they’re all a bunch of *corruptos*, they’re all on the take. You’re wasting your money. You should put all of your money with us.” Of course, the PIP guys would tell you just the opposite. They would say, “Oh, those bozos over in *Guardia Civil*. They don’t know their you-know-what from their you-know-what. What are you wasting your time with those characters for?” And then, of course, there was Peruvian Customs with which we had another project and they wanted more money, but they were believed to be the most corrupt of the lot. So you had to deal with these professional rivalries amongst the police, but you could do stuff with them, and that in part was why we did the bulk of the earlier work with the police. They were easier to work with, they were enthusiastic, and there was a certain logic to helping establish law and order or more law and order before you could do anything else; it was sort of *sine qua non*. People in the Agricultural Ministry were much more difficult. Essentially they didn’t want to deal with the coca crop problem. They didn’t want to deal with eradication, they didn’t want to really make

farmers angry at them. Whenever high-level people would come down from Washington, or the American ambassador spoke to the Peruvian authorities, they of course, at the senior level said, "Anything you want, anything we can do; we're in this with you 100 percent. We're poor, we need help, we need money, technical assistance technical assistance from the United States." "After all, that's only fitting, because you caused the problem. It was you, the Americans' demand, for these illicit drugs that has created the problem. Before your demand came along, there were a few Indians growing a few bushes and chewing on a few leaves and there was no big problem, so it's really appropriate that you should be helping us poor Peruvians to deal with this problem. But it's really up to you to do it. You have my blessing. When you come back down, talk to my friend the Agriculture Minister and bring his money, and talk to the Interior Minister and bring money to help the police." Well, as I said, the police took the bags of money and did some stuff, but our friend the Agriculture Minister didn't really want to deal with it so he said, "Well, I'm going to appoint this unemployed entomologist to be in charge of coca eradication," He was a little guy who specialized in entomology, specialized in killing insects. I guess we decided he would be an appropriate guy to think about killing coca plants. Anyway, he had no political weight, he was not a go-getter; he was this nervous little man who didn't really want to come to grips with the problem. He basically was interested in getting an office, buying furniture for the office, having a xerox machine, getting lots of typewriters and paper, and he would work writing up plans on papers. Every time you'd come to talk to him, "Oh, yes, I'm working on it, but we have to study this problem very carefully. By the way, I need some more money to get another xerox machine," or "I need another telephone." He just was getting nowhere. He was kind of a haughty guy also. He was just a real petty bureaucrat, not the kind of guy that would get out and shake things up and get things going, get dirt under his fingernails and be willing to do the head knocking that would really be necessary to get something like this going. Well, one of our major accomplishments, that really didn't happen till like the second year that I was there, after doing everything that we could to try to get this guy going and working with the police and hiring him a staff, Carlton Turner, who was the White House drug advisor - there wasn't yet a drug czar like Barry McCaffrey, but Turner was sort of a junior Barry McCaffrey at that time period - came down and he had gotten increasingly fed up with our inability to make headway on eradication, as had the Counter-Narcotics Bureau in the State Department and people in Congress who were watching us and so forth. Well, Carlton Turner came down and made a fuss, and because he represented the White House, when we took him around to talk to all the usual suspects, he was actually able to raise enough of a ruckus so that at the political level and through the government they decided to tell the Agriculture Minister he had to fire Mr. Ingunza, the entomologist director of the Coca eradication project. So we got rid of Mr. Ingunza and we got another guy in who was much smarter and much more a politician. He understood that something actually had to be done to satisfy the U.S. government, but he also understood that he could find a way to sell farmers that, "Yes, I'm going to eradicate your coca crop, but this is also going to lead to other things that you can do." He was a smart enough guy that he actually was able to get the project going in the Upper Huallaga area and did it in a way that he figured out places where we could push and move forward without making people too angry at us so that we could actually get the program going. I'm trying to remember. I did a little bit of reviewing before this just to

see if I could find some statistics. In the first year that I was there we had only gotten 100 hectares - and a hectare is about two and a half acres - maybe we'd gotten about 250 acres of coca eradicated in all of 1983, and by 1984, getting this new director and getting things actually going, we got 4,000 hectares, almost 10,000 acres, eradicated in just the first part, the first six months of 1984 before I left. So we really succeeded in getting the project really started off, which was a great satisfaction. The down side was, as the program began to bite, the bad guys began to bite back and we started to have increasing problems with threats, and actually just as I was leaving we even had an attack on one of the eradication teams and some 20 people got killed.

Q: You were talking about the problems between the various police elements, bureaucracy. What about you? Here you are, a line Foreign Service Officer. Did you find that getting involved in this? This is a pretty new game. Were there problems careerwise or just workwise?

CASWELL: I think in the time period that I was there - how can I put this? - essentially the job was a snake pit. When I bid on the job, I thought intellectually this was going to be a challenging job. I was thinking maybe this would be interesting to do because it's something that's concrete, it's real, it really relates to real American interests and it would be rather different than sitting around and reading Rabotnichesko Delo, pouring over the tea leaves, sending back cables to Washington about what's going on in Bulgaria and wondering whether anybody ever reads the cable and whether it really was having any impact or not. This was real, maybe I want to do this, but it will be hard, it will be a challenge. I don't think I had any idea how challenging it was going to be, because really we were in the middle trying to do a hard thing in which there were a lot of mixed feelings on the Peruvian side frankly. This was the kind of relationship in which whenever visitors would come from Washington, as I said before, they would say, "Sure, no problem, whatever you want. We're in this with you. We're poor. We need your help. We need money." They conveyed this impression to the visitor from Washington, be it Senator Paula Hawkins from Florida, who was rabid on the subject, or someone from the White House, or the Assistant Secretary of State for International Narcotics Matters or anybody else that would come down. We had a lot of CODELs (Congressional Delegations), a lot of visitors and so forth, Congressmen Benjamin Gilman, Charlie Rangle. They were really concerned about Peru because nothing was happening to end the drug problem. They would come down and in two or three days everybody from the President of the Republic on down to the lowest police officer said, "Yes, sir, we're going to do this. No problem, just you provide us assistance." Then they would leave and say, "I solved the problem. Now we're going to see some action." And, of course, as soon as the visitor from Washington went back and you were dealing with the rivalries, the bureaucratic foot dragging, the fears, such as, "If I do this, I'm going to get killed." The Peruvian politicians had their own concerns. They didn't necessarily want to stir up a hornet's nest. There was a fear that if they pressed too hard on the counter-narcotics front in the Upper Huallaga, the Senderistas would take advantage of them and then they would have a second front of the fight against Sendero Luminoso. So, of course, the results never were as good as what Washington would have expected. So we'd get a lot of people coming down from Washington and we were investigated by GAO...

Q: General Accounting Office.

CASWELL: ...General Accounting Office, by the State Department inspectors. As I said, everybody came to visit us that I mentioned before, and we had a steady stream of visitors from Congress and from the White House. We had the Attorney General, William French Smith. We had a whole series of people from the State Department, from both the Latin American Bureau and the International Narcotics Bureau, from Assistant Secretary, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, etcetera. They were all coming to complain, "What's the matter with you? Why can't you get this project started? Why aren't you doing more?" But the satisfying thing was at the end of the day we were able to show improvement, particularly the eradication project. Those figures I cited before did a lot, and by the time I left the country I had won a Superior Honor Award out of it thankfully and ended up getting the projects going. But it was an uphill battle. You could have a good run and then all of a sudden things could come undone again very quickly.

Q: Like pushing a wet noodle.

CASWELL: A little bit like pushing a wet noodle, so I felt myself very lucky that, one, I survived professionally and came out of it smelling good, because there were certainly periods in the two years I was there when I was thinking I'm not going to come out of there smelling good professionally. I'm frankly thankful that I survived with my life. I was involved in a helicopter crash up in the Andes that could have killed me. As it was, we survived the crash and we got out alive. But I was just very thankful that at the end of the two years I was out of there, and I said, "Never again." I had become something of a star in the International Narcotics Bureau back in Washington and, of course, they said, "When can we get you to go to Colombia or one of these other countries? You can work on other projects and turn them around, too," and I said, "Thank you very much. I'm flattered, but I don't think I ever want to do this again."

