

## IRAQ

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James A. Placke	1982-1985	Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Bureau, Washington, DC
Parker W. Borg	1984-1986	Office of Counter Terrorism, Washington, DC
David G. Newton	1984-1988	Ambassador, Iraq

Haywood Rankin	1986-1988	Political Officer, Baghdad
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**A. DAVID FRITZLAN**

**Vice Consul  
Baghdad (1940)**

**Consular Officer  
Basra (1942-1943)**

**Counselor of Embassy  
Baghdad (1956-1959)**

*A. David Fritzlan was born in India in 1914. He moved to the United States in 1932, and received a B.A. degree at Northwest Nazarene College in 1934 and an M.A. degree in at the University of Kentucky in 1936. He joined the Foreign Service in 1938, serving in Italy, Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Jordan, Spain, and Greece in addition to Egypt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

*Q: I want to back track before we get there. You went to Baghdad in 1940. You were there approximately eight months. What were you doing?*

FRITZLAN: I was doing consular, commercial and economic work. Consular work was light since we had few American citizens in Iraq.

*Q: What was the American role in Iraq at the time?*

FRITZLAN: It was very subordinate to the British role. In fact, we didn't have what you'd call a full-fledged Minister there. He was a Minister Resident rather than Minister Plenipotentiary, but that didn't make any real difference. The British were the only people there who had an Embassy. They were really in charge. They had advisers in all the ministries, in effect it was a continuation of the old mandate colonial system under a different name.

*Q: But you weren't there during that brief revolt?*

FRITZLAN: Rashid Ali? It was coming. I left just a few months before it exploded.

*Q: When you were there were you and the others looking at this thing and saying the British are really sitting on a tinder box? Or did you feel they were pretty much in control?*

FRITZLAN: We were ambivalent on the subject. If you recall, in 1940, in the summer June-- France fell--Vichy took over, and of course, I don't know why I say, "of course", but it happened that the French representatives in the Levant, that is to say Lebanon and Syria, offered their loyalty and allegiance to Vichy. So there was Iraq--on one side and there was Syria and Lebanon under Vichy French on the other. It was essential, absolutely vital, that the British keep Iraq from getting into the hands of the Axis. So the idea developed of bringing troops in from India to Basra and Iraq to help counteract the forces in Syria and Lebanon, a potential threat. This the British would do under the terms of their treaty of alliance with Iraq. Now the Iraqi government at the time was beginning to scent the possibility of an Axis victory. And Rashid Ali was Prime Minister at the time, he and a number of his ministers, including some who later professed greatest admiration and liking for the west and what it stood for, were toying, playing, with the Axis agents--Italians, Germans in Baghdad. The British were determined this wasn't going to last. The German and Italian missions were closed and their agents picked up. They then brought in these forces from India, and that is when in May 1941 Rashid Ali in effect invited the Axis in. The British were under severe threat from the Iraqi army, which was a considerable force. And also there was the German air force which was daily flying over Baghdad and threatening any enemies or potential enemies.

*Q: You left before this?*

FRITZLAN: I left before; several months before this.

*Q: We've been talking about sort of, "Gee, the Iraqis really aren't that willing to stay with the British."*

FRITZLAN: The British were acutely aware that the Iraqis were going to do what they thought was in their interest. They had in their own mind lots of reasons to dislike the British, therefore if there was an opportunity to take advantage of British weakness, they were about to do so. Apart from Nuri Said, and maybe a half dozen other leaders who had been with the British in the first World War against the Turks, and who had co-operated since, there were very few Iraqis that really could be trusted. He was one. I could name a few others.

*Q: Yes, it's often forgotten. To move on, you were in Basra. What were you yourself doing?*

FRITZLAN: This was one of three ports of entry for Russian supplies on ships coming from the US. The others were Abadan, Khorramshahr and Bundar Shapur. Our mission there basically was to do everything possible to facilitate and speed up the unloading of the ships carrying these munitions of war and civilian supplies to Russia. The bulk went by rail from Bundar Shapur on the Gulf. Some goods went by road through up to the point where they could get into Iran on the highway from Baghdad to Iran-- it wasn't a highway really, but a gravel road. So our mission, as I said, was to do everything possible to expedite the movement of these supplies. This meant working with the port officials, encouraging them, trying to get them to adopt efficient means of unloading and movement. The British were there in a big way helping to do the same thing. We had very close cooperation with the British on this in Basra at the time. In the stifling heat in the summer, it was incredible really how we managed to do what we did...at any one time there would be 30 cargo ships tied up at the head of the Persian Gulf; Basra, Abadan, Khorramshahr, Bandar Shapur. Each one of these had an average of 50 men aboard. The turn around time was an average of 30 days. So the Consulate was heavily involved. I had problems with seamen drinking paint mixtures for lack of alcohol, seamen who tried to commit suicide and sometimes did. We had a case of a Lithuanian on board who was convinced that he was going to be turned over to the Russians and he had made one attempt to kill himself, and I went on board to talk to him. He had a limited amount of English, but I tried to convince him that he was in good hands, and nothing was going to happen. I didn't succeed; he managed to cut his wrists, and that was that. So I had to arrange his burial.

And then a case of a master who went off his rocker, and he was clearly putting his ship and his men in danger, and we had to make a decision from the reports of the first officer, and his assistant, as to what to do. There were provisions in the Foreign Service Manual for removing a master from his command which is a highly unusual step to take, and a very serious matter. But the Consul decided we had to go ahead and do it. So we held a sort of court of inquiry, and it was done. I don't know what happened in the end, if this man was forced to be restrained and locked up in his cabin, or what. But anyway, the ship eventually left, and that was really the main thing that we wanted to happen.

These ships would come through the Mediterranean, and they would arrive with some of the most horrifying tales. Many were sunk, by the way. They had to go through the narrow waters near Malta, and the German dive bombers were massed, of course, close to this sea lane by Sicily, and the defenses were pretty limited. But, fortunately, many, many got through.

FRITZLAN: Yes. My attention in regard to Iraq was also focused on their own economic development plan in which we were very interested. The British and we had technical members, experts in economic development, especially land reclamation, irrigation, and so on, on what was called the Iraq Development Board. We each had a member with full voting rights. We had a large technical assistance program covering the fields of irrigation, roads, drainage, education, and public health. With our technical aid using Iraq's vast oil wealth, dams were being built on the upper reaches of the Tigris. It was a matter of time, we thought, when the benefits would accrue to the general populace, improving their standard of living and gaining greater acceptance for the government. I mean the land would be reclaimed, land would be parceled out, there would be irrigation, cash crops, etc. Mesopotamia in the distant past had produced enormous quantities of wheat, it could do so again. So you can understand how greatly this subject engaged my attention. I must admit as between Iraq and the Arabian peninsula I found it much more congenial to work on Iraqi affairs than the latter.

We knew that we were, so to speak, racing against time in regard to Iraq. We knew about the nationalistic pressures in that part of the world; the intelligentsia were rising up and demanding more and more recognition of what they called Arab rights, freedom from western influence, and what they called imperialism. And the focus of their anger against the west was, not surprisingly, Israel. This was felt right throughout the Arab world. I suppose among all the Arabs there were few who were more ferocious, and angry on this subject than the Iraqis. So we had to contend with that.

I say we were racing against time. We hoped that the lid could be kept on a kind of simmering kettle long enough so that the benefits from the development program that had already begun, and was making considerable progress, would be spread throughout the population to the extent that people would accept their government as legitimate and reasonably benevolent. Unfortunately we were disappointed, but that's another story.

*Q: At the time, I mean you were concerned because at this time one could term Nasserism, or something, which was nationalism was obviously of great concern. Was there a problem, or consideration, about this Northern Tier Alliance? In other words, we were going through this phase of trying to get everybody into an alliance, but you know alliances are two-edged things. It can get people, particularly a country such as Iraq, rather annoyed. Here we were the principal supporter of Israel and yet we were sort of pushing very hard to get them into this alliance. Was this a concern that was being expressed to Dulles, and the policy makers, that this was maybe not a very good idea?*

FRITZLAN: Israel didn't like the Northern Tier, the Baghdad Pact. The ironical thing is that we, who were the prime movers to get this Northern Tier and Baghdad Pact organized and functioning, refused to join it. Dulles said no, and why; partly because Israel didn't like it, but mainly because Egypt didn't like it, and he kept expressing the idea that we should keep open our

lines of communication with Nasser, and that we could in the long run deal with Nasser and work on him to promote our interests; and that if we joined formally, we lost this possibility. But to keep lines to Nasser open we weren't about to backtrack entirely on the Baghdad Pact. So what did we do? We became "observers." As I say, it's curious because Dulles was so adamant, and so strongly in favor of this, but he wouldn't join formally. As observers though, we were just as active, and influential, as if we'd been full members. We put in a lot of money, we had a technical staff and donated administrative staff to the Baghdad Pact organization. We took part in all the military exercises involved, and we concluded various agreements on communications and such technical matters. So that as far as the efficiency of the Pact was concerned it was not in any way diminished by our non-membership. But somehow it made us look hypocritical.

*Q: You were looking at this thing. How did you feel about the Pact? I mean one could look at it two ways: one, it could be, by getting Iraq into it could be destabilizing to the social situation; or two, it could give a needed shot in the arm to the Iraqi military which would help stabilize it. I'm talking about how you were looking at this.*

FRITZLAN: I must say that I thought originally the Pact idea was a good thing. I didn't approve of our non- membership. I would have liked us to become full members. I had little faith in our being able to work on Nasser in any way. I didn't trust him, and I thought we were too beholden to what we considered his sensitivity on this matter. By doing what we did, to a large extent, we contributed to a division of the Arab world. But the division was already there. Iraq and Egypt had historically been at odds with each other.

*Q: That's the old Baghdad-Cairo...*

FRITZLAN: There has never been any love lost between those two centers of power, and both had been striving for leadership of the Arab world. This was a time when Iraq was prepared to play with us, prepared to act with us in our common interest. Why not take advantage of the opportunity? Naturally enough, it generated problems after the Suez affair, especially-- which came later, of course. But it generated serious problems because we could see there was a rising tide of young intellectuals who did not like this sort of thing, formal agreements with the west, etc. They wanted a kind of neutralism that Nehru and Tito had espoused.

*Q: This is the non-aligned group.*

FRITZLAN: So, I can say this, that while I favored the Baghdad Pact, and did what I could to promote its implementation and success, I did so knowing full well that it created problems too for us.

*Q: Then you went to the War College. You had a brief stint back on the desk before going to Baghdad as Deputy Chief of Mission.*

FRITZLAN: Yes, in October of '56. I got to Baghdad a week after the Suez attack. It was really a hot time.

*Q: Could you talk about: one, what was the situation? You were in Baghdad from 1956 to '59, most of the time with Waldemar Gallman?*

FRITZLAN: Gallman was Ambassador.

*Q: And you were his deputy?*

FRITZLAN: Yes, I arrived in October just after Suez when things were in a very fluid state. Nuri Said, who was Prime Minister, felt extremely let down by the British who hadn't taken him into their counsels, and who had in effect bungled the whole thing. He said, "If you're going to do this sort of thing, do it quickly and successfully, or else don't do it." He felt that he was inevitably more vulnerable to the criticisms that he was not a good Arab nationalist. He was really in a very shaky position.

*Q: The British, and French, and Israelis had not consulted the United States wither, and this was very apparent. So in a way were we sort of at one with the Iraqis when you were there by saying, "Well they did it to us too," or something like that?*

FRITZLAN: Well, yes, we could say that. This in a sense did align us more closely than previously. What happened was, the Eisenhower doctrine was involved. That was what you might call one of the principal outcomes of the Suez affair as far as we were concerned because we had to do something to help retrieve the position of Nuri Said, stop the rot. So the Richards mission was sent out. Congressman Richards was asked to head this mission to go to the Arab countries to find if we could agree on ways and means to strengthen their economy, and their defenses, against any manifestation of communist aggression. There was also at this point, I should say, considerable turmoil in Lebanon where there was mounting Moslem opposition to President Chamoun--a Christian. Much of this was instigated by Nasser, of course. So we wanted to help him, and this was part of the plan. Any country that appeals to us for assistance against the threat of communism would receive our assistance.

*Q: When you say "against the threat of communism" were we in some way equating the nationalism that was spreading out, Nasserism or something, with communism or not in our thinking?*

FRITZLAN: Only by what we learned from experience. It is true that in these countries--in Syria and Iraq--there were communist agents, and there were members in high places in government, especially Syria, who were known to be left in their attitudes. This was a convenient cover, though, to deal with insurrection in a sense as happened in Lebanon later when we sent in the Marines, when Chamoun felt he was under extreme pressure from left-wing forces. We used this Eisenhower Doctrine to send in the Marines, as you remember. That was in '58.

*Q: In July of '58, just after the Iraqi revolution. What was your impression of Nuri Said, and also King Faisal?*

FRITZLAN: Let's start with the King. He was a young man, then about 22, who had been educated mainly in England and had had an English governess. He was the son of Ghazi, son of



Faisal I, who had been killed as a young man in an automobile accident in 1940, I believe. So that the young King came to the throne as a very small child. His uncle, Abdulillah, Ghazi's younger brother, was Regent for many years--15 maybe, until the young man achieved his majority. Then the Regent became Crown Prince, but he was always a power behind the throne. The King had little interest in government, and little knowledge of or experience in statecraft. His uncle did, and his uncle was the one really who made important decisions where the palace was involved. Nuri Said had been Prime Minister off and on since the 1920s in Iraq. He fought with the British against the Turks in Mesopotamia in World War I. A reliable man, pro-west, a nationalist, but in the sense that he didn't want to be ruled by any outside power. But a patriot in the sense that he knew the limitations of his country, and wanted the best possible expert advice, and such military and economic assistance, as the country needed. He got all that from the British until just a few years earlier when we moved in with our military assistance program, and our technical assistance program. A very shrewd man, a pretty ruthless man, simply never stood on ceremony.

Soon after I arrived, Gallman, the Ambassador, came back for home leave and selection board duty. He was gone a number of months, and I was in charge. Well, one day--Nuri, who had a very fertile imagination, and a very lively mind--I got a call from his office saying, "The Prime Minister is on his way to your embassy to discuss a matter with you." I had never in my life supposed a Prime Minister called on Charges, or indeed, even Ambassadors--it was the other way around. Anyway he came, and we sat in the office and had a half an hour's chat about some problem that was worrying him. Most of the problems worrying him dealt with Syria, their plans to do something to the Euphrates, for example. He had, as I say, a very quick mind, he quickly got to the root of the problem, his intelligence service was considered to be extremely efficient. The problem, I suppose, in dealing with Nuri was that we were dealing with a man who was hated by the Intelligentsia, the youth, and the professional classes who were strong Arab nationalists. They hated him for his commitment to the west, his dependence as they saw it on the west. That in a nutshell is Nuri. A victim of the revolution, as of course, were the King, the Crown Prince, and others. It is ironic that he had been 40 years earlier the Iraqi leader in the struggle, with the British, against the Turks and became the chief architect of Iraqi nationhood.

*Q: Before we get to that, what were American interests when you arrived, as you saw it, and the Ambassador saw it, in Iraq?*

FRITZLAN: Our interests were basically to keep Iraq in the Baghdad Pact. To help Iraq strengthen its defense forces. To help Iraq in any way we could in its development program. That in a nutshell was our policy and interest in regard to Iraq.

*Q: Again, obviously this is an unclassified interview, but in events leading up to the July 14, 1958 revolution, how well were you served by our intelligence service, not only the CIA, but the military?*

FRITZLAN: Not at all well, not at all well. We had a large military attaché establishment. We had one great building which was devoted to the military. An Army Attaché was a colonel with many years experience. A Naval Attaché, a Marine colonel with a large staff, an Air Attaché with an even bigger staff. They entertained frequently, they even went so far as to join the local

hunt. Now the Regent who, seemingly, liked to think of himself as an English country gentleman, if you like, who spent months in England at a time, and was fond of chasing the fox. Well, he brought into being in Baghdad the local Baghdad Hunt which consisted of chaps, mostly Army, on horseback chasing jackals, there were no foxes. And so these service attachés had to get themselves all decked out in proper hunting clothes, and get a horse. Some of them had to begin to learn how to ride. And then they'd go out and join the Iraqi officers, and the Regent if he were there--he wasn't riding in those days. This was one way, they said, that we can deal on a social basis with these army colonels, and brigadiers, and the rest of them. They entertained otherwise very lavishly. And they went on army maneuvers with them. Yet when the two brigadiers who staged the revolution, the coup in July 1958, and brought their brigades through Baghdad to take over the city before Nuri could send any troops to the Syrian border which he was on the point of doing and thereby precipitating a coup, when these two brigadiers, Qasim and Aref and their colleague were identified as the persons being the masterminds behind the coup, none of our attachés knew anything about them. I felt that this was a sad failure. Neither did the CIA know anything about them. There was no warning. The only thing you could say was this: when it happened, it didn't come as a total surprise because we had a feeling that there was some kind of ferment going on. It was reflected in meetings here and there, lawyers and doctors, and student groups. You had a feeling that all was not well. But to say that we had any kind of advance information on this, would be wrong.

*Q: Ambassador Gallman. I wonder if you could explain how he operated, and how he worked in the Iraqi milieu? And how he used you, also.*

FRITZLAN: Gallman was a bit like a fish out of water. He'd never been anywhere near this part of the world in his many years of service. He'd always been, apart from one tour as Ambassador to South Africa, he'd been identified with working with European affairs. He had no experience to serve him. That's why I suppose I was sent there because I had served in Iraq, had also trained as an Arabist. I knew something about the problems having been on the desk in Washington. I had a reasonably good relationship with him. He was not a very approachable man. He was pretty distant. Even after the dependents had been evacuated, after the revolution in '58, I stayed on for another year, he stayed on for another five months or so. Even in this period of five months he was in the Embassy, and I was in the compound in another building, I don't remember him ever saying, "Drop around this evening for a chat, and have a drink." He wasn't that sort of man. He never really acquired a feel for the problem. What motivated him, I think, as much as anything, he had a great admiration for Nuri as we all did, but what motivated him more than anything in my view was an intense dislike of the British Ambassador there, Sir Michael Wright. Now Gallman had served in London as DCM during the latter part of the war, and among his contacts at the Foreign Office was Michael Wright. He somehow or other gained a dislike for the man then and there, and that was years before he became Ambassador to Baghdad and he found Michael Wright presiding over the British Embassy. They never hit it off. It was all quite apparent, and it was a pity. I was sort of in the middle of this thing. I felt that we could not afford to be seen as pulling in the opposite direction against the British. I had good relations with him, and his DCM. But I have to say that Wright did little to make relations between our two embassies more happy, harmonious...

*Q: Two difficult men.*

FRITZLAN: Two difficult men, you're right. I mean Michael Wright could be difficult too, sure. In fact in his own embassy they thought he was a terrible man to get on with. I respected Gallman, his professionalism, but I felt the man had a number of serious weaknesses, and that's the size of it.

*Q: Can you tell from your point of view what happened during the revolution? We've already laid the groundwork.*

FRITZLAN: This was July 14, 1958. The first thing that we set about to do was to get our dependents, and all American citizens that we could urge, to get out.

*Q: How did you hear about the revolution?*

FRITZLAN: I had a call from our CIA chap, it was pretty early, about 5:00. He lived on the river, on the northern bank of the river, and opposite him more or less was Nuri Said's house, also on the river. And, as a lot of people did, he slept on the roof to get the breezes--you put yourself in a cage in wire netting with your bed there, you're up early, of course, with the sun. This was even before the sun, I suppose. He said, "Something is happening in the region of Nuri Said's house. I see puffs of smoke, and I hear gunfire." I said, "This is very serious. Come to the office right away. I'll be there as quickly as I can get there. And get one of your staff to cross over the bridge and see if he can get anywhere near enough to see what the hell is happening." He sent one of his staff, a chap called Wolf over. He got close enough to get a bullet in the radiator of his car. So that was that.

I turned on the radio, and what I heard was long lists of names of people who had been newly put into responsible jobs like the Governor of Baghdad, the Governor of this province, Mutassarif they call them, that province or the other, the Chief of Police had been replaced, he was now so and so. A list of new Ministers was given, and so forth. And although the word 'revolution' thawra, hadn't been pronounced, I knew there was a thawra.

*Q: How do you spell...*

FRITZLAN: T-h-a-w-r-a. I got to the office as hasty as I could, the rest of our staff came along in due course. We had, curiously, one of the Ministers who lived by the Embassy compound who had the news, and fearful for his life, came and took sanctuary in our Embassy. He said, "Can I stay here? Can I come for the time being?" I said, "Yes, we can't turn you out." So he stayed there for two or three days. In a sense it was very useful because he listened to the radio, and he interpreted, and explained things to us that we had no way otherwise of appreciating, and he wrote situation papers. He was very helpful to us.

After several days of this, he became rather nervous, and we also became rather nervous, because obviously they were on the lookout for him. All the Ministers had been arrested. So I said to him, "Look, we don't want to be hard on you and turn you out just like that." There was a guard on the gate, we had tanks around our Embassy with their barrels pointed at the Embassy. They were there to protect us, and all the gates had guards, and no one could come or leave without

scrutiny. I said, "We don't want to put you out just like that, but we've got to devise some way whereby you can get out because the longer you're here, the harder it will be for you in the end." He said, "I appreciate that, also I don't want to embarrass you." And I said, "That is a factor too. You do drive a car, I suppose?" He said, "Yes." I said, "All right. I've got an idea. I hope it will work." We had local native drivers. I said, "I'll get the uniform of one of our drivers, you put it on, get behind the wheel of an Embassy car, the Administrative Officer will be in the back. Take the car wherever you want, and he will drive it back." It worked. It didn't work in the long run because they did pick him up. But he was not one of those who was harshly treated, some, of course, were hanged-- tried and hanged. Terrible, and some were our good friends.

Then we had this case of three Americans in the newly opened hotel which was a quite splendid hotel. The Americans in the hotel, say a group of 20, some of them tourists, some of them business people, an archaeologist or two. Anyway, a major came into the hotel in the middle of the morning and said, "I want all the Americans to come into this room," a public room downstairs. After they assembled he looked around, he picked three men and said, "You three come with me." And they took them away, and they've never been seen or heard of since.

Our immediate problem was to get the American dependents out and the Embassy staff cut to the limit...

*Q: Was the Ambassador there at the time?*

FRITZLAN: Yes, he was. We weren't about to remove all of our technical assistance people until it became clear that this program was finished. We didn't want it to appear that we had pulled out and left and give them an excuse to criticize us. We kept a skeleton technical assistance staff, a skeleton Embassy staff, the rest were sent packing, and all of our dependents were put on planes. Several hundreds. We had plane load after plane load go--this took negotiation, of course. They went to Rome where they were based until it was safe to return which was not really for the better part of another year, and even then it wasn't all that safe. This evacuation of dependents, and non-essential staff, was made very complicated by the fact that on the day after the revolution or something like that, our Marines landed in Lebanon. So, naturally, the Iraqis got more and more nervous and suspicious. They nourished the idea that these Marines were basically a vanguard of a force that was going to come in, move through Syria, come to Baghdad, and redress matters and return things to status quo ante.

*Q: Also, British troops had landed in Jordan at the same time.*

FRITZLAN: The British troops had flown from Cyprus to Jordan creating a terrible possible scenario for MacMillan who was Prime Minister at the time. I've just been reading his memoirs. He said, "That while the Americans approved of this, and assisted, the one thing they forgot to do was to get Israeli overflight permission, which they eventually got but more or less ex post facto." He said, "I spent one sleepless night worrying about the possibility that one of our aircraft might be shot down." They sent troops in to bolster the Arab Legion, flew them in from Cyprus. But the Iraqis said, "Why do we want to give permission for your dependents to leave when we have good reason to believe..." They didn't exactly articulate it but we knew what they were thinking. "...when what you're planning is an invasion of Iraq, and you want to get your

dependents out of here for that contingency. So it makes every good sense for us to keep them here."

A week or two elapsed before we could really get their agreement, but we did get it. We had to work jolly hard to get it, but in the end they came across and agreed. So we got them all out. That was our first important task and duty. Convincing people to leave was another thing that wasn't all that easy. I had to focus my mind, because Gallman was on the verge of being reassigned to the Department, on the missing three Americans. One was a Bechtel employee, another was a high executive in one of the oil companies. The Bechtel employee was a man with six children. We discovered he was not all that affluent, as the other executive was on the other hand. And then the third person was a writer who had come to Iraq to try to publicize the fine work that was being done there by the Iraqi government, and the Arab cause generally.

So we pressed the Foreign Ministry on the matter of claims for the families of these people because clearly they'd disappeared and they were presumed dead after several weeks, and it was the responsibility of the Iraqi government to discuss claims-- compensation of families--and so on. I mean it was an army major, we had that in black and white, absolutely incontrovertible, who had taken these men out. The Foreign Ministry said, "Yes, but this happened before there was any kind of a government in existence. This happened in a state of public disorder, civil commotion, call it what you like. There was no government in existence and therefore this provisional government cannot assume responsibility." I said, "That is a totally unacceptable argument and I'll tell you why. This happened in the middle of the morning. Earlier at 6:00 in the morning of the revolution I was listening to the radio broadcast naming new ministers, naming the new police chief, naming the new Governor of Baghdad, and a host of other appointments. So your argument simply does not stand up." They accepted it. In the end they had to agree. In the end there was compensation but it was a long and arduous battle, and we were especially concerned about the man who had the large family.

Other things. Our rights were systematically being denied us, we couldn't get anything through the customs. We had gone to great trouble and expense of establishing a commissary mainly on the insistence of the technical assistance people who preferred to shop at some Embassy store and associate with their own people, than to go to the very nice, and very well stocked, local groceries. Thereby we were making ourselves very unpopular in the local business community, and we were actually not saving money as we'd been told we would. We all had to put in a large deposit to make the thing viable to begin with. So what happened? A lot of the goods that were in customs simply perished and the commissary had to close with heavy losses.

The purpose of this, of course, on the part of the Iraqis was just to be nasty, and make things frightful for us. In the hot summer in Baghdad we liked a cool drink in the evening and we couldn't even get our liquor through the customs.

*Q: How did we view the government? Can you give an idea of your impression of the initial government, and how things developed there--the Iraqi government?*

FRITZLAN: Well, in the light of what I've just said, it wouldn't be surprising if we viewed the new government with considerable misgiving; that we had any reason to regard them as friendly,

or helpful in any respect. They were constantly arresting our people on a whim, they let them go eventually but it took a great deal of intervention on our part. They allowed the Soviet Embassy to reopen. I don't know when there had last been a Soviet Ambassador. There probably had been one sometime in the "50s, I don't know, but for a long time it had been closed, and they allowed that to reopen. They welcomed the new Soviet Ambassador with fanfare. They sent packing the Chinese Ambassador who was the Taiwan representative, and got in a Maoist Ambassador. They signed an agreement for military assistance with the Russians. It was a strange thing, though, that they were not about to cozy up to Nasser. Although Nasser had in his propaganda, and his influence, a large bearing on the revolution itself--the uprising, and so on. They made polite noises in regard to Nasser, but they absolutely refused to kow-tow to him. This is in keeping with, of course, the traditional hostility between the two countries.

We suspended our military assistance program, of course. We were there in a position of what you might call holding the fort. It was nothing more than that. We didn't want to take any action which would cause regret later on in a changed atmosphere.

*Q: You were feeling that this was a temporary shaking out period.*

FRITZLAN: We weren't sure. Therefore we were just marking time, hoping that somehow or other matters would change. One of the things that we were under attack for, and I saw the Prime Minister several times, when I was in charge, on matters trying to get him to address some of the abuses we were suffering, but every time I went to see him he would accuse us of stirring up the Kurds in northern Iraq. And when I said, "I know nothing about this. I'll report your statement to the State Department." So I did and the Department came back and said, "You can state categorically to the Prime Minister that we are in no way, shape or form, stirring up the Kurds in any part of such a scheme." So I would go back to the Prime Minister and tell him this, and he just laughed at me, because he said, "I have concrete evidence that I could show you, I'm not prepared to do it right now, but I have concrete evidence of the very thing I'm accusing you of." Later on Rountree came, and Rountree's visit was something.

*Q: This is Assistant Secretary Rountree.*

FRITZLAN: He was on a tour of the Middle East capitals, he was in Cairo at the time. It was published that his plans included a visit to Baghdad. So the press got worked up, the communist press, and started a campaign to keep Rountree out of Iraq. And this got to a very high pitch, and we approached the Prime Minister--in fact, Gallman did just before he left, he left just before Rountree arrived. He asked the Prime Minister if Rountree was welcome--number one--number two, if he came would he be given suitable protection, and the Prime Minister answered affirmatively to both questions. We reported it to the Department, and also of course to Cairo where Rountree was. He was pretty nervous, I can tell you. And we said, "It's possible there will be disturbances, there could even be injuries, that's a possibility, though we are assured categorically that Rountree will be given full protection. In the light of that, and the certainty that if the visit were called off, the communist would gloat over a substantial victory. We recommend that he come." As I said, Gallman had left the day before so I was at the airport to meet Rountree in the Embassy Cadillac. Well, there were also a couple army vehicles, with armed soldiers in each one at the airport, and some motorcycle outriders. We followed one of these army vehicles,

and one followed us, and on each side of the car there was a motorcycle outrider. There was a big crowd at the normal exit waiting; they took us through another exit, but a good part of the crowd had noticed what was about to happen and rushed over to the other exit. I can tell you, we were bombarded with everything you can think of, from mud--it had been raining--to eggs, tomatoes, and what other vegetables you may think of. No stones. They came later.

In getting to the Embassy we were going around one of these roundabouts, a circle, and had to slow down, we had to slow down because some chap from the country had a herd of cattle--they'd arranged this, I'm sure--they were herded right into our path so we slowed down to let them by. In the meantime the crowd moved in and that's when the windshield of the car was broken. We got to the Embassy intact and Rountree was visibly shaken. He was the color of that wall over there.

*Q: This is almost a white wall--off white wall.*

FRITZLAN: And these motorcycle outriders obviously hated the job because they refused Rountree's outstretched hand. That was Rountree's visit. We called on the Prime Minister.

*Q: The Prime Minister was who?*

FRITZLAN: Abd al-Karim Qasim. We called on the Prime Minister during which call the Prime Minister wanted to talk only about our alleged incitement to the Kurds. And Rountree listened to this, and told him that, in effect, he was talking nonsense. We were not inciting the Kurds, that we had nothing to do with any Kurdish uprising. Qasim said, "I don't believe a word you're saying." And that was the end of that.

This is a sequel. Years later it was published in the papers, magazines, and so on--maybe information obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, I don't know. It was published that in that period, the CIA, who were very active in Iran, were working across the border with the Iraqi Kurds, getting them stirred up against the Qasim regime. So the old adage still holds, that a diplomat is somebody who lies abroad for his country.

*Q: Even when he doesn't know he's lying.*

FRITZLAN: Even when he doesn't know he's lying.

*Q: What was Qasim like? He was then the pre-eminent--was it a military junta that was running the country?*

FRITZLAN: He was one of two brigadiers. Qasim quickly asserted his ascendancy, and the other brigadier faded into the background. He formed a government of people who were virtually unknown. I don't think there was one of them that we had any information on to speak of. I really cannot think of a single one. They had no training in government, or experience to fit them for their tasks. They were professional types; there was a doctor, an engineer, a writer and, of course, several in the army.

*Q: So was it a military government per se?*

FRITZLAN: It was in the sense that Qasim made all the decisions, but the man who was the most notorious figure in the capital, and who was the most talked about, was the military prosecutor, because they immediately started holding trials, and he was the one demanding the death penalty for all the previous ministers, and others. This military prosecutor was the most feared and notorious figure in the city. Government virtually came to a standstill, you might say. Nothing was done. The Baghdad Pact ceased to exist, naturally. As you said earlier, it was renamed CENTO a couple years later. Qasim was unstable, he was known to be a visionary. People who did know him, or something of him, talked of him as a wild man, a man who had visions, and dreamed up crazy projects, that sort of thing. He called himself Qaid al-Awhad, which means Sole Leader.

*Q: Could you spell that for the transcriber?*

FRITZLAN: Q-a-i-d al-A-w-h-a-d. It comes from Qaid (leader) and the word wahad, which is "one" in Arabic so it becomes the Sole Leader. Early in '59 there was a counter revolutionary coup mounted in Mosul, and we got wind of that--this is one case where we got wind of something brewing that turned out to be in fact something pretty important. Our CIA man was on the ball, and he knew exactly the day there would be a move against Qasim, but for nationalistic reasons. It was no pro-western effort at all, and it fizzled out. The Muslawis, people in that northern city of Iraq, have always had a low opinion of Baghdadis, and they are in many ways the elite of the Iraqi populace. We never learned very much about this. Our sources couldn't help us very much on exactly what was involved. Pretty soon it fizzled out and Qasim in reaction simply tightened the screws even tighter.

*Q: What about the communist party? You mentioned the communist press. Here was a revolution, but you're looking at this in a way...you can do anything in a country...I mean this was our attitude then, but if you let the communist in, you're really asking for trouble.*

FRITZLAN: You don't have to let them in from Russia. All you have to do is sit in the Russian Embassy with pots of money at your disposal, get some of your agents out to pick up people who would be useful. You pay the money and tell them what to do. That's all. That's enough. And write the press articles for them. So the Russian Embassy was very active in stirring up the communist element. I say a communist element, these people were not what you might call intellectual communists, ideological communist. They were just being paid to do what the Russian Embassy wanted them to do. Egyptians and others behave in much the same way for their own purposes.

**ARMIN H. MEYER**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIA**  
**Baghdad (1944-1948)**



*Armin H. Meyer was born in Indiana on January 19, 1914. He received a bachelor's degree from Capital University in 1935 and a master's from Ohio State University in 1941. Mr. Meyer joined the Foreign Service in 1944. His career included posts in Washington, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and Afghanistan. He served as an Ambassador in Japan, Iran, and Lebanon. Mr. Meyer was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1989.*

*Q: I wonder if we could discuss now, Mr. Ambassador, your years in Iraq, particularly giving me some idea of the embassy or legation set up there. Who was Prime Minister of the country? What was the relationship between the British and Iraqis at that time and how you dealt with those people?*

MEYER: My tour in Iraq was from December 1944 until August of 1948. That was the period when World War II was coming to an end. We celebrated May 8, 1945, when the war in Europe finished, and then V-J Day, when the Japanese war was over. It was a relatively small community compared with Cairo, of course, where I'd been before.

As far as the embassy was concerned, it was called a legation in those days. That was in a period when we didn't have all that many embassies--in that part of the world, at least. Furthermore, in Iraq, at that time, by treaty the British were the only ones allowed to have an ambassador. Thanks to our minister, Loy Henderson, that, eventually, gave way and we had an ambassador there in 1947. We elevated the rank of our chief of mission.

In any case, while I served there the embassy was quite small. It was in a lovely, little building that was built as sort of a model of the White House here in Washington. But we had very few people. We had the minister and a deputy chief of mission, and then maybe one or two people in the political, economic, and other sections. My office, I was then the public affairs officer in charge of USIA, was located down on Rasheed Street. Rasheed Street was the main street. Our office was above the Thomas Cook company in the downtown area. We had quite a few people coming in to read our books and magazines. We had various movies from time to time. It was quite an active little organization.

Throughout that period, however, you had the overriding Palestine question, whether or not there would be a Jewish state. That was the big political issue that preoccupied our attention for most of that period.

*Q: Mr. Ambassador, what was the attitude of the Iraqis at that time toward the United States, before the Arab-Israel problem came up?*

MEYER: Oh, the attitude of the Iraqis was excellent. The Prime Minister was Nuri as-Said. I don't like to call people pro-West or pro anything except their own country, but certainly his orientation was toward the West and he was a great friend of the United States.

The country was a kingdom but youthful King Ghazi had died in an automobile accident. His son, King Faisal, was a very young fellow who was, in effect, under the custody of his uncle, the Regent. That was the general political setup. The population was roughly half Sunni and half

Shiite Moslems, the former dominant. Nuri as-Said, a Sunni, was Prime Minister most of the time while I was there, but during one period we had a Shiite Prime Minister. His name was Saleh Jabr, an excellent person.

As a matter of fact, Saleh Jabr was Prime Minister when the United Nations passed the famous resolution in November, 1947 which partitioned Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. I remember staying in touch with him throughout that U.N. debate. We were staying up all night listening to the radio and reporting to him. On a Wednesday it looked, from the speeches that were being given, that the resolution wouldn't pass. But the next day was American Thanksgiving Day and the U.N. organized a delay of one day. During that delay, apparently, some pressures were exercised, at least that's what the Arabs claim, and a number of countries that on Wednesday had said they couldn't vote for the partition of Palestine, on Friday, when a vote was taken, voted for it. So there was a great change in Iraq's attitude toward the United States from before to after.

*Q: To carry on a little bit about our relations before, what were our main points of interest with Iraq at that time? Was it trade or was it political? What did we discuss when we discussed things with the Iraqis?*

MEYER: There was some trade but it was rather minimal, Iraq's exports to the United States being mostly dates. One of the largest operations was bringing Turkish coffee down from Turkey by railroad to Baghdad and transferring it at Baghdad to the smaller gauged rail line that went down to Basra and getting it out during the war period. But trade was not really a major problem as far as we were concerned.

My interest, as head of the US OWI and then the USIS, was to try to keep Iraq friendly to the United States, particularly during the war effort. As you may remember, early in the war there was concern that the whole Middle East might fall to the Germans. It didn't, although early during the war period there was a movement in Iraq led by Rashid Ali al-Gailani that was pro-German. It was overcome. But, during the last years of the war when I was there, the attitude of the Iraqis was very good. We had the "Why We Fight" series of movies produced by OWI and showed them every Thursday night on the terrace of the Regent Palace Hotel. There was great interest. The Prime Minister would come; cabinet ministers would come. It was a very friendly country to the United States in those days.

*Q: Thank you. Now I think we ought to go on to the Arab-Israel conflict.*

MEYER: I might mention that after the UN resolution was passed, four days later, my office was sacked.

*Q: Could you go into that a bit more, Iraqis feeling about us and about the general problem of Israel?*

MEYER: When I came from Cairo, Loy Henderson, the minister, asked me, "What do they think about this Palestine issue down there?" I thought a minute and said, "Oh, yes, they're against the idea of a Jewish state." He said, "Is that all? Up here they're all excited and vehement on the

subject." And that was true. The Iraqis are very emotional people. They can be like Jekyll and Hyde. They can be very, very friendly and, on the other hand, they can really get very angry and tear up things and create violence.

After the passage of the UN resolution in 1947, the Iraqi students started demonstrations. They would walk up and down Rasheed Street shaking their fists at my office and saying, "Long live Palestine and down with partition," or similar outcries. For three or four days these mobs went peacefully by. We realized it was a dangerous situation so, obviously, the place was closed and we weren't operating. On the fourth day, I think they got a little tired of just walking up and down the street so they bashed the door down, stormed upstairs, tore out all the books and typewriters, and threw them out the window onto Rasheed Street. They had a big bonfire out there in what was for them quite an enjoyable occasion.

I never felt that their feelings were quite as deep as, for example, about the British, who were in charge, in effect, of Iraq. A short time later there were demonstrations over a new treaty which the British were trying to put through. Those demonstrations were more violent than the Palestine demonstrations, mostly because the government tried to suppress them. In what later was called "the Battle of the Bridge," the students tried to cross the Tigris River to the British Embassy. Iraqi troops tried to stop them and killed 27 people. That didn't happen with the Palestine demonstrations which the government did not try to control. But the feeling was strong. In my view, throughout this period until today, you can always consider the Iraqis as much more excitable and emotional on the Palestine issue than the Egyptians ever would be.

*Q: In looking back on that period, is there anything that you think we should have done, or you could have done, or the ambassador could have done differently than what he did? I'm not speaking of the U.S. Government, I'm speaking of locally, on the spot. Or was it completely out of our hands?*

MEYER: There wasn't anything any of us could do, the ambassador or anybody else, except what I called, "hold the fort" until better days might come. Once the Palestine issue broke out into the open, people boycotted the American embassy for any kind of an invitation. They simply would not come to it for any reason. There was not much that anybody could have done until time could heal things a bit, which they did. But to this day, of course, that is still the key issue between our countries.

**ROYAL D. BISBEE**  
**U.S. Army Intelligence Officer**  
**Baghdad (1945-1946)**

*Mr. Bisbee was born of Missionary parents in India, where he was raised and schooled. After graduating from the University of Washington, he joined the US Army and spent World War II in Iraq with the Army Intelligence Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947 and served, primarily as Public Affairs Officer, in Bombay, New Delhi, Lucknow, Salonika, Lahore, Freetown, Pretoria*

*and Manila. Mr. Bisbee died in 2010. Mr. Bisbee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.*

*Q: Let's talk about this. When were you in Baghdad?*

BISBEE: I was there from 1945 to 1946.

*Q: What were you doing?*

BISBEE: My job covered several things. I was in charge of their motor pool. There's nothing wrong with that. I was also in charge of being able to speak locally when Archie Roosevelt could not make people understand his classic Arabic.

*Q: Had you picked up Arabic by then?*

BISBEE: Yes, I learned it there. I also went over to the Indian military and took an examination in Gujarati, and got two years of academic study credits.

*Q: Did the British in Iraq use mainly Indian troops?*

BISBEE: Yes they did.

*Q: Was the revolt earlier?*

BISBEE: Yes it was. Loy Henderson had just taken off. James Moose had also gone at the time. Loy Henderson remembered me when he arrived in Bombay later. He said, "You were in Baghdad."

I replied, "Yes, sir."

He said, "I'll see you later."

That's all I know. Eight months later, I was up in New Delhi acting as his bag man, as it were.

*Q: Let's go back to Baghdad. While you were there, what was going on there?*

BISBEE: There were two things going on. One was the local Iraqis wanted to feel their oats. They felt suppressed under the British. They didn't feel that they were receiving their due recognition. The tribes in the western part of the country were not at all happy or satisfied with their particular lot. There were many aspects to it. The British, on the other hand, had what they called political advisors. We were constantly in touch with the political advisors, who informed us what was allegedly going on in the area. We did not entirely take their advice regarding the situation. We felt there was more to the problem because of the Shias, the Sunnis, and the Kurds up in the north.

*Q: Things that we are learning first-hand now.*

BISBEE: This is not new stuff; this is old stuff. I find it very discouraging, because it's not necessary.

*Q: What was Archie Roosevelt doing? Didn't he later make quite a name for himself in Iran?*

BISBEE: Archie Roosevelt came back and married an Eastern Mediterranean lady, who later became Chief of Protocol.

*Q: I've interviewed Selwa Roosevelt.*

BISBEE: That's right. Archie did not really amount to what he wished to be. He wished to be an ambassador, but he never made it. Somehow, he didn't hit the right notes. He later simply became a member of Citibank. He later died. I don't know the cause.

*Q: With your language, being American and not being tied to the British, how did you find the attitude of the Indian military?*

BISBEE: The Indian military were very friendly to me. I can suggest to you, [phrase in Indian/Gujarati?], you and we are of one country. I could just about do anything for the embassy. As a matter of fact, I was asked to do almost anything for the embassy. Henderson would ask me to do all kinds of things for the embassy, him.

*Q: How was Mrs. Henderson when you were there?*

[laughter]

BISBEE: Are you being facetious?

*Q: No. I think of the stories that supposedly when he was Ambassador to India, sitting in the grand dining hall, which was very opulent, and she was very carefully scrubbing all her utensils with her napkin saying something like, "You can never tell in places like this."*

BISBEE: Elise Henderson was a very sensitive and kindly woman. She was very intolerant of what she would call abuse. She couldn't stand or accept any type of slight. Does that mean that she was intolerant? Yes, she was intolerant as all hell. Was she intolerant towards me? No, because she needed me to deal with the servants and day-to-day aspects of the operation of her establishment. She couldn't seem to be able to keep servants in line, or order things from the bazaar. She would order things and then Henderson would say, "Roy, please take this back. I cannot have this. I cannot pay for this. I have no way to deal with this."

It is strange that you should ask that. No one else has ever asked me.

*Q: In my interviews, there are two sort of Foreign Service dragons, if you will, difficult people: Mrs. Henderson and Wahwee MacArthur, the wife of Douglas MacArthur II. I've interviewed Douglas MacArthur. These were two legends in the Foreign Service.*

BISBEE: To be perfectly frank about Elise, she was the first one to come to the Hindu Rao Hospital in New Delhi where my second daughter was born in 1950. She brought a bottle of wine, asked how things were going, and if everything was okay. She said, "Take your time. Don't come to the embassy until you're prepared."

She was considerate, but that didn't mean she wasn't one hell on wheels. She was not averse to going into a person's home and saying, "I want this piece and that piece of furniture in my house. I am asking Roy Bisbee to have it transferred this afternoon."

And by god, I did it.

*Q: We'll come to that. First, let's move back to Baghdad.*

*Was there any aftermath of the rebellion going on?*

BISBEE: Although we never felt it, I can assure you there was. It was quiet, but it was there. Most Americans would not have felt it. I knew it and I reported it to my colonel.

*Q: I'm just looking at some pictures here.*

BISBEE: The intelligence people are all together in one.

*Q: With the intelligence, what sort of things were you concerned about?*

BISBEE: At the time, we were concerned largely about the transfer of military equipment from Khorramshahr up through to the Northeast, through Iran and into the Soviet Union.

*Q: Was this a supply line?*

BISBEE: Exactly, a supply line. We were primarily concerned that none of the equipment get diverted. The equipment could be easily diverted through the tribal movements. If you know Iran and if you know Baghdad at the time, you know of the Baluchi tribe of Southern Iran, who could easily move equipment without you knowing it.

*Q: This was the sort of place where locomotives would disappear.*

BISBEE: That's right. That was our main concern.

*Q: Nobody was making moves to move you over to the CBI, China-Burma-India?*

BISBEE: Yes, I had applied for that. That's where I wanted to go. In fact, I volunteered to go right from the very beginning. The record should show that Royal D. Bisbee volunteered for the CBI Theater, because of my languages, and for whatever activity. However, I'm glad I did not, because I met my wife in Baghdad.

*Q: Who is sitting in on this interview.*

BISBEE: Immediately after the war I was fortunate that when I got my degree, the Department of State, which for whatever reason had my name, gave me my Foreign Service commission as Vice Consul to Bombay. We arrived there on January 7<sup>th</sup>.

*Q: Did you get married in Baghdad?*

BISBEE: We did.

*Q: Would you explain your wife's background.*

BISBEE: My wife came out about a year after I did. I said to myself that this was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. She was in the Foreign Service. I was interested in the Foreign Service. It looked as though this was made to order. We decided that we were made for this purpose and we applied for it. She had to apply as a bride of an American soldier being married overseas. She had to understand that this in no way would make her an American citizen or give her special privileges. She had to make sure that she had proper letters, references, and so forth, to make sure she was a person of proper order.

*Q: Oh yes.*

*Some years after the war, I was Vice Consul in Frankfurt. I would interview young ladies about their source of income, and all that. You used to have to get special waivers, because this was where GIs and young ladies met.*

*From your viewpoint, did our embassy seem to have much interest in what was going on in Baghdad?*

BISBEE: I have to say that it did not. The Rashid Rebellion had just ended. The main interest in that was over with, so there was a hiatus there. Henderson and Moose had left to come back to Washington on consultations. I never felt that there was a dynamic in place there. Nevertheless, we seemed to function in good order. We had people like my colonel and Armin Meyer.

*Q: What was Armin Meyer at the time?*

BISBEE: Armin Meyer was part of OSS (Office of Strategic Services). I don't know what happened to him.

*Q: Eventually, he was Ambassador to Japan. He was also Ambassador to Lebanon. He had quite a distinguished career.*

MRS. BISBEE: He was Loy's best man.

*Q: He's been interviewed.*

BISBEE: He has? Good.

Some of the other officers there included Westmoreland, Robert Meminger, and Moffat. I don't know if any of those names mean anything to you.

*Q: Were the Hashmites the rulers then or not?*

BISBEE: Yes.

*Q: Was it Faisal?*

BISBEE: It was King Faisal, the six year-old boy.

*Q: He wasn't deposed until 1958, I guess.*

MRS. BISBEE: He wasn't deposed. He was shot.

*Q: Was it pretty much British rule there?*

BISBEE: It was British rule, very much so with British advisors and so on.

*Q: When did you leave there?*

BISBEE: I left there in 1947.

**WILBUR P. CHASE**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Basra (1945-1948)**

*Wilbur Chase was born in Washington, DC in 1920. He received a bachelor's degree from George Washington University in 1942. Prior to becoming a Foreign Service officer, Mr. Chase served in the Naval Ordnance Laboratory, the War Shipping Administration, and the Coast Guard. In 1945, he joined the Foreign Service. His career included positions in Iraq, Canada, Germany, Israel, Turkey, the Philippines, and Washington, DC. Mr. Chase was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

*Q: Did you get any particular training before you were sent out?*

CHASE: I went to see a fellow by the name of Walton Ferris. He was the one who interviewed me. When I got out of the Coast Guard, I was still in my sailor suit. He asked to see my discharge papers. I don't know if you know, but sailor suits don't have very many pockets. Well, I had to struggle around getting my wallet out, and in the course of putting things back together, my wallet fell on the floor and things rolled out, including the lucky coin that I had been



carrying. I was told by Ferris to go up and get some civilian clothes and then come back to see him. So I asked the secretary there if she'd be so kind to look underneath the radiator for my lucky coin. She did. I went back then, about four or five days after I was in the State Department. I was then in a civilian suit, and I went in to see the secretary and she had my coin. Well, I was a bachelor, and this was an attractive, interesting girl, and I was just back in Washington and didn't know anybody, no women. So I was flipping my coin, talking to this girl, and all of a sudden Walton Ferris came back into the room. He looked at me: "How would you like to go to Basra?"

"Where's Basra?"

"It's in Iraq."

I was a little embarrassed to say I couldn't even think where Iraq was. I did know where Iran was. And I also knew that a Millsbaugh Commission had gone there, to see the war that had broken out. Not necessarily that my lucky coin was involved, but at least that had kept me dawdling in his office. I think Ferris had just come back from a meeting where they had learned that another vice consul auxiliary, who had been in training for eight, ten months to go to Basra, had gone off on his final leave before departing, and they had received a telegram that day saying that he was joining the ministry instead.

*Q: So there you were.*

CHASE: They said, "Oh, if you're going to Basra..." I then was told to go to FSI, which was in the basement.

*Q: FSI being the Foreign Service Institute.*

CHASE: And go into training. They had a class there, and I went down to join this class. It was a month's course, and I got, I think, two weeks or less. About the only thing I got was a trip to New York City, where we were taken aboard some freighters that were going around the world carrying cargo, to see what the Coast Guard did, signing off papers. So then about four weeks after I got in the State Department, I went up to La Guardia Airport and took a plane going to Basra, Iraq.

*Q: How did one go to Basra? The war was just over, in Europe, wasn't it?*

CHASE: The war was just over, in Europe; still in Japan. We flew out to Basra on an old DC-5, I think it was. It was an uncomfortable, four-motored plane, flying down to Bermuda for dinner. Then we flew all night and got to the Azores in the morning, and the next evening we arrived at Casablanca. Stayed in Casablanca for a couple of days till they could get another plane to fly me on to Cairo. I stayed in Cairo for about ten days before my number came up for a flight on to Abadan, where we had a big air base. People then were moving military equipment and personnel from Europe out to the Far East. So Cairo was a very busy hub, and Abadan was a big air base.

*Q: How were you sort of melded into the system when you hit Iraq? Abadan was actually in Iran, but then how about with Iraq?*

CHASE: The border didn't exist in those days. We had military troops all over. We'd just get in a car and drive across to Iran or Iraq. So a fellow from the consulate drove down, which is about a two-hour drive over a desert road, and he picked me up at the airport. I could telephone him from the airport and say, "I'm here." So they car came down, and I arrived. This was in the first of June, and it was damn hot.

*Q: Yes, I spent two and a half years in Dhahran; the summers--it was warm. What type of work were you doing in our consulate in Basra, and how did you fit within the consulate there?*

CHASE: It was an intriguing sort of experience. The principal officer, Les Sutton, was a very bright but a brittle personality. The fellow that I was sort of replacing, Les Stratton, was another character. And Sutton and Stratton had had periods of bitter feuding, in which they didn't talk to one another except on official business. There was a young woman there by the name of Betty Morley, who comes from Orleans, Vermont, and she had arrived about two months before I had. There was supposed to be a third officer coming out, but nobody knew: Was I the third officer and somebody else to replace Stratton or not? I don't know.

In any case, when I arrived Sutton was so glad to see that Stratton was departing, and I was completely new and anxious to do anything. Sutton was about thirty, I was twenty-five, a generation apart but we got along together very, very well. I like and admired Les Sutton very much.

The work I was doing, I did strict consular work of visas, shipping and seamen, some administrative work. My title was to do economic work.

The post was an interesting post, and in some respects I think it was a marvelous place to have as my first experience. We went off to Kuwait when they opened up the oil wells. We were down there.

Our consular district, which had included Dhahran, where you were, had shrunk, so that we covered southern Iraq, Abadan, Khorramshahr, and Kuwait. And you say, well, how could we go into these other political jurisdictions? We did! And we signed off as United States consuls. I was the vice consul, naïve consul.

*Q: How about dealing with the Iranians and Iraqis? Was this a time when, you might say, things were almost brushed aside, because of the war and because of our presence there, or were there problems in dealing with the local authorities?*

CHASE: At that time the prestige of the United States was so great that anyone moving about with the official colors of the United States government was given a tremendously warm welcome. Everybody tried to be helpful. They also continued to do those things that they had always been doing. The Iraqis and Iranians were basically compatible. There was a certain

degree of friction. There was concern about the amount of goods that we brought in from the air base.

The customs officer, a guy by the name of Ringrow, an elderly British man who was chief of customs for Iraq (the whole country), did a very nice job of allowing us to do our thing. He had confidence that we weren't doing anything illegal, yet there was concern about what the Iraqis and Iranians were doing, in the sense of trade. Because sugar was rationed, gasoline was rationed, Scotch was rationed. The people were living very close. They didn't have very much in the way of clothing. All of the Iraqis and the British officials were wearing suits and dresses that predated the war. The port authority was *the* main thing. Basra Port was a big port, it handled all the imports. They also controlled the whole Shatt al-Arab, so that anything going to Abadan had to have a certain amount of clearance with the Iraqis.

*Q: Did you have much of a problem with American crews there?*

CHASE: Yes, we did have a problem with American crews. The American ship captains would come in and want to file a note of protest.

"What do you mean a note of protest?"

"A protest!"

-- "Having experienced rough and boisterous weather and fearing damage to ship and/or cargo, I herewith enter this note of protest." --

You know, that official...

*Q: Yes, there's a bit of jargon which helps you if there are any damaged goods, for insurance matters.*

CHASE: And then there are crew list visas that had to be stamped. Also a number of disciplinary problems coming up. One crewman, coming off the boat in Basra, met a prostitute and wanted to give her a little present, so he went back to his boat and got a portable radio. And the Iraqi customs officer said, "What are you doing? You can't bring that into the country. You don't have clearance. If you want to pay customs on it, fine."

Well, this sailor got irritated with the customs official carrying out his duty, and so he picked up the radio and banged it over the customs official's head.

Well, the sailor was a big, strapping guy and the customs officer was fairly small, and his head was damaged. Well, the sailor was arrested, and so constant telephone calls: "We want a consul! We want to get out of here!"

We went up and represented him at the hearing. And the sailor was treated so gently, I thought it was criminal that this fellow was allowed to get away with it.

We had, also, among the sailors themselves, they'd run into battles. I was called off several times to go down to Khorramshahr to settle disputes where the crew refused to sail with the captain any longer. They said he was a danger to his ship.

We had some very colorful captains. Some captains would come back, every few months they were back there, ran a perfect ship, they were a delight to know, and never had a bit of trouble. They all got the sailors from the same pool, and why one captain had constant trouble and the other one didn't, I think it's management skills.

But going back to Iraqi, Iranian dealings. Yes, there was a degree of tension, because of Iraq being a government where all high officials were Sunni. The fellahin, the laboring class, was predominantly Shiite. And the Shiite had an emotional tie over to Iran, and there were quite a number of Iranian citizens there. We also had a bunch of Armenians, about 10,000 Armenians. And the Russians came down and were trying to attract these people to emigrate back to their homeland in Armenia.

*Q: The war was over rather shortly thereafter. At one point this was the major port for aid to the Soviet Union, and then all of a sudden it was cut off practically in midstream. Did this affect you? Was there a change in attitude towards the Soviet Union among you and the rest there or not?*

CHASE: The Soviet ambassador made a couple of trips to Basra. He was staying, the first time, at the Basra Airport Hotel, and I went out there with Lester Sutton to call on him. We also met a number of the higher Iraqi officials.

I was very interested, watching the ambassador pouring whiskey for us all. The Iraqi official indicated: No, no, he was Muslim, he couldn't drink.

But then the Soviet said, "Well, here, just to make us all feel comfortable, I'll put this glass in front of you." And the glass was emptied.

The Soviet then put some more in, he was giving us all a little bit, and the Iraqi protested--a little feebly.

And then about the third time the Soviet's hand went to the bottle, the Iraqi's hand went to his glass to hold it out.

I was interested in that bit of liquid diplomacy.

What the Soviet was coming down there for I don't know. He didn't really tell us, other than just wanting to see the country. There were the Armenians out there, and I think he was looking the ground over altogether.

And then, oh, about a year later, I went over to Ahv z in Iran, which was the provincial capital. They have a Soviet consulate general there, and I went in and called on them, and called on the

British and the French. They were all extremely hospitable to us, but by that time the shades of the Cold War were beginning, that we were suspicious of them.

But I might say that the Soviets were the most lavish in treating Bob Shot and myself. We were both vice consuls, and we also got the letter treatment. And I was wondering, after we toasted each other and ate and drank and talked about all sorts of things, as we were getting ready to go, they began asking us questions about how many British troops were there in the Basra area? And the bridge down there, could that carry a tank?

Well, then, on the international diplomacy. Iran and the British were having troubles over the AIOC, Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. This was long before Mossadegh, but some of the same sorts of tensions. The British, to the horror of the United States, brought in several divisions of troops. They hadn't told Washington anything. They had brought them all into southern Iraq, and we got involved in trying to find out how many British were there. They told us, in Basra, well, Washington has been briefed. We then heard from George Allen, who was our ambassador in Iran at the time, that the United States didn't know what was happening. So we began scouring around trying to find out just exactly who was there and what were the plans.

And lo and behold, we met a young American, who was in the Indian Army. He had come out to the Middle East in 1939 with the old ambulance corps and had run all over the Middle East in the ambulance corps. When the United States got into the war, he had joined the Indian Army as a military police officer. In the course of things, he came into the consulate to say hello to us, and he began reeling off to us all the military units that were there and what was their equipment. He had it all at his fingertips.

So we were the ones who were able to get the message into Washington, telling them what was there, what was planned, whether there were any more coming.

In Iraq and in Iran and these other things, our responsibilities were trying to help promote the economy of Iraq, and also trying to find ways we could get a better hold on the economy with respect to the British. Prior to 1946, the British were the only ones allowed to have an ambassador in Baghdad.

We could not have any representation in Kuwait. And we were trying to find ways to know what was going on in Kuwait and what was happening with the oil development. They were doing lots of oil exploration, some of this being done by American groups. And we were trying to channel this into the State Department.

We were trying to find out about domestic peace and quiet in Iran and Iraq. Every once in a while, people of little tribes were going out and shooting up somebody else.

But my own personal career, then I went to Montreal.

*Q: Before we get there, you raised something about attitude. Here the war is over, the United States now is exerting itself, really for the first time, particularly in an area such as the Persian Gulf. Although the oil companies might have been there, this had been a British preserve*

*practically. Did you have the feeling, and maybe the others in the consulate, that the United States should have a piece of the action, and that you were in some form of competition, in a way, with the British?*

CHASE: Yes, very definitely we were in competition with the British, but we regarded the British as friends. I personally, at least, didn't want to see the British humbled. I thought myself that a strong Britain is very important for the United States.

And in the Middle East, we were concerned about dates. Maybe this is not very dynamic now, but it was extremely important that we were importing from Iraq most of the dates that came to the United States. And we were interested in getting Zyr dates and al-Awe dates of a certain quality, a certain degree of sugar content, and purity. The British government was anxious to feed the British Isles, and they were short as hell of food. So we were struggling with how can we get out what we need for the United States in the date market and the British not wanting to lose food.

We were also distressed that the date industry wasn't really doing anything other than letting the date trees grow. They weren't really pressing forward with improvements of the date, protecting the date from infestation. And we felt that the British were also lackadaisical in promoting the economy of Iraq.

*Q: Did you have the feeling that the British were being too colonial and that they were sitting too hard on the Iraqis?*

CHASE: Yes and no. The British were colonial. And there were some of these people out there who were just insufferably colonial.

The British Club would not let an Iraqi come into the British Club. There was an English woman doctor in town who was married to an Iraqi doctor. The British woman was invited to come into the British Club, but she could not bring her husband to a dance, to a dinner. Also, though, no Americans, at first, were allowed in the British Club except as guests, with several days prior notification. Finally, then, we were invited to come in and join the British Club on an associate status. We then could go to their parties and eat their food. But the British were very colonial, and there was a great deal of argument over protocol.

The British themselves weren't all that way, there were many of them who were just anxious to move ahead. But the British generally had a very good deal there. They were living so much better than they would be living if they were back in England. They felt the Iraqis were profiting by their reign, but that they were getting a good many of the goodies.

Iraqi culture was sharply stratified between the very wealthy and the very, very poor. We were somewhat in the tension there, when we would have some of the Iraqis who were against the British coming in and seeking to get American help and American support in one way or another.

*Q: How did we deal with these?*

CHASE: We didn't give them anything.

Q: *We didn't have any secret agenda of trying to...*

CHASE: We were trying to promote a more happy sort of democracy. But I can recall, when I went down to Kuwait one time and was talking to one of the leading potentates down there, explaining to him the benefits of democracy and how a democracy worked. He was a very kind intellectual, who was not wanting to displease me but also wanting to say: "Well, look, over here, for so many hundreds of thousands of years we've done things a little bit differently. You have inequities and things that go wrong in your country with your democracy. We may have some of ours, but the poor people are protected, because the wealthy people have family and other ties to them. And we maintain communication." And he was, to a large extent, right.

Yes, I think the British were colonial, but not of the Indian type. There was a great deal of social intercourse between the Iraqis and Brits. Some of the British were constantly trying to degrade, demean the Iraqis and point out their faults. And enjoyed very much retreating to the British Club. But yet there were lots of the others who were extremely realistic of the way things were going and anxious to have the Iraqis, the Iranians, and Kuwaitis all develop.

**JOSEPH JOHN JOVA**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Basra (1947-1949)**

*Ambassador Joseph J. Jova was born in New York in 1916. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. In addition to serving in Chile, Ambassador Jova served in Iraq, Morocco, Portugal, and was ambassador to Honduras, the Organization of American States, and Mexico. Ambassador Jova was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.*

Q: *Lateral entry.*

JOVA: Yes, what a nice bureaucratic term, and that included people, for instance, like Dick Rubottom. Anyhow, that included some people who were already seasoned, etc. But even then it wasn't a big class, and it wasn't like now, it didn't last forever. They needed us, presumably, in the field. Then they made the assignments at the end of...as I say, it was only two or three months perhaps, and they assigned everybody else, and everybody got applause--so and so to Madrid, so and so to London, and so and so to B.A. And I was kept for the last, and I thought, "Gee, I don't want to go to Latin America again. I've done it with the United Fruit Company, I've done it with the Navy, I'm too sophisticated for that now. I've been in Europe, they can't get me back there. But maybe it would be nice if I could go to Europe again, and if not, probably to some place where French is a second language, maybe Black Africa, Middle East, or something." Wrong. They kept me for the last and they said, "We're keeping you for the last because we don't even know how to tell you how to get there." A dramatic pause, "Mr. Jova, you are assigned to the

home of Sinbad the Sailor, Basra, Iraq." Everybody else started, "Oh, ha, ha." Everybody was laughing at me, with me, making jokes, so I scrambled looking for a Post Report, and you know how they wrote them, particularly then. My heart sank, I said, "I better cut my losses and get out right now. This is terrible." But by the time dawn came, I said, "I've saved up enough money from my mustering out pay from the Navy that I'm an independent man. I can pay my way back." In those days you had to pay your way back if you didn't stay.

*Q: I might just add for the record that the Post Reports were submitted to inform people what living conditions were like, and in those days you got extra money for a bad post. It was a brief in order to talk about how awful it was so you could get more money for going there, better allowances, which was very good for that purpose but not for the person going out there.*

JOVA: It made those who were already there feel more heroic. But anyway, I decided this would be an adventure. If its too bad I can come home, but I'd be foolish not to try this adventure. And went, and of course, what do they say...God writes in a scribbled hand but it all makes sense in the long run. And it became true and the most important years of my life really. It fixed my career: because it was a very interesting time there. The little consulate in Basra--there were only three of us, plus two secretaries, and several locals--we also took care of Kuwait, which now is an embassy. But in those days we from Basra went down once a month--one of us went--in a four-wheel drive and spent three or four days providing services to the small American community, and also reporting on the oil which they had just started to ship out commercially and they were looking for more.

It was very important, calling on the ruler and the Sheikh, the so-called Prime Minister, and of course, the British agent who was very important. The British didn't want us to have a consulate there, let alone an embassy and that was unheard of. That's one of the reasons the U.S. hadn't opened one but we got around it by this, and we had a nice relationship with the political agent.

We also took care of Khorramshahr and Abadan on the river that were in Iran, because we were so much nearer than Tehran was. That again was an informal arrangement, and that meant that the embassy had a nice motor boat, or launch, a little boat or cruiser, which made it nice for other purposes too, for representational purposes. But it also permitted us to go to Abadan and Khorramshahr. Wonderful, because you did a little bit of everything at a post like that. You did commercial work, you did consular work, you did political work in effect. I mean what we were doing in Kuwait was political reporting, and political reporting from Basra also, oil reporting, petroleum reporting because while we were there they discovered oil in Basra which changed the community entirely.

The only other Americans were ourselves and the missionaries and one oil man who was prospecting. He was a geologist, an oil man of cultured background. Suddenly they started the Basra Petroleum Company and the first drillers arrived. These were tough, tough guys.

*Q: Called roughnecks, and for good reason.*

JOVA: That's right. Well, traditionally, Thanksgiving was celebrated at the consulate. We always had a dinner for the little American community, the missionaries. They were very lonely.



I'm a Roman Catholic myself, but these were Reformed Church, and the semi-retired head of it was the famous Dr. Van Ness who had been there forever, a graduate of Princeton Theological; his wife was a Smith graduate. He had written books (spoke Arabic) on Iraq written during World War I for the British who were there. But we learned our Arabic from that too. But imagine, I found that blood and holy water doesn't mix. The next Thanksgiving we had the oil drillers came, and the first thing you know they were sitting on the laps of little 65-year old maiden lady missionaries...called harassment now. But still everybody was very well disposed.

*Q: This was the creation of Israel in 1948. A very crucial period for the United States.*

JOVA: That's right. And that war, although the actual fighting was in Israel or in Palestine as it was called then, and the British were the targets of the patriots or the revolutionaries, or whatever you call what became Israelis. But we felt it all over the Middle East, and of course suddenly President Truman recognized Israel and we were still decoding the little messages that said, "Take security precautions because at 6:00 a.m. this morning (whatever the hell it was) the United States will officially recognize the State of Israel." Well, we were working on those little strip methods when suddenly we heard the noise outside and sure, the mob was demonstrating, stones were raining on us, etc. And we found it out the hard way. That made our relationships much more tense with the local authorities. This was true in Baghdad even more with the national authorities. Perhaps more there in Basra because we had a rather disagreeable governor and he was quite anti-American.

And, of course, the persecution of the Jews took place also. They were being expelled. In the case of some, executed, hung, and we did our best to protect those that worked for the consulate.

*Q: How was the protection worked out?*

JOVA: Well, intervening with the authorities. Most of them were leaving, or going underground. In some cases, I did something that was completely against regulations. One of our best employees asked me to take care of the family jewels. They were the bridal costumes, if you will. I saw them: gold crowns, etc., for his wife, and his mother, and his aunts, and I knew it was against regulations--you shouldn't put anything else in the safe but I said, "This is for a good cause." I remember putting that in our safe until they were able to make some proper arrangements to take everything to Iran. Iran was much more welcoming, and it was relatively easy for them to go across.

But our principal officer, David McKillop--he died recently here--was called back to the U.S. to work on Atoms for Peace, and Atoms for Medicine. They asked him to go back for that and it was hastily done, and they assigned a man called Cliff English to replace him. Well, he was nice enough to say, "Yes, I can come now. Jova is not that dumb. He can handle this for three weeks, or four weeks." Well, our Consul General in Jerusalem was assassinated--I think Mr. Wasson.

*Q: Yes, I'm almost positive. Its not known which side it happened on.*

JOVA: Nobody knew which side it happened on, but it was one of those terrible things, and Cliff English was derailed so to speak. They said, "Go and hold the much more important Consulate

General in Jerusalem until we can find a permanent replacement, and then you can proceed to Basra. So it turned out my entire second year was as acting principal officer in Basra. And as you can imagine, that's pretty heady stuff, and important stuff on your first post and in an area where so much was happening, and so much to report back. Well, I guess I got to be fairly well known, not many cables but certainly all the despatches, and airgrams.

*Q: For the record, airgrams came in later, but despatches were the written form in which one could wax eloquent and then there were the cables which in those days were quite short.*

JOVA: That's right, because they had to be done manually so we tried to avoid doing them too long. So much so that the Department asked me to become an Arab specialist, and go into language training. Well, I had to think quickly because it was very flattering but I thought it was the wrong thing to do on my first post to make such an important decision. I tried to be a good diplomat and expressed it that way. I said, "Try me again, but let's not do it right now. Let me see something else of the world." I had hoped to go to Spain. All during my career I hoped to get Spain, I never did, but now I live there during the summers so maybe it's more of an adventure and happier because answered prayers sometimes are the worst things. It is much better to have gone now on my own will, than to have been there.

On my "wish list" I put Spain, you had the choice of three areas--three posts. And strangely a friend from Navy days turned out to be in Personnel, and wrote me back and said, "I've just seen your "wish list" and we don't have anything in Spain coming up but we propose to assign you to Tangier and actually you could use what you've learned about the Arab world, and on a clear day you can look out your window and you can see Spain," which is true.

By the way, I've said all this but I'll tell you, the most important thing in my life took place there. I met and married my wife. My family suddenly got a telegram saying, "She has said yes." They got it before the preparatory letters. My wife is English, her father was stationed there also. He was on loan to the Iraqi government, he'd been in the Army in the Royal Engineers, and had also been with the Port of London Authority--PLA--and was loaned to the Iraqis as the number two in the Ministry of Communications and Transportation, as the Director General of Ports.

The Basra port trust was the last remaining bastion of British government investment and interest there, and that was a big job to run that because it also included the other side of the river. This has just been settled now with the peace treaty. Instead of going along the center of the river, the boundary has been on the Iranian floor of the river which, of course, was done by the British because of Abadan and Khorramshahr. That, again, was a big British investment in Iranian petroleum. And then they extended all the way out into the Persian Gulf because of the dredging operations, the buoyage. He was the big man on campus as far as Basra was concerned, in a great big house in the port, three yachts of different sizes for whoever uses them.

When his family came out a little later all the few young bachelors there were very excited because he had not only the wife and one smaller daughter, but one daughter was already 20-21 so everybody went to call very promptly on Mrs. Johnson, the mother, and met the daughters. We did from the consulate and little by little in that small community we saw more and more of each other, and then it started to get serious, and we became engaged and were married there in

the little Catholic church in Basra, founded by the Portuguese mission in the 15th century. Now it was staffed not by Portuguese, but by Belgian Carmelites, French and Belgian Carmelites. We were married there. She was not Catholic but consented, and we spent our honeymoon in Bahrain which in the winter--we were married in February--and the winter is like Bermuda. The political resident, who was the head of all the political agents around there, lived in Bahrain and as he was a friend of my father-in-law he offered us his guest house. So we had four days there, which was lovely. We went down on the little steamer which stopped at various places, and it made a little cruise of two days, and then came back by plane from Dhahran where we stayed with our colleague, Frank Meloy, now, since then, assassinated in Beirut. He was the consul in Dhahran.

You know, NEA was a very nice department to work for because it was small, it was adventurous enough, most of the posts were hardship posts. So there was a very good spirit. You never stayed in a hotel, you were always invited to stay with somebody, and of course we did our share in Basra for those coming through. But we stayed with Frank Meloy, and he, poor guy, thought it was going to be an overnight stay but these terrible sand storms took place. A squall came up and the whole place--I remember it was like sandpaper being driven, you were sandblasted, and there was a sort of wall around the consulate to try to keep the stuff out. So he had us for several days before the plane could fly again, and we went back to Basra, only to find that the inspectors had arrived. I was supposed to be back for them but they were very understanding, a honeymoon is a honeymoon, a marriage is a marriage. They'd only been there a few hours perhaps before I got there.

*Q: I'd like to ask just a little more about Basra because this is an important period. How did you find dealing with the local Iraqis? I mean did you have the recognition of Israel and all that, and Iraqis are sort of known all over, particularly in late years, but even then being kind of bloody minded. They are a different breed of cat. Was this a problem dealing with them?*

JOVA: The authorities, the governor I mentioned earlier, was so much so...he invited everybody, the rest of the consular corps, all five, except ourselves. I told that to the embassy and they complained to the Minister of Interior and he then apologized that he shouldn't have discriminated. It was more difficult with him, but with the Iraqi notables, as the French called them, our relations were very nice. For one thing, there were so few of us there, this tiny consulate, we were young and therefore were able to mingle quite readily, presentable, I suppose. The British community was well implanted there. There were no French except for the priests and some nuns. There was one shipping agent who was American too, I left him out, as well as the missionaries. No, they were very good and they entertained a lot and the big thing was everybody went down in their boats--we, the consulate--had one, to these date farms where the Jews would frequently have the parties on their...I've even forgotten what the date farms were called. Date estates is the name in Arabic. They'd have these big parties, big sheep roasts, and a great buffet loaded with food. They wanted to be very flattering. They'd wait until the guest of honor arrived and they'd slaughter the sheep literally right there as they were getting off the boat, which was a little shaky for some.

Of course, we never saw the women. My wife and her mother, who was the wife of the Director General of the Port, they would see the women and go to tea parties, and card parties. And if

there was a big party of the men, then the selected ladies would be taken to the women's quarters to visit, spend 20 minutes there with the ladies who couldn't come out. Everybody was veiled except for the Christian and Jewish women. All the Iraqis veiled from head to foot in those days, and in Kuwait also. It all changed afterwards. We have happy memories.

*Q: How about relations with the British? The British were not too happy with the American intrusion, particularly commercially in oil. This was not an easy time because they were beginning to feel the pressure, particularly in that area. The Americans were beginning to supplant them. This must have been reflected despite the fact that you obviously married into the British establishment there. I mean, relations there must have been a problem.*

JOVA: That's why we couldn't have a consulate in Kuwait, and the political agent was very careful that we didn't go too far. He would take us certainly to make our first call on His Highness the Sheik. That family was still ruling and have just returned there. So it was a question of being very attentive, and being proper. In Basra it wasn't a problem except that it was the British community that sort of set the tone of everything. And there was some snobbery and that sort of thing because they had tried to make it "Indja" all over again. When we saw the television series *Jewel of the Crown*...

*Q: Jewel in the Crown, about the Raj, the British--the end of the Raj in India.*

JOVA: That's right. We kind of allude to it because we felt part of it. I don't know if it was that way in Dhahran when you were there.

*Q: The British weren't there but you still got a little of the touch of that on Bahrain--the resentment of the Americans. We were changing things; we didn't know how to treat the natives; we were making too many concessions to Iran; ARAMCO was being too nice to the Saudis; a firmer hand, and all that sort of thing.*

JOVA: That's right, and also we're too informal, too casual. Well, their feeling was that it should be The Raj still, and they had the same kind of a set-up. The clubs were all imitating British India, the servants. I mean the sweeper number one, the sweeper number two, the cook, the dobe; they had Indian names for the laundry. But on the other hand it was pretty hard to be too stiff for too long with three young presentable Americans.

David McKillop was very warm-hearted, a Harvard graduate; myself; Bob Schott, our FSS officer who was--afterwards I was best man at his wedding, and he was best man at my wedding because he was married in Iraq too. He went to Iran but then returned to marry his wife who is the daughter of that geologist that I spoke about. He still looks as he might be only 35, and I suppose he must be 65 or 70. But we were young and made an effort and we found that we were included as honorary members of whatever was going on, and then we made our own way with the Arabs.