RICHARD OGDEN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Lima (1983-1985)

Richard Ogden was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, in 1939 and grew up in New Canaan. He attended Stanford where he majored in economics and went on to receive his masters from the Fletcher School in the spring of 1963. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964 and in 1966 he began service in Bogota, Colombia as part of the Economic Section. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Thailand, Argentina, Peru, England, and Spain.

OGDEN: Narcotics was a very big issue for us in Peru. We were funding programs to eradicate Coca production in the Huallaga valley, and AID was promoting agricultural substitution programs. We also were funding efforts by the Peruvian police to track down narcotics traffickers. Our funding levels were small then, but Congressional interest in the

programs was very high. I recall several Congressional visits to Peru which focused on the narcotics problem.

We had very close relations with the Peruvian military in those days. Ambassador Ortiz was an avid tennis player and had assembled a group of tennis enthusiasts in the embassy. We would go out almost every weekend to play tennis with key Peruvian military leaders. For example, the army chief at the time, General Julian Julia, was a tennis nut and we often would play with him and other top army generals. Between sets, we never missed an opportunity to emphasize the importance of democracy to the future of Peru. If any coup thoughts were brewing, I would like to think that we kept them in check. This was real tennis diplomacy.

Q: Was there a communist party in the area?

OGDEN: I think the Aprista Party on the left was wide enough to include most of the communist-oriented thinking in Peru. Prior to the 1985 election, we had several very useful sessions with Alan Garcia, the Aprista leader, while he was a candidate for President. I can remember several luncheons when we were talking about possible new AID programs and how we could cooperate on narcotics and other issues. It was a big disappointment to learn later that Alan Garcia had taken a different path and decided not to cooperate with the United States. I think he missed a big opportunity to transform the left in Peru into a more responsible political force.

Q: Did we have an attitude or do anything about the Shining Path?

OGDEN: Well, we certainly had an attitude which was to promote security and to limit travel to areas in which Sendero operated. Our anti-narcotics program was not directed against Sendero. Indeed, at the time the links between Sendero and narcotics traffickers were not very clear although we were very interested in the issue. We were concerned about the military and the police reaction to Sendero. Human rights violations were occurring and we didn't want military repression to turn the population against the government. We made this point often at high levels of the government and within the military. Frankly, it was hard to know exactly what was going on in small villages in rural areas. Anyway, Sendero was very active and got to be more of a threat. The group would frequently blow up electricity towers plunging Lima into sudden darkness.

Q: What about the narcotics? Were the drug lords there or was this a way station or how did we see the apparatus?

OGDEN: Coca production in the Huallaga valley was very extensive. I flew over the valley a couple of times in an airplane, and you went for miles and miles and saw nothing but Coca. Some laboratories were being built to process the Coca. The traffickers were running in and out with light aircraft and moving shipments to Colombia. This was an isolated area and very difficult for the government to control.

In general, our anti narcotics effort was focused on this area. As I mentioned, we had programs including Coca eradication, crop substitution and support for police efforts. While a major issue, we didn't believe the drug problem at the time spread across Peru or affected society at large.

But we were very concerned about growing links between the drug traffickers and the Shining Path. The pattern seemed to be that traffickers supplied money to Shining Path. The guerrillas, in turn, protected the drug traffickers from government efforts to put them away. This obviously was a very worrisome trend.

I recall another issue at the time was whether the Peruvian military should get involved in anti narcotics activities. On the one hand, the Peruvian military could be effective. On the other hand, there was concern that the military could become corrupted through narcotics involvement.

Q: Did we see a spill over between the situation that was developing in Colombia and in Peru?

OGDEN: Yes, I think there were a lot of links. Most of the production of Coca at the time probably was in Peru. The processing and shipping to the United States seemed to operate mostly out of Colombia. There was intense trafficking back and forth between the two countries.

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN
Director, Office of Andean Affairs
Washington, DC (1984-1987)

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogota, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Well, then down to Peru. What was the situation?

MCLEAN: Peru was in bad shape in 1984. The economy was hobbled along. They were tied up with antiquated policies. They had built up a great deal of foreign debt, and the narcotics problem was beginning to impinge on it. Narcotics were located up in the Ayacucho Valley in the middle of the country, a lot of coca was being grown there; we knew that. We also knew that there was corruption. It was beginning to corrupt the armed forces in the area. And so we had begun to work with the police. Just as I arrived up there

on my first trip, which must have been early '85, you had the same phenomenon of guerrillas actually beginning to enter into the narcotics areas and taking advantage of the social destruction that was going on there. When I traveled into the Ayacucho Valley the first time, it was the week after this first attack that had taken place. I saw the burnt-out AID projects that we had built for crop substitution, that were now just burnt to the ground. I saw the police cars that we had supported, full of bullet holes and was shown the spots of the massacres that had taken place in this sort of 'Night of the Long Knives' that took place in the valley. So it was a sobering event. And then I also met with the commanding general of the area, who had really done nothing to save the situation. Of course, I was aware at that time that there were accusations that he was on the take for the narcotics traffickers, so you began to see this complicated situation. The President, as I say, was a highly pleasant and popular person by the name of Belaunde, who'd been kicked out by the military back in 1970 or 1969, and he was back but he was not running an effective government. So early on in 1985 Opera, the party with a larger popular base, was elected. A very attractive guy, Alan Garcia, a tall, smiling, quick-of-tongue was elected and, I must say, was a highly charismatic figure. We were deeply worried by his economics, or lack of economics, his belief that you could solve economics by declarations. But I will say that when I met with him, I went in with Baker to see, I said, "Boy, this guy could really do something for the country." It turns out he doesn't, but that's another story.

GEORGE A. MCFARLAND
Retired Annuitant
Lima (1985-1997)

Mr. McFarland was born and raised in Texas and educated at Southern Methodist University and the Universities of Texas and Princeton. After a brief journalist career, he joined the Foreign Service and was assigned to the Passport office in Washington. His subsequent overseas assignments, primarily as Political Officer, were in San Jose, Nicosia, Istanbul, Lima, Ankara, Brasilia and Antigua, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission and Chargé d'Affaires. He also served as Cyprus Desk Officer in Washington. Mr. McFarland was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker in 1999.

Q: Well, now, you as a retired government employee living in that environment on a limited pension, how did you faire in that environment?

MCFARLAND: The first year I saved more money than I had been able to save on active duty, but after that the cost of living began to rise and rise and rise. It's not quite clear why. After Fujimori came in, he began privatizing the state-owned enterprises.

Q: Was that a good thing?

MCFARLAND: Yes. And bringing in investment in a variety of things. The money came in. There was also a great flood of unacknowledged narco-dollars from drug smuggling. Peru is a tremendous source of cocaine. It's the largest coca-growing country in the

world. It's not clear just what proportion of Peru's total dollar supply comes from that. I suspect that a much larger proportion comes than what they acknowledge.

Q: Do you have drug lords there as you do in Columbia?

MCFARLAND: Yes.

Q: Are they known

MCFARLAND: No, they stay more out of sight, and they're not so well known. There's great suspicion, though, that a great many of the top people in the army are compromised. The problem, of course, comes back to our requirement. I had never professed to have a solution to the drug problem. I can see in both ways. I'm horrified by drugs. I am equally horrified by the cost of the drug war. And one of the costs has been that by making drugs illegal, we have raised the profits of the drug lords, for all the smugglers, and because they are making so much, it's nothing to them to pay off police, army generals, judges, governors, whoever. In all the producing countries, this is having a terrible effect on the fabric of society, on the civil authority, on people's confidence in government - not that they had much confidence previously. That's been their historical experience. Their governments were not to be trusted much. That is one reason for the election of this son of Japanese immigrants, Fujimori, to be president, because the little people have had it with the traditional ruling group. They have been one failure after another, even though the army was not really part of the traditional ruling group, they tried that experiment. The Peruvians actually had tried all the varieties of political organizations just about, except out-and-out Communism, but they picked this Japanese as someone who was wily and smart and yet not a European type. And his first term was a great success. He brought security to his country after this long reign of terror, and he acknowledged involvement and investment, even though very little of it trickled down. But the poor people seem to have infinite patience. They felt that after a while they'd begin to get theirs. The trouble is, now, being seated on a second term, he closed down congress at one point and fired the Supreme Court justices, made way for himself for a second term, and now in his second term people are thoroughly fed up with him. The economic policies have not resulted in greater wealth farther down. Even the people at the top are beginning to have problems. And something like 30 or 40 per cent of Peruvians live in extreme poverty, by which I mean not having enough to eat and not having adequate clothing or adequate housing. People in the United States don't understand, on the basis of US experience, what it is to be poor, as you know very well.

DONOR M. LION
Mission Director, USAID
Lima (1986-1989)

Donor M. Lion was born in New York on May 3, 1924. He obtained a B.A. and a Ph.D. from Harvard University and an M.A. from the University of Buffalo. He joined USAID in 1963 and served in Brazil, Jamaica, Guyana, Pakistan, Peru, Dominican Republic, and Thailand. He worked in the

Program and Policy Coordination Bureau, the Latin America Bureau and International Conferences and was Chief Economist in AID in Washington, DC. He retired in 1989. He was interviewed by W. Haven North on June 25, 1997.

Q: What was our interest in preserving our program there?

LION: Peru was the fourth largest country in South America. It was a democracy in the sense that they had free elections. They had a serious Maoist terrorist effort. But perhaps what was, or should have been, our most important concern was that Peru was the largest supplier of coca for cocaine. Most of the coca, at the time we arrived, was being produced, processed into paste, coca paste, and then shipped to Columbia where it was further processed into cocaine. Then the crack.

So, our interest was to try to keep the Peruvians working hard in the anti-narcotics efforts. They certainly couldn't do that if they had to bear all the costs without receiving assistance. So, our assistance program had an anti-drug motivation, it had an anti-Communist terrorist motivation, it had a pro-democratic democracy motivation. It had the motivation that is suppose to drive AID to begin with, which is growth and development especially for the poor. Peru provided a great many reasons for US assistance.

You could see that it added up to several US interests in a significant bilateral assistance relationship.

Q: What was the strategy for the drug prevention process?

LION: We never really did it right. We never really tried to do it right, in my opinion. Early on it was a crop substitution program. Most of us in the business knew that that wasn't going to work. Then it was a kind of somewhat more ambitious but not a real area development program. We never put enough money into it. The Peruvians couldn't afford anything. The soldiers, the military who were suppose to help out against the terrorists were paid ten cents a day. The police were in equally bad shape. There was some corruption, as I mentioned earlier on. So, although we were trying to do well, we weren't doing the right things and didn't have enough resources to really make a difference.

Toward the end of the time I was there (we arrived in '86 as I mentioned and left in July '89), in early '89, I came up with a proposal within the embassy to submit to Washington. A proposal for an Andean regional anti-narcotics program. I felt not only couldn't we do it in one valley, which is something the USG had been emphasizing all the time, the Upper Huallaga Valley, and not only through other parts of Peru, but you had to do it in the region. Bolivia was a grower of coca. Columbia, to some extent. Ecuador, to a minor extent. I said you had to work on all these countries in an organized systematic way and came up with a proposed Andean region approach.

It was pretty ambitious because it had not only anti-narcotics, it had pro-development, it had assistance to the military in these countries and to the police. It was an economic,

social, I shouldn't say political, but multi-sector approach to these countries. The embassy liked it. The proposal that I made included sending a draft to the US embassy in Bolivia, in Columbia, Ecuador and maybe Venezuela which was also involved, if not a grower, then a financial middleman and maybe a mover of commodities. These embassies commented and we put it all together in final form and sent it on to Washington.

I saw, a year or so later, something was passed in Congress that the administration had sent to it, called the Andean Regional Anti-Narcotics program. But what happened, as happened so often, is that it was inadequately funded. The amount of resources that we indicated were really necessary wasn't even closely approximated. You can't really make a difference in a regional economy unless there's a lot investment. Unless there's infrastructure, unless there's training. If you want to get the farmers out of the business you have to sustain them for a year or two while they're trying to grow new crops and other things. You've got to have a substantial marketing effort.

You've got to do it right. And we didn't. And we haven't, anywhere. The only place, that I may have mentioned in our previous conversation where we seem to be "successful", quote unquote, was in Pakistan. There we succeeded not only in cutting the production of opium poppy in the Gadoon Amazai, but also unintentionally succeeded in pushing it elsewhere. That's where I really learned, on the ground, that you can't work just in one country. You certainly can't work in one valley or one part of the country as we had been trying to do in Peru for years.

Q: Why were we so halfhearted in the Andean initiative? Why do you think it never got that support?

LION: Over the years I've developed a cynicism as to how important fighting narcotics is to our top leadership. President Bush declared war on drugs and increased the budget from a few billion to maybe five billion. Most of which was not spent on where the stuff was grown but was spent on trying to keep the stuff from getting into the United States. I have felt that this administration, the present administration, really hasn't a plan, no matter what the rhetoric is. Apparently, the American people really don't understand or care enough to insist that we do everything that we know how to do even if it's going to cost a lot of money and take a long time. This is a ten or twenty-five year battle if you want to do it right. It'll cost an awful lot of money.

Unfortunately, if we're interested in cutting it out in a country where coca is grown, we're going to have to provide most of the money. The countries that are the producers, the Burmas, the Afghanistans, the Perus, the Bolivias don't have enough money for their own development. And be more successful in internationalizing the anti-narcotics effort. We never really worked hard and systematically at that.

LION: So, we were pretty busy there. Working on the narcotics problem and working on getting them to repay, working with Washington to get them to move money, PL 480. That took up 90% of your time and you worked very hard the rest of the time.

ALEXANDER F. WATSON
Ambassador
Peru (1986-1989)

Ambassador Alexander Watson was born and raised in Massachusetts and was educated at Harvard and Wisconsin Universities. In 1962 he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to the Dominican Republic, the beginning of an impressive career specializing in Latin American Affairs. His other overseas posts include Spain, Brazil, Bolivia and Colombia, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter three countries. He had several Washington assignments, the last being Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. From 1986 to 1989 he served as United States Ambassador to Peru. Ambassador Watson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Well, let's talk about it. I mean, what do you mean by serious problem, because I'm trying to get across the idea of problems?

WATSON: The management of the embassy was absolutely chaotic. The ambassador and the deputy chief of mission were at each other's throats, almost not speaking to each other, and when they were they were screaming at each other. Some people told me, I was not there. The administrative counselor had a medical evacuation in the embassy, for stress as I understand it, and it was in chaos. Yet here was an embassy that was facing the Shining Path insurgents and the MRTA and major drug problems and it was really in difficulty. I know that simply because I was in Brazil and the deputy assistant secretary who was responsible for working with our embassy in Peru had to go down there on an emergency basis to try to straighten this out. I can't remember quite why, but for some reason he talked to me, even though I was in Brazil, about it. There was a substantive reason for doing that, but I can't quite recall now what it was. It wasn't just gossip.