I've just mentioned the same thing took place in town, there were all kinds that you could visit; very interesting because Basra has a Shiite city. I never went into a mosque, not any of us. Not like Egypt where tourists go into the mosque. There were few families that were Shiite, few of

the big families. Most of them were Sunni of the big important families, but some of them were Shiite. We made friends enough that one of them invited us--a younger one--to be his guests and we could accompany him and see some of the...it must have been some meeting house rather than the mosque because we were able to be there. The son-in-law of the prophet, who was the founder of the Shiites, and they were all beating themselves, bare breasted and bare back, whipping themselves until blood came, and pounding their chests and repeating the little chant about Ali. So, in other words, we were able to make friends with people there. Naturally the ones you make friends with are the people who are more interested in Europeans, or foreigners, and were educated enough, also the shop keepers. But these were people who were people of substance. In those days they were the ones who were governing Iraq.

Also, another wonderful way to have an entree, is Arab lessons. Both Pamela and I had Arab teachers, and that's a wonderful way to find out what was going on, and I found that was the secret in Tangier which was our next post.

**ROBERT E. BARBOUR**  
**Foreign Service Clerk**  
**Basra (1949-1950)**

*Robert Barbour was born in Ohio in 1927. He graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1948 and attended The George Washington University. Since joining the Foreign Service in 1949, his career has included positions in Iraq, Japan, Vietnam, France, Italy, England, Spain and Surinam. Mr. Barbour was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

*Q: How long did stay doing that before you moved on?*

BARBOUR: Only one semester. In the summer of 1949 I was offered a job as a clerk. Foreign Service Clerk was my title and I was sent off to Basra, Iraq.

*Q: What was the situation like in Basra in those days?*

BARBOUR: Basra was a remote and exotic city, the seaport of Iraq, on the fringes of a region that was coming to life in the petroleum business--lots of exploration going on. It was a date growing regional center, in many ways very traditional, very Shia, and very interesting. Our consular district included not just southern Iraq but the Sheikdom of Kuwait, and, informally for emergency consular services, southern Iran as well. We had six Americans in the consulate and we had a Chris Craft cabin cruiser that we used not only for recreational purposes but to carry pouches and things down to ships that would take them back to the United States. If the city was remote and exotic, the consulate was also remote, and exotic in the sense that we lived and worked in an old Turkish palace. The offices were downstairs and the male members of the consular staff had a mess upstairs that included the principal officer, the two vice-consuls and me, with one of whom I shared a room--something unthinkable today.

*Q: Who was the principal officer?*

BARBOUR: Clifton P. English.

*Q: Was John Jova there at the time?*

BARBOUR: John Jova had gone; he left about a year before I got there.

*Q: Were there any problems with the Iraqis in those days?*

BARBOUR: Not many, and if there were, we in Basra were not involved in them. We were a consular and economic reporting post; we reported on date shipments, on oil exploration activities in the entire area. There was no political activity that I recall and I spent lots of hours doing our telegrams.

*Q: What were you using, basically the one-time pad method?*

BARBOUR: We used the OTP but we still had other forms; we had some old strips and once in a while we would even use a code book because it was cheaper. Our telegrams, by the way, would arrive in five letter groups written by hand from the local telegraph office. We got a carbon copy so occasionally we would have to go back to the post office and ask them to check and see what the particular letter was.

*Q: You left there when?*

BARBOUR: I left in September of 1950, after scarcely a year, to come back to Washington to participate in an intern program. The intern program, which was a very good deal for people in my situation, was really oriented toward developing senior civil service administrators for the Department of State. It was, nonetheless, an extremely good experience even though I had no intention whatsoever of going into the civil service. One of the great benefits for me was that among our three rotating assignments I was assigned for three months to the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs, working as the staff assistant to Dean Rusk and his one Deputy Assistant Secretary, Livingston Merchant. It was a fascinating period and at the end of my year of internship I went back there, in the same position, for another six months or so. It was the time when the Korean War was going on and Dean Rusk was very closely involved with Dean Acheson, obviously shared his confidence, spent a lot of time with him. And of course the relationship between the department and the White House, the Secretary of State and the President, was very special at that time. Dean Acheson was the Secretary of State in every sense of the word and the Department of State ran the political side of the Korean War.

**WILLIAM D. WOLLE**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Baghdad (1951-1954)**

*William D. Wolle was born in Iowa on March 11, 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from Morningside College and a master's degree in international affairs from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Army from 1946-1947. Mr. Wolle was an Arabic language officer whose overseas posts included Baghdad, Aden, Kuwait, Amman, and Beirut. He was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: How did you feel about going to Baghdad? Was this your request or was it out of the blue?*

WOLLE: As I recall the Middle East was one of the regions I had named. I felt that since I was trying this career and not really wedded to it at that early point, I wanted to go some place which was very non-American. Some place where I could really get a feeling for what the less developed world was all about. So Baghdad pleased me.

*Q: You were in Baghdad from 1951-54, is that right?*

WOLLE: I was actually there from January, 1952 until April, 1954.

*Q: What was the situation there at that time?*

WOLLE: At that time the country was ruled by the Crown Prince, Regent Abdul Illah. The later King of Iraq, Faisal, was a boy of 16 or so when I arrived. In fact, about half way through my tour in Baghdad, there was a week of grand celebration in the country. Hussein came over, his cousin from Jordan. The two of them were reaching the age of 18 at about the same time and each one was officially taking on the title of monarch. The Iraqis for their part spent several furious months just before the grand occasion patching up the city, paving streets, doing all kinds of civic improvement. As matter of fact probably their biggest burst of that sort of activity for many years to come. I guess they are going to be in another era now of rebuilding. But, of course, the Baghdad of today bears no relationship, even bombed out as some of it is, to the Baghdad of the early 1950s when it was very much an underdeveloped society.

*Q: What was the political situation there?*

WOLLE: The British were still very powerful. The British Embassy, from all accounts, certainly was close to the ear of Nuri es-Said, the Prime Minister, who for a good many years had been the real Administrator in the country. And, although about three years after I left Baghdad, the whole monarchy and Nuri es-Said along with it were thrown out of power, I think we would have to credit Nuri and the government of the late 1940s and early 1950s in Iraq for instituting the economic development program which became quite well know internationally for being a serious, fairly well financed program which was doing a lot to bring Iraq's level up. In fact, people knew there could eventually be trouble from potential revolutionaries for that government of the early and mid 1950s but many would say--Well, if only the Iraqi society would somehow go to sleep for 10-20 years and then wake up and see the economic development that has been produced perhaps that would be the best thing in the long run for the country.

*Q: What were you doing and what was the Embassy like at that time?*

WOLLE: Well, I was very much junior. I was the sole consular officer, issuing visas, handling some passport matters, and frankly learning as I went along--primarily from my expert Foreign Service National, or as we called them then, local employee, Edmond Totunchi, who later emigrated to the United States. He hadn't been in the job, himself, very long but he had been thoroughly immersed in the work of the office and he kept me on the right track at least most of the time.

The Embassy had a small 2-officer political section. Probably the main feature of those couple of years that I served in Iraq, as far as the American presence is concerned, was the mushrooming foreign aid program. When I arrived in January 1952, there were perhaps two or three AID officers. But as the months rolled on several new officers arrived each month and by the time I left, the AID installation somewhat dwarfed the Embassy proper. They were doing all sorts of things in the field, agriculture primarily.

*Q: Your Ambassador was Waldemar J. Gallman?*

WOLLE: No, the Ambassador when I arrived and for much of the first period was Ned Crocker. He was replaced in due course by Ambassador Burton Berry. The overlapping Chargé and DCM for both Crocker and Berry was Phil Ireland, who of course academically was well-versed in Iraq. He had written one of the standard texts about modern Iraq. In fact Mrs. Ireland came from a family that had a lot to do with the establishment of the medical school at the American University of Beirut. So they were the hierarchy in my time. Dave Newsom was the Public Affairs Officer and doing a great job.

*Q: I had an interview with Phil Ireland who obviously is getting along in years and although he didn't go into it in great detail, I take it there weren't the greatest relations between Ireland and at least one of the Ambassadors. Did you sense that?*

WOLLE: At my exalted low rank I was not really privy to a lot but you couldn't help sensing what was going on. I think there were some differences there. I mentioned Dave Newsom, a very effective PAO and a very effective person. I think there were times when Phil Ireland got a little jealous thinking that perhaps Dave was catching the ear of the Ambassador a little too often.

My own relations with Phil Ireland, who was really my immediate boss the first year, were good. He had an open door as far as I was concerned and he gave me some very good advice.

My last year and a half, by the way, was spent in the economic/commercial section because of the rotation system. That was a different sort of work. I was doing the reporting on petroleum, dates, etc. under the guidance of a relatively senior officer who had myself and one other FSO reporting to him.

*Q: Were you feeling any problems with the Embassy's relations, the State Department people in the Embassy, with AID? In those days it wasn't as integrated and there was separate financing. Often this was a real problem because in many cases AID had both the money and essentially the power.*



WOLLE: Well, they certainly had the money. They were really building up. But I wasn't really affected much by that, again because of my junior position in the Embassy, I think. I sensed though that there were those who were higher up in the Embassy who felt a little jealous of the expansion that the AID people were undergoing. At the same time I don't think it was a feeling that our AID program was going wrong. They were backing it.

We also had in the Embassy a military attaché system. Two officers represented each of the three main branches of the Service.

*Q: Did you have much contact with the Iraqis...both the government and the people? If you did, how did you find dealing with them?*

WOLLE: I found it was pretty easy to deal with the Iraqis in the ministries that my work called on me to do in terms of the petroleum and other reporting. Of course I was also in touch with the Iraq Petroleum Company who were mostly expatriate British. I didn't feel that I was being harassed or being led around and being kept away from the person that I had to see. I suppose, although I really liked to get out of the office and have the contacts, looking back one thing I probably could have and should have done even more frequently was simply make the command decision to get out of the office more often and increase the numbers and frequency of contacts. You get into a routine and think that this or that has to be written today, thus you are stuck in the office. But looking back, I think some of that wasn't necessary.

*Q: I think all of us feel this way. Well, tell me did you have any impression, again trying to go back to the time, about the Iraqi people? When you look what happened, particularly the July, 14, 1958 overthrow of the monarchy and all, it seems to be a bloody mindedness in the Iraqis that sort of justifies all the talk that one hears periodically about the Middle East--you have to worry about the mob in the street. Really in a way the Iraqi mob was the only one that did do something like this.*

WOLLE: Yes, you are right. I always felt that. In fact the practice of dragging bodies behind vehicles in the street during a revolution or an attempted coup, that is not an Arab practice, that is an Iraqi practice. The Iraqis I knew or knew about were among the most friendly, most hospitable Arabs that one can meet, really good friends, but then there is a violent streak in some that is just at the other end of the spectrum.

*Q: Did you have any feeling about how America was considered in those time? I mean not just by officials but by the man in the street?*

WOLLE: I think our image was good. The Iraqis who chose to castigate foreigners or "imperialists" tended to take their feelings out on the British. I mean it had been a British Mandate and this was the logical thing. The British presence was so much larger than ours--in part the official presence but more than that--there were thousands of British subjects still making their living working there either for the government or privately. So I felt we were well liked and that America was admired.

*Q: On the economic side what were you concentrating on in Near Eastern Affairs?*

WOLLE: We were concentrating on things that involved mostly countries in the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Egypt. I, myself, dealt very little with Egypt, Fran Dickman was handling that. One of the interesting things during that period was simply following some of the efforts I had seen get started on the ground in Saudi Arabia.

Between 1962-64 we were approached by the Saudi government to help them get some of their development works underway. For example, they wanted the road network radically improved. They wanted television installed in the kingdom. They wanted an increase in the survey effort which the US Geological Survey had started many years before, along with ARAMCO...it was a joint mapping and exploration effort. So to make a long story short we got the US Army Corps of Engineers to establish a presence in Saudi Arabia to oversee contracts and contracting work in some of these fields. The 1960s became a period of gradually greater US involvement with the Saudi development effort.

With Iraq there was the annual question of date infestation: whether or not Iraqi exports entering this country measured up to standards in terms of bug and waste infestation. Every year this topic required substantial negotiations between ourselves and the Iraqi Embassy which feared we would suddenly lower the boom on the Iraqi date exports.

*Q: Iraq had always had this potential of being the great economic powerhouse of the Middle East, but they seemed to be plagued and continue to be with having dictatorial regimes that drive it to the ground. Have we written Iraq off almost as an economic...?*

WOLLE: At that time?

*Q: Yes, the time we are talking about.*

WOLLE: No, there were some large American construction firms involved through the sixties in building large dams in the northern part of Iraq...Morrison-Knudsen, J. A. Jones and some others. From time to time they would come in and need some kind of representation from us or through our Embassy if they were having problems. Also the road network in Iraq was in part engineered and designed and to some degree constructed by American firms.

But the Iraqis were...let's say they had educated officials who could deal with their development much more readily than the case of the Saudis who had very few engineers and the like, and really wanted the US to be interceding there to make sure that they were not being ripped off by American, European or other contractors.

**DAVID D. NEWSOM**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIA**  
**Baghdad (1951-1955)**

*Ambassador David D. Newsom was born in California in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of California in 1938 and a master's degree from the Columbia University in 1940. He served overseas in the U.S. Navy from 1942-1946 and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. Ambassador Newsom's career included positions in Pakistan, Iraq, the United Kingdom, Libya, Indonesia, and the Philippines. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 17, 1991.*

*Q: How did your assignment to Baghdad come about? You were there from 1951-55 as Public Affairs Officer?*

NEWSOM: After my tour in Pakistan, USIS wanted to co-opt me. USIA was beginning to develop as a separate agency, but it was still during a period when there was a lot of interchange of personnel between that agency and State Department. I told Personnel that I was not interested in becoming a USIA officer. But USIA remained interested and when the Baghdad vacancy arose, they offered to me. It was clearly an interesting opportunity and therefore I accepted it. We went on direct transfer from Oslo to Baghdad in December, 1951.

*Q: What was the situation in Iraq when you arrived?*

NEWSOM: I have never been a country that was as cynical as Iraq was then. Many Iraqis -- the educated elite -- were intensely pan-Arab in outlook. They thought that Iraq was an artificial creation resulting from infamous Sikes-Picot agreement which enabled France and Great Britain to carve up the Middle East after World War I. They thought that the monarchy was an implant because the Hashemite family, to which King Faisal II belonged, came out of the Hejaz in Saudi Arabia. That family was not an Iraqi one. The real power rested with the Crown Prince, Abdullah, who ruled with help of a strong politician, Nuri Said.

The Iraqis had a strong belief that the Cabinet, which was periodically reshuffled, were made by either the British or American Embassies. It was believed that we were still manipulating events in Iraq. There was very little distinction made between the US and Great Britain. We were both the "Gray Eminences" in Iraq. When I arrived in December, 1951 to be immediately confronted by the strong emotions aroused by the creation of the State of Israel. It was the fundamental issue that the Embassy had to deal with.

Much of the population felt that not only that the regime, nominally democratic, was run by outside powers and was also very corrupt. There may have been some justification in the belief that the British particularly retained political power by offering favors and contracts to personages close to the Royal family and Said. The Shiite-Sunni split was obvious. There was a Shiite party. Just before I arrived, Sullah Jabbah, a Shiite, had been the Prime Minister for a relatively brief time. It was a classic situation, seen in other parts of the world, of a government in power, which was friendly to us and with which we believed we could work, but which ruled over a population and an elite which was resentful of both the government and the perceived foreign interference. In November, 1952, while I was on home leave in California, the USIS offices in Baghdad were ransacked by a mob. Our offices were in a conspicuous three story building in downtown Baghdad which housed our library and offices. I immediately called

Washington and returned to Baghdad. Apparently, on the second or third Anniversary of the so-called Portsmouth Treaty -- a treaty between Iraq and Britain -- a mob, in protest of that Treaty, demonstrated. It couldn't cross the bridge to demonstrate in front of the British Embassy, so it turned on the US Information Service. The building was burned out. A friend of mine, who worked in the British Embassy, used to joke that we Americans would take all means to distribute our material. The building had an open court yard and apparently the mob piled books and papers there. The wind draft in that court yard picked up much of the material and scattered it throughout the city, including the British Embassy across the river.

That was the second time that a USIS office in Baghdad had been attacked and ransacked. When Armin Meyer was the Public Affairs officer in Baghdad in 1948, at the time of the creation of Israel, his office had been torn apart. When we talk about the terrorist attacks on US establishments, we tend to think it only started in the '70s. In fact, it has been going on for some time. At the time of the second attack, Eisenhower had just been elected and John Foster Dulles had just become Secretary of State. They decided that the Truman doctrine and the experience of the establishment of NATO should be extended eastward. They developed the concept of the Baghdad Pact. They also felt, as did Haig many years later, that if we could show a resolute support for an Arab country against the Soviet threat, we might be able to wean it and others away from their preoccupation with the Israeli issue.

Dulles came to visit Baghdad in 1953. Our USIS building was still burned out and we had not been able to get compensation from the Iraqis. Indirect approaches sometime produce results. I had a good friend who was a son-in-law of Said. His name was Aryan Abaci. I went to him and pointed out that Secretary Dulles was arriving in a few weeks. I speculated that when Dulles and the Ambassador rode by the burned out building, the Secretary would undoubtedly raise the question of compensation. I thought that when Dulles would hear that no compensation had been paid, that he would not get a very good impression of the Iraqi government. Sure enough, in a very short time, there appeared a check to cover our losses. Dulles arrived and he and our Ambassador, Waldemar Gallman, launched an effort to draw Iraq into a Western-oriented northern tier security arrangement. That came to fruition in February, 1955, when the Prime Minister of Turkey came to Baghdad, met with Said and formed an Iraq-Turkey alliance. I recall that quite vividly because Hermann Eilts, then the Embassy's Chief of the Political Section, and I were at a party together and were called to come to the Embassy immediately. When we arrived, we were debriefed and asked to write the appropriate reporting cables about this new development. That agreement was the beginning of the Baghdad Pact which came into being when Iran, Pakistan and Great Britain adhered to the Turkey-Iraq Pact. We never joined the Pact because Dulles was concerned that if the draft were submitted for ratification, the Senate might insist on a parallel security treaty with Israel, which he did not feel would be in our interest.

But during my tour in Baghdad, we built a security relationship with Iraq and the Baghdad Pact. We signed a Mutual Security Assistance agreement with Iraq. During all this time, we were pushing against the clear discomfort, if not outright opposition, in Iraq to such close cooperation with Britain and the US. I recall going with our Chargé to the Foreign Minister's house to get the final signature to the Mutual Security Assistance agreement. The Foreign Minister signed it, presumably under instructions, and told us that he was going to submit his resignation on the next day just to show that he had signed over his objections. So we continually faced the

dichotomy between the government's policy and the attitude of significant segments of the population, which were not at all pleased by the close ties that were developing between Iraq and the US

*Q: You seem to suggest that the Pact idea was Washington inspired. Was there discomfort in the Embassy with the concept?*

NEWSOM: Yes indeed. There were many signs suggesting that the concept was not acceptable to the Iraqi population, but they were dismissed. It was the classic illustration of the problem we have had in many places. We find a friendly government which is prepared to conclude arrangements that satisfy larger US interests. We then estimate whether that government is likely to remain in power for the foreseeable future and is stable. If the estimate is positive, we then tend to discount the contrary views. Ethiopia, Libya, etc. all opposed the Pact. I remember writing something for USIA's house organ at one time on the problem that an information services faces when US policies are tied to a government not popular and whose perception of the United States was warped by that fact, recognizing that the information service's job was to sell US policies. I have seen that situation many times.

I encountered another example of this dilemma in Iraq. We worked with the Iraqi government and the British to conceive an economic development program, using Iraq's oil revenues. From a Western point of view, this program was a model of planning and interaction with a foreign government. We had a very fine American member of the Development Board, Wesley Nelson. He had been one of the engineers who had worked on the construction of the Hoover Dam. The focal point of the development program was the recreation of the irrigation systems and water control systems that had been destroyed in the 10th and 11th Centuries. Three major dams were started and built in northern Iraq. But neither journalists or educators in Baghdad would go to visit the sites; they showed no interest because they were firmly convinced that the dams were being built by British and Americans as a way to re-occupy Iraq. I went to a newspaper man one day. He had just written an article about how the British and Americans had built barracks for their troops in Darbandi Khan in the Kurdish area. The Kurdish situation was already explosive at that time. These British and American troops would then re-occupy Iraq. I told him that we were not building any barracks there, but were building a dam which would benefit Iraq. I asked him to pick any day in the next few months and I said that I would fly him to the area to show him what was really going on. He prattled a bit and then said that he didn't really want to know what was going on. He said his job as a journalist was to embarrass and harass the government until it fell. He did not want to be bothered by the facts.

*Q: How was it dealing with the Iraqi press?*

NEWSOM: The Iraqi journalists were mostly "hired guns" who were being paid to plant stories or to keep some stories out of the press. The press was free to some extent, but it was a manipulated one. Sometime, the outcome was rather curious. One day, I was in a conversation with Nuri Said right after a large student demonstration. I suggested that he was being remarkably tolerant of the demonstrations. He said that he didn't want to suppress them because one couldn't be sure that when out of office one might not need their support. On the other hand, when the Russian tanks were suppressing the uprisings in East Berlin in 1953, I went to an Iraqi

official in the Foreign Ministry and pointed out that this was a perfect example of Communist repression. I asked whether this deplorable situation might not be given greater publicity in Iraq. He turned the suggestion down because he did not want to give any ideas to any part of the Iraqi population which might wish to rise against the government. So the Iraqi government stood on both sides of the demonstrations issue.

*Q: Did USIS ever get involved in purchasing space for its own news stories?*

NEWSOM: USIS did not then nor do I think it ever has. Even then, I think CIA was probably doing some of it. The Soviets certainly were. They were very active. I got to know my Soviet information counterpart. He never acknowledged buying space or reporters, but I think they did so primarily through providing printing supplies and equipment. We gave people books. We would entertain journalists by showing them films and so forth. In the Iraqi society, there was an understanding that if a person was entertained, he then was under some obligation to his host to view him favorably. No money ever passed. It was of course for that reason that a lot of journalists would not come to our functions. They didn't want to be tainted by identification with the US Embassy nor did they want to feel obligated.

*Q: Were there any American correspondents assigned to Baghdad?*

NEWSOM: There were no correspondents permanently stationed there. There was a stringer for the AP who was also the editor of the English language newspaper. His name was Anderson. There were occasional visits by newspaper people. Dorothy Thompson came through once for a visit. She was part of a group that was studying our policy toward Israel and the attitude of the Arab world towards that policy. I don't recall any great US press attention at the time to events in Iraq. The Thompson group was the beginnings of a group later called "The American Friends of the Middle East" which was funded by CIA, as was divulged later on. It tried to promote a better image of the US in the Arab world despite our support for Israel. I remember one classic remark made by a woman, Mrs. Sellers, who was one of the founders of this group. One time when she came to Baghdad, she was arrested for taking a picture of a bridge over the Tigris River. I went to get her out of jail and as we walked away, she said to me : "You know the Arabs are the most difficult people to be the friends of!".

While we in the Embassy may have had doubts about our policy of weaning Iraq away from its preoccupation with the Arab cause, this issue was not debated very much in the American media.

*Q: How was the Baghdad Embassy staffed? Were the personnel primarily "Arabists"? How did the Embassy view the situation?*

NEWSOM: I served under three ambassadors in Iraq. When I first arrived, it was Edward Crocker, whose experience had been largely European. Then came Burton Berry, whose experience had been in the Balkans and Turkey. He was followed by Waldemar Gallman, whose experience was also largely European. He had been our Ambassador to Poland and South Africa before being appointed to Iraq. Prior to Crocker, we had ambassadors who were experts in the area, like George Wadsworth and Loy Henderson. During my tour, the emphasis was more on the Cold War and the development of a security relationship. The Deputy Chief of Mission for

most of my tour was Philip Ireland, who had had considerable service in the area. Hermann Eilts, of course, was and still is, one of the leading experts in the Arab world. There were several others who had had tours in other Arab countries. We had several who spoke very good Arabic. So the staff was strong in its regional knowledge, even though the ambassadors while I was there were not Arab affairs experts.

*Q: I have been told that the relationships between Ireland and Gallman were not very good. Is that true?*

NEWSOM: The relationships between Gallman and all of his section chiefs were not good. I personally found myself in the most difficult circumstance I have ever encountered. As I have said, I was the Public Affairs officer which was regarded as the Number 3 position in the Embassy. Burt Berry, a very mercurial man, was the Ambassador. Ireland was on home leave, touring Europe. Berry had to go to a Chief of Mission conference in Amman or Cairo. Ireland was due to return while Berry was away. Berry called me in to tell me that it was not the custom in the Foreign Service to change Chargés while the Ambassador was absent from his post. Therefore, he said, that even if Ireland returned, he wanted me to remain Chargé. I told him that would be very difficult. He agreed, but insisted that it be that way. He left me written instructions which required that I remain Chargé in his absence. Approximately ten days of such an awkward situation passed with Ireland remaining in his house when Mrs. Ireland, one of the old school wives, called my wife to say that although I was Chargé, that did not mean that she was the "First Lady" at the post. That was a very difficult period for the Newsoms. Ireland knew the area. I later found out that the reason Berry had done what he did is because the Embassy had begun to receive mail for Ireland from various parts of Europe addressed to "The Honorable Philip Ireland, United States Ambassador". That did not sit too well with Berry.

I should add a word about the Foreign Service of the period from 1947 to the early '50s. The Service went through a tremendous expansion from something like 750 officers to close 3000. That meant that both in the Department and the field there were officers quite junior who were assigned large responsibilities. If you look at the careers of some who became Chiefs of Mission and key Departmental officials in the '60s and '70s, you will find that many came from NEA and EA -- areas that had suddenly emerged as important -- where the Service did not have enough experts. So young people were given assignments with great responsibilities and were able to acquire great experiences very early in their careers. That stood them in good stead in later years.

*Q: That was done at the cost of much resentment of the older officers who had waited so long for their opportunities. It was a period much like the Army and the Navy faced during World War II.*

NEWSOM: Quite true. But there were officers of the "old school" who were fine people with very good experience, but who could not bring themselves into the new world. Many felt alienated from what was happening in the late '40s, '50s and '60s.

*Q: How did the Ambassadors you worked for relate to Iraq? Were the Arab experts wary?*

NEWSOM: The Crocker -- he was Marshall Green's father in law -- were very traditional. They felt that their responsibility was primarily to relate to the Iraqi Royal family and much less to the

broadier population. I remember when King George VI died. Mrs. Crocker wanted all Embassy officers to wear black ties as a sign of mourning because that was what the Iraqi court was doing. I, as Public Affairs officer, felt that was just what we did not want to do since we were trying to disassociate ourselves from the British and the ruling family. So I didn't wear one when I was working downtown. I took one along which I put on if I had to go to the Embassy. That was a decision made out of the tradition of relating not to the population, but to the nominal head of state. Berry was broader in his perspective because he had served in the area and was a shrewd political analyst. He was bitter about the Service because he felt that he been badly treated by a Foreign Service Inspector, Merle Cochran. Berry retired after his tour in Baghdad after delivering a bitter diatribe against the Department in a despatch that he permitted me to read. Gallman was very much a professional. He was there to do the job that had been assigned to him by Dulles, namely to build the Baghdad Pact. I am sure that he was not unaware of what we were facing. He has written a book on Nuri Said because he was in Baghdad when Said and the King were killed. That book reflects more surprise at events which would not have been the case had he been more understanding of the currents that were flowing beneath the surface. But that brings me back to a basic dilemma faced by many Foreign Service professionals. Even if he had detected the turmoil under the surface, should he have stopped his efforts which he was carrying on under instructions even if he recognized the risks involved? We have faced the same issues in many other places.

*Q: During this period, what were your views and those of your colleagues towards our Israel policy? Was there a view that this policy was not in the best interest of the US as for example Loy Henderson believed?*

NEWSOM: Having dealt with the Arab world for several years by this time, I was very conscious of the very difficult problem of avoiding parochialism on this issue, just as it was difficult in Pakistan to avoid parochialism on the Kashmir issue. Some in the Embassy became very emotional in their view that the US was on the wrong side of the Arab-Israeli issue. The credibility of the Foreign Service and of the Arab specialists particularly has suffered because so many of them became emotionally involved in the issue. I felt then, and even more strongly later when I served in the Department, that the US policy had developed from a variety of domestic circumstances and therefore as a representative of the US, I had to understand it and to extent possible try to explain it, if not defend it. That is what diplomacy is about.

It was a highly emotional issue in Baghdad in those days and remains so even today particularly for those who served in the region for extended periods. I don't think our basic national orientation on the issue is going to change very much, although Mr. Baker has shown greater guts on the issue than most of his predecessors.

I thought the best tactic was to avoid a discussion of the issue because there was absolutely no support for the US position. You could expect to be drawn into contentious discussions often and I felt it was wrong to apologize for US policy or to walk away from it; I tried to explain that the policy grew not only out of domestic political pressures from the Jewish community, which was the conventional Arab point of view, but that there was considerably sympathy for the Jews round the world as a consequence of the Holocaust. In addition, there was a lot of non-Jewish support for the democratic state of Israel as fulfillment of Biblical prophecies -- in the Bible belt



in the middle west, for example. Sometimes, you could explain those rationales to people, but it was still best to avoid discussions of the issue entirely. One day, a prominent American journalist came to Iraq and called on the Foreign Minister, Fahd Jamali. Jamali had defended the Arab cause in the U.N. for many years and was very adamant about it. I briefed the journalist on that and warned him that the Minister would regale him for the first forty-five minutes about the perfidy of the US in its support of Israel. I suggested he should be prepared for that. The journalist nodded. Sure enough, after a few minutes of the usual pleasantries, Jamali started in with his speech about Palestine belonging to the Arabs. The American put up his hands and said: "I didn't come here to talk about history. I came here to talk about Iraq today. Let start with that!". That really set Jamali back. Unfortunately, a diplomat could not have been that blunt!

*Q: How did you find it dealing with Iraqi officials?*

NEWSOM: They were friendly, but they had their sensitivities. One of the areas which presented interesting challenges was the educational exchange program. The Fulbright program started while I was serving in Iraq. That program required that a binational committee be established which would review the applications for overseas scholarships. But the Minister of Education at the time, Kuhil Kennah, felt that scholarships to study abroad were a form of political patronage. Therefore, he did not want a commission to block him if he wanted to give a scholarship to one of his nephews or to one of the Prime Minister's relatives. So we had a constant discussion on that matter. Dealing with Iraqi officials at that time was particularly difficult except for the Foreign Ministry or perhaps the Prime Minister's office. there were always people sitting around in a Minister's office -- not outside, but in the office itself. They sat there drinking coffee and chatting. If you called on a Minister, the conversation was very public with a number of people listening in. Private conversations with Ministers in their offices were rare and hard to achieve.

It was a very social post. You met Ministers and other officials at frequent parties. You could reach out; it was not always easy, but I tried it. I met with people who belonged to the opposition or who at least were not part of the government, such as University professors. I used to listen to them which was perhaps one reason why I had a somewhat different perspective on the Iraqi attitude towards our policy. I heard people who were not part of the formal power structure. I felt that from a professional point of view the position o Public affairs officer in Baghdad was perhaps the most valuable one that I ever occupied because I had a degree of independence and I had management responsibilities -- personnel and budget -- which was a rare opportunity for a Foreign Service officer at that level. I had a staff of 7 Americans and forty locals which was a large office particularly for the Foreign Service at the time. So it was good experience. I also had the opportunity to travel in the country and to meet people who did not necessarily reflect the official position of the government in Baghdad.

*Q: You were in Baghdad in 1952 when Mossadegh was overthrown in Iran by a CIA operation. How was that received in Iraq?*

NEWSOM: We were involved in that event, although I was not fully aware of it at the time. I met a number of the people that were involved in the Iranian events. They passed through Baghdad. I had known Archie Roosevelt because we had been reporters together in 1940 on the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He and his cousin Kim worked together for the CIA. So I saw Archie

frequently as he traveled to and from Tehran. Of course, I didn't know until later the degree of our involvement in the Iranian events. One day, probably in late 52, Ambassador Berry called me to tell me that I should know that the Shah of Iran was in Baghdad. He had just flown in from Tehran, piloting his own plane, on his way into exile in Rome. He had been overthrown in Tehran. Berry learned about the Shah's presence from the shoe-shine man in the Eliah Club, which was the Club in Iran at the time. When he had returned to the Embassy, he received a call from the Foreign Ministry telling him that something very secret had happened and asked him to come to the Foreign Ministry to be briefed. So Berry learned about the Shah for a second time.

The Shah stayed a days or so in Baghdad and then went on to Rome. A few weeks later, the counter-revolution took place in Tehran and the Shah came through Baghdad once again. We had a very flamboyant Iranian Ambassador in Baghdad at the time who had sided with Mossadegh after the Shah's overthrow. When the Shah got off the plane which the Shah had piloted from Rome, a Foreign Ministry official told that the Iranian Ambassador was at the airport. The Shah was reported to have responded that he had no Ambassador in Baghdad and walked off without further adieu.

I don't think that there was a very strong Iraqi reaction to events in Iran. There may have been some concern, but I don't remember that as a factor. This was a time when the Embassy's mood was that the US could take action when its vital interests were at stake. We were a big power and I don't recall any of us having any doubts about the wisdom of our Iranian policy.

*Q: What about the Iraqi military, which eventually conducted a successful coup in 1958? Did we have sufficient contact with them to know their views?*

NEWSOM: The Military Attachés and some of the Political Section had close contacts with the senior Iraqi officers, particularly a General Gazi Gaghastani. But I never had the feeling that we had very good contacts with or a real appreciation for the attitudes of the younger officers. My experience in countries such as Iraq is that the military is the most difficult part of society to get to know and particularly the colonels and lieutenant colonels. I tried while in Baghdad to get USIS activities unto military bases. They would borrow our films, but they would insist on showing them themselves. We might have provided a local technician, but the military were not very receptive to our approaches.

The Military Assistance programs and the Baghdad Pact opened some relationships with the Iraqi military, but we were inhibited to some extent by the jealousy of the British who maintained a base in Iraq and who were the principal suppliers and as well as trainers of the Iraqi military. Our Military Assistance program had to be designed so not to challenge the preeminent position of the British. We got off to a bad start because the first shipment of equipment to Iraq consisted of reconditioned pieces. I went down to Bestrew to manage the publicity for that first shipment. We were horrified when we noticed that the US markings were still visible through the thin layer of paint that had been spread across the equipment. The Iraqi knew that they were getting second-hand equipment and that took some of the bloom off the rose.

*Q: Were you and the Embassy concerned and aware of the separatist feelings of the Kurds in the North and the Shiites in the South?*

NEWSOM: We were trying to deal separately with the Kurds, although we were certainly not trying to support or foster Kurdish nationalism. That was already in existence. We did have an Kurdish-speaking officer stationed in the north. I traveled in Kurdistan and became acquainted with the Kurdish leaders. We couldn't possibly not be aware of the Kurdish independent spirit and of the Arab resentment of our policy of dealing with the Kurds. I remember one evening having a party for Ministry of Education officials in Baghdad when all of a sudden a whole group -- seven or eight -- Kurds dropped in on the party. We had to put them at one end of the garden while we continued with the Education officials at the other end. There was no mixing of the two groups.

The Shiites in the South made no bones about their desire for separatism. We tried to reach them. I made visits to both of their holy cities. Loy Henderson had promised an *Encyclopedia Britannica* to a cultural group. He wrote me from Tehran, where he was our Ambassador, and asked me to take a set down to this group because he never had a chance to get around to doing it. We had a Shiite Arab translator in the Arab, whom I asked to set up this gift ceremony. He set it up with another group with which he was friendly with a somewhat similar name. I went to the town, somewhat suspicious. I asked to see the book in which Loy Henderson had signed his name; of course, it turned out that this group didn't have it. We ultimately found the group that did have it and made the presentation. I am sure that the encyclopedia went on a dusty bookshelf and probably remained unopened till its demise. I always resented that because it cost me \$180 out of the USIS' budget.

I might just mention in closing that during my tour we saw the development of the Baath Party. We were apprehensive about that development because we viewed it as a threat to the existing regime. I had a friend who was a member of the Party. Hermann and others were watching it closely. We were trying to learn as much about it as we could.

*Q: This was the period of Nasser's triumphs in the Arab world. How did he play in Baghdad?*

NEWSOM: The US tried to build a Middle East defense organization around Nasser. There were some very acrimonious exchanges between Ambassador Jefferson Caffery in Cairo and Ambassador Waldemar Gallman in Baghdad about the development of a Middle East defense organization. Caffery felt very strongly that we shouldn't proceed with the Baghdad Pact without Nasser's participation. He thought that was a dangerous policy. Nuri Said was very suspicious of Nasser. I don't remember there being in Baghdad the same public adulation of Nasser as I encountered in Libya later. We had mixed feelings about Nasser. In November 1952, after I had returned to Baghdad after the burning of the USIS building, I was assigned to take Senator Guy Gillette of Iowa on a trip through the Arab world and Israel. That was about nine months after the revolution in Egypt. We went to Cairo and met with the Revolutionary Council. We were greatly impressed with the group. Nasser did not particularly stand out at the time, but he was clearly one of the articulate members. We were impressed with the Council's plans for Egypt's future -- bringing it into the modern world. The Council did not dwell as much as other Arab leaders did on the problem of Israel. So many Americans had the impression at the time that Egypt was being governed by a new wave of Arab leaders dedicated to modernization which if not meriting necessarily our outright support, at least should not be opposed. On the same trip, I

was once again made aware of Israeli power in the American political system and its ability to impress Congress. We went to Cairo, Beirut, Damascus, Amman and to Jerusalem through the Mandelbaum Gate. We stayed at the King David Hotel. Except in Cairo, the Senator had been forced to listen to long diatribes about America's support for Israel. By the time he got to Jerusalem, he was fed up with that standard line. We arrived at the hotel late at night and went to bed. In the morning. We went to breakfast where we met by a young man from the Israeli Foreign Ministry who welcomed the Senator to his country. He told the Senator that there were twelve people from Iowa staying at the hotel that day. He thought that the Senator might wish to meet them while he was in Jerusalem. He added that a program had been developed which would permit the Senator to meet all the key Israeli leaders, but time had been left on the schedule to permit the Senator to spend a little time with his constituents. It was like and day when compare to his experiences in Arab capitals, where we had difficulty in arranging appointments, where he had been the recipient of diatribes, where it was obvious that no attention had been given at all to the American political system; it was 180 degrees different in Jerusalem.

*Q: To some observers, Iraq seemed to be the one bright hope at this time in the Middle East. It was a far more literate society than in other Arab countries. It had oil revenues and a balanced economy. How did you view Iraq by the end of your tour?*

NEWSOM: When I left Libya, I was uneasy about the future and said so in writing. I don't remember doing the same thing from Baghdad, but I don't think I left Iraq with total optimism about its future because you could not help be conscious about the divisions within the country and the underlying resentment of the ruling class. So when the revolution took place on July 14, 1958, I was entirely surprised.

*Q: Then you came back to a very interesting job, still in Middle East Affairs. You became Officer-in-Charge, Arabian Peninsula Affairs.*

NEWSOM: Right. I think for the first few months, it was the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq. Later, Iraq was given its own desk officer because of the Baghdad Pact. That left me the Arabian Peninsula. The Office for Middle Eastern Affairs was at the time was a relatively small office. We all worked very closely together. A crisis in the general area would involve everybody. A desk officer had responsibilities then that a country director has now. In the Bureau, there were only two deputies and the office directors were the king-pins. Fraser Wilkins came first and then Stuart Rockwell.

We went through two major crises during my tour in NE. First came the Suez crisis and then the Lebanon-Iraq crisis. To a degree that would probably be unheard of today, desk officers were dealing directly with the Secretary of State on issues. Even if your responsibilities were for the Arabian Peninsula, you might be drawn into the affairs of any other part of the Near East region just because of the need to deal with crises. At this time, the Near East Bureau covered the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt. The Sudan was in NE, but I don't remember if Libya was; it had just acquired its independence. Algeria was part of France and therefore in EUR's jurisdiction. Morocco and Tunisia achieved independence in 1956. Roughly around that time, EUR set up a new deputy assistant secretary for Africa. Joe Satterthwaite was the first. The African Bureau was not created until the late '50s.

NE was really the heart of the eastern Arab world plus Israel. The "Arabian Peninsula" covered all the area from the border of Kuwait south, including Kuwait. It covered Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, the Trucial Sheikdoms -- this was before the birth of the UAE -- the Sultanate of Muscat and Oman, the Protectorate of Aden, and Yemen.

*Q: The next major event took place in July, 1958. I refer to the Iraq-Lebanon dispute. Tell us your memories of that?*

NEWSOM: By that time, Iraq was no longer the responsibility of my office. I think Dick Parker was the desk officer for Iraq, but we were all involved in the handling of the Iraq revolution and its aftermath. That took place in July, 1958. I remember that I was chosen, along with Bill Macomber, to brief the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs Committees every day for three weeks on events in Iraq. That was interesting for several reasons.

First, it demonstrated to me how different the perspectives of the Senate and the House were, at least in a foreign affairs crisis. The House was interested in the immediate and its impact on their home districts. The Senate was prepared to look at the longer term. At that time, you still have an executive session in the Senate without, as is the case now, having to go through a prolonged negotiation on what can be revealed and what can't be. So executive sessions could be quite open and candid. I remember especially the Senate sessions. One reason was that the Chairman was Senator Theodore Green, who was by 1958, in his dotage. He was in his '90s and lucid only for short periods of time. That made briefings a little difficult. Highboard Humphreys was on the Committee. He was alert and sharp. Because he was not trying to impress his audience, he asked very penetrating questions. Fulbright was also on the Committee, but he was angry with Dulles and at one point, stomped out of the briefings because he said that he didn't want a party to "star-chamber" proceedings. The Committees were interested in the progress of the landing of the Marines, why we were not better informed of the over-throw of the monarchy (the same question we have had to try to answer after every revolution) and the significance of that. We briefed the Committees on the Robert Murphy mission which was one of the more successful actions of American diplomacy, despite our unhappiness with our Ambassador in Lebanon, Rob McClintock. He thought he could solve the problem, until he was quoted as saying that the Lebanese Minister of Finance could hang from the nearest tree. I was with Mr. Dulles shortly after that comment was made; the Secretary said that it was like having Babe Ruth on your team -- he strikes out quite often, but every once in a while he hits a home run. Murphy negotiated a resolution of the Lebanese problem and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops. Interestingly enough, the man who asked for the troops in the first place -- Camille Jamal -- was not put in power, but rather a Lebanese military man was chosen as President. We couldn't reverse the revolution in Iraq -- Kassam and his bloody shirt.

The only interesting sidelight that I remember of those events was the deft work of the French who managed to preserve their oil interests in Iraq. Five percent of the Iraq Petroleum Company was owned an Armenian family, Gulbenkian; the other 95% was split four ways: the French company, British Petroleum, New Jersey Standard and SOCONY Mobil. Kassam nationalized the Iraq Petroleum Company, but the French persuaded him to let them keep their shares. They

then argued that were saving Western interests in Iraq because there was no way any of the other parties could maintain their interests. The French are always our staunchest allies in tough crises!

I left NEA in 1959. In the previous year, we tried to recover our interests in Iraq, but the Baghdad Pact became CENTO. The British had to withdraw from Habania -- a military base they used in Iraq. The British were in general pulling out east of Suez. We believed that we had to fill that vacuum. We did that until Kissinger took over by taking some modest measures like establishing consular posts in the Gulf, beefing up slightly our naval presence in Bahrain with two AVPs (aircraft tenders -- the *Greenwich Bay* and the *Valcour*). We did add also a couple of destroyers and increased the Sixth Fleet visits to the area. We wrote letters to the Kings of Saudi Arabia emphasizing our deep interest in maintaining the integrity of their country and its independence. I drafted a number of them for Presidential signature. It is no wonder that the Saudis expected some action from us when they were threatened.

We had extensive written exchanges with the British during this period concerning the Gulf and its future. The question of military assistance to Kuwait arose because Kassam raised the Iraqi claim to Kuwait shortly after the revolution. They landed some troops in Kuwait and provided some equipment -- tanks, etc. We tried to work with Kassam, but weren't very successful.

**PHILIP W. IRELAND**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Baghdad (1951-1955)**

*Philip W. Ireland was born in Iowa in 1904. He graduated from Oxford University with a B.A. in 1933 and a M.A. in 1937. He received a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics in 1936. Before joining the Foreign Service, he was a professor at the American University in Beirut and the University of Chicago. His career included posts in Egypt, Iraq, Greece, and Syria. Mr. Ireland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

*Q: You were in Baghdad from 1951 to 1955.*

IRELAND: Yes.

*Q: What was the situation when you arrived and while you were there in Baghdad.*

IRELAND: There was a certain degree of resentment of Britain, but basically the people who were ruling, those who were at the top of the political pile one might say, they did not resent the British as much as the others. There was one British officer assigned to each important section. But it was supervisory and basically advisory, etc. The British have a gift for that--bring advice without seeming to order them. The man who was king when I was there was Faisal and he was...

*Q: He was a very young man wasn't he?*

IRELAND: He was a young man and really not very able.

*Q: How about Nuri Said?*

IRELAND: Nuri Said was a friend of mine. I taught his son at Beirut. Nuri was a man who knew what things were going on and how to best follow them to help build up Iraq. I was a great admirer of Nuri. He died in an ignoble way in 1958 when killed during a coup d'etat. It was at this time that to the front came the desire to be governed only by Iraqis and as time went on this developed into being governed only by one Iraqi. And we have today a man who is [in total control] we presume. Our President has other objectives.

*Q: The British were there as advisors when you went there in your official capacity and whom did you talk to? Did you talk to Iraqi officials or did you talk to...?*

IRELAND: I talked to both of them. I found that Nuri was good. The Secretary for Agriculture was an extremely good one. And there was another one--a man from Said who was down from Mum Mosul. He was another one who got retribution for his closeness to the British.

*Q: Well what was our feeling towards Iraq at the time? Did you all see it as a country that had considerable potential or one that probably wasn't going to...?*

IRELAND: You know I think they had in mind the maintenance of Iraq from several points of view. They were very much interested in the Kirkuk oil countries. There were several meetings of the group in Iran and we were intimate friends of the cadre for the whole of the Iraqi oil company--IPC. I do not think at that time they were upset with Iran by its claiming as much of the river as they did...

*Q: We are talking about the Tigris-Euphrates...?*

IRELAND: Yes, that is right. Particularly after they formed the wider river--the Shatt al Arab. I think about 8 or 10 years ago they decided to do something about it and their attempt...

*Q: It has been a disaster.*

IRELAND: Yes. The interest in which Saddam Hussein has attempted to use that to win the support of the Iraqi has been marvelous because they had such a difficult time with the Iranians themselves--which took place particularly through their fanaticism. The Iranians were not very practical. My father had several Iranians as students of medicine...

*Q: I would like to return back, rather than today, to the 1951-55 period. How did you feel at the embassy about the future of Iraq?*

IRELAND: You know I don't know if I can say. I felt it was going to make something out of itself. Students that we had at Beirut were good. It is true that it did not apply to the broad element of what other countries would call peasants. But I had a great deal of sympathy and

admiration for the activity and I enjoyed my stay in Baghdad. It didn't have as much to offer as Cairo did or as Greece where I also spent some time or some of the others, but it was a--I found them to be very earnest and as students they weren't bad at all.

*Q: Were there any particular crisis in Iraq at the time you were there?*

IRELAND: Well, only with the Kurds. There was almost annual antagonisms to the Kurds. They had the Kurds with the Sunni-ism or whatever you want to call it of Islam.

*Q: Did we have any particular policy towards the Kurds or was this purely an Iraqi problem as far as we were concerned at the embassy? Did we see the Kurds as a tool of the Soviets or something like that?*

IRELAND: No, I don't think so. I think we were sympathetic with them as a group of men. The women did not have to wear the black dresses and veil. My wife went into areas in which she was the first white, or whatever word we want to use for that, woman. One time we walked up into the mountains with some Kurds who naturally all had their rifles.

*Q: This is in Kurdistan?*

IRELAND: This is in Kurdistan. They shot at something and then said, "Mr. Ireland, you try it." I missed it by about six feet. I was embarrassed, but they all had a wonderful time laughing like mad at my missing. I agreed with them and said if I ever got into trouble I would call for them for help. The king had sponsored that trip for me backed by the military. So everything that could be supplied was supplied to my wife and myself. She was given a mare to ride. One time it did some bucking and running and threw Mrs. Ireland on the ground--but it didn't hurt her. However, this afforded some amusement to some of the accompanying Kurds.

*Q: Who was the ambassador while you were?*

IRELAND: I was there with both Burton Berry and Waldemar Gallman. On certain occasions the job of the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) was to run the embassy, except for political decisions. However, I could see the ambassador about a political point which was important because if anything came out and I had been the person who had done it, it would offend the ambassador. As you know the building at the Baghdad embassy was built as a front of the White House--but on the East side there were only--the kitchens were on one side and about two rooms on the other side. One thing that I am proud of is that I got a number of Pounds and built two more buildings for the people we needed at that time because the embassy was growing.

*Q: How would you describe Ambassador Gallman's method of operation? He was there for some time. How did he work in Iraq?*

IRELAND: I am unable to speak on that subject. He and I departed less than friends. I have never been able to understand it. I think Burton said that you have to watch Ireland, he has been here four years and he has a tendency to take the issue and act. I think there was some personal



antagonism there and I am unable to speak. That part is not for publication. He did shift the source--we, the embassy, went back to Nuri and people like Fedl Gemali were pushed off.

*Q: What was his position?*

IRELAND: His position had been Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Prime Minister. He understood the country. He had an American wife who wanted to turn Moslem and did, but the Baath at that time said no because they felt there might come a time when she didn't mean it. Faisal did need it because he was opposed to groups that were pressing for a wider participation to the type of person we have now as the head of the nation.

*Q: You left before the big revolution in 1958?*

IRELAND: Yes, I did.

**VICTOR WOLF, JR.**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Baghdad (1952-1953)**

*Victor Wolf, Jr. was born in New York in 1927. His Foreign Service career included positions in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, the Philippines, Denmark, Germany, Poland, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 31, 1986.*

*Q: I see you entered the Foreign Service in 1952. Did they ask you what you wanted to do? Did you have any career goal at the time in any areas?*

WOLF: I was very interested in political work. I was also interested in, I guess, what would now be called human rights, although as a separate term or a separate concept of work inside the Foreign Service, human rights as such didn't have that label. But the content of that issue was certainly in U.S. foreign policy.

I also said that I was interested in the Near East, although it is true I had taken my university training basically on Central Europe and NATO affairs. So in the mysterious ways of personnel, I was assigned to Baghdad in Iraq.

*Q: In your training, before you went to Baghdad, did they touch on immigration or refugees policy? Or was this more or less discounted as being an importance?*

WOLF: No, I won't say it was discounted. It was touched on--a little more than touched on. They gave a certain amount of attention to the mechanics of how visas would be issues and should be issued and various types of visas.

In those days, the McCarran-Walter Act, the Immigration Nationality Act of 1952, had just passed. Actually, as you may remember, that Act didn't go into effect until the first half of 1953. Before that, they had other laws that govern visas and passports and nationality. The McCarran-Walter Act, although it had many features which I think we now recognize were discriminatory and had certain obnoxious characteristics to it, had the virtue of pulling together a whole number of other laws that previously had governed visas. Before the McCarran-Walter Act, consular work and particularly visa work for the United States was governed by as many as 15, 20, 30 pieces of legislation and their related regulations. This, of course, made it extraordinarily cumbersome to do visa work overseas in those days.

*Q: Particularly, I would imagine that most of this type of work was often handed to a rather junior officer at an embassy, who would have little time to master all these laws before moving on.*

WOLF: Not only that, but he would have comparatively few people to refer to, to give him guidance and counsel among his more senior colleagues at his post of assignment, because all of these laws came into operation successively over a 15-year period, roughly just before the McCarran-Walter Act was passed.

*Q: Speaking of the McCarran-Walter Act, I note that when it came into effect, you had then moved from essentially a position as special assistant.*

WOLF: I was special assistant to the AID director in Iraq. I then moved on to head the consular section, which was not a very large one. It was basically me and two Iraqi local employees.

*Q: This was 1953-1954.*

WOLF: Yes, it was. It was a normal little consular section, some visa work, passport work, protection work, and the like, even consular invoices, where that was in the days when it was still necessary for consular officers to accept and process the certifications of exporters of products to the United States as to what was in the shipment.

*Q: Turning to the problems of movements of people, in the first place, was there any regular migration from Iraq to the United States in those days, what I'd call normal Iraqis going to the United States?*

WOLF: There was a small number of Iraqis who were immigrating, not very many, and a somewhat larger number of people going to the United States principally as students or to visit their relatives in the United States. And there was a very interesting third category. This was the category of Iraqi Jews. This was 1952. This was rather shortly after the coming into existence of the state of Israel.

*Q: That was in 1948.*

WOLF: That was in 1948. The Iraqi felt very, very strongly about this. They had the typical Arab position that you would expect on anything having to do with Jews, Israel, Zionism, and the like.

I would even go so far as to say that the way Iraqis discussed this question was unusually hysterical. I suppose that meant because they were far away from the borders. They were not what now is called front-line states.

*Q: They had sent a military contingent during the 1948 war.*

WOLF: They had sent a military contingent during the 1948 war, which was done unusually badly. As a consequence, I think they were more than unusually neurotic or psychotic on the subject of Israel and the like. They had, to be perfectly frank, treated their own Jewish population rather badly. According to all of the information available, the small Iraqi Jewish community wasn't the least bit interested in Zionism and Israel, except what I would call a certain normal sympathy with their co-religionists. But there was no evidence at all, at least that I ever heard of, that there was any truth in the claims of the Iraqis that the Jewish community represented a massive fifth column in Iraq and that they were engaged in spying and the like.

In 1948, there had been some rather nasty lynching going on, in which prominent Jewish merchants were lynched, literally lynched. Their enterprises were taken over by the organizers of the lynch mobs.

*Q: Did the British have any control in Iraq in those days?*

WOLF: No. By that time, the British mandate had really ended before World War I, although the British influence was, comparatively speaking, still high. But the Iraqi, as so many Middle Eastern countries, always credited foreigners with more influence than the foreigners always had. Middle Easterners, Arabs sometimes have a tendency to be much less introspective than is warranted or is necessary.

Anyhow, as a consequence of the mistreatment of the Iraqi Jewish community, the Iraqi Jewish community was extremely insecure. The newspapers were full of anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist statements and articles, and Jews in Iraqi were very prudent, very careful, and really kept a very, very low profile.

*Q: Do you have any idea of the approximate number and where they were located?*

WOLF: Most of them were located in Baghdad itself. I don't know, there might have been as many as--well, by that time, it had been considerably reduced, because in 1948, there had been an airlift to take a large number of Iraqi Jews out of Iraq and relocate them in Israel. That had been arranged somehow. So what you had in the Iraqi Jewish community was a considerably smaller number than had been in existence before the founding of the state of Israel in 1948.

*Q: Are we talking about several thousand?*

WOLF: Oh, yes.

*Q: Tens of thousands?*

WOLF: I would say we're probably talking perhaps 5,000 to 10,000 in those days. It's much, much less now in 1986, because everything that has happened since that time has made it even more difficult for Jews to stay in Iraq.

*Q: What was the embassy's role in helping these people?*

WOLF: We didn't have a role as such, but we had a terrible dilemma. The dilemma arose from the fact that large numbers of Iraqi Jews tried to visit the United States, and we, normally speaking, found that very many of them qualified as non-immigrant visitors or as non-immigrant students. They went to the United States.

At that point, a curiosity in Iraqi nationality law came into existence. Iraqi nationality law had a provision which I guess you would call blatantly discriminatory. It said that any Iraqi Jew who did not renew his nationality specifically before an Iraqi consul abroad by going to that consul and saying, "I wish to remain an Iraqi citizen," was immediately denationalized, and that meant he could not return to Iraq. If he couldn't return to Iraq, and he was in the United States, he was in the United States, and there he would stay.

The result was, as this pattern became more and more visible to us, we began to have real qualms as to whether, in fact, Iraqi Jews who were going to the United States or were proposing to go to the United States to visit or to study or what have you, were simply using this as a device for disguised immigration.

*Q: Were you finding any of these students or visitors going to Iraqi consuls and making an attempt to stay nationalized?*

WOLF: A small number were, but the largest number were not. On the other hand, we were receiving a significant amount of pressure from university administrations, from Jewish communities in the United States, and from congressmen who said, "We don't want you to discriminate against Jews by issuing them an unduly low proportion of visas and denying their applications in an unduly high number of cases." It was a very, very complicated thing.

The additional problem was that from time to time, the Immigration and Naturalization Service would come to us, would ask the embassy to get the authority of the Iraqi Government to receive as deportees some of these overstaying Iraqi Jews. The Iraqi, in every instance, refused to accept them. The dilemma was that there was a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act which said that if a foreign state refused to accept U.S. deportees, it was possible to deny all visa facilities to all citizens of that state. About the time I was leaving, the United States was grappling with whether it would bring that section of the Immigration and Nationality Act into operation or not.

*Q: What about these Iraqi Jews? They did have another nationality, which was Israeli, and the law of return. Were they taking this into account?*

WOLF: Not really, because the law of return only applied if you were in Israel and made specific application before an Israeli authority or an Israeli officer, a person authorized to receive

applications for the law of return. And it would have been anomalous for us to say that an Iraqi Jew in the United States, in the jurisdiction of the United States, simply because he was a Jew and had not gone to Israel and applied, was therefore an Israeli citizen under the Israeli law of return. I think the United States has always been unwilling to act as an agent to enforce the laws of another state. That's a very dangerous precedent to start.

*Q: You were mentioning the pressure on you. How did the pressure come? There you were issuing visas. What did the ambassador tell you or recommend to you? What sort of instructions did you get from the Department? How did you get these instructions?*

WOLF: With regard to visa applications as such, the Department did not instruct. The people who ran the visa office in those days availed themselves of that section of the law, the Immigration and Nationality Act by that time, which said that the consular officer is responsible, not the Department. The Department can only give guidance and interpretations. So the Department of State basically stayed out of the whole issue. They didn't want to get involved in the issue.

As far as the ambassador, Berton Y. Barry, was concerned, the ambassador said, "If you find a person qualified to issue a visa, you issue it to him. If you find a person not qualified, you do not issue it to him. You have to make that decision yourself, but I will support you in whatever decisions you make on individual cases."

The deputy chief of mission was a man named Philip W. Ireland. I never got very much counsel and guidance from Philip Ireland, because I think he was not really interested in consular work. I think he took the view that consular work was non-substantive. Now, anyone who's done consular work for the United States Government understands what the words "substantive" and "non-substantive" mean and how, in some instances, non-substantive is pejorative. Philip Ireland was interested in political work; that's all he was interested in. He wasn't interested in anything else. In some respects, that was good, because although he was interested in political work, he made political officers very unhappy by getting involved in details which DCMs should not get involved in.

*Q: Did you get a lot of congressional correspondence?*

WOLF: We got a fair amount of congressional correspondence. Curiously, the member of Congress who was most interested in this and who basically wanted us to virtually automatically issue non-immigrant visas to any Iraqi Jew who applied was John J. Rooney. John J. Rooney, among other things, was the Chairman of the House Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee, I guess it was, that handled the State Department appropriations.

*Q: He was considered the most powerful man as far as the State Department was concerned, because he controlled the State Department's purse strings.*

WOLF: That's correct. I, fortunately, never had a real crisis or run-in with him, because for whatever reason, I never had very much in the way of kickbacks on my decisions. In some cases I issued, in some cases I did not issue. But this was an ongoing problem.

The one other element with regard to this was the question of the reaction of the Iraqi Government whenever we asked them to accept an Iraqi Jew who we wished to deport. Because they were not citizens, we asked them, nevertheless, to accept them. As I said, in every instance they refused to accept them.

The problem that we had was, every time I would go down to the Foreign Ministry and talk to an Iraqi official, who usually was the under secretary who, among other things, dealt with consular matters, the reaction I got from him was not what I would call a very adult or disciplined one. The reaction was about 15 or 20 minutes of an anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic, anti-Zionist tirade, attacks on the United States for helping the Jews against the Arabs, anger that we were even concerning ourselves with people like this, and then he would say, "We refuse your request." But I always had to go through this temper tantrum of about 15 minutes to half an hour. I knew what the result was going to be. And so finally, I simply would go down, hand over the note, in effect shut my ears, contemplate my navel, and think of something else. When I heard them say no, I would get up, go out. I would go back to the Department of State, and I'd do the reporting message on it.

*Q: Besides this rather unfruitful business, did you have any other specific types of problems dealing with the movement of peoples?*

WOLF: Yes, we had one other. In 1953 or '54, I believe, the United States Congress passed the Refugees Relief Act. Now, the largest proportion of the operations of the Refugees Relief Act had to do with refugees and other categories of people principally in Europe, but there were several small programs involving persons outside of Europe.

Among those programs was a provision that 2,000 Palestine Arabs displaced from their homes could be admitted to the United States as refugees. Now, there were a comparatively small number of Palestine refugees in Iraq. There were, I think, 400 or 500 of them in a not particularly attractive suburb outside of Baghdad, principally. And we thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to use the 2,000 numbers to move that whole group to the United States and get this irritation out of Iraq.

Now, the problem was that the Congress had said that the country where they were sojourning had to issue a readmission certificate. That was a certificate that said if after all the refugee processing was finished, within six months after their arrival in the United States as refugees, it developed that there was some ineligibility, the country that had issued the readmission certificate would let them come back if they were found ineligible to stay. And no one at the time thought that this would be any problem at all. Here it was simply a pro forma document, because the investigations were going to be so careful and so detailed that there wouldn't be any slip-ups. This was long before the days of the Palestine Liberation Organization or Arab terrorism or anything like that. This was just a mechanical procedure, because, if I'm not mistaken, this requirement was laid down for all persons admitted under the Refugees Relief Act.

*Q: Yes.*

WOLF: Now, the problem was that many of the Arab governments were unwilling to issue such things, and the reason was they didn't want the Palestine refugee question settled. They refused to issue these. I remember I was struggling with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry for about a year, trying to get this. It must have been in September or October of 1954, shortly before I left Baghdad, that I finally received an instruction from the Department saying, in effect, "Look, you've been doing this now for a year with the Iraqis. Let's have them fish or cut bait. Let's really get a position from them. Will they or won't they issue a readmission certificate?"

So I called on the under secretary of the Foreign Ministry who dealt with consular affairs, and he told me, quite candidly, that they would not issue it simply because they did not want the Palestine refugees resettled anywhere else. He said something like, "We want this running sore to continue. This running sore is a good way of keeping the Palestine question alive, and ultimately we hope that this will serve to destroy the Zionist state."

When I went back and I reported that, I remember there was some discussion in the embassy as to whether such a telegram reporting such a thing should even be sent out.

Q: . . . to send out a rather straightforward informational-type telegram such as this?

WOLF: Because isn't it true that many embassies do not like to report things that make their host government look not very constructive and helpful? There is always pressure on an embassy to make the government to which it is accredited, if at all possible, look good rather than bad. And also, no one likes to report an inability to follow instructions from the Department.

**JAMES N. CORTADA**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Basra (1953-1955)**

*James N. Cortada was born in New York in 1914. He grew up in New York, but spent his high school years in Havana, Cuba. He attended college in New York five years, until 1932. Mr. Cortada joined the Foreign Service in 1942. His career included posts in Cuba, Spain, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.*

Q: Did you take it in Washington?

CORTADA: In Washington. I took it in Washington and when the experiment was done, there were only five of us in the class. The institute opened up an office in Lebanon, in Beirut, and sent these boys over there. And I went to Basra. You see, what happened at the end of another six months of this kind of immersion, the way it worked out, was that my oral knowledge of the language was superior to that of the boys who had stayed in Lebanon, but their knowledge of classical Arabic was better than mine.

Q: You served in Basra then as a Consul from 53 to 55. Were you running the Consulate then?

CORTADA: Yes.

*Q: What was the situation in Iraq in the 53 to 55 period?*

CORTADA: Very stable. I caught the end of the British Raj because while I was there the British military left and the Iraqi army command achieved total independence. The only British influence remaining in the place was the Port Engineer...and of course the Basra Petroleum Company. We had a Consulate there because there were about fifty American oil workers in those fields. The Basra Petroleum Company was owned in equal shares by the British, the French, the Dutch, and ourselves with Gulbenkian having a five percent interest in it.

*Q: How did you find the Iraqi officials?*

CORTADA: Deviousness and suspicion were characteristics. But they were apt under pressure to give in. A very good incident of this kind happened which proves that. Pan American used to fly all the way from the United States to Turkey, the Middle East, India and Indonesia. In one of those flights, there was a Jewish American girl with a newborn baby which she was still nursing. She was on her way to Indonesia to meet her husband. He was with the Agency for International Development. Iraq had passed a law, or a regulation, call it what you may, or an edict, that any Jew crossing Iraq was to be returned to where he came from, that is back to Istanbul, if that's where the plane came from. When the lady filled out landing forms, she identified her religion as Jewish. The Iraqis immediately demanded that she be returned to Istanbul. The Pan American manager, immediately got a hold of me and explained what was happening.

I went to the airport and gave the Iraqis the tongue lashing of their lives. In fact, it was one of the very few incidences in my professional career...in fact, it's the only incident in my professional career where I let my emotions get the better of me. I remember telling them: "My ancestors spent 800 years cutting your damned heads off, and the coat of arms of my family is that of an Arab head with a sickle under it. You deserve no better now. You got your pants beaten off by the Israelis and you're making war now on a woman and a baby, that's how low you have descended. I am disgusted with the whole lot of you. You are going to let that woman go."

I turned to the Pan American manager and ordered the plane to stay on the ground until I released it. He reacted with: "Jimmy you can't do that, you haven't got any authority for that." I responded "Whether I have it or don't, that plane is not leaving without that lady and her baby." In the interim the two were under my wife's wing in the residence.

Well, you can imagine the Iraqis. I called the Embassy, of course. Phil Ireland was in charge at the time because the Ambassador was away, and I explained what had happened. Well, Phil who was bit of a quiet sort of fellow, not very prone to get into confrontations did what was necessary, and the word got back from Baghdad to let her go. To me also was the issue of honoring an American passport by a nation with which we maintained normal ties. Well, she left on the plane and the crisis was over.



The Iraqi airport officials were clearly distressed over the issue and decidedly unhappy that the regulation had to be applied to a tired mother and her baby. They were greatly relieved when Baghdad gave the green light for their continued travel. Despite the sharpness of my reaction, our relationships remained as cordial as before the incident.

Also, I ran into Iraqi army maneuvers one time when I made a trip from Basra in August to Baghdad by car, up one side of one river then back down the other. The performance was poor.

*Q: What about your relations with the Embassy. Ambassador Goldman was the Ambassador...?*

CORTADA: Well, he was there. At the beginning, there was another fellow...what was his name? He was later on, I believe, Ambassador to Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria. He was a bachelor. He was followed by Goldman. Relations with the Embassy were excellent under both gentlemen.

*Q: You didn't have much dealing with the Embassy?*

CORTADA: No, but whatever dealings there were, whatever the Embassy wanted, I complied with immediately. I never had to ask the Embassy for anything. I never had any problem with the Embassy.

*Q: Who was Sheik of Kuwait at that time?*

CORTADA: Kuwait at that time was looked upon as a British enclave. And frankly, the Iraqis never would have made a move on Kuwait if the British had not departed from the area. But once they left that was it.

You see what happened was that in the Turkish period, Mesopotamia was divided into three Wilayats: Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. The Basra Wilayat, governed by a Turkish Wali consisted of four districts: Amara, Basra, Montefik and Kuwait. It included Arabic speaking areas in Southern Arabistan and (now part of Iran renamed Khuzestan). Kuwait consisted then only of a small hamlet with pearl diving and ship construction as mainstay. There was a long history of association of southern Iraq with Kuwait and the present Iranian side of the Shatt Al-Arab River. Incidentally, Shatt means river. That was the basis for Saddam Hussein's attempt to take advantage of Iran's troubles.

*Q: This is in 1990?*

CORTADA: Earlier than that. Remember they had a long eight years' war with Iran. The Turkish past was the cause of it. He wanted to seize Arabistan and Kuwait, and reconstruct what was at one time the Basra Wilayat. And I can tell you this, whether Saddam Hussein is the dictator of Iraq, or a most mild mannered General a successor, this aspiration of Iraqis for Arabistan and Kuwait will never go away.

**HERMANN FREDERICK EILTS**  
**Chief of the Political Section**  
**Baghdad (1954-1957)**

*Ambassador Hermann Frederick Eilts was born in Germany in 1922. He received a B.A. degree from Ursinus College in 1943 and an M.A. degree from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1947. Ambassador Eilts was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1945. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947, serving in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, England, Libya, and Egypt. Ambassador Eilts was interviewed by William Brewer in 1988*

*Q: Well, this certainly well illustrates the difficulties that a Consul can have in a small post because of the activities of one or very few American citizens. After your assignment in Aden you were transferred, I think, directly to Baghdad as Chief of the Political Section, and this was in 1954--early in 1954--and at that time the government in Baghdad was, I think one could say, fairly pro-western, and it was dominated, although possibly he was not in it at the time, by Nuri Said. I wonder if you would comment about working in that environment, and in particular your view of Nuri and then the genesis of the what became the Baghdad Pact, the CENTO organization?*

EILTS: Yes. I arrived in Baghdad in April of 1954. At the time Nuri was not Prime Minister, but a man by the name of Fahd Jamali had that post. Jamali was a very distinguished Iraqi; he was a Shia; he was a Columbia University graduate; he had been a Minister in various cabinets; and now, a short time before I arrived, he had been appointed as Prime Minister. Now, what was of particular interest, as far as the United States was concerned, was that our Charge--we did not have an Ambassador at the time, the Ambassador had left on transfer a week after I arrived--went around telling everyone that he had arranged to have Jamali appointed as Prime Minister. Implicit in this rather foolish and empty claim was that the US had done so. The US Charge was a man named Phillip Ireland. This was an effort to show up the British, who had been the principal element in Iraq up to that time and had often been responsible for suggesting who Prime Ministers might be. Well, Jamali didn't last long as Prime Minister. He really did not have the kind of political base that was necessary and by the latter part of the fall of '54 Nuri Said Pasha did come back. Nuri came back, in what I think was his tenth or eleventh term as Prime Minister. Most of the members of his cabinet were people from the old school, colleagues of his. It was like shuffling a pack of cards. Nuri was a little man, as far as size was concerned, but he was a man of considerable political acumen. He was very close to the British, and had for many years depended on the British.

But this was also a period when Iraq felt it needed additional arms and the United States was willing, as it turned out in early talks with Nuri Said Pasha, to provide arms to Iraq. These would supplement arms provided by the British.

*Q: Excuse me. I wonder could you explain why perhaps the Iraqis felt at this time that they needed more arms?*

EILTS: It was shortly after--well, six years after, not that shortly after--the Arab-Israeli war. The government of Iraq felt that it was exposed to a threat, not just a potential threat from Israel, but from others. As a matter of fact, Nuri Said wasn't that concerned about a real threat from Israel. But Nuri Said had come to be concerned about a possible threat from the Soviet Union, because it was, after all, the period of the cold war. And, while the British had provided the Iraqi government with weaponry up until now, the judgement of Nuri Said and the Iraqi Chief of State was that Iraq needed more arms. The military sector of society in Iraq was important and there was an effort to keep it happy. The British could no longer provide all the needed weapons and the United States seemed willing to, if Iraq was prepared to take some kind of steps to set up, or to participate in a security organization that would be directed against a putative Soviet threat. The earlier so-called MEDO, Middle East Defense Organization, effort had been attempted. The British had spearheaded that several years before and it had failed. We then, the United States, and particularly John Foster Dulles when he became Secretary of State, developed the so-called Northern Tier Concept. The states on the southern border of the Soviet Union--or claim to it--Turkey, Iraq (even though Iraq is not contiguous to the Soviet Border) Iran, Pakistan, and possibly Afghanistan. When a new American Ambassador, Waldemar Gallman, was appointed to Baghdad in the latter part of '54, Dulles charged him with trying to persuade the Iraqi government to participate in a Northern Tier. The lubricant would be military assistance. Now I must say that few of us at the time all of this started, i.e., in the fall of '54, thought there was much chance of persuading the Iraqi government to do anything about it for some time to come.

But the persuasive element, the element that came into play and persuaded Nuri Said Pasha to go along with this kind of thing, that is with a Northern Tier organization, was the Turkish leadership. Specifically Adnan Menderes who was Prime Minister of Turkey, and his Foreign Minister Zorlu. They visited Baghdad in January of '55 and persuaded Nuri to sign an Iraqi-Turkish Pact, a pact of mutual defense. It represented a very limited mutual commitment, but was nevertheless a mutual defense pact. This then became the basis for what subsequently came to be called the Baghdad Pact, after the British government had joined it, and the Pakistani government and the Iranian government had also acceded to it. The first meeting of that organization was held in November of '55 in Baghdad, at which time it was decided to call the organization the Baghdad Pact, and to set up the secretariat for the organization in Baghdad.

Now, as I've said, the lubricating element in all of this was the United States. It was the promise of American military assistance. We had used argumentation with the Iraqis, which the Turks copied, in trying to win over Nuri Pasha. We and then the Turkish leaders stressed to Nuri that the degree of Iraqi participation in a regional defense organization would determine the volume of military aid that might be received from the United States. Hence, the desire on the part of the Iraqi government to join up. There's a letter that was attached to the Iraqi instrument of ratification of the Turkish-Iraqi Treaty that says that as far as the Arab-Israeli problem is concerned, the Iraqi position hasn't changed. This was an effort to try to keep themselves clean vis-a-vis the Arabs. But that is how that came about.

Now it came about, the birth of the Baghdad Pact, much more quickly than any of us had ever believed. It was suddenly upon us. And when it was suddenly upon us, all of the forces in the Department of State, in the US Government, that had been skeptical about the wisdom of a Middle East regional defense organization, now came into play. There were those that said if the

United States joins the Baghdad Pact, it will antagonize Nasser, who was of course very strongly anti-Nuri and anti-Israel. Others said it will require a security commitment to Israel. At one point the Israel government even asked for permission, at least the Israeli Ambassador did so, to explore the possibility of joining the Baghdad Pact. Well, that wasn't feasible. But then a separate security agreement with Israel would be needed, it was argued, if there was to be any chance of getting Senate advice and consent for joining such a treaty. That wasn't wanted by the administration at the time.

Another group said the Greeks will be upset because it would mean the US was siding with the Turks against the Greeks. Another group, especially Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, who was Ambassador in India at the time, said, "The Indians will be upset if you do this," because of Pakistani membership. So the United States, despite the fact that it was the principal catalytic element in the organization of the Baghdad Pact, when push came to shove, the most it was able to do was accept observer status. Now the fact that it was only an observer did not mean that much--its voice in Baghdad Pact councils was the preeminent one, but we never became formal members of it and much of my time in Baghdad as head of the Political Section was spent on this issue of the Baghdad Pact. In the early days of the Pact, first the Turkish-Iraqi Agreement and then the Pact itself, and in the initial meetings that took place in Baghdad--the US Ambassador was the US observer to the Council of Deputies meetings. I accompanied him and also attended the various ministerial meetings of the Baghdad Pact that occurred every six months.

*Q: Well now, some have argued on an ex post facto basis that Nuri's step in joining the Turkey-Iraqi Pact and then the Baghdad Pact served to alienate Iraq even further from the mainstream of Arab opinion and, as a result, was a factor in the eventual overthrow of this pro-Western regime in 1958 I believe it was - '57...*

EILTS: '58.

*Q: Would you care to comment on that?*

EILTS: My own view is that certainly the Iraqi membership in the Baghdad Pact was a factor in what led to the '58 overthrow of the monarchy. It wasn't the only factor, but it was a factor. Iraq had isolated itself. But I think the primary problems that one ought to think about in connection with that are these: should one have done more after the Pact was initially formed to persuade the Syrian government to join, and it was not a unified government at the time, on the issue of Pact membership? Or to persuade the Jordanian government to adhere? Related to that, if the job of urging those governments to do so had not been left so much to the British, who were suspect, and had been handled by the US, might the results have been different? If another Arab state had joined the Baghdad Pact on the same conditions that Iraq did, that is keeping its hands clean on the Arab-Israeli problem, that would certainly have helped. But none of this happened.

Second, the rather ambivalent action on the part of the United States left members puzzled and hamstrung the Pact from the outset. After having been what I've said is the principal catalytic element in all of this before the Pact was signed, the US suddenly decided that it didn't want to be a member. This was puzzling to everybody and it certainly didn't help Nuri. Yes, he got some of the US military equipment that he sought, but even then he did not get what he had expected. I

think we dissembled a bit on that one. We led him to believe that if he joined the Pact he would get additional increments of military assistance over and above what Iraq was already receiving. There was no money for additional increments. In effect, he got what he would have gotten anyway. So the United States did not join the Pact, it was simply an observer, and, yes, American military assistance was indeed arriving, but not in the amounts that Iraq had expected.

I think all of those things hurt Nuri's position. But I would still argue that the principal thing that hurt Nuri was his lifelong association with the British. The British were, of course, still preeminent in the Gulf at that time.