Then I remember there was a time Alan Garcia went to New York, to the UN General Assembly opened in September. This was probably in '86. There he met George Shultz, who did not take a shine to him either. Here you had perhaps two of the most important figures for foreign policy in the U.S. government in the Reagan administration thinking bad things about Garcia. Meanwhile, of course, the narcotics industry was burgeoning there, basically run by the Colombians, but with the Peruvians providing a lot of the raw materials, as were the Bolivians. The Bolivians, to a greater extent than the Peruvians, ended up with their own supply groups that they owned up to a point, and the Colombians seemed to tolerate until they got too big and they'd come in and blow them all away. In Peru, as far as I can recall now, it was sort of like a colonial relationship in which the Colombians had all of the money and the power and production facilities. The Peruvians had coca and they are the first two levels of processing from leaf to base to paste to base and then move that to Colombia for refining or some refining done with the hydrochloride in Peru, but most of it was done in Colombia. So you have a government that comes in with a strong popular mandate, led by a very attractive young guy who has

been brought up in kind of a cult-like situation, so he starts to see himself as _____'s successor in every way, as being infallible and all that sort of stuff. You have the narcotics industry burgeoning. You have the economy staggering along and you have two violent guerrilla groups in activity in the country. You have a military that has only shortly before left power. I think that's sort of the end of it. Peru as a country is, as far as I'm concerned, the most interesting country in all of Latin America, certainly one of the most complicated and one of the most conflicted. I used to see it in a rather simple way as the country with three different fault lines. One was the coast, which is inhabited largely by European immigrants and the highlands, rich and poor and ethnic Europeans and the indigenous people. Those fault lines were all superimposed on each other with enormous stress there.

Q: When you went out there what were American interests?

WATSON: I can remember participating and actually drafted my own instructions to myself. It was a long time ago, but certainly to try to strengthen democracy and avoid any other return to power of the military in Peru. It was certainly to try to get the Peruvians to pursue rational economic behavior, which would include getting back into the good graces of the global financial community, which it was not after announcing this debt default. It was of course to work on trying to find ways to reduce the narcotics trade and industry in Peru.

Q: The security was strictly the Shining Path problem.

WATSON: The MRTA.

Q: Oh, the MRTA.

WATSON: And potentially the narcotics guys. The narcotics guys were after us in Colombia, but the narcotics guys in Peru are mainly out in the jungles. They took a lower profile and they weren't coming after us, although we were going after them in the sense of sending teams and pulling out the coca and all that stuff. I don't have enough time to go into all this today, but we built a base out in the jungle and it's a very long story about that.

Q: You were ambassador there from when to when?

WATSON: '86 to '89.

Q: '86 to '89.

WATSON: Then I had to leave because President Bush was elected in '88 and '89 and we all submitted our resignations. Tom Pickering called and asked if I would be his principal deputy to the U.S. Mission to the UN, so I did that.

Q: Okay. Well, back to Peru. What about the drug business? You had this Garcia regime, which is not friendly to us. How were we able to operate our anti-drug operation?

WATSON: It's not that the Garcia administration was hostile to us, it was that Garcia was playing a political game which required him to maintain some distance from us, but working on a daily basis with his government was okay. The people were okay. They're all friends of mine; I could deal with them. They weren't often very competent, the government didn't do things very well, but we had a very good relation with the elements of the police force and others and we provided a lot of support to them. We had a lot of air equipment in that country; we built this base up.

Q: You're saying the base was quite a story in itself. What was that?

WATSON: The idea was that we needed to have a staging point out in the middle of the Rio Apurimac Valley, which is where most of the coca was then grown from which cocaine is produced. The security situation was extremely difficult with the Shining Path out there and the narcos out there. We needed to have a place where we could have our people deployed rather than flying them out everyday from Lima in planes, and we needed to have an airstrip. Everybody agreed this was a good thing to do, that we had to do this. Then you had all of the geniuses from Washington coming down. This was when you just shake your head and you wondered how this can happen. To everyone this is so intriguing and sexy that everyone wanted to be involved in it.

Q: Oh, yes.

WATSON: You had these guys from the White House, NSC staffers who didn't know anything about this, but they're in very powerful positions and they come down and they can write a memo and influence everything up there, come down here for a day and look at it. We had guys on the NSC staff or some component of the Pentagon or navy seals, very aggressive, very tough, rude in their behavior, that's what their style is, who are coming down and giving us advice. If we didn't listen to it they'd go back and say we were bad. It was totally out of control. Everyone you can imagine was down there telling us what to do. Then there were people saying there is no way you can ever build that base. People saying this is just too dangerous, you're never going to get that stuff in there. There were guys coming down and literally advising, this is supposed to be serious, this is the United States government, these people who don't know who the hell they're talking about coming in here and saying we've got to come in with C130s. You've got to bring in Caterpillar tractors and the C130s and drop them and bring them in and drop them in to this place like that so that then you will have a machine to build a runway out there. You can't try to drive them over the land area, it's too dangerous. You'll be ambushed, you'll be killed. What do I know about this? Zero, but I have some capacity to think beyond the box and I said, "Okay, now there is a little village there right next to this place. What if our brilliant C130 team for some reason or another has a hiccup and they drop this bulldozer, huge, D10, D4s, huge thing, 100 yards further than it's supposed to be and it lands in the middle of the village and crushes all these people. What happens when the D4 hits the ground and it bounces a little bit and it falls on its side? How do we

get it up? What equipment is there to right this thing or else we just have this little pile of metal in the air lying on its side and you can't do anything? But these were supposed to be serious people coming down to help us out. It was pathetic and it just showed, maybe it's all better now, because this was all kind of new stuff in those days. Everyone is excited and everyone wanted to be involved, and every Rambo you can imagine was there and I had to deal with this stuff every single day. We finally did it and John Hamilton was acting DCM for the current ambassador and we had this wild guy who was a security officer who came in to help us and he had come out of Vietnam. Without going into any enormous detail, we actually put together a caravan that moved all the equipment with timing as a secret, with overhead air protection, on the ground armored vehicles and stuff like that and we got all the equipment in there safely. The only problem was that one truck driver lost the key so he couldn't get it during one part moving. We built this base. Some of us had always thought that the idea of this base had a lot of flaws.

Q: Sounds like _____ or _____.

WATSON: That's how these military guys thought of it, oh yes. We got the thing built. It was during the end of my tenure there. As I was talking about this, there are so many adventures. I should tell you another little story, just because it was kind of fun. It will show you what kind of atmosphere you're in. We had these helicopters and everyone says they're DEA helicopters, that's how the press always writes them up; they were never DEA helicopters, they belong to the State Department. These helicopters were being used to ferry and flown by retired military helicopter pilots on contract to the State Department and some of these guys are great guys and some of them are like little kids that shouldn't be let out of a playpen. They are living sort of Vietnam fantasies out there and they are really buccaneers and this kind of stuff. They're getting a lot of money doing this stuff and it's sort of wild and exciting. They would fly out the crews that were destroying the coca. The Peruvians would never let us use fumigation like we're doing in Colombia now, even though we did lots and lots of research, we knew a lot about this stuff, what kind of chemicals did what damage to what. We could have done a lot of stuff there, but they wouldn't let us. We had to do it by hand. They also would fly up DEA people to join up with the police to hit labs and stuff like that. One day these guys were coming back in one of the helicopters, flew over a river and they saw a flag of the Shining Path. They decided to play capture the flag.

Q: Oh, no.

WATSON: So they put the helicopter down on the island and sneaked up like little kids on their bellies and ran up and got the flag and ran back to the helicopter and flew back into town. Just like puppies with their tails wagging so hard they hit each other. Of course they went to the bar where they all went every night and they were bragging about this. It came back to my attention - and one of the most difficult things you see, this in the Colombia situation now is when you start to get insurgents, politically motivated insurgents involved in the narcotics industry or close - the U.S. government tries very, very hard to focus on collaborating the local people in dealing with the narcotics, but not getting involved in the civil war. One of the worst things that we can do is to be starting

to being perceived as trying to take on the Shining Path directly, which we weren't at all. No mandate, you could go to jail. These assholes had gone out there and so I had no choice but to immediately throw all of these guys out of the country. There were about five of them. So, I had no problem with the guys on the State Department contracts. They were gone the next day. They were out of there. Like I said, those guys who were the head of the narcotics assistance unit, those guys are out of here tomorrow. The more complicated factor was the DEA guys. Now I had full authority to throw them out, but I didn't need to have a fight with Jack Lawn, the head of DEA, over this. Jack I knew pretty well. I called him up and I said, "Jack, you won't believe it. This is what's happened. Those guys have got to go." He said, "Well, I agree." I said, "It's much better if you pull them out of there than if I order them out." He said, "Okay." He did that. The point that I, when sometimes I tell the story, the point I say is what's really important for ambassadors to do is to work the Washington front really well so that you have adequate relationships with these other key players that affect what you're doing. Like I had with Jack Lawn at this point, who was a really nice guy, or else you keep yourself in an enormous amount of difficulty struggling with bureaucratic fights back here, and everybody gets all riled up. It's so much easier to get your authority to do what you have to do there.