Now when the coup happened in '58, it was argued at the time that if the British government had responded positively to a request that Nuri made of it that Kuwait, which Iraq had always claimed as part of the Basra province of the Ottoman empire period, be returned to Iraq, this might have saved the Iraqi monarchy. Kuwait had not yet been declared independent, it was still a British protectorate, hence Iraq contended Kuwait could and should be given back. The argument that one heard was if that had happened Nuri Pasha would have been such a hero in the eyes of the Iraqis and that all of these other things for which he was being blamed, the alienation from the Arabs and everything else, he would have been able to weather. All of this is of course speculation, but I mention it at some length mainly to suggest that it wasn't just the joining of the Baghdad Pact on the part of Nuri. There were other factors in his downfall.

*Q: Well, thank you. That's a very good explanation of that period of your career. Do you have any other comments about personalities or operations in Baghdad before...*

EILTS: Well, Nuri I think as I look back on Nuri--it is argued that Nuri was a British agent. Nuri Said Pasha was one of the most brilliant, articulate Arab statesmen that I have ever met and over the years I have met a great many. He was no fool. He had a sense of pragmatism, a sense of realism about him. He was not deluded by the normal Arab rhetorical symbols. Perhaps it was because of his Kurdish mother that he saw things in a more realistic fashion. I think he was a tremendously able statesman who unfortunately lived in a period when the generation of Arab nationalists to which he belonged, the first generation--the World War I generation and post-World War I generation--had already become passe. A new generation of Arab nationalists had by then emerged, who saw Arab nationalism in a somewhat different context, led largely by that very charismatic figure, Gamal Abdul Nasser. The Israeli problem had arisen, the Arab-Israeli conflict was underway. And so Nuri had passed his prime. It was in a sense perhaps a mistake that he should have assumed the Prime Ministry again in those years. And yet there was no other Iraqi around who had the administrative ability and the leadership ability that Nuri had. Nuri was indeed a leader.

**THOMAS C. SORENSEN**  
**USIA Temporary Duty Assignment**  
**Baghdad (1956-1957)**

*Thomas C. Sorensen was born in Nebraska in 1926. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in 1947. His overseas posts included Beirut and Cairo. Mr. Sorensen was interviewed in 1990.*

SORENSEN: After six months, I was asked by G. Huntington Damon, our Area Director, to go to Baghdad on temporary assignment to help set up the propaganda side of the Counter-Subversion Office of the Baghdad Pact. The Baghdad Pact, you will recall, was that unfortunate notion of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. It was a mistaken concept from the start, an alliance of unequals which most Arabs (including most Iraqis) saw as simply the new face of western imperialism.

Incidentally, we were so "successful" in countering subversion that there was a coup d'etat in Baghdad two years later, and somebody told me -- I'm not sure it's true -- that the Iraqi representative on the Counter-Subversion staff was one of the conspirators in the Qasim Revolution.

Anyway, I was there for a few months, successfully resisted it as a permanent assignment, and returned to Washington before Christmas 1956.

**ROBERT C. F. GORDON**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Baghdad (1956-1959)**

*Ambassador Gordon was born and raised in Colorado and educated at the University of California. He joined the Department of State in 1950, becoming a Foreign Service Officer in 1954. His Washington assignments include a tour with the Department's Executive Secretariat and with the Bureau of Near East, South Asia and African Affairs. His first overseas post was Baghdad, Iraq, after which he served in Sudan, Tanzania and Florence, Italy. He was appointed Ambassador to Mauritius in 1980, where he served until 1983. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989*

Q: *Baghdad, this was 1956 you went to Baghdad?*

GORDON: Right.

Q: *What was your position there?*

GORDON: My position was in the political section. I did some regular political reporting but, basically, I was the working-level representative of the embassy the Baghdad Pact Organization--an anti-Soviet and anti-Communist organization which held its first ministerial level meeting in the spring of 1956. Just like we have our US NATO, a much bigger operation, of course. We have a whole embassy in Brussels accredited to NATO. The Baghdad Pact Organization meetings were held in Baghdad. It was the central headquarters. I did most of the reporting to

Washington on all aspects of BPO affairs and the presentation of the American position on these matters.

I, basically, ended up as sort of a special assistant to the ambassador because he was the US representative to the Baghdad Pact Organization meetings at the ambassadorial level which took place every two or three weeks.

*Q: Well, how really serious was the Baghdad Pact as an entity?*

GORDON: That's a good question. We were not a member, strangely enough. We were "associated" with the BPO. The members were the United Kingdom, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq. We never did become a member. Partly, I think, it was not to get too involved any further in the Middle East--particularly the Arab-Israeli dispute.

All those countries had their own reasons for joining the Pact. Iraq, basically, felt it would strengthen its hand regarding Israel. Pakistan thought it would strengthen its hand concerning its conflict with India. Turkey and Iran were strongly anti-Soviet and both hoped to receive additional military aid from the US and Britain after they joined the BPO.

The BPO had no military forces but it did had an intelligence operation. The BPO did some counter-subversion work. But, basically, The BPO provided a forum for an exchange of views on money matters and it met every six months or so at the ministerial level. The first meeting was in the spring of 1956. Ambassador Loy Henderson went as the US representative to the first meeting in Tehran and I went to serve as his spear carrier. This was in Iran. Then, later, there were meetings in Karachi and in Ankara. Everything was going along fine, they were cooperating, exchanging information, working on economic projects, such as communications, transportation and power until the morning of July 14, 1958.

*Q: Before we get to that, I'd like you to give your impression of how you saw Iraq when you arrived there in 1956 to '57, before the 1958 revolt. How did you see the situation?*

GORDON: I think most of us saw it as a country which was not democratic at all. After all, there was a king, and a crown prince, and a very powerful prime minister, Nuri al-Said. The Iraqis managed a more efficient use of their oil resources than in most countries. In addition they were putting in big irrigation projects and resettlement of people into areas which were better suited for agriculture. And when you got down to the bottom line from the US point of view, we had every reason to believe that Iraq was, basically, associated with the United States in its views toward that part of the world--which was to minimize to every extent possible any influence of the Soviet Union or the Communist Party. And they were very effective in that, so we were very satisfied with that state of affairs at that time. Of course, Iraq strongly opposed the creation of Israel and US assistance to it.

*Q: From what you were gathering, because these interviews are designed to pick up the personal side, the observations, and perceptions, but how did our embassy feel towards Nuri al-Said, for example?*

GORDON: Well, the embassy, and the government in general, were very approving of Nuri al-Said because he was cooperative with us in various plans we had. Remember, this was the period of the Cold War still, and anything we could do to suppress communism in that part of the world we did. And he felt the same way we did, so, therefore, we considered it a very happy arrangement and a very happy marriage. I think we tended to overlook the unrest among the Iraqi intellectuals and in the military. We weren't aware of how strongly they felt because, I don't care what anybody says, we were all caught flat-footed the morning of July 14, 1958 with that revolution. I don't care what they said, there's nobody that said it was coming because we were caught completely by surprise. Also the military, I think, felt isolated from the Arab countries. Obviously, the other Arab countries were not at all in favor of the Baghdad Pact because they felt we were the great Zionist devil or the friend of the Zionist devils. I think that's one of the reasons that motivated the military to pull this coup.

*Q: Well, was it also that we were keeping our eye on the communists and not looking at, you might say, the more nationalists or Islamic side of things?*

GORDON: To a certain extent. And, again, I think we were certainly not aware of how much dissatisfaction there was in the military, the Army, primarily, with the King, the Crowned Prince, and the Nuri regime. They felt there was no real representation of the people. But more importantly, they were unhappy with the association with the United States and Great Britain because it isolated them in the Arab world. I think that was one of the main reasons and we were not aware of it.

I became a little bit aware of it just a few days before the revolution when a professor came through, a man by the name of George Lenczowski, a great expert on the Middle East that I had known him at Berkeley. I had a couple of young Iraqi friends. One was sort of the equivalent of the Director of the Bureau of Budget here, now teaching at St. Andrews in Scotland; and the other man who was the first Eisenhower Fellow from Iraq. They came by my house for dinner with the professor and they relayed how very unhappy they were with the regime and no room for opposition. They were unhappy but I just thought they were somewhat radical. They were, but they represented an element that you didn't see too much because it wasn't necessarily healthy for them. You had to get to know them pretty well before they would level with you.

*Q: You were dealing with the Baghdad Pact, did you have any relationship or did any of your American military colleagues get close to any of the military?*

GORDON: It's surprising that they didn't have any advance knowledge. We had a MAG, a military assistance advisory group. And we had Army, Navy, Air Force attachés. After all, the whole attaché system is an intelligence operation, as we know. And then on top of that we had an American major general and quite a military contingent accredited to the military side of the Baghdad Pact. And none of them picked that up, either.

*Q: CIA?*

GORDON: We had a small CIA staff.



*Q: Well, I suppose, of course, we were sort of the enemy, in a way, of those that did it. Would you say this was because of our ties to Israel?*

GORDON: That's part of it. Then on the political side and on the military side, there was this Arab Socialist Movement, the so-called Baathist Movement and they were very much involved. Whatever opposition it was, it was the Baathists. I remember, after the revolution, when I had to go down and cross the lines on the other side of the city and negotiate the passenger list for evacuating our dependents because the consular officer -- can we turn this off for a minute?  
[Tape recorder turned off]  
[Ambassador Gordon resuming]

GORDON: The consular officer was Roberta McKay, a very effective, able consular officer. When it came time to evacuate all of our dependents and a good portion of the AID mission and so forth, and reducing our presence drastically, the Foreign Office was clear down at the other end of town so I was instructed to go down and negotiate these passenger lists, thinking that it would not be appropriate for a woman in an Arab country to go tromping around.

And so I found out if I wanted to get anything done there were two officers in the Foreign Office who knew me who also had secretly belonged to the Bath party, this Arab Socialist Union Party, and now were able to come out from under cover and they were the ones who had the power to go ahead and clear these things. We did not break relations or anything, but it was a very, very touchy period.

*Q: We're talking about July 14, 1958. And this thing came as a surprise. What happened to you at that time?*

GORDON: The actual coup, as I understand, was one or two o'clock in the morning. They attacked the palace and killed the king and his uncle, who I think had been the regent while the king was under age, and members of the royal family. They did not get Nuri al-Said, who they found four or five days later and then killed him. They burned the British Embassy and the USIA.

So that morning I was getting ready to go to work about 7:15. My wife was going to drop me off and then she was going to meet some other American ladies and some Iraqi ladies. They were going down into the bazaar area just to poke around and see what they couldn't do without. We only lived about four blocks from the embassy. Normally, I just walked but I had to drive because she was going on. We turned the corner at the embassy right there at the back gate. Then I could see at the front gate there was a tank with Iraqi soldiers sitting up in it. I could not imagine what it could possibly be. So I just told her to turn around and go home.

I walked by and they let me in. I remember walking up the steps of the embassy and John Gatch, (an Embassy Political Officer) was standing on the steps. I said, "John, what's happened? What's going on here?" He said, "There's been a revolution." We could see the smoke from the British Council building and the British Embassy. That was my first knowledge of it and his, too.

*Q: There had been no sort of telephoning around?*

GORDON: No.

*Q: I guess you really hadn't had a system set up where people --*

GORDON: No.

*Q: Were the tanks and soldiers there to protect you?*

GORDON: That was what they told us. And I guess that is true, even though I wasn't sure at times which way the gun barrel of the tank was aimed, in or out. They maintained that was what they were there for. And I must say that, in contrast to the British, we didn't have any problems. Nobody made a move toward us. It was a big embassy compound with the ambassador's residence and the chancellery attached to it. The DCM had a house in the compound. And our consular section was inside the compound, but the Econ and administrative offices were all across the street in a series of buildings that we had rented.

I must say for awhile I was among the most pampered members of the Foreign Service. My family was supposed to leave Baghdad on transfer to Egypt, we thought at that time, on the 15th, so we were all packed up and everything. When my wife and children were evacuated, the DCM very nicely invited me to stay with him inside the compound. And the medical officer, Dr. George Mishtowt, and he also was invited to move in. So the three of us were bachelors there. And Dr. Mishtowt's major responsibility was the children and dependents of the embassy. They were all gone so he didn't have much to do. We appointed him mess sergeant and we had very high quality food there for a couple of months. I've always said it was interesting that we had the one doctor and two patients in that house. I finally was allowed to leave in September.

*Q: In the first place, the ambassador was Waldemar Gallman? Can you describe his style of operation?*

GORDON: Yes. He was what I would call a real ambassador of the old school. He had come into the Foreign Service in the late 1920's. And like others, I think Loy Henderson is an example, and Cavendish Cannon, who had had their first post in Danzig or one of the Baltic countries. I probably saw as much of him as any Embassy officer did because it turned out it was just much more efficient for the ambassador and me to work, together, just the two of us, when I needed assistance or clearances.

But, basically, I prepared the US agenda for the meetings of the council which, as I say, met every two to three weeks. And if there were other items on the agenda I was supposed to get those and get all the background papers so the ambassador was briefed on every item. And so I had to work with him a lot. And he would say, "This is fine," or "I want a little bit more on that." So I was in and out of his office a lot. He and I went together to the Baghdad Pact meetings in Karachi and again we traveled together to the Baghdad Pact meeting in Ankara.

So I saw, as I say, a lot of him and I became very fond of him. He was a fairly strict fellow but it was a real pleasure to work for him. I certainly learned a lot working with him. He had had two

prior ambassadorships, Poland and South Africa. He had a very big operation in Iraq because we had a big AID mission and plus the military. I remember at the big staff meetings we were quite a roomful.

*Q: You arrived at the embassy and you had a really pretty nasty situation. You had a lot of Americans there and what did you all do?*

GORDON: Oh, you're talking about the 14th? Well, the first thing was to try to establish what actually took place; if there was any anti-American element. Things seemed sort of quiet. We still had some of our stuff there because we had a radio that we tried to listen to. And I said I'm more concerned about what was going to happen in the next 24 hours than I was the revolution because we, in the embassy, some of us, were shown a top secret telegram saying that the marines were going to land in Beirut the next morning. Now I and some of my colleagues thought that that might generate more of an anti-American backlash in Iraq than the actual fact that we had been associated closely with the prior regime. So nothing happened. There was no anti-American demonstrations.

I still don't know the story in all its details, but there were two or three Americans that were staying at the new Baghdad Hotel, the newest hotel. And somehow they were thought to be Jordanians. Anyway, they were grabbed and they were taken away in a truck and, as I understand, were just torn to pieces.

*Q: I was looking up an account. One was Eugene Burns, a newsman, and the other was George Colley, from Bechtel.*

GORDON: Right.

*Q: But there weren't mobs, basically, roaming the streets ripping people apart?*

GORDON: No.

*Q: I have to say my perspective, I was a vice consul in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. I also knew about the Lebanese landings and we were scared, too, because we thought there might be a tremendous uprising of Arab wrath, plus the revolt in Baghdad. But we sort of had the picture of mobs roaming the streets, ripping anybody apart who looked cross-eyed.*

GORDON: I must say I was a little bit uneasy. I was just going to take my own car and drive alone without a driver. Anyway, we ended up taking one of the more beat up cars and a driver just because I didn't know about parking. And I did see the result of some mob action; and that was some Iraqis were still hanging by their necks from some of the lampposts on a couple of the streets I had to go through to get to the other end of town. And there were a couple of places where young boys cut down some of these people and were dragging them through the streets. But there was no big mob action, you know, thousands of people in the streets. Some of it was going on downtown and we just kept away from there. It sort of cooled down and never reached the part of town we were in.

*Q: Well, why was the British Embassy attacked and we weren't?*

GORDON: That's a good question. The British were far more closely associated with the Iraqi regime. After all, the British were the ones who really helped establish the Hashemite dynasty. That was established at the end of World War I after the Turks were thrown out of there. Just like Iran, they had a very close relationship, which we were aware of. But there was a sort of feeling that this was an area of predominantly British influence. I think because of that--they had been instrumental in establishing the Hashemite Dynasty--they were considered more of a target.

I don't think they were ordered to do that. The British Embassy was clear on the other side of the river, quite a distance from us. I don't have any reason to believe that those who pulled off the coup, at the same time said go down and sack the British Embassy and their equivalent of our United States Information Agency.

*Q: British Council.*

GORDON: But then they had another one, too. You know, the British were very careful to maintain that the Council had nothing to do with the British Government. It was a private operation. And then they had a press office, to boot. I think that was the one that was burned. There was a distinction that nobody really believed; though the British made a big distinction between that. You were in Dhahran at the time of the revolution?

*Q: Yes, I was.*

GORDON: I came down and visited Dhahran in an attaché plane in the spring of 1958. I got a ride down because I had never seen that part of the world.

*Q: Well, I had just arrived at that time. How did we deal with the new government? I mean, what were you doing and how did the embassy deal with Qasim?*

GORDON: Well, I think they let it be known that there was no direct antagonism towards the United States. They were a little bit unhappy that we had started evacuating our people which, to them, indicated we were not sure of their ability to maintain peace and order. And they maintained they were able to do so and we need have no fear, and there was no anti-American sentiment that was going to manifest itself in any dangerous way. They were going to see to it that that was the case.

And so, as I say, one of the first things they did, they went out and locked up the Baghdad Pact headquarters and sealed it. And, as I say, my job, which was 98 percent Baghdad Pact, I just went over to the regular political section and started doing reporting telegrams on what was going on and what we could find out. So we started deciding who was going to be evacuated and who wasn't. All wives and children were evacuated.

*Q: Was the decision to evacuate made at the embassy or was this Washington?*

GORDON: Well, it was the embassy's recommendation, which Washington approved. It's one of those things that you have to get an okay from Washington.

*Q: Oh, I know. But sometimes I've heard of instances where Washington gets much more nervous than the people on the ground. But in this case, it was felt in Baghdad that it was best to get the people out?*

GORDON: Yes. And with the Marines in Beirut, it was one of those things that it seemed more prudent to get them out of there. A lot of the wives were very unhappy about going. Oh, boy, we had a hard time. And I was told later, not too much later, the ambassador was having a hard time with his wife to get her to go. He said, "You've just got to go. You've got to go because I can't ask these other people to send their wives and children out and you stay here." "Well, why not?" Anyway, he prevailed and she went. I remember some of the wives were really unhappy about going and they didn't see any need for it.

But then, as I say, I stayed on until September doing regular political reporting, and press reporting, and anything that a political officer does. I knew where I was going because if the revolution had not come I would have left around July 20th for Point Said where I was to be principal officer for one year. After a year I was to move up to Cairo to be in the political section. I can remember talking to the ambassador and saying, "Don't you think I ought to go?" And him saying, "No, no. You stay right here. We need you."

So finally one day I went to him and said, "Mr. Ambassador, we've got a real problem here about my leaving." He says, "What's that?" I said, "Well, you know, I'm from Colorado and trout fishing season ends the last day of September. And here it is about the 15th or so, if I don't start to get out of here, I'm going to miss fishing season." He said, "Okay, go ahead." Because my job, as such, didn't exist anymore. I mean, I was a busy officer, you know, working day and night as you do in those situations. But I still remember he said, "Okay, you can go if it's that important to you." We all knew I was going to go. This just helped me establish the actual departure date.

*Q: Did you go to Egypt or you went to Khartoum?*

GORDON: I went to Khartoum. While in Baghdad I had a brilliant career there as far as promotions were concerned. I had two promotions in nine months. I was there when they created classes seven and eight so I was promoted from class four down to class five. And then eight or nine months later I was promoted back to class four again. So I consider that was two promotions in nine months, one from four to five and one from five to four.

Anyway, I got back to Washington and was poking around. It turned out that one reason they wanted to keep Port Said going was that, after the canal war and all the destruction there, the Eastern Europeans had opened up a lot of consulates there. So I thought that would be fine. And then Gallman told me, you know, you get a post of your own fairly early on you will learn a lot of things that will be valuable to you the rest of your career because you've got to do everything. I said, "Fine."

So I went to French language school which was the principal non-Arabic language spoken in Port Said. I was in the last class of the language school that was in Nice, France. And while I was there I was promoted to class three. My family had come to stay the last month at Nice. About three or four days before we were to leave for Port Said I got a telegram saying I was assigned to Khartoum instead. No consultation, no nothing. Those days they just sent you telegrams. And there I was saying, oh boy, there's my car, everything sitting right on the dock in Port Said. All I've got to do is cross the border, technically, to go clear myself with the embassy in Cairo and everything would be there. Because we had such bad luck with my first assignment; because we arrived in the summer of 1956 there was the Suez War. And that bottled up everything. We couldn't get our stuff through anywhere and we were months getting our stuff. And then we were months getting it out because of the coup d'etat and the revolution in Iraq. So I thought, boy, this was going to be neat. Well, I went to Khartoum and never saw the stuff for another four months.

*Q: Before we move to Khartoum there is something I meant to ask. What was our evaluation of Qasim at the time you were there? I mean, how did you all see him?*

GORDON: Well, we evaluated him as, obviously, an intelligent, effective guy. One measurement, you might say, to your question is his ability to organize this revolution, this coup, so quietly that not one word leaked out anywhere in a land full of people who worked for the king. So, therefore, he was given high marks for planning and knowing how to organize a complicated thing like the coup. He represented a radical Arab point of view, which was not in our interests at all, particularly vis-a-vis the existence of Israel. But, nobody feared that he was going to be like Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran. It was nothing like that. I found them a civilized group of people to work with, as I think everybody else in the embassy did.

*Q: So it wasn't as sometimes happens when the military takes over, they have their own agenda but they also don't really understand the niceties of diplomacy and all, and tend often to shut themselves off from contact with foreign groups, particularly ones they feel should be hostile?*

GORDON: Sure. However, they also got rid of practically all of the civilian ministers of the government who had headed up all the departments--most of them were jailed. One minister spent two weeks, at least, as a refugee in the ambassador's residence.

*Q: But this group, did they open up to you? I mean, were you able to go to them or was it pretty difficult?*

GORDON: For what we had to do to get along, there didn't seem to be any real problem. But there was no great friendship at all with us, either, because we had been closely associated with the regime they overthrew.

**MORRIS DRAPER**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Baghdad (1957-1959)**

*Morris Draper was born in California in 1928 and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1952. An Arabic language officer, Mr. Draper served in a number of Middle East posts including Beirut, Baghdad, Jeddah, Ankara, Jerusalem, and Washington, DC. Mr. Draper was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Then you were assigned to Baghdad in 1957. That this comes as a surprise?*

DRAPER: Not really because I had indicated that I wanted to take Arabic and specialize in the Middle East. I was first assigned to Kuwait to see whether the Department would be making a wise investment if I were to go to Arabic training for two years. I learned when I came through Washington that it was to be Baghdad instead. I was not assigned to the Embassy, but to the Baghdad Pact Secretariat. As it turned out, I and my family were successfully indoctrinated into the Middle East and later went to Arabic training in Beirut.

*Q: Tell us a little about how you saw events in Baghdad and Iraq before the July 15, 1958 incident. But before we get to that, perhaps you might tell us what your assignment in Baghdad was?*

DRAPER: I was seconded to the Baghdad Pact Secretariat, just as officers are seconded to the international organizations, like the U.N. I was a political and economic officer, who designed projects for the organization's use. I also acted as a secretariat officers during conferences, which I helped organize and monitored. I was usually the reporting officer for major conferences. The Pact staff preferred to have all records in English, although Arabic, Farsi and Urdu were used. The Pact organization was an international one; the US was not a full member of the Pact, but rather an associate member. It was very questionable whether the Pact could survive; the British and the Turks wanted it and the Iraqis were the first to join it with the West. By doing so, that laid the seeds for its demise because Nasser and other critics of the regime used Iraq's membership in the Pact as evidence of that regime's pro-West position. Iraq was painted as a satrap of the imperialist powers--"lackeys" of the imperialists.

Iraq itself had pluses and minuses. Among the positive features were the Iraqi development program; they were devoting some 85 percent of their oil revenues to social and economic development and not to the military. You could evidence of this investment all over the country. There were massive dams, new highways as well as schools and housing programs, resettlement and development of agriculture. We had a large assistance mission and other countries also had assistance programs. The development experts were over-joyed with what they were seeing. There was visible evidence of development with considerable governmental support with almost unlimited funding by the standards of the day. So there were some real enthusiasts in Baghdad. Not only did development influence new infrastructure, but also new ways of life. Clean water was brought to rural villages and schools to people who had never passed fourth grade. There were a lot of changes being made. The society was a very interesting one; even in those days, it had a large percentage of college graduates; there was a major university system influenced by outside forces. The Jesuits, for example, ran a major college in Baghdad with professional schools which were beginning to give Ph.D. degrees in some of the sciences. By and large, the

monarchy was benevolent even though there was a powerful and large security apparatus, which did not touch, however, the rank and file of Iraqis.

On the other hand, I have never seen any place with so much random violence. It occurred day and night. Taxi drivers would hit each other; policemen would cuff children; a lot of killings. It was unusual because in most of the Arab world there is very little violence because of revenge. In Egypt, there is practically never a murder. But in Iraq it was constant and in terrible form.

There was still a Jewish community in Baghdad; some were quite well off. During the first week I was in Baghdad, the patriarch of the community was stuffed up a fireplace. There was a lot of that sort of violence, particularly between religious groups. The Shi'as, who were the majority, would hold one of their religious holidays, violence would break out and there would be demonstrations. The Sunni, who were the ruling group, did everything they could to humiliate the Shi'as in all sorts of ways. They would call dogs "Ali" or "Hassan" who were the Shi'as main prophets. Then there were the Kurds. I got to know quite a few of them. Many of the Christians who lived in my neighborhood were strongly opposed to the regime and it would not be uncommon for people to be put in jail, have relatives tortured and be challenged in various ways. There was a lot of resentment brewing against the dynasty among the educated; there was a pervasive opposition to the remaining forms of British colonialism; for example, there was considerable resentment of the British Ambassador, who sort of operated as if he were a pro-consul. So there were a lot of seething under-currents. I would say that in the Western community, --the British, French, Italians and others--, there was a feeling that Iraq would come through its travails quite well because they were spending money on social services; they were not trying to build up their army--in fact, they were keeping their military services deliberately small--; many institutions had been established by the British which had been maintained--there was even a minor kind of representative assembly, which followed the dictates of the ruling group, but was nevertheless symbolically important. There was even an embryonic beginning of political parties. A couple of our Embassy staffers thought that the regime was living on the brink of disaster, One assistant military attaché predicted correctly that a revolution or an outbreak would occur in the summer of 1958. Another officer, a member of the United States Information Agency, from his contacts with journalists and the art community, also predicted an overthrow.

Iraq was an interesting country. The position of women was quite modern for that part of the world. The first female doctor to operate in the Arab world was an Iraqi woman. Iraq had a major thriving art colony. The Iraqis were not sold on all Islamic tenets which why is why they permitted the human figure to be represented in art.

*Q: Who was challenging the regime?*

DRAPER: They were many secret groups in the military in particular. Many were followers of Nasser of Egypt. There were nationalists who felt humiliated by what had happened to the Arab world in 1948 and 1956--the wars against Israel. Of course, the Iraqis had a long standing tradition of opposition to anyone in power. It took the British a couple of years during World War I to get the Iraqis under control. In World War II, Iraq was the scene of a rebellion and provided sanctuary to the violent anti-British, pro-Axis Mufti of Jerusalem. So Iraq had a history



of anti-attitudes. When the revolution occurred, it took place because the Prime Minister--the strong man--let down his guard for the first time in his history and allowed a unit of the Iraqi army to move through Baghdad along with its ammunition trucks. This is the first time such a thing had happened in forty years and that army unit immediately proceeded immediately to the radio station, to the Prime Ministry, the information department and the Palace and took over.

*Q: How seriously did you take the Baghdad Pact?*

DRAPER: I didn't think it would last. I saw a lot of weaknesses in it. There was a lot of make-work. But I liked being assigned to it because I was exposed to the top leadership, including Presidents and Prime Ministers of many of the countries that belonged to the Pact. I was going to conferences in England, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and of course in Iraq. I was getting familiar with the area. I got to know some of the young people --e.g. the deputy Minister of Health and a rising star, who later became Prime Minister in Iran and was one of the modern influences there, although later overthrown. I watched these people and how they reacted and worked. I saw Harold MacMillan, who had become Prime Minister in Great Britain. I not only saw these people in action, but in the case of Iraq and Turkey, I saw people who were part of transitional societies. When I first visited Iran in 1957, was still eliminating malaria which had in some parts of the country kept its birth rate down to zero. The results of malaria eradication was a population explosion which creates dilemmas. I saw people developing their countries facing huge problems. Turkey was a basket case in some ways, but you had to admire some of their efforts to modernize.

As far back as the mid-50s, you saw emerging the first signs of Islamic fundamentalism.

*Q: What are your views about why Iraq joined the Pact?*

DRAPER: The leadership felt very vulnerable and felt that the association with Western powers and Turkey and Iran would be a stabilizing element. However, in retrospect, most observers of that period find it hard to understand why Iraq joined the Pact. The establishment was very subject to British influence and control and wanted to do the right thing. The "right thing" includes being a "Western gentleman". Nuri Said, as portrayed in Lawrence's stories, after destroying a train, marched into the baggage car and immediately took all the caviar and champagne. He and other Arabs had the desire to show that they could have been part of Western society as well.

Also the Hashemite rulers felt very unsafe on their thrones. The British had put them there; they had drawn the borders in irregular fashion. The oil boom was just beginning to cast its influence on Iraqi life. A country which is moving from a Third World status to the next higher step is always subject to instabilities. New classes of people come forth and others get left behind. In addition, you had groups such as the Kurds who would not buckle down to anyone; they still won't. They wanted their autonomy and their way of life, their culture and language preserved. Neither the Turks or the Iranians or the Iraqis have been able to subdue them. The Middle East is fundamentally a mosaic of all kinds of races and religious, who in most cases are very proud and nationalistic. The Christians in Iraq are a major force and have been a major source of US immigration over the years.

There are a lot of interesting aspects of this. We had among our Iraqi employees a preponderance of Christians--something like 95 percent. We wanted to hire others, but could not get as many Moslems as we wanted to. Very few Shi'ans would work for us. A young, able, educated Shi'a could find more attractive opportunities elsewhere. He didn't have to be disloyal to his society or community by working for us. So we had a preponderance of Kurds, Assyrians and Sheldigans. That was not a good practice. In a later assignment, Jerusalem, it was hard work to get an ethnic and religious balance, but we had to do it, even at the cost of keeping on the payroll people who were not necessarily qualified.

*Q: What was your impression of the King?*

DRAPER: The King was very young and weak. His uncle was generally considered the mastermind. There is a general weakness in the Hashemite family in any case which shows itself in various ways. The revolutionary group found a lot of photographs of the King in compromising homosexual positions. They used those photographs to great advantage to convince the conservative clerics especially that the monarchy deserved to be overthrown. They also hurt King Hussein of Jordan because he couldn't mobilize support for the Hashemites as he wanted to do. So in the end there were very few tears even by the former supporters of the monarchy.

(Nuri as-Said was another was another matter. He was well respected). The King was clearly out of touch. I would occasionally attend the Assembly which was almost a joke. Nuri would not permit any opposition or criticism in public and he used rather ugly means of controlling various groups. A critic started to speak he would be drowned out by cat-calls from Nuri's faithful. The Assembly was largely a facade. Nuri was an old man by this time and didn't interest himself in day-to-day developments. He didn't have his finger on the pulse. But he was recently austere; he was not a disgrace. When the revolution occurred, he disguised himself as a woman and survived a couple of days before they caught up with him. He ended in a rather violent death, being dragged through the streets.

*Q: How did you evaluate the Ambassador and the Embassy?*

DRAPER: There was a division in the Embassy between those who predicted an early overthrow and others who felt the situation being relatively stable. The Ambassador, Jack Jernegan or his predecessor, Waldemar Gallman, was undecided. Some of the senior officials were far too complacent. They seemed that way even at the time. They were out of touch. A lot of us younger officers felt that we had a better feeling for the society because we were out in the country side, talking to everybody from archeologists to reporters to soldiers to shop-keepers. Some of our senior officers only talked to other diplomats or senior Iraqi officials of the establishment. They were never seeing a cross-section. That is always a danger for senior officials anyway. They didn't take trips and see the whole picture. We of course saw it more clearly when the revolution came. You wonder why one didn't see it sooner. But it is very hard to predict such events in some societies. For instances, if an American goes into a market and gets spit on, you know something is brewing. But in many cases, as diplomats, you live a protected life even when we are strolling through the market.

*Q: Tell us what happened on July 14, 1958 and thereafter.*

DRAPER: Said allowed an army division to move through the town for the first time. Baghdad is like Paris in that if you want to get from one part of the country to another you have through the city. This time the division was allowed to carry its ammunition with it. So it took over the government at about 3 or 4 in the morning. Many including myself heard firing; that was not uncommon in Iraq, but this sounded somewhat more intense. Many of ours were awake. I was to take an Iraqi airline flight to London later that day for a conference. One of my colleagues drove out to the airport thinking that if there had been a revolution, the airport would have been taken. Strangely, it had not happened for many hours. So he returned at six a.m. and drove into the Embassy driveway, when his car stalled. A stray bullet had gone through his radiator and the water had run out. All our normal contacts were unavailable or hard to find, but much of the Embassy and the Baghdad Pact Secretariat felt that something was going on, although none of us were sure what it was. Most people thought it was another palace coup which probably would not succeed.

In any case, I went to the airport and I tried to find out from people I knew there, including the pilot of the plane, what was going on. There was military presence at the airport. I had driven near the Presidential Palace, but by this time all of the killing had taken place. So I got on the plane to London. After an hour, while flying over Turkey, the crew came back and explained that they were being ordered back to Baghdad, but the captain refused to do so. He wasn't sure he would survive if he returned. He didn't really know who they were. General Sararef who led the rebellion was not well known in Iraq; no one was quite sure what would happen. It could have been a plot inspired by Nasser, but no one knew. In London, there was a major meeting of Prime and Foreign Ministers and others including MacMillan, Dulles and Menderes of Turkey. Iran was there but no one from Iraq. There were a lot of intelligence people because at that time there was an informal network of intelligence people from Iran, Turkey and Israel. That dissolved in that year. By the end of the first day, it was pretty well agreed that the coup had been successful and that the old establishment would not survive. The question then arose as to what to do about the Baghdad Pact. Menderes felt strongly that it should be preserved and in the final analysis, the decision was reached to maintain the alliance without Iraq. Its headquarters would be re-established in Ankara as CENTO (Central Treaty Organization). It was essentially a decision to save face because everybody knew and almost admitted in so many words that the organization was just a facade. But the Turks felt very strongly and also the Iranians felt that you needed a bulwark against the Nassers of this world.

All Embassies in Baghdad were still operating and sending communications about what they saw. They described what had happened--the rioting. When you organize for a crisis you can collect considerable amount of information on personalities. By that time, we knew which army division had been involved. All our military attachés knew what the division size and strength was. We had learned a lesson when Nasser had come to power because the group of officers who took over the Egyptian government did not reveal who the true leaders were for a long time. We didn't know for about six months that Nasser was the genuine leader and that Naguib was only the nominal leader. We learned our lesson from that. So by the end of the first day, we were pretty certain on what had happened and who was in charge. There was never any question of intervention. The only question to be resolved was what to do about King Hussein of Jordan. We

felt that his regime was threatened and that was one of reasons later on, in connection with the Lebanon issue, that led the British to send troops to Amman.

*Q: There was a story about one of our officers trying to get his family out. Can you tell us that?*

DRAPER: That was horrible. He was a communicator and came to duty early in the morning, about 5 or 6 o'clock. He heard the shooting and decide that he better return to his house to get his family. They lived across the river close to the Presidential Palace area. So he did that, collecting his wife and three children and as he was driving back to the Embassy in his car, he had to cross a bridge that had been bombed in the fighting then going on. The traffic was stopped all of a sudden; he heard rumbling and soon he saw a huge crowd trying to cross the bridge leaping from car to car. They were dragging with ropes some people they had killed. So the crowd jumped on his car, hundreds of them, smashing it. The kids had a picture of sheer horror and the family was thoroughly frightened. Scenes like that were repeated regularly and went on for months and months. Property was destroyed, usually by younger people. We evacuated all Embassy dependents; the Embassy was taken over by the Iraqis. They did not occupy the building, but had a tank out front pointing its gun at the building. They were obviously trying to intimate us; they tried to stop us from communicating by radio. They generally harassed us. We decided we just couldn't keep the Embassy at the size that it was; so we evacuated a good number, including myself. I joined my family in Athens and waited for the Department to send me to Nice to study French. When the new class started, I went to Nice and was there about three months brushing up on my French. Then I returned to Baghdad, this time as a political officer in the Embassy, starting in the summer of 1959.

*Q: Let me return to the question of the Embassy's evaluation of the situation prior to the revolution itself. You mentioned some division among the staff. Please expand on that theme, if you would.*

DRAPER: The number two in the Embassy derided some of the ideas of the junior officers, when they reported that trouble was brewing in Iraq. He refused to believe it and was very insulting in staff meetings when he would shoot down this theory. He of course turned out to be wrong. The more junior officers had been prescient. He was also remarkably insensitive. After the revolution and the Iraqis were harassing us; they surrounded the Embassy and caused all sorts of problems. When our dependents were leaving, the Iraqis were particularly difficult, trashing suitcases and behaving in a very hostile manner. They were atrocious to the women and children.

In any case, the number two lived in a large house on our compound, separate from our chancery and the Ambassador's residence. Many of our Embassy people had crowded into the chancery, sometimes living in very close quarters, eating out of cans and have rare showers; nevertheless, the number two man and his wife lived in lonely splendor in their house, living as if nothing had happened. They showed absolutely no interest in the rest of the staff; it was an appalling show of insensitivity. Fortunately, there aren't many of that type in the Foreign Service. The number two job in Baghdad seemed to be held by a succession of people who seemed to be made of the same mold. The predecessor and his wife of the person we are discussing used to inspect the fingernails of the Americans coming to their parties.

We had a competition early in my career to see who was the worst wife in the Foreign Service. There were a lot of candidates. One lady won hands down.

*Q: You mentioned that the Iraqis were giving us a rough time and that the American community was barely hanging on. Tell us a little more about that.*

DRAPER: The Iraqis allowed us to collect basic economic information--the status of the oil industry, etc. Beyond that, they were very tight lipped. Essentially, they tried to isolate us. We couldn't routinely go to the Foreign Ministry to discuss events. To get appointments with some of the new Ministers was essentially impossible.

The Iraqis were driven by anti-Western, anti-American sentiments and a healthy dose of fear. Their security apparatus was all over the place. The Iraqis have always behaved this way. After they broke relations with us in 1967, the same thing happened; not until 1982, did we have genuine exchanges. I was the first senior American official in Baghdad who received an invitation to meet the Foreign Minister. They liked to keep us isolated. It was very, very difficult. It was like living in an Eastern European communist state. It is very hard for Arabs to isolate someone. They are normally talkative, lively people; even the Iraqis. So it is not normal for them to isolate others.

*Q: The late 50's were the heights of the Cold War. Was that reflected in Baghdad?*

DRAPER: Back in 1957, we had joined the Baghdad Pact. Eisenhower had convened the Richards Commission, headed by a distinguished Congressman.

That Commission had some objectives and lots of money. The main objective was to form an anti-Soviet coalition; the Eisenhower administration was very fearful of the Soviets, stemming in part from the assistance the Soviets were providing Egypt. The Richards Commission was designed to build at least an informal coalition. He went to many countries, including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and others--even Lebanon. The Commission led to many "understandings"; it later became evident that Richards had set the stage for our 1958 Lebanon intervention, among other. Essentially, however, the Commission was a failure. The forces of nationalism were far more significant and the Soviets had hitched their wagon to that drive, taking advantage of it. They listened to these Arab states and provided them arms and propaganda. Those of us who could separate our policy from ideology had another kind of fear, which had permeated the Middle East experts for many, many years. The Middle East was an area which could have been the battleground for a Soviet-US confrontation. Russia was close to the area; both countries had a lot of clients in the region. Our worst nightmare was that we would plunge into this confrontation; in fact, we came very close to it in both 1967 and 1973 when the Soviets had decided that they would have to help their Arab clients and we had decided that we had to defend Israel. It could have been the beginning of World War III. In light of that context, the American diplomats were both anti-Soviet and fearful of Armageddon. That was our worst nightmare. In fact, it was very interesting to become acquainted with the Russians at this time. Some were always trying to creep out from under their restrictions; some would try to establish dialogues. We did a lot of that. But the Iraqis were a different matter. Whether they were listening to the

Soviets or for other reasons, it was very difficult to establish contacts with them. The Iraqi security people followed us on motorcycles all the time. We would go out to dinner and hear the noise of the cycles all the time. They followed us everywhere. It was worse than in Czechoslovakia.

*Q: During this period, we sent troops to Lebanon and the British sent troops to Jordan. What caused that?*

DRAPER: It was a confluence of events. The Lebanon situation was heading toward a *denouement* and Chamoun, the Lebanese President, wanted help. The British could be counted on to support King Hussein. The Washington perception which was shared in some other capitals was that Hussein would fall momentarily either by coup or other ways. There were plenty of coups plotters that were being uncovered. It was our feeling that we had to do something. Our show of force in Lebanon was just that; a show of force. It was remarkably successful. We have never had anything like that before or since. The troops that came to help Hussein contained the situation in Amman; he was very close to the end--a misplaced bullet would have ended it all for him. It was a close call. But the show of force by the US military, followed by our quick withdrawal, combined with Eisenhower's 1956 stopping of British, French and Israeli attack to recapture the Suez Canal, made for a positive atmosphere in the Middle East, all things considered. It was an intervention, but of the most benign kind. It was the first time we had landed on a foreign beach with no casualties--Lebanese ice cream vendors meeting our troops. It would not have worked another generation later.

There was of course the question of Arab pride. Fortunately we had Robert Murphy out there as special envoy. He had some experience with Arabs in North Africa. He was able to patch things up in very short notice. Deals were made. It was one more piece of evidence of the essential truth of the Middle East: it is a bazaar. You have to know how to make a deal.

*Q: What was the Embassy's assessment of who the people were who ruled after the coup?*

DRAPER: There was a fight for power among those who took over. There were also other groups throughout the country who were vying for power, including the Baath factions. At the time, we had not quite focused on the character of some of the new rulers. They were erratic. We had difficulty therefore in determining our courses of action. In all cases, even a regime of a repulsive dictator, you should try to communicate. You have to establish something and know what direction the regime might be taking. That was very difficult in Baghdad. In later years, there were terrible fights and coups in Iraq at about the same time that the Syrians were going through their bloodless changes. The situation in Baghdad didn't settle down until about 1968 or '69 when the present Baathist party, aligned with the military, took control.

The situation was very unstable. I mentioned that the development experts were happy with the pre-coup situation in Iraq. The upheavals in Baghdad brought the whole program to a halt. Major development programs were abandoned for few years. The money went to the military forces. The Iraqi had 70 divisions facing us in "Desert Storm". Prior to the military take over, there were something like 6 divisions.

The Iraqis kicked out Parsons and Co. and the other major construction firms that were working in the country. They treated Parsons so badly that the company said it would never return. People were arrested, jailed and tortured. Plans were discarded; a lot of dumb things happened. We had an experimental farm testing dry soil farming, managed by one of our universities, which the Iraqis completely destroyed. There were something like twenty generations of plants growing; that was a life-time's work.

The new rulers were a combination of pure thugs and some ideologues. One of the first things the revolutionary group did was to give all the students passing grades from high school on up, regardless whether they took a test or had done acceptable work. The students were demanding it. They were demonstrating in the streets all the time. That is sort of self defeating, but it is what happens. The regime was appeasing one group after another. People did learn to survive under this stress, even when a new security apparatus was installed with new rules. Groups vied with each other; in the military, there were wholesale retirements and discharges of officers who were viewed as disloyal. The same process took place in Egypt, except there it was done without violence. When there is a change of government, even in democratic states, different leadership emerges; in Iraq and other dictatorships, there are continual changes as stronger and stronger leaders emerge and succeed each other. Saddam Hussein himself was preoccupied in the early years in trying to bring Araf down. He was the bully for his cell of the Baathist party. The party was organized in cells in the same way terrorist organizations are. This means that sometimes a cluster of cells can organize and not have the slightest idea what other clusters might be doing. I don't think what happened in Iraq is necessarily a model for any other revolution, including what might happen there in the next few months. After all it took about ten years for stability to be restored in Iraq. By 1968, the Baath party, together with the military was in power; interestingly enough, it was Saddam Hussein and others in the Party who re-embarked on the development track with some success. There have been a lot of Iraqi achievements that have been commendable. All, of course, has been destroyed in the last month or so.

For example, the Iraqis decided that they should have an agricultural infrastructure as good as the one that existed some four thousand years ago. So they gave some incentives to over a million Egyptians to farm in Iraq. They set them up on farms; the Egyptians were good farmers and they helped the Iraqi economy to a considerable extent. Now most of the Egyptians are gone; the farms undoubtedly lie fallow and the Egyptians will probably never return; they will have lost confidence. But there were major changes in Iraq since 1968 that were positive.

*Q: So the US role following the 1958 revolution was just a holding operation in a hostile environment. Was a new Ambassador appointed?*

DRAPER: Gallman was there during the revolution and was succeeded by Jernegan. Jernegan was a very savvy officer; a good stabilizing force. He was more engaged than Gallman. Jernegan was a real student of the area and very much engaged. He had the ability to get information from his staff.

**JAMES A. PLACKE**

**Economic Officer  
Baghdad (1959-1961)**

*Mr. Placke was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at the University of Nebraska. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. An Arabic Language Officer and Economic specialist, Mr. Placke was posted to Baghdad, Frankfurt, Kuwait, Tripoli, Ottawa and in Jeddah, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. Placke dealt primarily with Near East affairs. From 1982 to 1985 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East. Mr. Placke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Did you get any feel for the British? When I was in Dhahran we covered Bahrain and Qatar and there and the Brits had a different approach than Aramco, which was much more accommodating than the Brits at that time. They thought that Americans were selling their rights down the river. I mean it was too much sharing and too much bringing Arabs in to do the jobs and all that. Did you run across this sort of split between the American and British approach there?*

PLACKE: It was a very different approach. It was post-colonial, well, not post maybe, it was colonial.

*Q: It was colonial in a post- atmosphere.*

PLACKE: Yes, and they hadn't really understood and probably they understood not quite all, but they did not understand, the guys on the scene did not understand that that era was over. Yes, there was very definite different attitude and by and large wherever you were, whether it was Saudi Arabia or even Iraq, the local population preferred the Americans. There was a book written by the permanent undersecretary of the foreign office, senior career official who had been in Baghdad at least once, maybe twice, I think twice, and had completed an assignment there not too long before the revolution and in his book he talks about the British perspective on these things. Even at the time he wrote the book in the 1980s that tension between American and British aspirations and the British – well, it was all done with reasonable politeness and a certain amount of circumspection - it was pretty clear that they regarded the United States as a competitor and treated us accordingly. They essentially kept Americans out of the lower...

*Q: Yes, we're going to stop very shortly. We were still developing the theme of the British and the Americans referring to the oil business and the American approach particularly to Aramco which was much more allowing it to be Arabized and all that and the British were still really in terms of colonial and all, the white man's version of running the oil business.*

PLACKE: White man's privilege

*Q: Jim, you were in Iraq from when to when?*

PLACKE: From April '59 to October '61.



*Q: Well, we've talked really about the British in the oil business. What were you observing of the young Iraqis?*

PLACKE: We didn't really have much contact with them. This was of course only a short time after the revolution had overthrown the monarchy. During all the time I was there security was heavy and omnipresent. There was a great deal of suspicion, even to some extent hostility toward the U.S. and the UK, particularly the UK having been a former colonial power and the U.S. because of its identification with CENTO [Central Treaty organization also called the Baghdad Pact] and one of the charges against the old regime is that they basically had sold out the country's interest to CENTO and the Iraqis withdrew from CENTO about six months after the revolution {Editor's Note: Iraq withdrew in March 1959}. They stopped participating.

In any event, there wasn't much contact with the younger Iraqis. The USIA [United States Information Agency], about a year or so after the revolution - as soon as it could, restarted an English language-training program, which was just enormously successful. So successful in fact that they really were just overwhelmed and there was still great interest among young Iraqis in going to the United States for education. The U.S. was regarded as the technological leader of the world. The Iraqi government controlled press and the government spokesmen in general tried to persuade everybody that it was really the Soviet Union, but nobody bought that. In fact, nobody bought hardly anything that the government said.

*Q: We may have discussed this the last time I can't remember, but what was there about the Soviet Union that attracted the leadership in Iraq? Was it just because it wasn't British?*

PLACKE: Yes, essentially, you know, this was in the depths of the Cold War. It was a bipolar world and you tend to I think both sides looked at it pretty much as a zero sum game and so Iraq's loss to the West was the Soviet Union's gain and in the same zero sum framework I think countries looked at it that way. If you're going to line up on this side of the fence rather than that side of the fence and then the propaganda mill went to work and that was the way it went. Russian military equipment was quickly purchased and absorbed into the Iraqi military and is still to this day largely Russian equipment. That was the path they chose to follow. It was very much a political decision not based on certainly nothing to do with economics.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the division of Iraq into any reflection of when you look at Iraq they divided into the Arabs, the Kurds and various types of groups within Iraq and all?*

PLACKE: Well, the Kurds are a distinct group. The Kurds have their own language. They have a long history in their own traditions. In Iraq they have been substantially Arabized, but nonetheless they seek to and generally are able to maintain a distinct identity. Kurds were not as far as I could observe discriminated against particularly. There were Kurds in the government, a lot of Kurds in Baghdad. Some were local employees at the Embassy and seemed to get along fine with the Arab employees. I think a lot more has been made of those internal divisions particularly by the current Iraqi opposition as a way to sell the notion politically in the United States, particularly to the Congress that this country is just ripe for internal dissent and revolution and so on, which I think is basically nonsense.

*Q: All right, well then in '61 whither?*

PLACKE: '61, I went to Frankfurt. I entered the Foreign Service without any foreign language. I had never studied a foreign language and kind of willy nilly I chose German as the language that I would pursue and took four months of German language training following the A-100 course here at FSI and continued to study German at the Goethe Institut in Baghdad and went to Beirut for language testing. One of the linguists at the Beirut language school was a German speaker and was able then to legitimately administer the test and fortunately I passed it. I got my 3/3 in German [Editor's Note: 3/3 means on a scale with 5 as "native speaker" he scored 3 in speaking and 3 in reading comprehension], so I sought a German speaking post for my next assignment and was assigned to Frankfurt. I thought this was really great. As we left Baghdad which had been an extraordinarily interesting assignment at a very critical time in Iraqi affairs and indeed Arab affairs more generally and it introduced me to a whole lot of things about the Middle East which has served in good stead all these years, but when we left I felt well that was really interesting and glad I did it and thank God I'm never going to see it again.

I had no inclination to become a Middle East specialist until I got to Frankfurt. I was assigned to the single junior political officer spot which I learned later everybody was assigned when sent to Frankfurt but in fact, everybody went into the consular section. There was such a slot, but it was kind of a reward for having done a good job for a year or so in the course of your assignment. It was the plum regarded at least as the plum spot for junior officers in the consulate general. The consulate general at the time issued more immigration visas than any other Foreign Service post mainly to brides of American service personnel and so I became a visa officer and in fact worked through all the greatest visa jobs. After being there for about six weeks I realized that I had had more responsibility as a first tour officer in Baghdad than I would have for another ten years in Europe at any of the larger European posts and initiated an application for language training at FSI in Arabic. So, I concluded quickly that I had made a wrong assessment when I left Baghdad.

*Q: While you were there, '66 to '68, did you feel any, I mean were the Iraqis making any threats, was it a menace that was hovering out there?*

PLACKE: Well, the two things in my experience in Baghdad, which actually we didn't cover in the Iraq section of the interview, was the creation of OPEC in September of 1960. That was an event that has had more impact on international business affairs probably that might have been foreseen or certainly that indeed it didn't have much for about the first 20 years, but since it has become more prominent.

The other event was the British withdrawal from Kuwait in 1961 in granting Kuwait full independence. Kuwait had run its own internal affairs for a long time, but Britain still had responsibility for security and foreign affairs. As part of the whole decolonization around the world, they gave Kuwait its independence and helped them develop and adopt a constitution and had a great deal to do with shaping the way the country is organized today. I can remember the Iraqi tanks being loaded on flat cars in Baghdad to go south to liberate the lost province in 1961. The Kuwaitis of course immediately appealed to Britain who had just left to come back and save their bacon, or rice in this case. All it took was one paratroop battalion which the British sent back and that was enough to turn the Iraqis off. But, the notion that Iraq is or that Kuwait is

rightfully part of Iraq is not a new one, it didn't originate with the same, it's been there for many decades and indeed now generations and it's still there and I'm sure that we haven't heard the last of that controversy.

**HUME HORAN**  
**General Services Officer**  
**Baghdad (1960-1962)**

*Ambassador Hume A. Horan was born on August 13th 1934 in the District of Columbia. Horan served in the US Army from 1954-1956 and graduated from Harvard University in 1958. In 1960, Horan entered the Foreign Service. Ambassador Hume's overseas career includes posts in Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Jordan and as Ambassador in Saudi Arabia. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy 2000 – 2001.*

*Q: Did you have any idea of where you wanted to go?*

HORAN: That is a good question. My parents were friends of Loy Henderson, and so Mother said, "Hume, why don't you go see Loy. You know, he is really very influential in the State Department," I went to see him. He was then Under-Secretary for Political Affairs. I knew he had been in the Middle East. I only saw him for about 10 minutes. He asked about my parents. Then he asked, "I hope you are enjoying your work?" I answered in the affirmative. "Do you have any idea what kind of work you would like to do or where you would like to go?" I told him of my graduate work, and said, "Sir. I'd like to go to Baghdad." He replied, "Ah, you know, I don't have a long line of people waiting in my office to go to Baghdad. Let's see what we can do." That was the first and last time I saw Mr. Henderson. But I got sent to Baghdad.

*Q: Why Baghdad? I mean in your thinking.*

HORAN: Yes, the city of the Abbasid Caliphate and the Arabian nights! That appealed. There was archaeology in which I was interested. Baghdad had a certain resonance, Also a lot was going on: that ghastly Abdul Karim Qassem, the first of many...

*Q: So it was really only two years after the '58 July 14 coup.*

HORAN: Correct. In some ways a tough time for Americans. But Baghdad was... Baghdad! I know in our profession you must resist the temptation to romanticize your host culture. But unless you can respond to it even a little, unless your imagination sees it not only in the present, but also in some historical and cultural dimension, you are going to have a miserable, superficial experience. Your colleagues are going to have a bad time with you, also. So, Baghdad was for me a genuinely romantic place, and for the U.S.A., one big mess.

*Q: Now, before you went out, did you get any sort of training, did you read yourself into the place and find out what was going on or anything like that, or just go?*

HORAN: I've mentioned Ed Wright. He was very good, a former missionary.

*Q: I knew him, too..*

HORAN: He was very good. He has us read not only on the Arab world, but recommended some good books on Iran - I remember E.G. Browne, "A Year Amongst the Persians. and Moirier's "Hajji Baba of Isfahan."

*Q: Well, before you went did you run across any old Baghdad hands?*

HORAN: Yes, I did. You know, they were saying, "Gosh, then was then, now is now. All our contacts are dead or in exile. The survivors are here in Washington or London." I went to the Middle East Institute and met a couple of people who had been in Iraq in the good days. But my feeling was, "Thank you very much. I don't want any more briefings; just let me get out."

*Q: Okay, you got there, let me go to the beginning, you were in Baghdad from when to when?*

HORAN: I got there in September of 1960. Didn't have any language training-I'd qualified in Spanish. My Arabic, even after lots of grad courses, was rudimentary. I could puzzle out headlines, but not editorials! I was there until December of 1962.

*Q: Let's first talk about the situation when you got there. How did we see the situation in Baghdad and the American interests in Iraq?*

HORAN: American interests were then, as they are now, substantial in Iraq. The country has had a historic role in the area. It was a kind of communist stalking horse right between Iran and Saudi Arabia and Jordan, countries that were close to us and important. There was a rogue quality to Abdul Karim Qassem. To say he was a communist was probably wrong. His mind could not seize and hold anything as systematic as an ideology - except for Qassemism, I suppose. The communist party was very powerful. But insofar as he ever had to choose between, "Heads it is America, tails it is the Russians," it would often come up "Tails." The atmosphere was extremely anti-American. When we arrived at the airport the police asked if there were any diplomats amongst us. Ostentatiously, the clerk put our diplomatic passports below of everybody else's. We were the last people through. No one was there from the Embassy to meet us. We made our own way to the Chancery... welcome to the Foreign Service, Hume!

The Russians had a large, triumphal embassy in Baghdad. We ourselves had a beautiful new embassy designed by Jose Luis Cert. It was mentioned in Jane Loeffler's recent book, The Architecture of (U.S.) Diplomacy. We had a magnificent compound. It extended from a main road, down almost half a mile to the Tigris River. It must have covered 50 acres. Every piece of furniture in that Embassy - Residence and Staff apartments and the Chancery - was inspected and set in place by yours truly. I was Assistant to the Administrative Officer, and the new Compound was my job for the first six months. I liked everything.

*Q: You were married at this point.*

HORAN: I was married, yes. We had no children at the time. Everything kind of glowed, and I thought here we are. Now we are in the Middle East. No more seminars, no more blah, blah, blah. And I liked the administrative work. It was REAL. Clearing customs and all this stuff, pedestrian maybe? But when a load of frozen food and butter arrived at the railroad siding on a Friday - everything was closed, of course - I had to get it out. Well, I got it out. I felt more satisfaction than if I'd gotten an "A" in a seminar. I had good relations with the little people. They didn't mind seeing a junior American because no one really cared about them. So my contacts tended to be carpenters or tailors, or refrigeration mechanics, or clerks in the customs and the railroad. Small people, but they could make your life easier or harder as they chose. I didn't talk politics with them, but I would get invited to their weddings and baptism ceremonies and go down to the river with them and have picnics of masqauf, roast fish. I would come home with rice all in my hair and smelling of fish grease. I would give little presents - you know, books about America and stuff. I could see that despite the official anti-American line of the government, the average Iraqi tended to like the average American. I had a sensational boss, Raymond Cary, Jr., who was to foreign service work what Vince Lombardi was to football.

*Q: The very famous football coach.*

HORAN: Yes.

*Q: Cary was the administrative officer.*

HORAN: The Administrative Officer, I was his assistant, and General Services Officer for part of my time.

*Q: Was there concern, I mean we had a couple of Americans almost literally ripped apart two years before you got there by a mob. Was there concern about safety in Baghdad at that time?*

HORAN: You always had to watch out for someone making a move against Abdul Kareem. If you were in the vicinity, people thought that would be really bad news. At our national day, our marvelous DCM Roger Davies and our wonderful Ambassador, John Jernegan, passed the word that if Qassem came, and if we heard any funny popping noises, don't worry about protocol. Fall flat on the ground or dive into an irrigation ditch. It was very difficult to travel out of town. There were travel restrictions on Americans. You had to make a request weeks in advance. Often the request would be denied - unless it was to a "permitted destination," such as Babylon. I never encountered hostility on the part of Iraqis I was prudent as I would go around town. If I saw a large crowd gathering, I wouldn't go near. But, as I moved around town they'd hear I was from the American Embassy. Looking back it was kind of silly. I would ask them what do you think about the Abbasids and the architecture of a certain mosque. This, to people who were wondering if they could haul our refrigerators up the stairs! They must have gotten a lot of laughs on me sometimes. But I got along well with the Iraqis. I didn't have to deal with policy issues which were at full stop. But contrary to many Embassy people, I DID see a lot of Iraqis.

*Q: Well, this is a problem particularly when relations are bad. The people who are supposed to be out there learning things are almost frozen out because their contacts are all officials or with*

*people connected to officialdom who don't want to be seen with you. They are frozen, whereas you are down there mixing with sort of "the people."*

HORAN: It was a good tour. I had a worm's eye view, but for those days, not a bad one. I sometimes dealt with more Iraqis than some people. I should remark we had two really sensational political officers in Baghdad, Bill Lakeland, a real chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche*, and James Akins, who later became Ambassador to Saudi Arabia when I was DCM there. Both amazingly good people. I think they found the work frustrating, but they were real models for me.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador?*

HORAN: John Jernegan was ambassador and Roger Davies, later assassinated in Cyprus, was DCM. Great men, wonderful men, great Americans.

*Q: How did they run the Embassy did you feel?*

HORAN: John Jernegan was somewhere up there by the side of God the Father, maybe even in His place! But always watching out over his embassy - and with a perceptive, tolerant, humane eye. Roger Davies was, so to speak, God's manifestation on earth. He was excellent. Very good with us juniors. He'd invite us to his house, his wife, Sally, was like our house mother. Mrs. Jernegan was a beautiful, spirited woman. When I took the job my boss, Ray Cary said, "Hume, I am going to judge you a success or failure on the number of direct phone calls I get from Mrs. Jernegan. If I get a phone call from her, you are going to be in trouble." So I made a special effort to be accommodating, obliging, and to anticipate what Mrs. Jernegan wanted. Her requests were always reasonable. She loved her garden, and in my two years I learned a lot about gardening. When she'd make a request, I would get right on top of it. I thought, you know, senior people deserve good support. They have a tough job as it is, and I am happy to do whatever I can to take a bit of pressure off of their lives.

*Q: Did you work strictly as an administrative officer during this time?*

HORAN: Strictly in Admin, generally. I filled in as B&F Officer, also, for awhile.

*Q: That's Budget and Fiscal?*

HORAN: Yes.

*Q: You were in a good position to observe a hardship place under real pressure. Embassies often work better or posts work better than when people are living in the lap of luxury. Were there currents within the embassy or disputes or problems at all?*

HORAN: You know, the station chief was excellent. He and his wife were really nice to me, included me in parties. I was beginning to speak French, and his wife was a Francophone Lebanese - so French was a plus for me. She also knew that I very much liked French literature - still do. At that time, my reading was way better than my speaking. On the whole, the Station got

along well with the Embassy - our respective officers had shared the war...But AID tended to rotate on its own inscrutable orbit, doing things people couldn't quite grasp.

*Q: What did AID do in such a hostile environment?*

HORAN: Zero, zilch, but they had a rather large Mission, headed by some very senior people. Supposedly they were there to shut down the program. But it was like bringing a super-tanker to a full stop from 18 knots p.h. They were still around when I left in 1962. They had this suite of offices and I used to wonder what they did there for 10 hours every day. I never found the answer to that. USIS was very good. They had the Cultural Center downtown, including a library. They had access that many of us envied. They had books, and programs, and even some scholarships. They were not as tainted with the USG brush as people who worked in the Chancery. The Iraqis didn't like American policy - but did like American culture.

*Q: But that was also the year when they had the cartoons, "What are we going to do today? Let's go down and burn the USIS library." Did you have any demonstrations, you know, somebody pushing buttons saying we don't like what is happening in the Congo?*

HORAN: We were lucky. There were a few demonstrations, just a few, but the government having been helped to power by unbridled, unrestrained demonstrations was inclined to confine that genie to a bottle. You start a fire in a wastebasket, the next thing you know there goes the roof.

*Q: You know, I was in Yugoslavia close to this time, and they had problems because they had some demonstrations just to show their solidarity with the communist cause. It began to turn and students demonstrated on other matters going after public buildings, not much. They got nervous and they stopped that sort of stuff.*

HORAN: That is the way it was.

*Q: Were you able to develop any sort of Iraqi friends? Did they come over to the house and that sort of thing?*

HORAN: a few pretty low level people would accept my invitations. I met some other nice Iraqis through parents of children at the American school where my wife was teaching. Nice Iraqi families; sometimes the husband was Iraqi and the wife an American. Often, they'd met and married while he was in graduate school in the U.S. Some of these marriages worked out well. More perhaps, though not in our own circle of friends, did not. We heard bad stories of spouse abuse. Through my language instructor I met a couple of nice Iraqis. It was all very low key. Very often they would prefer not to come to my house, but if I were to come by their house for tea, that would be all right. I mean, the Iraqis were really paranoid, but they could see there was no malice in Hume Horan as he stumbled around asking about the Abbasid Empire.

*Q: How about I am just curious, getting things cleared in customs? Often this requires in some places a little gift or something like that. Did you find there was any...*

HORAN: No, I didn't get hit for that. Sometimes I really thought that some of these officials didn't mind responding to my appeal: "I have a problem and my boss will kill me unless..." There are times when some Arab functionaries can respond well when you present yourself to them as a fellow human being in a jam. That was one of the nicer qualities of some local bureaucrats. There are easements in Arab bureaucracy, and I may have benefitted from some of those. Of course, I also saw to it that my better contacts were remembered by the Embassy at Christmas.

*Q: What about your Arabic? How was it coming along?*

HORAN: Very slowly. I was working at it diligently. At grad school, I'd had the equivalent of one full academic year, three courses or four courses just all Arabic, all classical Arabic. Ibn Khaldoun, Basic Arabic, contemporary Arab thinkers and writers, but as I said, I couldn't read a newspaper. Certainly not the editorials. So in Baghdad I got a tutor for whom the Embassy paid, and I worked hard with him. My Arabic improved somewhat, but it is a difficult language. By the time I left Baghdad I may have been at best an S2/R2 plus.

*Q: Well, in this '60-'62 period, were there any sort of dramatic occasions that sort of stirred up the country?*

HORAN: Yes. Iraq claimed Kuwait and was going to invade. *Toujours les mêmes chansons* [French: always the same songs]! The British sent paratroops to protect the Kuwaitis. The United States supported the British position, whereupon John Jernegan was PNGed. He went on to Algeria. We were sorry to see Ambassador Jernegan go. Before leaving, he and Mrs. Jernegan had a reception at the Residence for all Embassy Americans. In his farewell remarks, I'll never forget, he selected the administrative officer for especial praise! He said, "You should all know, that the officer with the hardest job here is Raymond Cary, Jr. who is also the best administrative officer I have ever seen." Jernegan would have been within his rights to have especially congratulated his wonderful Political Officers, Bill Lakeland and Jim Akins. Instead, he selected the man who kept the power and water flowing. Leadership!

*Q: That is Persona Non Grata [PNG].*

HORAN: Yes. Then Roger Davies ran the embassy for a time and did so extraordinarily well. He was transferred in the summer of 1962. He was replaced by Roy Melbourne, with the rank of charge d'affaires. Roy later became our charge to Finland. He was able and vigorous. No previous experience in the Middle East.

*Q: Were there any sort of demonstrations or clamping down during the Kuwait crises?*

HORAN: a few demonstrations were carefully orchestrated and controlled. But because the Embassy's new location was far from the center of town, demonstrators had a very long hike - and a very hot one - to reach our gates. At one demonstration I seem to remember the Iraqi government not only trucking people over, but offering free watermelons. Once, the secret police actually entered the compound and took away some Iraqi visitors to the Consulate! We had every kind of a dust up over that.



*Q: Did you have any feel, I mean this wasn't your job, but you were at the embassy,, about Iraqi relations with its two major neighbors, Iran and Syria?*

HORAN: Relations with Syria were bad. A rival Ba`th state! Relations with Iran - the traditional enemy, were terrible. When you had a chance to take some R&R or leave, you would head for Iran. It was so nice! I'd go down to Sabah, a small port near Basra, and from there take a ferry to Abadan. Some of Daddy's people would meet us, and we'd drive north to Shiraz, Isfahan, and Persepolis to Tehran. Wonderful! In Tehran life was comfortable; Daddy had a great house, there was a big PX, wonderful restaurants. All along the way, the culture tended to overwhelm. Isfahan! Boy, it was like you had taken a plastic bag off your head. One trip I was accompanied by Bob Paganelli - one of my closest friends. Bob became Ambassador to Qatar, Minister to Rome, and Ambassador to Syria.

**HOLSEY G. HANDYSIDE**  
**Commercial Attaché**  
**Baghdad (1960-1962)**

*Ambassador Holsey G. Handyside was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1927. Handyside attended Amherst College in Massachusetts, majoring in French and political science. Ambassador Handyside received a B.A. in 1950, and then attended the University of Grenoble on a Fulbright Fellowship and then the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University for two years. He received an M.P.A. in 1953. Ambassador Handyside entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Beirut, Baghdad, Tripoli, and Mauritania. He was interviewed by C. Stuart Kennedy on April 19, 1993.*

*Q: When did you finish?*

HANDYSIDE: I finished the late summer, early fall of 1959. I went back to the States on home leave for November and December and then by early January I was on my way out to my next post which was Baghdad.

*Q: How did you feel about Baghdad?*

HANDYSIDE: I was really looking forward to it with a great deal of anticipation. Because for the first and damn near the last time, at least in my immediate ken, somebody in the personnel part of the United States government had made a very creative decision. Someone had decided that given the kinds of constraints that were imposed on the American Embassy in Baghdad first by the situation and second by the Iraqi government, it made no sense to send a traditional Department of Commerce type out to be the commercial attaché in Iraq. Somebody had the creative spark of imagination to consider the possibility of sending an Arabic language political officer out as the commercial attaché and teaching him enough commercial attaché-ing before he went to enable him to perform as a commercial attaché. Such an officer could perform in a

situation which was hyper-political where his skills as a political officer were in many ways more important than his knowledge of commercial work.

So, indeed, I was schooled to do this during my home leave and consultations during the last two months of 1959. By the time I arrived in Baghdad in the latter part of January 1960, I had learned a fair amount of what commercial attachés were supposed to do. I'd had a series of conversations with people in the Department of Commerce section who were responsible for the Middle East, etc. So by the time I got out to Iraq I was in reasonably good shape. Coupled with that fact, I came from a family that was business oriented, so I had some sense of what American businessmen were interested in and why they were interested in it. The result was that I had a ball as the commercial attaché in Iraq. I think as a result of a number of things that we were able to do ("we" meaning the whole Embassy because there was an economic section and a very supportive ambassador, etc.), after I had been in Baghdad a year and half, I was told by one of the American business people representing one of the big firms as a regional representative, that the word was out in the American community that if you don't go talk to any other commercial attaché anywhere in the Middle East, don't fail to go and talk to the commercial attaché in Iraq because you will profit enormously from doing that. We had a very solid, imaginative, exciting, systematic program of commercial support for the efforts of Americans who were trying to sell airplanes, railroad locomotives and all kinds of other things in Iraq.

*Q: What was the situation in Iraq, you were there from 1960-62? Two years before they had had this horrible revolt in which a couple of American business people were killed. I wouldn't have thought it was a very promising area for anything.*

HANDYSIDE: At the beginning it wasn't. At the beginning it was still very much a whacked-up kind of place. But time passes, life goes on and there was a very significant upper level of professional Iraqis who had been by this time trained in the United States. The airline and the railroad were operated by the same administration within the Department of Transportation (or whatever the exact name was), and the man who was the chief engineer for this part of the Iraqi Government was a graduate of MIT. He understood what the United States could do, what the producers of technical equipment in the United States could do in terms of designing and building equipment which would be appropriate for a dry, dusty, desert area that gets exceedingly hot in the summertime. So there were lots of possibilities. Not that American companies necessarily got the sales, but one of the things we were able to do was to intensify the level of competition in such a way that the Iraqis were able to insist that their Soviet suppliers provide them equipment that would work instead of a lot of used junk. In other areas--in terms of selling automobiles and trucks, communications equipment, and less spectacular things like that, which perhaps had less public relations impact, but were very important in terms of earnings--we were quite successful.

The atmosphere in Iraq at that stage of the game was very much the atmosphere of a police state. We were not able to go outside the city limits of Baghdad without a permit from the military governor general. It would take four or five weeks to get such a permit and you would have to say not only where you wanted to go but when, why and what you were up to. One of the advantages that I had as a commercial officer was that the military governor general was relaxed about what the commercial attaché was going to be doing. I made it my business each time I

went outside Baghdad to see all the American businessmen or all the Iraqi businessmen in the area who had anything to do with the United States. I would spend time with the local chamber of commerce people; I almost invariably ended up by making a speech at the local chamber of commerce, telling the assembled business people what prospects there were for doing business with American companies, etc. I saw an awful lot of the industrial base, such as it was, of Iraq at that point, because one of my typical activities was to go visit every factory that I could make arrangements to visit. Typically what I would discover was that I was the first Westerner who was permitted to go into many of these places not only since the July 14 coup, but since the March 1959 counter coup.

When I finally got permission to go to Mosul, I drove north in an Embassy car and spent four or five days as the commercial attaché making my typical speech at the meeting of the chamber of commerce and visiting all the factories, etc. There was only one hotel in that town at that point and that was the one at the railroad station. Late in the afternoon, as the temperature began to cool off toward evening, it was the practice of virtually everybody in town to go up to the terrace of the Station Hotel and have a cup of coffee in the restaurant. The first afternoon, after I had gone through my schedule for that day, I ended up having a coffee on the terrace. In minutes after I sat down and the coffee was served, a person came up, introduced himself, and asked if he could sit down with me. That started a procession of interviews that lasted for the next three or four days I was there. I learned in excruciating detail some of the awful things that the people had done to each other not during the initial coup d'etat, but during the counter-coup in...

*Q: What happened in the counter coup?*

HANDYSIDE: This was where part of the army under one of the group of army officers who did not agree with what Abd al-Karim Qasim was up to, tried to pull off a second coup and take over the government apparatus so that they could run things their way. There was a fellow by the name of Salem Aref who was the Lt. Colonel or Colonel who was the leader of this group. The first city that they tried to take over was Mosul. The Qasim forces suppressed this military counter coup ruthlessly. There were American girls who had married Iraqi students in the United States and had come back to Iraq. There were Iraqis who had been trained in the United States. There was a sugar factory whose chief engineer had been trained in the United States. These people would come up to me at the table and blurt out, "You are the first American I have seen for 11 or 12 months and the first one I have talked to." My presence and my identity as the U.S. commercial attaché had been reported in the local newspaper so everybody knew who I was. The fact that these interviews were taking place in a public place and they looked as if they involved only social chit chat, kept both the Iraqis and me out of trouble. None of them was interrupted by the ever present secret police. I heard just an incredible succession of almost unbelievable stories of what had happened in March. By the time I got back to Baghdad after my five or six-day safari as commercial attaché, I spent the whole first day back in the Embassy doing commercial work. The next five days I spent doing political work. The creativity of the decision that had been made by that unknown person in the personnel office to send an Arabic speaking political officer to be the commercial attaché...the success of that decision was the Mosul payoff, the stuff that went back to Washington as a result of it. I filled in an awful lot of gaps in our understanding of what had happened in Mosul during the time of the counter-coup. While that may have been of interest only for historical purposes, I think the interest was probably broader

than that because certainly I had never understood how nasty Iraqis could be. Certainly I had never understood before how nasty Iraqis could be to one another.

*Q: One always talks about the Arab mob but it never is that bad even in Egypt, except in Iraq. Iraq is the one place where there seems to be something within the Iraqi psyche that is nasty.*

HANDYSIDE: And it also is determined. There is an absence of a compromise gene or something. I was introduced to this by one of the young diplomats that I was telling you about in an earlier session that I knew in Cairo. He was the Second Secretary in the Iraqi Embassy. (He is still very much in the public eye as a practitioner of diplomacy, having just been the representative of the Secretary General in Somalia for the last four or five months.) He and I were on a bus riding along in Cairo one afternoon; I have no idea where we were going. There was some kind of an altercation on the bus. The driver stopped the bus and forced the person who was causing the ruckus off the bus. The door was still open and this guy was down on the pavement shouting vigorous epithets back at the bus driver. The windows of the bus were open so everybody heard the dialogue. My kitchen Arabic at that point was...I could communicate with the man who cleaned up my house, but that was about it...so I didn't really understand what was going on. After it was all over, the door was closed, and the bus began to pull away, the Iraqi diplomat turned to me and said, "Did you understand any of that?" I replied, "Very little." He explained what happened and then said, "If what the guy on the ground said to the bus driver had been said under parallel circumstances in Iraq, there would have been mayhem. It might well have ended up in one of them killing the other. There were some words said to that bus driver that were absolutely unacceptable in anybody's definition of social intercourse." And what happened in Cairo? Nothing. The bus driver, instead of getting involved and really taking it as a personal issue, simply closed the door and started the bus.

*Q: Handy, being commercial officer would have been an interesting position. One idea that was going around at the time we were in the Arab world prior to the 1958 revolution was that the one country in the Middle East, outside of Israel, that is going to make it is going to be Iraq. They have the literacy, a relatively small population, they are hard working and certainly have the natural resources and plenty of water. It hasn't. Something has gone wrong. Were you seeing any sign of something going wrong or was this feeling justified? This is a critical time.*

HANDYSIDE: I can speak to that in the sense that there were two things that happened in my view that led to this present situation. One was the displacement of the civilian government by a group of Iraqi nationalists/Arab nationalists military. A military who got themselves for international political reasons associated with the Soviet Union and who knew very little about a whole host of highly technical kinds of things. They were persuaded that the Soviets had the Iraqis' best interests at heart, and consequently they virtually turned over decision making to the Soviets in certain areas. For example, in the area of the railroad locomotives where the MIT graduate knew that what he wanted to buy were diesel electrics made in the United States because he knew that the American engineers would re-engineer a basically sound product and adapt it for use in Iraq and the dust and the heat of an Iraqi summer. He had total confidence that when the engineers from General Motors and the engineers from the other manufacturers arrived in Iraq and said they could do this and take care of that problem, etc. He knew this would happen.