ANTHONY QUAINTON
Ambassador
Peru (1989-1992)

Ambassador Anthony Quainton was born in Washington state in 1934. He graduated from Princeton University in 1955 and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. He served at overseas posts in Australia, Pakistan, India, France, Nepal and as ambassador to the Central African Republic, Nicaragua, Kuwait and Peru. Ambassador Quainton has also served as the Deputy Inspector General, Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security, and the Director General of the Foreign Service. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: Before you went out there what were the United States major concerns in Peru as you saw it?

QUAINTON: There really were two or three. It was evident that narcotics would be at the top of the program agenda, if only because Peru at that time produced 60 percent of the world's coca and 60 percent of the world's cocaine had its origin in Peru. That was an enormous preoccupation with the rising level of cocaine consumption in the inner cities in America. DEA had deployed quite substantial resources, up country in Peru, and was actually fighting the drug war with gun in hand. The narcotics agenda was very, very central.

Throughout this period from 1990 until early 1992, the biggest part of our agenda was, of course, the drug agenda. We were anxious to coopt Fujimori to get his support for a more aggressive interdiction campaign and, if possible, for eradication of coca plants,

particularly in the upper Huallaga valley, which was the area from which about two-thirds of Peru's production came. Fujimori had as his principal adviser a well known economist, Hernando de Soto, who had written a book called *The Other Path*. The first path was Abimael Guzman Reynoso's *Shining Path*, which was causing considerable chaos throughout the country. DeSoto was very influential and often argued against the U.S. interdiction strategy and in favor of alternative development.

On the drug front, Fujimori had a strong desire to cooperate with the United States. Just before I went to Peru, President Bush had announced a major drug strategy for the Andes and promised major resources for Andean countries - Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia - to help them with their interdiction and crop substitution programs. In point of fact, those monies were not dispersed promptly, in some cases not until 1996 or 1997, leading to considerable cynicism by the Andean governments about American intentions. Certainly in Peru's case, Fujimori took the view that if he was going to take a tough line on narcotics and get peasants out of coca production, he would require substantial money for alternative development for other crops which could be used by the small farmers as a source of income. We initially were skeptical of that approach because the AID economists could not see any crop that would provide comparable return to coca. Over time, a number of cash crops have been developed which are, in fact, competitive, but at that time there was not a whole lot we could do. The congress objected very strongly to our disbursing AID resources to Peru given widespread human rights abuses. It was a classic case of the difficulty of co-existence between a number of competing American priorities. We wanted to control drugs and at the same time promote democracy and human rights.

Fujimori, for reasons of his own, did institute economic reforms for which he got very little credit in Washington even though reforms had been a major rhetorical thrust for his administration. It certainly was one of the subjects that I discussed repeatedly with senior finance officials. But the focus in Washington was on drugs and on human rights. Peru was constantly criticized for not reducing the acreage under coca production. Fujimori said, "Well, when we tried to get resources for alternative development, your congress refused saying they would not provide aid to a country with systematic human rights abuses." The systematic human rights abuses grew out of Fujimori's efforts to control two terrorist organizations, The Shining Path, Abimael Reynoso's organization, and the MRTA. Both organizations were extraordinarily brutal in their tactics, murdering peasants, villagers, as well as killing police and soldiers. The response of the police and military was to strike back very forcefully.

Human rights was a constant problem in Washington, where there was an unwillingness to recognize that Peru was a highly conflicted society in which it would take quite a long time to change attitudes about the role of the military and permissible behavior. Civil rights organizations were singled minded, America's Watch particularly, demanding the United States reduce its ties to Peru until the Peruvian military and police got out of the drug and interdiction business. So many of the things we wanted to do were halted by various congressional restrictions, and we didn't get the narcotic results that we wanted.

Q: You had been the anti-terrorism person in the Department. Was there a time that you came down on terrorism rather than drugs?

QUAINTON: There was a linkage to the degree that terrorists provided protection to the traffickers in some of the areas in which there was drug production. For the Peruvians, the anti-drug campaign was also an anti-terrorist campaign. The army repeatedly asked for our assistance in dealing with the terrorists, at the same time that it was reluctant to become involved in anti-narcotic efforts. A great achievement for Fujimori was to convince the military that they would have to engage in the drug war, beginning with the air force and the navy. Our perception of the military was that they were all corrupted by drug money and were reluctant to be involved in anti-narcotics program because they benefitted too much from the narcotics business. For them, it was not a useful thing to try to get the drug war cleaned up. So, there was always a constant tension.

One of the other effects of terrorism was that it allowed me to carry out something like Jack Tuthill's Operation Topsy in Brazil. I succeeded in reducing the embassy staff from a permanent complement of just over 200 to 135, a cut of about a third. However, the motivation was different and my approach was somewhat different. It was clear that we had too many people. The more people we had, the more we were at risk for security reasons. Using the security angle, I required every agency head to give me a list of every employee along with a description of what each employee did. There were several agencies that were resistant, as you might imagine, but in the end all complied. Then, using the list and working with the DCM we went through it identifying jobs that in our judgment were secondary and didn't fit in with the central focus of what we were trying to do in drugs, human rights, counterterrorism, etc.

Also, we became increasingly aggressive in complaining about Peruvian drug performance and their unwillingness to engage in major eradication efforts. Fujimori's point of view was that there was not much to talk about if we weren't prepared to put up resources. The dialog became more fractious in the last year I was there. The first year was really a learning period for Fujimori. Fujimori was doing most of the right things. Right up to the time of his visit to Washington, he wanted to be taken seriously as a Latin American statesman who had access at the highest levels. He went to Japan, to Europe, and a number of other countries. He wanted to project Peru and to project himself on the international stage.

Q I think we are about at the end of the Peruvian tour.

QUAINTON: Yes, I think so. There isn't a whole lot more to say about Peru. As I look back on that experience, aside from the evident saliency of the issues - democracy, drugs, terrorism, etc. - which brought together cumulatively a great deal of the experience that I had had in other jobs, it certainly was the most complex mission I have had to manage. One of the problems was how to maintain effective control over the law enforcement agencies, particularly the Drug and Enforcement Administration and its teams that were actually engaged in the drug war. The drug war was fought by a coalition of U.S. government agencies receiving their guidance and instructions from a variety of different

places, from Panama to Washington and internally from the embassy's country team. The coordination of the drug agenda was carried out by the DCM who was chairman of the narcotics committee, but many issues came to me for decision. Unlike my predecessor, I was not much interested in day-to-day military operations; I left that to my DCM. But this is always a great question as to how much an ambassador should engage himself in the details of what was in fact a paramilitary operation with quite a large number of people involved. We had a fleet of helicopters, transport planes which were run out of the embassy by the narcotics assistance unit. That was a constant problem. The inspector general was interested in the whole narcotics bureau and how they were controlling the resources. In management terms it was one of my major areas of concern.

JAMES F. MACK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Lima (1994-1997)

Mr. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin America where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy March 20th, 2004.

MACK: Fujimori was President and at that point Peru was the Saudi Arabia of coca, the raw material for cocaine. They produced more coca than Colombia and Bolivia combined at that point. Peru had two insurgencies, which were declining strength but, nonetheless, still quite dangerous. One was the MRTA and the other the Shining Path or Sendero Luminoso. Even in Lima there were fairly frequent bombings and shootouts. The MRTA was the more traditional revolutionary movement, with links to the Central American guerrilla groups. In 1995, this group had planned very thoroughly to take over the Congress of Peru which was housed in a 1930's fortress type building. For this purpose they had purchased or made Peruvian military police uniforms and had a vehicle painted up to look just like a Peruvian Army truck. To execute the plan they had brought 45 of their fighters out of the jungle to Lima and staged them for two weeks in a house in one of Lima's tonier suburbs to put the fine fitting touches on their preparations.