Ultimately the decision on the purchase of replacement locomotives was made by Abd al-Karim Qasim himself on the basis of an assurance from the Soviet Ambassador that of course the Soviet technicians could handle any of these kinds of problems and would. The upshot of it was that the Iraqis bought a whole bunch of locomotives from Hungary that had been built in Hungarian shops and designed to be used in Eastern Europe and in Russia. None of them had the kind of heat dissipating equipment that was necessary in a place where the summertime ambient temperature reaches 150 degrees Fahrenheit. The upshot of it was that these locomotives began to fail very soon after they arrived. It was an enormous investment in hardware that within a matter of two or three years was totally wasted because it had crashed.

So, as a result of the military regime misspending the Iraqi oil income, the kind of impact that the economists you mentioned and others around the world were expecting--their projections were based on the assumption that the oil income would be spent efficaciously--instead of being spent for equipment for civilian purposes that wouldn't function after three or four years or being spent for totally useless military hardware. So one of the major issues in my view was that the military skewed the governance of the country in such a fashion that the enormous income-generating capabilities of the Iraqi economy were dissipated rather than capitalized on.

I think that we can see that that process is still going on. Iraq has a leader who committed himself to an eight-year war against his next door neighbor that not only dissipated money and hardware but thousands and thousands of young Iraqi lives. He then behaved himself in such a way that he got himself crosswise with the entire Western community and ended up with a second destruction of his country. That is a set of circumstances that an economist operating in his ivory tower probably never would have imagined.

The other problem is much more interesting and much more subtle. During the time of the of the Nuri-el-Said regime, during the time of the monarchy, the British were still very much the influential outside power in Iraq. The Iraq Development Board was predominantly British, although there was one American who sat on it. The Board and its staff was made up almost exclusively of people who, if not actually economists were people who thought like economists. That is, they thought only in terms of economic factors and had little understanding, or at least demonstrated little understanding, of political factors. This became of crucial importance immediately after the coup d'etat in 1958 because the Development Board, understandably wanting to conserve oil income, had made the decision that they would take Iraq from where it was immediately into the kind of high tech solution of 40 years ago. The Board decided, for example, to build three or four or five enormous power plants to generate electricity and spot them in key positions all over the country. They made this decision even though they knew that what this meant was that it was going to take ten or twelve years to build all these power plants and get electricity out to the villages. They were convinced as economists and engineers that that was the way to do it. The idea that for political reasons the government needed to bring the fruits of the oil income to the ordinary Joe in the street right now, not twelve years from now, never occurred to anybody apparently. So the economic planning, the developmental planning of the Iraq Development Board was, as far as I could determine, rarely, if ever, enlightened with political considerations.

The upshot of it was that at the time of the coup, there was an enormous outpouring against the people who had run Iraq before. Under the development plan that had been in place, they had spent millions and millions of pounds and had nothing to show for it. A few paved highways and that was it. There was no electricity in the villages; there were no schools or health clinics in the villages and so on. And this was true because the Development Board was building major hospitals instead of neighborhood health clinics. They weren't building any schools because they said they didn't have anybody to teach in them so why build schools, etc.

Well, the upshot of it was that it wasn't until two years into the Qasim regime, the spring of 1962, that there was a pay-off. There had been lots and lots of snow up in the mountains in Turkey and in northern Iraq and then lots of rain in the spring. There was a very real threat of a major flood. This was the first time that one of the major projects of the Iraq Development Board was put to use. This was the Wadi Tharthar flood control project north of the city of Baghdad. At some point as the water started to rise (and every time we would go across one of the bridges we could see that it was getting higher and higher), the technicians who were responsible for the Wadi Tharthar opened the gates and the water started pouring out down this canal in to the middle of the desert. The flood level at Baghdad never got above the prescribed level. I can still remember riding across one of the bridges in the middle of this period in a taxi cab and talking to the taxi driver who just couldn't...because the day before, the river had risen some 20 feet in 24 hours and then stopped. The taxi driver said, "You know I never believed this was possible. We were all absolutely convinced that this thing was going to wipe us out again. It hasn't happened for a long time but my father remembers when it happened the last time. This is the first time that we realized what those crazies in the Development Board were doing made sense. We finally understand what they spent the money on." But it was too late. The king had been killed and the government had been out of office for two and a half years by then.

*Q: One last question on this. I wonder if you could tell me a little about the Embassy. It was difficult obviously as you couldn't get out and around very much. John Jernegan was the Ambassador. How was the Embassy run?*

HANDYSIDE: As one would expect, living in a police state where the presence of the secret police was noticeable at virtually all times and the requirement to get permits to get out of the city limits, etc., all this had a very real inhibiting impact. But on the other hand there is sort of self selection process that goes on in the Foreign Service. People gravitate towards difficult posts largely because they are interested in them for some reason or other and they have some desire to be there. As I look back on that period of time, my recollections are not one of hardship but one of a very pleasant, very productive post. Part of this was because we had a lot of interesting people, people who were involved in all kinds of extra curricular activities ranging from putting on plays to reading poetry to putting on concerts. Lots of people became intensely interested in one of the challenging things that did exist in Iraq and that was Iraqi archeology. In spite of the problem of getting permits from the governor general, it was still possible to plan weekend outings into the parts of the country that had previously been occupied centuries before. It was well before the Iraqi authorities had caught up with the idea that they really ought to organize the archeology in some systematic way themselves. So there are, for example, in the homes of various Foreign Service people here in Washington extensive collections of little bits and pieces of cylinder seals and other kinds of pottery shards or glass beads, etc. that they lovingly found by

poking through sand dunes, packed up and brought back to the United States and now display in very attractive fashion.

There was a play reading group for example, Stu, where once a week we would get together and parcel out the parts and we would read the play. People didn't move around or have props. But we read the parts and made the play come to life.

*Q: We were doing that sort of thing in Belgrade about the same time. It was a delightful way to...*

HANDYSIDE: Sure it is lots of fun. You learn an awful lot because we quickly exhausted the supply of American plays that were in the library at USIS and any time anybody went back home and found another collection of plays, he would buy up 12 or 15 copies in paperback and bring them back into Iraq. So we always had a fresh supply of things to work on. Every once in a while for some special occasion, we would put on something in public. There we tried to put costumes on and introduce some action. But most of the time it was just sit around in a circle to read and spend an evening.

Another thing that we had was a choral group, a very small choral group, made up of 12 or 14 people. We got together to sing largely for our own benefit. But one of the members was the director of music at the local English-speaking church. So every once in a while the group would be invited to do something special at the church, like once every five or six months. So that was another kind of thing that was going on.

As far as the internal operation of the Embassy was concerned, we had some very good people there, people who were very bright and perceptive about what was going on in the Arab world and specifically what was going on in Iraq. There were a few highly competent Arabic language officers who were able to get out and really interact with the community. However, at that stage of the game, there were still a very substantial number of Iraqis who had been trained in England or the United States and they were accessible. Not indiscriminately so, but reasonably so. The result was that there was lots and lots going on.

As far as I was concerned, I couldn't have had a better ambassador. He started off on the right foot at the very beginning. He said, "I don't know anything about commercial work, I have never had to do it before. But I understand in this environment that this is important, and I also understand it is one of the things that we can do. Your job is simply to go do what you think needs to be done. When you need me just tell me. If you need me to put on a reception for a visiting American businessman, or if you want me to have a lunch for him, or whatever, just give me advance notice so that I can work it out. Whatever you need me for, you will get."

One of the things I very quickly realized I needed was an office for commercial purposes which was away from the Embassy proper. Business people were afraid to come into the commercial section of the Embassy. So I worked very hard for a period of time on a separate location. Eventually, I got permission for and then organized the selection of an office on the third floor of one of the rare office buildings in the new commercial center of the city. We opened that office with great fanfare. There was a big commercial library and rooms that could be used by visiting American businessmen to have meetings with Iraqi counterparts, etc. I had a staff of three FSL

commercial people who kept busy doing WTDRs, etc. It was a very thriving place. The office was open every day of the week for certain hours. It took a little while for it to catch hold, but within a couple of months virtually every morning there was a small stream of Iraqi businessmen coming in to look up possibilities in the Thomas Register, or whatever. They recognized that there wasn't any surveillance at this place. The kind of dispensation for commercial work that applied to my traveling around the country also applied to this office. And as far as I am aware, there was never any secret police surveillance of our operation at Southgate.

So certainly as far as I was concerned, Embassy Baghdad was one of the most bureaucratically friendly environments I ever worked in. Whenever I had an idea that made sense, and after working it out and talking to various people about it, I would go to the DCM or the Ambassador for approval. And approval was a virtual certainty.

*Q: Did the CIA intrude on you at all?*

HANDYSIDE: They attempted to intrude on my little office down town. At one stage of the game they came to me in advance and said they were bringing in another guy and they wanted to assign him to the commercial section as cover. I said I would not have it. I said, "Hey, look. We are great friends and I recognize what you are doing and how important it is, but for reasons that have to do with the mission of the commercial office, I can't take the risk of having even anything that smells in the faintest way of any connection with the intelligence community. That would be the kiss of death for this office. It has taken me a year or a year and a half to get this office to the point where Iraqi businessmen feel safe coming into the American Embassy. I am simply not going to risk that by exposing it to connection with the intelligence apparatus." "Well, what would you do if we decided we wanted to do it anyway?" I said, "It would be very simple. I will go to the Ambassador and I will do my very best to explain why I think this is an unwise thing. And then if push comes to shove and if you all win, then I will resign as commercial attaché because I am not going to be associated with what I think is the most effective way of wrecking this program."

The upshot of it was that that was the last I heard of it, until months and months later when I was at a party of American Embassy people, I met once again the intelligence guy the Agency had wanted to place in my office.

*Q: Was this still in Baghdad?*

HANDYSIDE: Oh, still in Baghdad, yes. This was five or six months later. After most of the party had kind of wound down and there was only the hard core left, this guy accosted me on this subject. He said, "I understand you are the guy that put the kibosh on my coming in here as a commercial secretary." I said, "Yes, I was." And he said, "Well, why?" I went through the same story and said, "I was absolutely convinced then, as I still am, that that was a sure fire formula for undercutting the accomplishment and the purpose of the office. There was just no way that we could accommodate you." I went on, "You all know from everything I have done since I've been here, that I am perfectly prepared and have on a consistent and continuing basis immediately shared with you any information that I picked up that I thought was important for you to have. This has happened enough so that even in your own evaluation you ought to know



that this is simply not a fluke. It is something that I believe in, that we are all part of the same government and if there is something that I happen to stumble across that I think is important, I will share it with you or share it with one of the military attachés so that the United States government as a whole benefits from it. That is a quite different question than the operational question of whether or not I am prepared to have one of your group in my office." At the end of the conversation he said, "Well, you have made the case. I understand now."

*Q: Just as a practical thing all of us know that the CIA cover is such that everybody from the outside looks upon everybody in the Embassy as a potential CIA agent until proven otherwise. As soon as they start doing other type work all the local employees immediately know. I have run across this. The local employees know before anybody else.*

HANDYSIDE: What it comes down to in my view as a result of the things I have seen in my experience in the Foreign Service, is that living a cover is a very difficult, demanding task. Most of our colleagues in the intelligence community are not sufficiently convinced that cover is necessary for them to do it. I have stumbled across people in one place or another, in one way or another, for whom maintaining their cover was vital not only to the operation but to their continued existence. Under those circumstances, they really lived their cover. But for the most part, the people who were assigned to an American Embassy simply to be able to get a diplomatic passport so that if push came to shove the U.S. Government could get them out of the country reasonably easily and quickly, they always wanted people to know that while they were part of the Embassy they were a little different.

If I could follow up on one other thing, on my comment that I shared information with other parts of the Embassy. I did this on a consistent basis. One of the times that I remember as a result of having gotten to know the fellows in the Air Attaché's Office and the fellows in the Military Attaché's Office, I became aware at one stage of the game that they had a terrible puzzlement. They couldn't figure out why some radar equipment that was installed in a particular military installation not far out of the city never seemed to be functioning properly. It functioned, but it didn't have the capabilities that it should have had in terms of what we knew from other intelligence sources about this particular piece or this set of pieces of Russian equipment. They had mentioned this to me one time. At that point, I didn't know anything about it. But some time thereafter, one of the American businessmen who came in was the representative of Rustoleum. This is a special coating that is different from typical lead based paint. It is designed and formulated in a different way and specifically, has the property of binding with the molecules of the surface of the metal that is being protected in a way that it literally prevents rust. Because it is lead free, it has quite different characteristics of electrical or electronic response.

The Rustoleum technical representative came in one day, and we had a long discussion about what he was going to do, who he was going to see, etc. He had been invited to Baghdad by the Ministry of Defense. At the end of our session, I said, "I have given you everything that I can think of that might be of some help to you. I would be grateful if you would keep in touch with me and each day you are here stop by so we can have a brief chat about what you have accomplished and what you are up to. This is partly because it is also my responsibility to keep track of you and to know whether you are alright and that the Iraqis haven't for some reason or other decided to lock you up." He got that point and agreed.

One of the times he came back from one of the military installations he visited, he said, "You won't believe what I have discovered." I said, "I probably won't. What is it?" He said, "They took me out to see a radar site and told me that they had been having problems with it and it wasn't doing what it was supposed to do. They asked if it was just the lousy Russian equipment or whether there was something wrong. When he climbed up on the radar site, he discovered that the last time the Iraqi military had painted the radar dishes, they had used lead-based paint. The wheels immediately began going around in my head, but I didn't mention it to the American businessman. Then, at the earliest opportunity, I went over to the Embassy to see the Assistant Air Attaché and said, "I think I found the answer to your radar mystery." I told him the story. The USAF officer replied, "My god, they wouldn't be dumb enough to do that." I said, "Well, apparently somebody did. Just to check it out, send the report back to your technical people at Wright Patterson and see whether or not they can model the propagation and reception characteristics that would result from a couple of coats of lead-based paint." In the fullness of time the explanation came back from the Air Force technical people that the lead paint fully explained the discrepancy between the prescribed operation of this equipment and the observed operation of this equipment. This is the sort of thing that if the attaché and I hadn't discussed the problem, they might never have learned the reason for the discrepancy.

*Q: You were just about ready to leave then weren't you? Is there anything else there we should cover or not?*

HANDYSIDE: One final thing because it has an impact on what has been going on in Iraq in the last three or four years. At one stage of the game Mr. Qasim had decided that Kuwait really belonged to Iraq and that he was going to take advantage of the disappearance of the British colonial forces, who for budgetary reasons, had decided they were going to pull out the military forces that had been guarding the Emirate of Kuwait for years and years. Qasim began a series of PR moves to get everybody used to the idea that Kuwait really belonged to Iraq, and that as soon as the European colonial power finally pulled out Iraq was going to bring the lost province back to Iraq. As the date of the departure of the British military came closer and closer, the tension began to grow. No one by this time was quite sure what this very unpredictable "maximum leader" was going to do. All the Military Attachés stationed in Iraq were having a field day. They all pooled their information. The British and the French were one thing, but some of the others representing some of the other NATO countries were really less competent militarily. There was a Turkish officer, for example, who really was off the wall.

In any event, as we were running down the home stretch of this developing crisis, Ambassador Jernegan decided that it would be very useful if we had an all-embassy meeting so the Military Attachés could present their best estimates of the situation to the rest of us. This would serve to alert us and sensitize us to observe and report any movement of military forces or anything else. The attaché briefing was to construct a matrix in which to put any observations, so that all the information collection activity of the Embassy would be directed in some systematic and organized fashion to a single end.

So late one afternoon we had this briefing. It went on and on and on. The Assistant Military Attaché babbled on for an inordinate length of time about where all the tank units were; it turned

out that they were all stationed in the immediate Baghdad vicinity. After this long presentation with maps and stories about how difficult it had been to get all the unit designations and come to this analysis, etc., came to an end, the Ambassador asked for questions. I raised my hand and said, "Mr. Ambassador, I got lost on one of the curves apparently because I thought we were here to learn about the threat that Qasim poses to Kuwait. All I have learned this afternoon is where all the military forces are deployed around Baghdad. The last I knew Baghdad was still separated from the Sheikdom of Kuwait by some 300 miles. The question that I have for Major Hall is how are the Iraqi military commanders planning to move their armor from where it now sits in these camps ringing the city of Baghdad, down to the Kuwaiti border so that they can march across the border and liberate Kuwait?" I said, "I am not a military guy and I don't really understand very much about how you move tanks around. But I do know something about the railroad and know something about the highways from personal reconnaissance because I have been up and down the road to Basra, the road north of the river. South of the river there is no road, it is a track in the desert. The idea of driving the tanks there under their own steam is a non-starter. It would only be a matter of a few days before they were all hung up at various distances away from Baghdad, broken down and unable to move any further. There aren't sufficient tank carriers apparently, according to Major Hall, and even if they did have transporters, in my estimation they couldn't possibly navigate these non-existent roads between here and Basra."

"There is no way they can get tanks on board a river boat, even if the river ran all the way to Baghdad with sufficient depth in the middle of the summer to float a raft or a barge." "Finally," I said, "the railroad simply can't carry the tanks. At this stage of the game, it is so decrepit as to be non-operational. Furthermore, the railroad has so few flatbed cars there is no way that they could move any appreciable number of tanks from here to Basra in anything less than about three months. So my question to the Military Attachés is, 'Why are we all so excited about Qasim marching into Kuwait when in my view there is simply no way that he can get his army from here to there?'"

Dead silence in the room. Finally the discussion began. I said, "Look, I learned this from trying to sell locomotives to the railroad. I have gotten to know those railroad people very well including the guy who is the chief engineer. Another youngster who works for him is a great friend of mine. I have a pretty good comprehension of what the railroad is capable of doing. And it is not capable of moving any appreciable number of tanks in any brief period. As far as the highway is concerned, I know that highway and it is my judgment as a guy who knows something about heavy vehicles, that there is no way that those tank transporters could possibly make it all the way to Basra. By themselves, maybe, but with a 50 ton tank on board, no. Concerning the river transport possibility, maybe in the wintertime; but certainly not at this season of the year. So what are we all excited about?"

The upshot of it was that the great day came and went and Qasim decided that he really wasn't going to try to march across the border in any force. All the buzzing around that the Military Attachés had done was forgotten about. But I decided that there was no point in going through this drill again. Since there were a couple of points about each of these transportation modes that I had been a little uncertain of, I checked them out and then sat down after the crisis was over and wrote a very long airgram, some 25 pages, describing the transportation system and

describing how it could not possibly have been used to do what the military thought the Iraqi military was going to do with it. I sent this into Washington and recall no reaction.

But I just decided that as the person in the Embassy who had this information, I had the responsibility to get it back to Washington so that the next time, if there were a next time, at least somebody would recognize that moving heavy military equipment around Iraq posed a problem and, recognizing the problem, would make the effort to update the information I had provided. Then, unless there were some significant differences, unless the railroad had in fact been rebuilt and new flat cars purchased, then we wouldn't get ourselves sucked into the same misprediction of what was going to happen militarily.

*Q: This leads into something that you said you wanted to make a comment on. Your bridging between the science side and the Foreign Service side.*

HANDYSIDE: Yes. As I look back on the 30 years that I spent in the Foreign Service, it is now clear with the advantage of 20/20 hindsight, that for 25 years my career path went almost directly from one assignment to another at the intersection between foreign policy and diplomacy on one side and science and technology on the other. From very early in my career I discovered that I found myself in places where I had to spend a fair amount of time and energy mastering technical subjects in order to have the knowledge, expertise and understanding to address the diplomatic overlay of the problem to devise a solution in an international context which was responsive to both the technical and diplomatic/political considerations involved.

The first time I found myself at the technology/diplomacy interface was the nearly three year assignment as the US commercial attaché in the embassy in Baghdad. I found that there were a whole lot of things I had to learn in order to be helpful to the American business people who were trying to sell airplanes, diesel electric locomotives, and in a third instance, expensive and technically sophisticated trucks. In order to be of maximum assistance to the various groups, sales people and engineers, who came to Iraq from the American aircraft industry or from the American railroad locomotive industry, not only the vocabulary but also the concepts underlying the functioning of their equipment and why the US version was so much better than the product the Iraqis would get by buying from a European supplier or from the Soviet Government. It became quite clear that as the commercial attaché in Iraq, I was going to have to learn an awful lot of technology and engineering that I had never been exposed to before.

I noted another area of the interface between diplomacy and technology earlier, when I described how I stumbled on the explanation for the malfunctioning of the radar equipment the Soviets supplied the Iraqis, which had puzzled the staff of the Air Attaché office for months. This was another illustration of how my assignment at the interface of diplomacy and science and technology contributed directly to the understanding and appreciation of an intelligence problem that had been bedeviling the appropriate intelligence collection people for some 12 or 14 months, and thus, to the pursuit of US interests in Iraq.

**LAURENT E. MORIN**

**Economic Officer  
Baghdad (1960-1964)**

*Laurent E. Morin was born in 1920 in Augusta, Maine. He attended the University of New Hampshire where he received bachelors degrees in economics and history. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948. In 1957 he received his master's degree from Yale University. He was posted as a Foreign Service officer to Algeria, France, Japan, Washington, DC, and Iraq. Mr. Morin was interviewed in 1992 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: You left INR in 1960 and went to Baghdad for a good solid four year tour.*

MORIN: Baghdad was very difficult living but very rewarding professionally. I must say it was a really active place with a lot going on. I spent very little time in the office. I was out in the community all the time calling on bankers, industrialists, government people, etc. I had a car and chauffeur that I used virtually all of the time.

*Q: There had been this horrendous revolution in 1958 where the king was assassinated, and mobs took over...*

MORIN: The Prime Minister and the Regent were dragged through the streets behind cars until their bodies wore out.

*Q: So you got there two years after that. What was the political situation like?*

MORIN: They had settled down from the revolution. They were getting closer to the Soviets who were moving in with five year plans for Iraq and financing industries and such. And yet the Soviets were not very popular at all. Iraq had quite a large size middle class, many of them trained in Europe, particularly in England, or in the States, and these were the technicians and junior people in the various ministries. They were very friendly to us, although officially they were not. Nevertheless we got around a lot despite this, and were able to help them a lot. The Soviets had begun to plan a steel mill in Baghdad for the Iraqis. A senior official, who trained at the University of Michigan, asked one of us, "Look, I need some help. We have been given these new plans for this steel mill and it is terribly outdated. It has stuff you haven't seen in the United States for years. This is what they are offering to put up and the top brass want to do it. I wonder if you could help?" We made contact with one of the big American steel companies, through the Department, of course, and asked if there was anything that could be done. The company sent one of their vice presidents, who was going to be out that way anyway. The idea was to say that he just happened to be going by the area and dropped in to see if by chance there was any business he could get. I took him around to the government, and he explained their latest systems. They were just putting in a new plant in Ontario in those days. He explained that this was the newest thing and what they should be thinking about it. I took him into the minister, himself, and he explained what the situation was and gave the pitch to the minister. Well it had the effect of slowing this down for about two years because these guys started having second thoughts and went over the plans again. But at some point Qasim said, "Let's go with it anyway."

*Q: Qasim was still the head of the junta?*

MORIN: Yes, he was the military dictator. His picture was everywhere, just like Saddam now. But looking back, he was much better than the current crowd.

*Q: We are talking right now about Saddam Hussein who is probably the worst of the dictators...*

MORIN: There were three coups during the time I was in Baghdad. The bloodiest one was the one that upset Qasim in 1963. It was quite scary for us because we could hear the radio...the Qasim side was trying to raise the people who lived in the slums, the sarifa dwellers, to rise up against the middle class and against the foreigners. These slums were just over the bund from our house. So it looked pretty bad there for a while.

But finally the new group won and that night word was passed around the city that everybody should watch television at 7:00. At 7:00 a "Felix The Cat" cartoon played for a few minutes. Then all of a sudden the scene shifted to the TV studio and there they had Qasim's body on display. They had shot him and his lieutenants right there. They held up the head and rotated the body so one could be sure he was dead. They didn't want stories that he was hiding up in the mountains planning a counter-coup. All his lieutenants were there too, all dead and sprawled around. That was the evening entertainment.

Actually it wasn't as bad as the 1958 revolution when the two leaders were dragged behind the cars all around the city for a couple of days for the same effect...to show that they were dead.

Anyway, Qasim was gone and the new guys came in. It was interesting. These fellows were Baathis. We had some information on the Baath party. Most of them were young idealists, some from the London School of Economics, but a lot of them were military types. So you had two groups within the Baath party. They were terribly young. The head of the labor ministry was 19 or 20. The new foreign minister, just a kid, walked into the ministry and when stopped by the guard and asked who the hell he thought he was, said that he was the new foreign minister...so the story goes.

The Embassy was well plugged in to what was going on, and it was suggested some time before the revolution that I cultivate one of the senior officers at the refinery which I did. "Comes the Revolution" and behold he was the new minister of oil as our people had expected.

The new team started up the government. It got kind of nasty though. There was a great deal of torture and that kind of thing. Things were very much on edge. My contacts in the banking community were leaving town if they weren't in prison. Then after a while, the end of the same year, the other element of the Baath party, the Saddam types, just threw out these young kids and shot them. There was a lot of street fighting in our neighborhood between the Army and the Baathi para-military units. I remember my son playing football on the street, and when a shot or a grenade would go off nearby, all the kids would jump over the walls and then, after a while, would come back out and play some more.

The Baath party stayed a different creature from then on.

*Q: During most of this time our Ambassador was John Jernegan?*

MORIN: Yes, he was the Ambassador for half of the time. His problem was...Kuwait was given its independence by the British. The Ambassador from Kuwait landed in Washington, and the moment he presented his credentials, Iraq PNGed Jack Jernegan because they wouldn't accept this. They claimed Kuwait was part of their country. They had a huge map of Kuwait on the side of a high building in Baghdad showing it as part of Iraq. They issued postage stamps with Kuwait as part of Iraq. The funniest thing of all, they sent monthly payments to the Emir of Kuwait, his pay for being a district governor.

The Iraqi army started down and got to the border and we were all reporting on this. But the British sent their troops back into Kuwait and that stopped it. But the Iraqis have always had this claim to Kuwait. The countries are very close in dialect and customs.

*Q: What was our attitude toward Iraq at the time?*

MORIN: We were hoping to develop it as a friendly country. Iraq is such a promising country. It has such potential. Here is a country in the middle of the desert which should be the most prosperous in that part of the world. It has lots of oil, probably as much as Saudi Arabia. It has water...two major rivers. It has no population crush and a lot of real smart people. There is much unused agricultural land...all you had to do was put water in the deserts around Baghdad and everything grows. It could be like California.

*Q: I remember that was very much the feeling at the time that here was a place that really was ready to blossom forth in every way, and yet...*

MORIN: Yes. And they just can't hack it. They have one big political problem of their own making. The Arabs that run Iraq have this problem with the Kurds. The Kurds form maybe 20 percent of the population and they are not Arabs. But the name of the country is Arab Republic of Iraq, and the government always plays up the Arab side. They're not ready to accommodate the Kurds. This has been a continuing war. It had been going on for a while when I was there. There were some horrible stories. I was up north once and saw some of the devastation where the Iraqi army would blast out villages and that kind of thing. Or they would move whole villages down south to try to mix them up with the people in the south. It was a continuing thing that goes on today. It may never be resolved. It's unfortunate as it keeps the country from stabilizing and developing properly.

*Q: How did we feel about Iraq and the Soviet Union?*

MORIN: We didn't like the idea that the Soviets were getting in there. We thought the Soviets would get into the Gulf that way so our overall strategy was to try to head this off. One strategy was to try to make friends with Iraq and we did. We were friendly with them and helped them as much as we could. We wouldn't give them any military products but we were beginning to give things like trucks and that sort of stuff. We had had a huge AID program up until 1958, but that was cut way back. But we had a small one during the time I was there. We were trying to keep

the door open to Iraq and hoping they would come around and show some sense. If they had, they could be a major country in that part of the world, the major country. It was an unfortunate development. They still have the potential.

*Q: Were our close ties to Israeli a burr under the saddle?*

MORIN: It was a problem, but much less of one than you might think. You would hear about; it was a subject that would come up occasionally. It bothered them. There was lots of censorship. You couldn't bring anything into Baghdad or Iraq that showed the name Israel on it in those days. Even things like atlases and maps would be blacked out.

*Q: I was in Saudi Arabia about the same time and we had the same thing.*

MORIN: I remember Newsweek and Time would come in on the British Airways plane. In order to get them in, the BA people would cut out the pages that had anything to do with Israel. People, of course, listened to international news, BBC, and even the Israeli stations.

*Q: Did you find yourself in competition with the British?*

MORIN: To some extent. We were selling planes in those days and we had competition for Iraqi Airways...we wanted to sell Boeings to them. The British thought they should get some of that pie and they worked hard on it. We outdid them. The British accused us at one time of playing dirty pool...the military attachés got involved in it somehow.

The French weren't in at the time as they didn't have diplomatic relations with Iraq because of selling arms to Israel. In fact nothing French could come in so whenever you bought Courvoisier or something like that it would be labeled Lebanese brandy.

I remember one case, an American called from the frontier, which was quite a ways. He said that they wouldn't let him cross, he wanted to go to Iran. He had a Citroen, a French car, and they wouldn't let him in.

That turned around while I was there. The French embassy reopened, and they started getting into the act too.

We had a couple more coups in Baghdad. Later in the year when I mentioned earlier that the Baath party turned over, it was the time of President Kennedy's assassination. It was also the time that Duke Ellington was in Baghdad for a USIA program and was caught there for a week. Immediately before that we had had the annual Marine Ball, and Duke Ellington was the band that played for us. That was probably tops for a Marine ball. But Duke Ellington was most unhappy about being caught in Baghdad as were a lot of other people.

*Q: Were you scared during these coups because a couple of Americans were dragged out of a hotel...*



MORIN: That was in 1958.

*Q: Yes, but obviously that left an impression because Iraqi crowds...*

MORIN: The Iraqi crowds were terrible and the fighting was around us during the first coup particularly. Planes were strafing the Presidential Palace which was right next door to the Embassy. We weren't in our house but the house boy was and he called frantically and said, "Say the house has just been hit by a bomb. Is it all right if I go outside?" He was supposed to be guarding the house, but he felt safer outside.

Then an interesting thing. In the second coup my daughter was teaching (she was a teenager) a kindergarten class across town. The rebellion broke out so people sent the bus to pick up everybody. It picked up the children, and, while she was locking up, the bus went off without her. She didn't know what to do. She finally found a cab but it couldn't get through the barriers. The driver took her to a village below Baghdad. It was a scary situation. We didn't know anything about this, of course. She spent several hours with a family in a hut there. After time the driver found a boat and rowed her across the river, which is quite a row, down below the city and then walked her back to an area that she knew. She popped into Bill Lakeland's house. We didn't know she was missing as I presumed she was with one of the mothers from the kindergarten. This could have been a real tragedy as she could have easily disappeared for good. We are forever thankful to that unknown taxi driver.

I was the chief warden during these coups which means the guy that takes over the central communications office and keeps tabs on private Americans around town, sort of like an operations center. We had a boat for pleasure on the Tigris and a couple of Marines went out in the boat and crossed the river to see what was going on. The militia started after them and shot up the boat. Fortunately they got back and reported to me. I was most unhappy. It could have been very serious, as they could easily have been killed. It was quite a sight to go up on your roof and see the planes zoom in across the river, shooting up the main streets and the ministries. You could hear the tanks rumbling at night and that kind of stuff.

One of the best things about Baghdad from my point of view was that you could go out into the desert and visit the archeological sites. There are thousands of sites, mostly unexplored, some dating back to 3000 BC or even older. We'd go out in our cars steering across the absolutely flat and hard-packed desert by compass. It was like a boat on a brown sea. The sites would pop up like islands as you approached. I loved it and still miss it.

*Q: You left Baghdad and came back to the Department where you worked in the Economic Bureau from 1964-65. I have you in the Maritime Division.*

MORIN: Yes, I had forgotten about that. I don't have it on my list.

**RICHARD W. BOGOSIAN**  
**General Services Officer**

## **Baghdad (1963-1965)**

*Ambassador Richard Bogosian was born on July 18, 1937, in Boston, Massachusetts. He studied history at Tufts University and graduated from University of Chicago Law School. In 1962 he entered the Foreign Service and his career has included positions in Niger Republic, Chad, Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda. Ambassador Bogosian was interviewed by Vladimir Lehovich in 1998.*

*Q: What happened from the time you joined the Foreign Service in the summer of 1962 till you went off to Baghdad?*

BOGOSIAN: Which was almost a year. It turned out to be almost a year.

*Q: Almost a year. What happened at that time?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, first of all, as I say, we began July 10 -

*Q: Did you learn Arabic, for example?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, that was part of it.

*Q: Okay.*

BOGOSIAN: For about two months we were in the initial training course, called the A-100 course. My recollection is that six months or so of Arabic followed that. And then there was consular training in the Middle East, area course, and by then it was the spring of 1963, and in those days the fiscal year ended June 30, and quite typically, there was a travel freeze in the spring because they had run out of travel money. And so for about two months I worked in the NEA Bureau on CENTO affairs because one of the fellows needed to get out of his job to do training and the other fellow hadn't come in yet. So the net result was it took almost a year. I joined the Foreign Service on July 10, 1962, and we sailed for Baghdad on July 9, 1963.

*Q: A year of preparation.*

BOGOSIAN: A year of preparation.

*Q: How good was your Arabic?*

BOGOSIAN: When I finished the six months, I was graded at S-2, which was enough to get me off language probation. Now, I never really did follow up. I never took the extended course in either Beirut or Tunis, and in that sense I never really got much beyond that, as far as Arabic is concerned, although I've served at four posts where Arabic is spoken.

*Q: Do you understand it and you can-*

BOGOSIAN: I can manage up to a point. There's a world of difference between me and someone who is S-3 or S-4 in Arabic, nor did I ever really learn to read Arabic. But it has been useful. I've been able to make use of my Arabic. In fact, in studying Arabic, one of the first sentences they taught us was "Where is the American embassy?" *Wayn as-safira al-amerikyia?* And we got to Baghdad in the evening on July 23, 1963. It was like landing on the moon, and the next day we got up, and I could see the flag, but I couldn't figure out how to get there. And this old Arab walked down the street, and I said, well, here goes nothing, and I looked at him, and I said, "*Wayn as-safira al-amerikyia?*" And he said to me in Arabic, "Well, just go down the street and turn left." So it worked.

*Q: Good for you. So it was worth every month. Dick, Iraq, 1963 - tell us a little. What was it like?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, the first thing to note is that in February of 1963, during the Muslim month of Ramadan, the Baath Party mounted a coup and overthrew Abdul Karim Kassem, who five years earlier had overthrown the monarchy. In Baghdad we had had very close relations at the time of the Baghdad Pact; in fact, the Baghdad Pact was headquartered there. And the régime was very friendly to the United States. And they were swept away in what was clearly an anti-Western and essentially radical coup in 1958. But then Kassem, who I guess was somewhat idiosyncratic, fell to the Baathis. Now the Baathis have remained in power ever since, and they also took over power in Damascus at about the same time. The thing about the Baathis is that they're secular, notwithstanding Saddam Hussein's protestations of Islamic issues, but they're relatively secular, and they tend to be radical in terms of their position on Arab-Israeli issues. They're not particularly friendly to the West.

Now when I got to Baghdad, there was a group in power that, if you will, is the direct ancestor of Saddam Hussein's faction. He was not around in those days, or certainly not that anyone would notice. They were overthrown in November, and I would note that in November 1963 there were three things that were quite memorable for us, and they happened all around the same time. One was the assassination of John Kennedy, and when one of the embassy employees called me to say that the President has been shot, we thought he meant Iraq because those things didn't happen in countries like the United States. So as you can imagine; it was quite a shock. Now this happened shortly after a coup in Iraq, and as a result, during our memorial services, people had to walk to certain places. The coup in Baghdad was an internal Baathi thing, the moderate faction overthrew the radical faction, and then after I left that radical faction came back into power.

The third thing that happened was around that time we had Duke Ellington and his orchestra playing for us on a USIA program. He gave concerts, of course. I got to meet him. But he was increasingly nervous about being in Baghdad. On the other hand, to some extent as a result of my cajoling, we got Duke Ellington to play for our Marine Ball that year, and needless to say, it was one of the greatest Marine Balls that ever took place.

When you say "What was Iraq like?" I think there are two or three things to mention. One was that of all the assignments I've had, that was the one where the government was most unpleasant to us. During the two years I was there - first of all we maintained diplomatic relations - it isn't the way it is now - and there were times when they were a little easier than others, but after all is

said and done, they were hostile in the sense of being very difficult to deal with. Our ambassador had no real access beyond the under secretary of foreign affairs.

*Q: Who was our ambassador?*

BOGOSIAN: Robert Strong in those days. Robert Strong was really a China hand, but he had, effectively, had to leave during the McCarthy purges, and he ended up in Middle East affairs, where he had previously headed the part of the Middle East Bureau that dealt with the Arab countries. In any event, the Iraqis weren't hostile in the sense of, say, the way the Iranians were after the revolution, but they were difficult. They took one of our local employees, one of our Foreign Service nationals, who was our main political advisor, and they put him in jail. And he was a diabetic, and they wouldn't let him have insulin. Later, they took a Kurdish employee we had and pulled his fingernails out. They took an Armenian employee we had and literally put him on the rack. They were a very mean and nasty régime, albeit not as bad as Saddam.

*Q: Was this a tradition they'd picked up from their predecessors and predecessors before them?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, you know, the Iraqi people are interesting. I think there probably is a certain history of extremely harsh governments. I will say that some of the most wonderful people we ever met were Iraqis, and in fact, as my wife says, when you have an Iraqi friend, you have a friend for life who'll do anything for you. But on a governmental level - for example, we went to Babylon as tourists, and the security person sat just a few feet from us and watched us the whole time. And we were, of course, the most junior people in the embassy. So there was this kind of pervasive suspicion, very different attitude toward issues involving the Middle East, the key Middle Eastern issues, and in that sense it was not a very pleasant assignment.