MACK: Fujimori had recognized that Peru's role as the major supplier of raw coca and cocaine paste to the Colombian cartels was jeopardizing his efforts to bring about central government control of the country. The guerrillas were living off the proceeds of their taxation of the coca growers and processors and of taxation of the aircraft that landed in the jungle to take the cocaine "base" back to Colombia for refining into cocaine HCL. And Fujimori recognized that to get a handle on the guerillas he had to cut off the source of their financial support. Therefore, he moved very vigorously to support a plan to intercept aircraft that Colombian pilots and pilots of other nationalities were flying in to pick up the loads of cocaine base for processing back in Colombia. The US contribution

was to help the Peruvians acquire the information on when these planes were coming in – the date, time of day, and landing location so that the Peruvian Air Force would be ready to receive them. Intercepting narco-aircraft isn't quite as tricky as you would imagine if you know when and where the planes are coming. We started this cooperation with Peru early 1995 if I am remembering correctly shortly after a US law had been changed to allow us to provide intel, in this case Peru, to intercept civilian aircraft bearing cocaine, provided certain safeguards were followed to insure the aircraft that the Peruvians had intercepted was the right one. I think for this sharing to be possible, the US president also had to certify that drug trafficking from Peru was a threat to US national security.

Between January of '95 until May of 1996 I think there were twenty or so successful "events" in which Peruvian intercept aircraft successfully intercepted narco aircraft, either in the air, on the ground as they loaded the cocaine base to transport to Colombia. A number of them were shot down, when they refused to land. Some of them were forced down. Some of them landed after the pilot realized he could not escape. Some were destroyed on the ground. It took about a year and a half for the first narco pilot to agree to land peacefully. I was surprised it took so long because the intercept success rate was quite high. But the upshot of these successful intercepts was that fewer and fewer pilots were willing to make trips to Peru to pick up a load of cocaine base.

But the coca bushes kept producing coca leaves. And the peasants kept making the coca paste and coca base so the stuff started piling up in Peru. When you have too much of something, what happens? The price drops. And the price of coca and coca base in Peru dropped over 80% to what was well below the cost of production. And when that happened the most coca farmers simply abandoned their coca fields. The weeds grew up and killed the coca. The result was in a four or five year period the coca production in Peru dropped by 70% percent. This was a real success story. .

Q: Randy was saying when this thing started somebody at the Pentagon said, let's look at this because we're getting all these radar tracks of narcotics aircraft flying between Peru and Colombia, but that after the Russians had shot down a civilian Korean Airliner violating Siberian airspace, the US passed a law making it a felony for anyone to give assistance to another country that led to the shooting down of a civilian plane.

MACK: Correct. That person was criminally liable, which meant we could not share intel on the movement of narco aircraft to the Peruvians or anybody else. So while we had the information, we could not do anything about it. Remember this law was in reaction to a Russian, not US, shootdown of a civilian aircraft. We had to change the law and it was changed. It said that there would be no violation of law if the countries that received the information took certain steps to determine to safeguard if they had the right aircraft in their sights and to give the pilot a chance to identify himself and to land if instructed to do so. Once that law was changed, which would have been at the end of 1994, we were able to provide the Peruvians the information they needed. The program was tremendously successful. It really changed the situation in Peru. As I said coca production dropped seventy percent in about five years.

Q: How did we evaluate Fujimori at the time you were there?

MACK: Well a couple of things. He was no great friend of the United States. Neither Al Adams nor his successor Dennis Jett had a relationship with him at all. This was in large part because both were following instructions to push strongly human rights issues. Fujimori basically cut off the American Ambassador. However his ministers were willing to cooperate with us.

Having said that, Fujimori was very successful in his early years in three absolutely key areas. One, he got a handle on the guerrilla insurgency. Two, his political decision to use the Peruvian Air Force to intercept narco aircraft produced a dramatic reduction in coca production. And three, the economy boomed while he was President. He strongly supported foreign investment in Peru. While I was there the economy was growing eight, ten, twelve percent a year.

MACK: 1994 to 1997 in Peru.

Q: So during that time how were we dealing with him? The good points, the bad points and where were we standing?

The big issue was, of course, narcotics. Fujimori had come to the conclusion, I think I spoke about this the last time we talked, that the narcotics trafficking was fueling the two Peruvian insurgencies, the Sendero Luminoso and the MRTA, so he made a commitment and decision early on to really go after the traffickers. And I explained, I think, during our last conversation that he authorized the use of deadly force to force down or shoot down narco aircraft who refused to obey instructions to land. We had worked out the arrangements with Peru under which we could share intelligence just prior to my arrival. I believe we negotiated the deal with either the head of the Peruvian Air Force or Minister of Defense. I can't recall.

Under the agreement, the Peruvians had agreed to respect certain international rules related to how you intercept civilian aircraft, in this case civilian narcotics aircraft. You need to be aware that there were stringent requirements in that regard. Unless the Peruvians met them, any US official who passed information led to the loss of life could be criminally liable for murder.

Prior to that time, a US person who shared information that led to loss of life could be liable even if stringent safeguards were in place to avoid mistakes. So obviously, none shared information under those conditions. In any event the law was changed; Fujimori agreed to follow strict intercept guidelines; and we began to share intelligence on narco aircraft. As it turned out, most of the information that the Peruvians used for intercepts they had gathered themselves based on training and equipment we had given them. In a nutshell, they were able to learn when the narcotics aircraft were coming and to what landing strip in the Peruvian Amazon. As a result when the narco aircraft was landing or when it was trying to take off with a load of drugs, it very frequently was intercepted by a Peruvian Air Force plane, often a plane we had provided to them.

The Peruvian Air Force was very successful in starting in '95 intercepting these aircraft, very successful. And during for eighteen months or so I think there twenty odd aircraft were shot down or shot up on the ground. I think of these 20, six or seven were actually shot down when they refused to land. Finally, after about eighteen months, the first narco pilot agreed to land when instructed to do so. It surprised me it took that long for those narco pilots to come to the conclusion that if they did not land, the odds were very good they would be shot down.

Q: What was the Peruvian Air Force flying for the intercepts?

MACK: They were flying actually A-37's which we had given them. A-37s are very old jet aircraft that only fly about 400 miles per hour. But that was fast enough since they were dealing with narco aircraft flying at half that speed. We had mounted F-16 radars on the front of the A-47s. In addition, we always sent up a separate aircraft to monitor the situation and help the A-47s identify the narco aircraft.

It was only many years later that we had this horrific incident where the Peruvian Air Force apparently didn't follow completely its own intercept safeguards and ended up shooting down a missionary aircraft. This produced the immediate suspension of all U.S. aerial intercept assistance to Peru.

The Peruvians were not following their own guidelines; they were rushing through the procedures. And in that particular case, the indications that the missionary aircraft was a narco aircraft were not there. It was actually going into Peru, not out of Peru. It was not varying its altitude. It was not trying to evade. It was in broad-daylight. They didn't bother to check the tail number. Or at least they had not gotten a response back before they opened fire. The interceptor never established contact with the missionary plane. It is true that narco pilots rarely acknowledge a request by the intercept aircraft to land. But the narcos usually flew at night. There were a whole lot of signs that should have told the Peruvian Air Force interceptors that the missionary aircraft was not a narco aircraft. But anyway, that tragic incident ended the intercept program in Peru. This occurred in 2001, four years after I left.

Q: During that time basically the pilots were taking coca out, was that it?

MACK: Well they were not taking out the coca leaves; they were taking semi-processed cocaine it was called "paste", in its crudest form or "base", which is more processed, but still not cocaine HCL, the product sold in the US.

Q: The big money is not there?

MACK: Well the biggest money is not there. But certainly there is money there. The farmers were not able to take it beyond *paste* or maybe *base* anyway. So they took it that far. And you are absolutely right if you compare the price they received for cocaine base in Peru to the wholesale price for cocaine HCL in the United States; There was a huge

difference. It was probably two or three percent of the US wholesale value of cocaine. However, the buyer actually flew almost to your door and you didn't have to hump it over the mountains to Lima. It was a quite good deal for coca farmer as seen from his perspective. He wasn't really comparing himself with the wholesaler in New York. He was comparing himself to how well off he would have been if he were not growing coca.

Q: Was narco money penetrating the judiciary or military system?

MACK: This is a very broad question. I would not allege that narcotics penetrated to the degree that it penetrated in Colombia. I think there was much greater penetration in the Colombian Congress and Judiciary. But some military who served in the jungle areas where narcotics were produced did become tainted to some degree. There were cases where the Peruvian Army Officers were directly involved with narcotic trafficking or protecting trafficking and being paid off by them. I don't recall instances of members of the Peruvian Congress or Legislators being involved. I don't recall that was the case.

Fujimori worried about that. He didn't want Peru to become another Colombia. That was often discussed.

VENEZUELA

LOWELL FLEISCHER
Consul General
Maracaibo (1982-1983)

Q: When you were in Maracaibo, were you concerned about terrorism or drug trafficking and some of the problems that have grown up in recent years?

FLEISCHER: Yes. Most of those have really come up since we lived there. We were concerned I guess, not that we had private guards at the residence and were careful about things like that. We did not have marines at the Consulate. We had a private security staff and I guess the local police gave us a couple of people out in front. The drug business was really beginning at the time we were almost leaving Venezuela. It was much more evident at that period of time in Colombia. It was also a problem in the area known as the (Guajira?) which is that peninsula, almost a no-man's land between Colombia and Venezuela leading up to the gulf. I wanted to drive across that peninsula into Colombia and the State Department security officers in Bogota and Caracas would not hear of it. That had become sort of a no-man's land where automobiles were stolen, let's say in Maracaibo. Venezuela was economically a little better off than Colombia at the time we were living there. They would end up in the Guajira. Numbers would be erased, they'd be changed, etc. and before you'd know it, they're in Colombia and being driven by somebody else. There were bands of terrorists there, etc. but we were never really too concerned about our children. We had a very large American school there, because there were a lot of Americans associated with the oil industries there. A lot of US companies had set up operations there partly because the Venezuelans required it. (...) for example which sold a lot of equipment. Other manufacturing companies which sold to the

Venezuelan oil industry and often established then local manufacturing facilities in Maracaibo in order to better facilitate the oil industry. So there were never really any serious problems I would say connected with either drug trafficking or pure violence and terrorism.

EDWARD L. LEE II
Regional Security Officer
Panama City, Panama (1982-1985)

Mr. Lee was born and raised in Michigan, educated at Delta College and American University. After seven years service with the US Marine Corp, he joined the State Department as Agent in the Office of Security. Mr. Lee's entire career in the Foreign Service was devoted to Security matters in Washington and in diplomatic posts throughout the world. His postings as Regional Security Officer include Cyprus, South Korea, Thailand and Panama. Mr. Lee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: As you're working on security, did you find in dealing in Latin America, where corruption was getting to be major, did you find this spilling over into our operations? One, corruption is a political phenomenon that we observe and are concerned about. Two, corruption is one where if it starts tainting our people, then... Did you find that there was much of a spillover?

LEE: I think we were seeing it spill over from the standpoint of the consular function. When you begin to look at political corruption, assuming that there isn't a deterrent to that, you then begin to see it spill over into the issuance of visas, passport fraud. The one unique link to what was going on in Latin America was the increase in drugs. There is a correlation between drug trafficking and visas and passports. So, probably unlike previous years prior to '82-'85, we were beginning to see a sophistication level of fraud where people wanted visas, they wanted passports, and one way to do that would be to get to a local employee who could be coopted, who could either provide information or make a dent in the way the system works or ease the possibility of fraud occurring. The most obvious evidence of corruption that might be endemic to a political- (end of tape)

That was something that the Bureau of Consular Affairs and the Office of Security was most concerned with. We were seeing visa fraud and malfeasance turning up everywhere, not just in Latin America. It did become very disruptive to consular operations.

But again, getting back to Venezuela, we had rising crime. That was because of the hyperinflation. But other than that, there was not any major political concerns going on. Now, Venezuela is much different.

ALFRED JOSEPH WHITE
Economic Counselor
Caracas (1987-1990)

Alfred Joseph White was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 16, 1929. He attended Syracuse and Georgetown Universities and served in the US Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. His career has included positions in countries including Germany, Sudan, Italy, Austria, Turkey, and Venezuela. He was interviewed by John J. Harter on September 17, 1997.

WHITE: Regarding drugs, Venezuela is fortunately not a drug producing country, or it was not when I served there, anyway.

Q: Of course, it's right next door to Colombia.

WHITE: That's the problem, its geographical position. Its borders are very remote and in very wild country.

Q: Are its borders permeable?

WHITE: Yes, to say the least. Particularly, the land along the Venezuelan border with Brazil. When you're down there in the valley of the Orinoco River and along the Colombian border, it's the same thing. Those borders are in very wild and unsettled country. Policing that area is virtually impossible.

Toward the end of my stay in Venezuela the U.S. Treasury was getting concerned about possible money laundering involving Venezuela. I wouldn't say when I went to Venezuela in 1987 that was as much a problem as it gradually became during the three years that I was there.

Because of the low oil price at that time, Venezuela's economy was slowly sinking into the ground. There was a Presidential election in late 1988. A new President was elected who took power in early 1989. To put it all in a nutshell, he found, when he entered office, that the cupboard was bare. Leading up to this election the Venezuelan Government really hadn't been very frank in telling the country where things stood, and things did not stand very well at all.

Q: So who was elected in 1988?

WHITE: The man elected was a very interesting man. His name was Carlos Andres Perez. If you were a Latin American hand, you would have heard that name. He was known as "CAP," the initial letters of his name. CAP had previously been President of Venezuela in the good old days. He was the man who had nationalized the oil industry.

Back in the 1970s, that was the time when practically all Latin American governments were doing the same thing. Import substitution was the rule. You mentioned your connection with UNCTAD [UN Conference on Trade and Development]. You know the philosophy that was prevailing at that time. The themes were: keep the foreigners out, import substitution, subsidize industries domestically to ensure that no producer from

abroad could compete with them, run up huge deficits, and, in other words, spend and spend and spend. Big spending. And, of course, nationalize everything owned by the foreigners. That was the prevailing philosophy in Latin America. I'm sure you're very familiar with it.

KENNETH N. SKOUG
Deputy Chief of Mission
Caracas (1988-1990)

Q: I was wondering, one of the problems with the Drug Enforcement Agency is it is an enforcement agency and sometimes tends to act like a cop on the beat in a foreign country, which causes all sorts of complications. Did you run across that sort of thing? I mean, it usually means that whoever is in charge of the mission has to keep a very close eye on them.

SKOUG: Yes, that was a substantial responsibility, because the officer in charge of the Drug Enforcement Agency Group, was very well regarded in her own agency in Washington, but not by her DEA colleagues at post. She had bad relations with her staff and had them very frightened. They felt they got no recognition for their work, and they themselves were very frightened that Colombian *capos* were going to get them, which almost did happen on one occasion. The Colombians sent a hit man or men to Caracas, aimed at a Venezuelan contact in the PTJ, *pete jota*, the judicial technical police organization fighting against the *narcos*. The hits also apparently were directed against the embassy. We had to have a man and his family evacuated because of death threats against them. DEA headquarters came back in and said this was an "alleged" threat and, well, there was no reason to have got them out. But our security people, including the Agency people, thought it was a very real threat, and said these Colombia bad guys were actually in Caracas. I mean they identified them. And eventually the Venezuelans took care of them in one way or another, so we didn't have to have them around any more. Anyway, the management of the Drug Enforcement Agency was a problem.

There was a national television program which appeared some years after I left Caracas which dealt with another aspect of this delicate subject. One of the main TV networks ran an exposé about the Venezuelan National Guard, which was the other agency most involved on the Venezuelan side in the drug fight, using the Agency to deliver some drugs into Florida. According to the exposé, the station's understanding this was part of a program for trapping someone, but actually they were duped. According to the exposé, the chief of station in Caracas in my time was disciplined for having been deluded. It was a very nasty business. The Venezuelan military was also much involved, particularly the minister of defense, a man named Filmo - if you can believe it - Filmo López. Filmo was anxious to get as much as he could in money and goods from the United States in exchange for posturing on narcotics, because in reality not much was being done in Venezuela. He refused to sign the narcotics agreement because there wasn't enough in it for his ministry. He was finally forced to do it, but he assured me, after keeping me waiting for a long period of time before signing the agreement, that in the next agreement there would have to be much more for Venezuela. And I thought to myself that I hoped

there would never be another agreement that I would have to sign with Filmo López.
(End of tape)

Speaking of drugs, the wife of one of our senior military people had problems of that nature, including one involving a weapon, and so I tried to keep her out, but she got back... the administrative counselor. I sort of stayed between them because I had known the administrative officer favorably when he was a young officer in Moscow when I was there. After Otto left, the administrative counselor even got bonus pay for his work in his second year in Caracas. Earlier that issue wasn't quite so calm. But anyway, this very well-intentioned fellow had a knack for getting into quarrels with various section heads, and a lot of my work was management of this relationship. The defense attaché had serious problems in managing his own staff. He had problems of drug use by people within the embassy itself. We had an officer assigned to us who had serious matrimonial and other personal problems. At a previous assignment, there was a suggestion that he had been working for the Soviets, but that never was verified.

SKOUG: I mentioned Filmo López, the minister of defense who wanted more things from the United States in the narcotics area. He wanted the United States to give more general assistance. More money, in other words, which the Venezuelans would use for what they wanted. There was a military operation north of Colombia which was aimed essentially at drug-running, and the Venezuelans were asked to participate. They didn't participate, but they were informed. In fact, I was present when a U.S. team led by somebody from State and the Narcotics people came down to explain it, and Cap listened to the explanation and offered his support, although not Venezuelan participation. Later, Figueredo, the foreign minister, stated publicly that the Venezuelan Government had not been informed about this. Well, maybe he hadn't been informed, but I called him on the phone, and I said that since he'd made this statement publicly and the press was asking me about it, I was going to tell the press that indeed the president had been informed. Figueredo said, "Well, you have to say what you have to say." And I did say it, of course, and that didn't help Mr. Figueredo either, I suppose. But that didn't affect the attitude of Filmo López, and the navy people. They continued to oppose the operation and announced Venezuela wouldn't participate.

Subsequently, in the summer, there was another incident where a Venezuelan naval vessel, a frigate, illuminated a U.S. Coast Guard vessel, illuminated in the terms of radar. I mean, radar before you can fire, and our Naval attaché referred to it as an act of war. The Navy took it very seriously. There was some question as to the facts, as to what actually happened, but a protest by the United States was eventually delivered to the Venezuelans. What it showed was that the attitude of even the government assumed to be very friendly, like Venezuela, could be very, very nationalistic.

Q: On the gun-running business and back and forth, was there any suspicion that there were people high up in the Venezuelan Government who were involved?

SKOUG: There may have been suspicion in some quarters. I hardly believe it. It could have happened with gun-running, but in drug-running...

Q: You mentioned trying to squelch the gun-running operation in Colombia.

SKOUG: Well, it was drug-running that I meant. There was a plan discussed in my presence by the chief of station and the head of our DEA operation in Venezuela, which they described as an "FBI operation," and which they described as conditional, something that could be happening in the future, which would involve a controlled shipment of drugs through Venezuela from Colombia into the United States in order to apprehend villains. It turned out - and I think I mentioned earlier that this wasn't really what was happening because, according to the "60 Minutes" program, the chief of the CIA station there was later reprimanded for his participation in a so-called controlled scheme, which was apparently going on even as they talked about it in futuristic terms. It also was being argued about between the agency and the drug enforcement agency. If so, neither one was candid in telling me. They were supposed to tell me any time there were any disputes between agencies represented as to policy. I was totally uninformed about this dispute. It turned out, apparently, if the television report was accurate, that it wasn't controlled and that Venezuelan national guard officers were involved. So there was apparently involvement by senior Venezuelan officials in drug-running. It's just too lucrative, just too tempting, I guess. Now, I don't think that the president had any idea of that. He was always supportive of action against drug-running. A money laundering agreement was under discussion when I was there. The head of the central bank, Tinoco, was very much in favor of a money laundering agreement, which would have been very helpful in affecting any flow of cash through Venezuela, but I'm not aware of any senior government officials who were involved. There wasn't any General Ochoa, who was as you know executed by Castro for allegedly having participated in this trade.

ROBERT B. MORLEY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Caracas (1993-1995)

Robert B. Morley was born in Massachusetts on March 7, 1935. He attended Rutgers University, Central College of Pella, Iowa where he received his BA in 1957, and the University of North Carolina. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962, wherein he served in countries including Barbados, Poland, Venezuela, and Ecuador. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 1, 1997.

Q: That is very interesting. During the 1993-1995 period, was there terrorism and drug problems in Venezuela?

MORLEY: There wasn't much of a terrorist problem and there wasn't much of a narcotics problem, no. There was some drug cultivation and abuse, but it was not considered a major problem.

NICOLAS ROBERTSON
Public Affairs Officer

Caracas (1997-1999)

Mr. Robertson was born and raised in California. He was born in Wilmington, near the heart of the Los Angeles Harbor district. He attended University of California at Santa Cruz. Mr. Robertson first desired to be an academic, but then spent some time working as a chef on a ship. After returning home, he took the Foreign Service written and oral tests and passed. Mr. Robertson subsequently was stationed in South Africa, Barbados, Argentina, Nigeria, Ghana, Venezuela, and worked as the Deputy Director of the Office of African Affairs in at the State Department. Mr. Robertson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

ROBERTSON: Anyway, I went up to talk to him, we're just talking. I walked out, and somebody asked me about our overflights of Venezuelan territory carried out routinely as part of the anti-drug traffic campaigns. Anyway, I went back to the embassy and reported that Chavez was going to revoke our overflight rights for the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) planes, the military.

Q: Yes, you might explain what that was.

ROBERTSON: This was before the famous Colombian bases. We were doing some overflights, part of the anti-drug trafficking activities, and they were military overflights, reconnaissance. It would have been about March of '99, maybe April of '99, and Chavez decided that he was going to stop that.

Q: Now, were we watching the Chavez-Colombia relationship?

ROBERTSON: Yes. Don't forget, though, that at that time the Chavez relationship with FARC, the Colombian rebel groups, was not that deep or formal. One of the sad issues when I was there was the FARC shot three Native American activists who had gone down to work with indigenous groups in Colombia. They were murdered by FARC in Venezuela. They put them down at the border with Venezuela and shot them as they crossed. We weren't at all ambivalent about FARC.

Q: FARC being the-

ROBERTSON: The Colombia guerrilla group, *Fuerzas Armadas revolucionarias de Colombia*. They were very powerful in Venezuela just because the Venezuelans were so lax. It was easy to get money in and out; it was hard to control the Venezuelan banking system because so much comes in and out and they're not terribly – not a very bureaucratic culture. And so it was always a loose banking system which FARC could manipulate. FARC collected taxes from ranchers and farmers almost all the way to Caracas. They had a strong underground presence there. There's a huge population of Colombians in Venezuela and so there was no way to sort of "spot" FARC. It wasn't something that was at the official level – the Venezuelan parties were not even mildly

sympathetic - it was just the fact that Venezuelan society made it very easy for them to operate. The same probably holds true of drug traffickers. Colombia had always looked upon Venezuela as a problem, a factor in the ability of FARC to keep going. It's a guerilla force that can do banking, supplies and even R&R for troops just by getting in vehicles and crossing a border. But obviously Chavez tilted the scales at least rhetorically, initially. And this was before the spectacular reversals to FARC's fortunes. Chavez's penchant for talking too much was pretty obvious in the first six months of his government, and it was clear that he was going to provoke diplomatic tensions with Colombia.