That said, I would note a couple of other things that perhaps are more personal. Baghdad was our first assignment, and as was done in those days, they consciously gave us a rotational assignment. Now there were two of us there at the time. There was a fellow named Cameron Sanders and I, and we arrived within a few weeks of each other. So we sort of went around the embassy, and I forget what Cameron's rotation was, but I began in Political, and the Ambassador said, "Oh, you're getting dessert first." And as you know, most Foreign Service people seem to like political work the best, but it was probably the single most boring assignment I had, mainly because they simply didn't need me. They had a three-person political section that could cover the issues in Iraq. The rest of my time was divided equally between economics and administration, and I found that I enjoyed those much more. The trouble with administration was that you could never leave work behind you because people were forever pestering you, and sometimes it was difficult. On the other hand, there were days one had a lot of fun. I was sort of the junior GSO, and I took my clipboard every day. We had a wonderful compound. It was designed by José Luis Sert, who was a renowned architect at Harvard, and there was a brief period in the late '50s and early '60s when the State Department retained the services of the most renowned architects in the world, and he was the one for Baghdad. And he designed an embassy and an ambassador's residence that was supposed to evoke an Arab tent in the desert. We had an embassy gardener who was growing flowers that had never been grown before in Baghdad. Our garden was irrigated by the Tigris River - our property went down to the river. And so I would

go out every day, and I would talk to our people, like Nimrod K. Mansour, who managed the laborers. Nimrod spoke eight languages. He spoke English-

*Q: Nimrod, the Valorous.*

BOGOSIAN: Maybe. I remember Nimrod K. Mansour. He was Assyrian. He spoke Assyrian, his mother tongue, and Arabic, of course, because it's the language of Iraq, and English, because the British were there, and Urdu, because they brought all these people from India, and Armenian and Kurdish and Turkish, because that's who he grew up with, and Persian and so forth. And then there was George Debaizer, who ran the warehouse, and a few other people. But my favorite was the guard who watched the embassy boat, and he lived in a lift-van down where our property met the Tigris River, and this is dead serious, and he said, "Mr. Bogosian, can you get me a little bit of stuff for the lift-van?" So I would get him a pillow and a rug maybe. I can't believe that these people existed, but they did.

*Q: I think what you're saying is it was much more fun to work as a general services officer than as a young political officer.*

BOGOSIAN: It was indeed, yes.

*Q: I'm not surprised.*

BOGOSIAN: But what I did particularly enjoy was Econ because in economics what I found, and one reason why I chose to specialize in economics, was that there were issues of substance - there were bilateral issues and so forth - and yet you had a chance to get out and about, and so that hostility that greeted one disappeared when you talked to a businessman. For example, I did a report on the insurance industry, and this got me around to a whole range of people. I did a report on the cement industry, and some time later the Ambassador said, I need to get in touch with so-and-so, he's a key political figure. I said, "Oh, I know him, he's the head of the Cement Marketing Board." Well, I was a junior officer, but I had access to him in his capacity as chairman of the Cement Marketing Board, and when I went to call on him at the Ambassador's request to try to set up a meeting, he said, "I'd love to see the American Ambassador, but politically I can't. It'll kill me." So that's where I learned that sometimes, through doing economic work, you can actually penetrate.

The other thing that happened in Baghdad that is worth remembering is that we had a school, and in our wisdom we worked out an agreement with the Iraqis that if we did not accept Iraqi children, then they wouldn't make us teach Arabic and Islam; and that worked out fine because we had no desire to get involved with local children. The teachers were all Americans. My wife taught. Most of the teachers were wives of Iraqis, and what this meant was that, through her, I had contact with a much broader range of Iraqis than I might have had otherwise, so in that sense, notwithstanding the fact that I was the youngest person in the embassy, I did have an opportunity to meet and work with Iraqis in a way that might not have been possible if my wife wasn't teaching.

*Q: Can I ask a question? How would you characterize American policy at that time toward Iraq?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, it's interesting, Vlad, in the light of some of the things that have happened over the last few years. Our Ambassador expressed gratitude for the fact that nobody had any interest in Iraq. We had no Congressional delegations; there was no press interest; nobody was really pushing to come out there. In that sense, it certainly wasn't the way it was ten or twenty or a hundred years before, but I think I joined the Foreign Service when it still wasn't that easy to make a phone call. Frankly, it wasn't that easy to make a copy of a document. The technology that exists today that permits faxes and e-mails and who knows what-all didn't exist in 1963, and so as a result, in Iraq we were kind of on our own.

And there were three principal elements to Iraq, not counting the Cold War, which of course permeated everything in those days. One was the Kurdish problem, and the Kurds were in revolt, as they've been almost permanently for as long as anyone can remember. I don't recall that we got that involved. I mean, we tracked what was going on. We had people who were in touch with the Kurdish community. But frankly, we weren't about to do anything with the Kurds, so it was more just a reporting function. I don't believe - and things may have gone on that I didn't know about - that we ever got involved in any really serious programs with the Kurds. The second was the Arab-Israeli issue. Now you couldn't be at an Arab post and not be involved in the Arab-Israeli issue, and the point there was that Iraq always thought of itself as in competition with Egypt for dominance in the Arab world. But in fact, I don't think Iraq was a major player in the Arab-Israeli issue. Now the main event that occurred in those days was the '67 War, which by definition was after I left Baghdad, and so what happened was that the Iraqis would take a very strident tone in their media. They were totally unsympathetic, very strongly opposed to Israel, and needless to say, that carried over to their attitudes toward the United States. The third factor of Iraq was oil, and while I was there the oil flowed. Now when I was there, I don't think people realized the vast reserves that Iraq has. Maybe some people in the oil company did. The company was called the Iraq Petroleum Company, and some of its ownership was American, but it was essentially the British that were running it. It was the British part of IPC that was managing it, and there again, I think we essentially kept a watching brief.

Frankly, the other things that went on - Iraq is the largest exporter of dates in the world, and they make the best dates, but it rarely became an issue. I mean, we were always trying to get them to improve the quality and so forth of the dates. We had a consulate in Basra in those days. There were always Christians who were hoping the Americans would protect them the way the British used to, and a certain amount of emigration.

*Q: Dick, you're describing an Iraq of 35 or 37 years ago, and in certain ways it doesn't sound too different, maybe a little less extreme.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I think it depends on what you're talking about. I visited Iraq in the mid-'70s, and what I noticed was the city of Baghdad was a little, not cleaner so much, but there were some new buildings and new mosques and even statues - things like that. But all the people walked looking at the ground, and so this sort of a police state - evidently it's as bad now as it ever was. Iraq should be much, much richer, but they've been hobbled by war and one thing or another. What's new, Vlad, when the Gulf War was emerging, I couldn't believe that Iraq represented such a threat. That is to say that they had that kind of weaponry or that kind of

research. And my wife and I agreed that there's no way that the Iraqi soldiers could be a threat, because they're terrible fighters. And in the event that proved to be the case. So you have a kind of ambivalence or dichotomy - I don't know what the right word is - because on the one hand, they've developed a kind of military structure that is indeed frightening, and, as has been pointed out, they used some of these weapons on their own people; on the other hand, I can't believe that that régime has any popular support. What we know, though, is this. One of the teachers my wife worked with has been living in Baghdad, and of course we really don't have any contact with her anymore, but at one point it was evident that she was so insulated from the outside world that she had developed a rather distorted view of how people... And so I can imagine how the Iraqi Arabs feel.

On the other hand, it has been 35 years since we've lived there and 25 years since I've been there, so I can't speak to what's going on now.

*Q: So, Dick, Iraq, then, lasted for your family until 1965.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, from '63 to '65. I did want to mention one thing, Vlad, and that is that in our system, my grade, when I went to Baghdad, was what they called FSO-8. And it's common for people to get promoted after one or two years. And I didn't get promoted in Baghdad, partly because my writing wasn't very good, and one of the things that happened to me in Baghdad, which is common though I'm not sure it happens to everybody, but I had one boss, a guy by the name of Lonnie Morin, who was my boss when I first went in the Economic Section. Whereas my previous boss said, "You know, maybe the reason you can't write too well was that your first language was not English," Lonnie said, "Do this report on insurance." He made me write it I don't know how many times, and in the process I finally learned how to write. I've been fortunate in my career to have a number of bosses like that who gave me the kind of help that really makes a difference. In a personal sense that was a major turning point in my career, to have Lonnie "teach" me how to write.

Having served in the Middle East, having wanted to go there, I began to think about maybe going somewhere else. And keep in mind that that was at a point when I thought we'd leave the Foreign Service rather than stay in. So I thought that the whole point was to come back to Washington or, if not, go to Europe.

*Q: Was your family enjoying it?*

BOGOSIAN: My wife loved Baghdad. The children had no notion of what was going on.

*Q: So basically four years after you joined the Foreign Service and after three years overseas, you were getting the bug.*

BOGOSIAN: Hold on, two years.

*Q: Two years overseas.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. By the way, when we got to Baghdad, each of us got sick, and my son lost a third of his weight, so we had our moments, but by and large it was a good assignment. We had some awfully nice people in the embassy and so on.

So I was pushing to get an assignment out of the Middle East, and as a result, I was assigned to Cairo. And when I talked to the people in Personnel, I said, "You know, you told us you tried to assign people where they want, and you've sent me to Cairo and I wanted to get out of the Middle East." He said, "Oh, but we have an investment in you that we have to get back from teaching you Arabic, and by the way, they like you in NEA." So we said, well, all right, and we got ready to go to Cairo, which was one of those posts where you needed to buy everything and so forth. I remember we got a champagne-colored love seat, and there was no time to Scotchguard it, and years later, when it was dirty and smelly I kept remembering that. Anyway, a week before we were to leave for Cairo, they called and said, "Your assignment's been changed," and I thought they must mean that we were going to Yemen or some awful place. And they said, "You're going to Paris." I said, "Paris? I don't even speak French." They said, "That's right, come down and learn French." And when I did, I saw the fellow who told me why they assigned me to Cairo, and I said, "You explained why they assigned me to Cairo, and I'm going to Paris." He said, "Well, the position was abolished, and that made you the property of the Junior Officer Division, and they thought you should have a world language and a totally different experience," which proved to me that Personnel can justify any action they take.

Q: Any, absolutely.

**GORDON S. BROWN**  
**Security Officer**  
**Baghdad (1963-1966)**

*Ambassador Gordon S. Brown was born in Rome, Italy in 1936. He graduated from Stanford University in 1957. He served in the Army from 1957 until 1960, and joined the Foreign Service in 1960. His overseas career included positions in Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, Tunisia, and Mauritania. Ambassador Brown was the Political Advisor to the Central Commander in 1989 to 1991 and served as the Ambassador to Mauritania from 1991 to 1994. Ambassador Brown was interviewed in December 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

Q: Where were you assigned in '62?

BROWN: We were assigned to Iraq, and I was assigned as sort of the clean-up batter in the administrative section. I did personnel, security, travel. All the things that either the GSO or admin officer wouldn't do.

Q: You were in Iraq from when to when?



BROWN: '62 to '66--that's wrong because I must have gotten there in '63. '63 to '66. I earlier said I that I had left training in '62, because I was almost two years in training.

*Q: In '63 when you went there, this was five years after the overthrow of the Hashemites. What was the situation as you saw it in Iraq in 1963?*

BROWN: Well, again, it's amazing when you look back how little you actually knew. Abd al-Karim Qasim, who had been dictator in Iraq for a number of years after the Hashemites were overthrown, had just been overthrown himself -- I believe in February -- and we must have gotten there in June or July. The new government was a nationalist government, not particularly pro-Nasser, not Baathi. It was Arab nationalist, and the president was a fellow called Abdul Salam Aref. At the time, we were bothered by the pro-Arab nationalist, anti-American tone of the government. But I think in retrospect it probably was the high point of our relationship with Iraq since the fall of the Hashemites, because these were basically military pragmatists who wanted to run their state independent of Nasser, so they stayed away from too much Nasserist rhetoric. They did not want the Baath to overthrow them so they kept a good deal of distance between themselves and the Baath party in Syria, and were running a fairly forward-looking modern, secular, semi-militarist Arab nationalist regime. We had a major dispute with them about the nationalization of the Iraqi Petroleum Company properties: Public Law 81, I can't recall exactly. That was the major irritant in our relations. We had cut off aid, of course, because they hadn't paid compensation. I think you're right-- it was the Hickenlooper Amendment. So what was poisoning our relationships was that specific issue, the existence of Arab nationalism, and our support for Israel -- as a background kind of complication to our relations. And, of course, our presumed involvement in the Kurdish insurgency which was going on at the time. So our relations with the Iraqi regime were not good, but they weren't bad either in retrospect. We were communicating with them, we talked with them, and they spoke in relatively reasonable terms.

*Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?*

BROWN: Bob Strong, who was one of the old hands of the Near East Bureau. He headed the Near East office before he came out to Baghdad, an phlegmatic and rather interesting man but one who had most of his staff in fear of him. I was probably too stupid to be afraid of him.

*Q: How did this translate?*

BROWN: He had a reputation, I guess, for being ruthless in his evaluation of people's careers. I was too far down, I think, to be directly threatened -- but most of the section chiefs were quite scared of the ambassador. The DCM was perhaps not the best interlocutor between a tough ambassador and a scared staff. It was a happy enough embassy, but the relationships with the front office were not that warm. It wasn't a collegial place to work.

*Q: I imagine coming out of Arabic and find yourself down at the bottom of the administrative section must have been sort of a shock to you.*

BROWN: Well, I remember Hume Horan, who had just come out of Baghdad where he had been General Services Officer, had told me he had spent half his tour with his hands down in toilets (figuratively), and he had found it very enriching. So I tried to be positive about this. Hume is always positive, and I tried to model myself on him. But you're right, I did not find it all that exciting to process personnel actions, and worry about the security of the compound, when I'd been trained in Arabic and thought I was going to be a hot shot reporter.

*Q: Were there any particular things that you had to deal with that might be interesting?*

BROWN: Well, as security officer, of course, I had to deal with the Iraqi police, which was an experience which I think was very useful, but not particularly enlightening. Periodically they would arrest some of our employees and I would have to go down and beg them not to crush their fingers. I'm saying that in an illustrative fashion but Iraqi police even in the best of times were not exactly gentle with people they arrested, and they never would tell us why they had picked up our employees, and give any excuse when they released them. And the employees would never speak to us frankly because they were scared. Iraq has never been a pleasant place to run afoul of the law. I remember going down to talk to some of these police officers, and have them tell me about how much they had enjoyed the training they had gotten from the anti-insurgency courses we had trained them in. And I thought that there was something wrong with our foreign policy that we were training these people to maltreat our local employees.

*Q: Again, I realize you're looking at it from the point of view of taking care of personnel actions, but did you pick up any emanations about how we viewed Soviet influence in Iraq?*

BROWN: Obviously the departure of Qasim had created a great plus for us in a sense, because Qasim had been perceived as very pro-Russian. At the time, Baghdad was a much more friendly place than it presumably had been a few years before. When we first went to Baghdad and showed up in the market, we were greeted by shopkeepers who would say "Zdrasdvitye," because they thought that having blue eyes or fair hair meant we were inevitably going to be Russian. But the world had changed, and the regime was much less pro-Russian. And yes, we saw Russia as a big complicator in terms of our relationship with not only Iraq but the Arab world in general. By this time, most of the anxiety had shifted to how far Nasser was going to play footsie with the Russians, because the Iraqi regime was definitely, if not anti-Russian, at least equally anti-Russian and anti-American.

*Q: Did you get any feel for our pro-Israeli policy at this point? Or was this somewhat removed?*

BROWN: It was somewhat removed. The Iraqis have their own set of complexes and problems. They strike poses about Israel, or they did at the time. I think we -- all of us who work in the Arab world -- have learned that there is a certain amount of a drill involved in establishing relationship with any Arab, on a bureaucratic or personal side. That when you first meet them, you're going to get exposed to a good deal of rhetoric, and a good deal of complaints about America's position in the Middle East, and America's support for Israel. And after that is all over, they will then get down to business.

*Q: Gordon, we talked about relations with the Russians and how it was done, so we're going to have to do a bit of back-tracking on this. You're in Iraq. What was your job?*

BROWN: My job was in the beginning in the administrative section. But when I went back to Washington for home leave at the end of the first year of my assignment in Baghdad, I intended to go in and complain and ask for an early transfer out because I thought I was wasting my Arabic language in that situation. And, much to my surprise, when I went in to the Department to make my complaint, I discovered that I had been transferred within the embassy to the political section -- where I was going to be in charge of our program to contact and identify promising young Iraqi potential leaders: this being at that point a priority of our government (if you remember Robert Kennedy's insistence that our ambassadors spend more time identifying the leaders of the future).

*Q: I might add that we had the same thing in Yugoslavia at this point and there was a certain reluctance because, at least during the Tito time which lasted almost another 20 years, the old guys were still doing it. I mean it was a little hard to pick up young leaders who were really going to go any place at that time. Could you talk a bit about how you went about this?*

BROWN: Well, to be perfectly honest, it was something we sort of concocted. And, since we had almost no access to the lower levels of Iraqi bureaucracy because the Iraqi government was very strict in its procedures, (they put even a third secretary at a level where he had to see an office director), we were unable to identify the people who actually might be moving up in the bureaucracy. So we decided to go even a lower level, and try to reach out to people at the university level. I went to Baghdad University and helped set up cultural affairs programs (I should explain that as youth officer I was assigned to USIA as the assistant cultural affairs officer and I was doing the usual cultural things: cultural presentations, and bringing lecturers in, and so on), I would try to go to the university and set up the lecturers to meet with the most prestigious, or most likely future leaders, in the university. By and large, however, the people we brought over were sports figures, coaches, academics on middle eastern history, or American political science, or something like that, and we were speaking mostly in the faculties which were lower down the pecking order in Baghdad University, like the faculties of law, faculty of sports, and the faculty of sociology -- a faculty in which I myself was registered as a student. And we were not really getting to the students in the schools of engineering and medicine, which were places where in fact the brightest students went-- in fact where the most politically active students were present. So I think probably we didn't have much success in identifying leaders. I do remember doing the equivalent of Rolodexes and drawing up biographies of people on the basis of my rather random contacts around Baghdad University. But I think in the end we didn't do terribly much more than teach them the fastest way to the American Library -- so that they could burn it down in '67!

*Q: You said you were taking a course dealing with tribal politics.*

BROWN: Right. As a student, or an auditor, in the sociology department (I had to get my entree where I could, and this is a course which I found interesting, both to myself and to the embassy from what it taught us about Iraqi society). The professor was a very interesting fellow, and the students were interesting at a personal level. I enjoyed meeting a lot of them and palling around

with them: going on field trips. But I don't think I learned terribly much that was useful to the US government youth program. It was useful to me personally, understanding how Iraqi society worked -- because it was a tribally based society. The official ideology at that time, of course, was that this was a modern state and had by-passed tribalism. Therefore, what I was doing at the university was seen as a little suspect. I may be the only Foreign Service officer I know of who was the direct subject of a Foreign Ministry note-- a note eventually came out from the Iraqi authorities, a circular to all embassies in Baghdad, saying that henceforth auditing at the university was forbidden to all diplomats. So I was kicked out of the university -- although I continued to go, even though I was no longer officially an auditor.

*Q: Do you think as far as the reporting that we sort of kept tribal associations in mind? I'm thinking of today where Saddam Hussein who is the dictator of Iraq, I mean his roots are tribal aren't they?*

BROWN: His roots are familial really rather than tribal -- a group of families up around Samara and Tikrit are his basic source of support. And, yes, I think that tribalism is extremely important in understanding how Arab societies work, and I tend to be amazed at the degree to which the American embassies report on political currents in Arab countries as if the political parties existed as real powers in their own right. Whereas I think quite often the political party is a front for a particular group of tribes, or a particular group of family interests. You really have to look behind the political labels to discover the families and tribes that are active. I've carried this prejudice with me. I think that anthropological and sociological analysis is sometimes much more relevant than political analysis in looking at Arab and traditional cultures. I think I learned that in Iraq -- if I hadn't learned it before, it certainly was cemented in Iraq. The Iraqi politics are familial politics. As we see with the Kurds today, who are unable to agree amongst each other about much -- when they've been given the most obvious chance for autonomy and independence they've ever had, or at least had in the last 40 years, and they're blowing it because the two leading Kurd families can't get together.

*Q: Could we touch a bit on relations with some of the surrounding countries. How was the Kurdish situation viewed at the time you were there?*

BROWN: Let me go to one point which might have been covered earlier, but that I want to look at again. Iraq, because it was trying to keep its independence from Arab nationalism as led by Nasser at the time, was careful and quite correct in its relationships with its neighbors, specifically Jordan -- which was itself trying to keep independent from Nasser's pressure -- and also with Iran. Iraq's relationships with Iran were correct and fairly good. Its relationships with Syria went up and down depending on the extent to which Iraqi politics were meddled in by the Baath party, which was headquartered in Syria. I think by that time already the Syrians -- I mean the Baathis -- were in power in Damascus. And there were various Baath coup attempts in Iraq while we were there. So the relationship with Syria was much more strained than it was with Jordan or Iran. The relationships with Iran were quite open. The border was open, trade moved fairly well -- as much as it can between two countries with similar economies. The Iraqis were spending, for example, a good deal of money on a sugar plantation right at the border of Iran, so that they could have minimal security anxiety as far as Iran was concerned. Iran, however, was meddling in Kurdistan, as were the Israelis, as were probably we, and that was an irritant to our

relations with the Iraqis because our friends -- the Iranians and the Israelis -- were meddling, keeping Kurdistan heated up against the central regime.

*Q: Why would we be involved if we had correct trade relations with Iran?*

BROWN: Well, I've never been quite sure -- probably we are not quite sure -- of the degree to which we were involved. I certainly know that the Israelis and the Iranians were, given our intelligence relationships with those regimes. I always assumed that there was an American presence back there too, and I think all of them had interest in keeping Iraq destabilized. Iraq has always been a potential power, and potential trouble, in the Middle East -- and I think keeping it weak and disorganized was to our advantage at that point. Certainly it would seem to be to the advantage of the Iranians and the Israelis. It probably played into Nasser's hands, which was not necessarily in our interest.

*Q: What about Kuwait?*

BROWN: Kuwait was not a major feature of our relationship with Iraq, or even Iraqi politics. Our relationship with Iraq was fixated on one issue, and that was the compensation issue for the seized oil properties, and was pretty much driven by that. Kuwait lurked in the background as a potential irritant, because Iraq certainly was -- at least rhetorically -- pushing its claim to Kuwait as the lost 19th province, and had never dropped its claim there. In fact, I think several years before, it threatened to invade Kuwait, which at that time precipitated a British expeditionary force to protect Kuwait's independence vis-a-vis Iraq. It didn't so much irritate our relations as British relations, because at that time the British were still the guardians of Kuwait.

*Q: Did the British have any influence in Iraq at that time?*

BROWN: Yes, but less with each passing year, I think, because as the ex-colonial power they were looked upon slightly askance. They had supported the Hashemites up until the coup. They had influence and they had access, because many of the Iraqis at that point...there was a good, and still important, Iraqi bourgeoisie which had been trained quite often in Turkey or particularly in England, who were English-oriented, and English-centered. So that gave British interests a particular entree which we didn't have. But we were seen as more powerful, and more relevant than the British.

*Q: Let's talk about the lead off up to the Gulf War. I'm interviewing more or less concurrently David Mack who was the deputy assistant secretary dealing with everything except Palestine. So I'd like to get your view here. Iraq was beginning--what was it, June or July, making noises towards Kuwait. Did that raise any particular warning bells with us?*

BROWN: Yes, but....this has been written about it and it's an item...but I don't think we had any particular knowledge down at CENTCOM about what was going on. We were mainly receivers of information. Iraq was blustering. Iraq was broke. Iraq wanted people to bail it out, and was threatening the Kuwaitis, who were the nearest and richest people that they could threaten readily. And we saw this as not....basically, I think, our reaction was a little light: mine was certainly. I subscribed to the general theory at the time, and that was that the Arabs had periodic

feuds, and periodic hysteria fits amongst each other, and even occasionally took up force (usually kind of symbolically) against each other, but that no Arab threatened the existence of the Arab state structure -- which was as artificial for Iraq as it was for Kuwait. That once you started questioning the boundaries and the existence of the states, then anybody could question anything. We just assumed that if Iraq moved against Kuwait, it would move in a way to get whatever kind of blackmail it wanted out of Kuwait, and then retreat, or go back. I think in the Headquarters the betting was -- Schwarzkopf was betting -- that Iraq would invade but stop, occupy a little bit of the north of Kuwait, saying, "Watch it or we'll come the rest of the way if you don't give us what we want." And then there would be an Arab mediation and everybody would go home, and the Kuwaitis would be forced to pay. Because frankly most of us thought the Kuwaitis were behaving pretty stupidly. They were pretty arrogant.

*Q: David Mack was saying you could always defeat intelligence estimates if you do something incredibly stupid. And that was the feeling that what Saddam Hussein did at that particular time.*

BROWN: Well, he could have come off with it. He could have. I think (that his error was in) offending the entire Arab state system, as well as the international community: not only by invading, but by then trumpeting that this was for all time, and it wasn't just a question of settling the current dispute, but settlement of Kuwait's hash, period. The minute he tried to replace the Kuwaiti ruler by force and put in a puppet regime, he changed the formula.

*Q: Really, up to things moving there was some requests I think slightly before anything happened on the part of the United Arab Emirates to have some refueling capability. Did that fall within your bailiwick?*

BROWN: Yes, indeed it did, and that was kind of fun because it put us in direct conflict with the Department of State. The UAE has a lot of offshore oil facilities, and they remembered that during the Iraq-Iran war the Iraqis had been quite successful in long range raids -- towards the end of the war, they had been able to conduct raids against Iranian oil facilities in the southern Gulf almost with immunity. The UAE was among the countries which were being yelled and screamed at by the Iraqis at that point. They were one of the countries that were over-producing their oil quota, and the Iraqis were claiming this was driving down prices, and therefore hurting Iraq, and that they were going to get even with the people who were hurting them. The UAE -- which had developed a relatively good relationship with CENTCOM -- I think decided to put it to a test, and they asked us for these tankers. We down at CENCOM said, yes, let's do it. And, of course, as you can imagine, our leadership in Washington did not feel that was appropriate. I don't know whether David Mack did. He may have.

*Q: He said he thought it was. At first they had to go through...ask the Saudis, and the Saudis predictably said no.*

BROWN: The Saudis were angry. Kelly didn't want to do it because he'd have to explain it to the Israeli lobby. There was a lot of foot dragging and outright opposition in Washington, but eventually they came around to thinking this wasn't such a bad idea, as a show of American ability to help our friends in time of need. It was just a question of a couple of tankers. I remember that, after days and days of arguing about whether they could go out there, the tankers

finally did go out. And then, of course, they had the wrong refueling equipment so they couldn't refuel any of the UAE planes anyway for still another couple of days until we got different kinds of equipment out! It was an interesting drill of American decision making, and it was not one of our finer hours, to be perfectly honest.

*Q: According to Mack again, he said this did seem to capture a certain amount of attention of the Iraqis. The only thing we had been sending notes saying don't do anything, but the fact that we actually did something which showed we were willing to project something into the Gulf caught their interest.*

BROWN: It certainly didn't cause them to delay.

*Q: Before, what was it the 2nd of August? Was there any sort of honing the instrument at CENTCOM, something might happen so let's look a little closer. There were CIA reports of troops massing.*

BROWN: Yes. It didn't, however, I think, extend to the level at which it would have been most useful at that point, and that was the actual operational level. There were no operational plans being drafted as a result of this information. People on the intelligence side, people in the plans and policy side, political advisors, the general -- we were all following the issue as something that might exacerbate relations. The planes started flying on the night of the 10th. To think that in five days we were actually going to start deploying forces in a major way was not terribly likely. After all, the 82nd Airborne and other units are on permanent standby -- and I'm sure some steps were taken to make sure that planes were available, and things could move if they needed to -- but it was all done as a kind of routine. When you move up to a certain level of preparedness you make sure you've got the logistic capability to conduct whatever kind of deployment you may need to. There wasn't much being planned in the way of actually doing a deployment, and certainly not the kind of deployment which we were suddenly scheduling ten days later: moving whole divisions of ground troops and tanks.

*Q: The Soviet Union by this time...it was still the Soviet Union I believe, but with the reunification of Germany which had happened...*

BROWN: The reunification actually didn't take place until October or later, but anyway it was on the way.

*Q: The wall had gone down. Was anybody talking about what are we going to do with all this equipment in Europe?*

BROWN: No, that wasn't really a concern at the time, maybe it was in other parts of the Defense Department, but in terms of the parochial interest of CENTCOM, CENTCOM did not have any feeling that it had access to the stuff in Europe until much further down the pike.

*Q: Can you talk about what you experienced when things started to happen?*

BROWN: Well, obviously at first there was a great deal of confusion. Nobody really knew what was going to happen. Nobody knew whether we were going to go, whether we weren't going to go. Schwarzkopf went up to Washington and briefed on what he could do on short notice: send in the 82nd, send some wings of fighter aircraft, and that kind of stuff. That's easy to do. What's hard to do is get the bombs out there, and the artillery pieces, and later on tank divisions. So he was really briefing on instant response, AWACS, aircraft carriers that were in the Gulf.

Q: *Diego Garcia, did that play?*

BROWN: But even Diego Garcia took some weeks to break out of moth balls and sail over to the Persian Gulf. We were all confused, and I think none of us really expected to get quite the kind of invitation we got from the Saudis in the end. The Saudis, who had previously always been somewhat reluctant to really put their money down, never had had a situation like this -- a situation in which they were exposed to something truly threatening. They really surprised us all by saying "Yes, come, and come in a serious manner." Schwarzkopf said, "We can come with 200,000 people", and they said, "Yes, that sounds serious, let's do it". Two hundred thousand was a lot more than the ten thousand we had already sent.

Q: *Chas Freeman in my interview said King Fahd normally would never make a decision without going to his Council, but this time actually made the decision right there. "We don't have any time to consult, this is my decision, I'm making it"!*

BROWN: Actually, I take the figure back. I think we were talking about 100,000. And then it became 200,000 a week or so later, and then it became an awful lot more later.

Q: *What was your role during the very early part. I mean, all of a sudden Saudi Arabia says "Help us". Did you have any part in the Saudi Arabia coming in?*

BROWN: No, none at all. That was one of the more interesting elements of confusion. I was sitting in Tampa, with bag packed, ready to go out to Saudi Arabia with General Schwarzkopf. If he was going to be the US representative sent to talk to the King, then he was going to take his whole team and go with him. There was a lot of pulling and hauling going on in Washington and Riyadh as to what team would go, what level, etc. And when we learned that Cheney was going to go and head the team...

Q: *He was Secretary of Defense.*

BROWN: Yes. To me that was an indication that the Saudis were going to invite us in. I realized that right away. If Schwarzkopf had gone, they would have done the thing you talked about before. The Saudis probably would have said, "Thank you very much for your briefing; now let us consider this; we'll get back to you in a week and let you know whether we've made a decision." The minute we knew that the Secretary of Defense was going to go, that meant that it was raised to a level of political commitment. If Schwarzkopf couldn't make a commitment, Cheney could. I mean Cheney could make a commitment that nobody else could make, and that it was much more likely to happen. But it also meant I wasn't on the plane. Because Cheney took all the people from Washington, and Schwarzkopf wound up leaving from Washington, rather than coming back to CENTCOM and picking up his people and moving out. So we were



sweating it out there down in CENTCOM, and when the decision came -- we listened to the wires from Riyadh -- and when the decision came to send the troops, all hell broke loose. Because they called CENTAF, the Central Command Air Force Detachment, and said, "Send!" And suddenly planes were in the air. I'm on the phone to people in Europe saying, "Planes are in the air and they're going to fly over your country in three hours; can you please get us permission?" And they're all going bananas because all of a sudden things have been launched and there hadn't been any preparation. And planes were flying, and countries were calling our embassies and saying, "What's going on? These planes are coming at us!" It was very confusing for a couple of days. The planes were going to places in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere where they weren't ready to receive them, and there was an endless amount of just plain, "How does it work?" kind of running around that we had to do.

*Q: What were you doing?*

BROWN: Mostly trying to straighten out the terrible snafus with any number of governments about aircraft movements, about overflight and landing requests, about getting the first deployments out there. Because we didn't forewarn anyone, we just started launching.

*Q: Were any countries from your perspective more difficult to deal with than others?*

BROWN: At this point it all sort of blends into a blur. I'm reminded by some interviews I'm doing for a book I'm writing now, that the French were difficult at first. The Spanish were pretty obliging all along, and we sent most of the stuff over Spain. But for a while there we had to send stuff around France because things we were sending down from England couldn't go over France; we had to go around France, over Spain to the Mediterranean and across. Luckily there were not too many overflight requests that are needed, usually just Spain.

*Q: After you finished that phase--in the first place were you getting both either assistance, or being by-passed? How did you feel from the State Department?*

BROWN: This was a point at which my relationship with the State Department didn't matter. To be perfectly honest, I was working directly with the embassies on these kinds of logistical problems, and the logistical problems really ate up our time for the next 8 or 10 days. We (the Headquarters) went out to Saudi Arabia I guess around the 15th of the month; I can't remember exactly when it was. Maybe it was a little bit later. But for those first ten days or so, it had all been just getting the initial wave of troops out there. Getting rid of the problems involved, and explaining to the governments involved that, "Yes, I'm sorry these planes landed in your air base in the middle of the night." Instructing ambassadors who were sometimes not instructed by the State Department, and trying to get things out as fast as possible. A lot of it was done on the phone rather than on telegrams.

*Q: How did you find the response?*

BROWN: By this time there was an obvious national commitment to do this and everybody was prepared to be helpful. Some countries were less supportive. In the beginning obviously you had the question, that you had to overfly Egypt to get into Saudi airspace. And the Israelis always

watched Egyptian airspace, so there was questions there, which I didn't deal much with, because Israel was not in the Central Command area.

*Q: Was there a feeling of great concern about the fact that it would take a while...we were putting things such as some aircraft and the 82nd Airborne into Saudi Arabia before and it would take a while to build up some more, and the Iraqi army was considered a battle hardened, the forth largest army in the world at that point.*

BROWN: Was there concern? Yes, there was concern at headquarters. Did I share it? No, I didn't. My own rather simplistic view was that the Iraqis had never fought except on short supply lines, and that they weren't capable of penetrating in any depth into Saudi Arabia. That once we had fighter aircraft -- two wings of fighter aircraft, and sufficient bombs... (which I think was by about the third or fourth day)...bombs and rockets to actually attack advancing columns of tanks - that we were going to be able to stop any Iraqi drive into Saudi Arabia. The military planners didn't believe that, and probably on their scenarios it wasn't a believable scenario. I just felt that the Iraqis wouldn't fight if they were opposed to western air power for a couple days. They wouldn't continue to advance; they'd stop.

*Q: It's both flat and open terrain there as we both know. It's not a very good place to try to send columns of tanks if you don't have air superiority which was pretty much the accepted idea wasn't it?*

BROWN: Well, we felt that the Iraqis...they still had their air force intact, obviously, but they were not good against other airplanes, and that they didn't know how to do combined exercises. And I felt the prospect of their advancing their tanks under their own air cover was unlikely. And I felt we could pretty effectively disrupt an advance of their tanks. But that was a non-military view. The military were saying they've got X tanks, we've got Y machine guns, and they'll beat us, and they were very worried.

*Q: Then what happened after the first about 15 days? I mean you were mainly involved in overflights, and straightening out the diplomatic problems of moving people across other people's countries.*

BROWN: And getting them set up in bases in countries which we didn't have any basing rights in. Towards the middle of the month, I'm not sure I know exactly when, the forward headquarters said, all right, we now have a location for you and are ready to move. So we picked up and went off to Riyadh. Once we were there we were thrown immediately into the question of what the military call "bed-down". Where do you deploy these people as they come in? What's their relationship with the local government? How do they get food and water, etc.? A lot of that fell into the realm of government to government relations, or what the military call political affairs. The military did not have political affairs teams at that point. Most of their political affairs teams are in the Reserves and hadn't yet been called up. So they were pretty thin on the ground in terms of being able to negotiate base agreements and all this other stuff. CENTCOM was fanning people out and I was helping provide guidance, essentially where the priorities were, what we needed to do; talking to ambassadors who were saying How do we arrange this, what do we do? A lot of it was trouble-shooting in those first days. It was really organizing and trouble-shooting,

setting up negotiations on status of forces so we'd have some agreement as to who supplied the water and the gas and the food. A lot of things had to be arranged on very short order, and not just in Saudi Arabia because I think we started fairly quickly deploying to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain.

*Q: Did the Gulf governments play a role?*

BROWN: Not immediately but very shortly afterwards Qatar joined in.

*Q: Did you get any assistance from the State Department?*

BROWN: At that point we were dealing with issues that the State Department didn't really have any handle on. To the degree we dealt with the State Department we dealt with the Political-Military branch of the State Department.

*Q: I was just wondering whether you got a couple junior officers to go out with you and that sort of thing.*

BROWN: I was dealing with the Political-Military branch of the State Department on a lot of these overflight requests because I would have a problem and I didn't know the international law. So I would deal with them and they were very helpful. I think it was after I'd been there for about a week or so they said they were sending a guy out, and from then on I always had a deputy. It was generally the same person. Doug Kenney was there for two months. He went away for a while and was replaced by a fellow who wasn't a State Department officer -- he was actually an intern or something like that recently from Georgetown Law -- a very good fellow, and very interested. They were both very helpful adjuncts because, for one thing, it meant I could get some sleep.

*Q: How did you work with the embassies?*

BROWN: One of the first things I did when we got to headquarters was phone around to the other embassies, give them my phone number, tell them where I was, and say that they could call me anytime day or night to solve problems that they had with the Command. That was, I think, pretty important: "If you've got a political problem, don't stew over it, tell me about it, we'll talk it over, we'll see if there's a way to deal with it." I knew most of these ambassadors, and frankly Schwarzkopf had done a pretty good job with most of them. So most of them trusted CENTCOM enough, at least, so there was not an adversarial relationship. And as I told Chas Freeman, his relationship with Schwarzkopf was so good that he put me out of a job. In the nine months we were there, I never had to intercede between the embassy and the Command. There was never a problem of any nature which involved...

*Q: I find it incredible with Chas Freeman, whom I know having interviewed him extensively, and by reputation Schwarzkopf, that they got along so well. Because Chas Freeman is very much quite an intellectual, and not a screamer or yeller, a man's man type guy. I mean he's much more on the sort of intellectual level.*

BROWN: Chas comes off pretty well with the military. He's forthright. I think that's the most important thing that Chas brought to this relationship. And that was obvious to me even when we visited a whole year before -- that Chas and Schwarzkopf got along very well. That they trusted each other; Chas spoke straight to Schwarzkopf. When we got there, Chas said essentially to Schwarzkopf at the first meeting, "You are going to be what's going on here for the foreseeable future. You understand that it is very important to make it work politically." As a matter of fact, Chas even had a conversation with Schwarzkopf when he was out there in the briefing of the King. He said, The worse thing that could happen is if the deployment affects the Saudi generals, the Saudi population, the Saudi public's impression of Americans negatively, because then the King will have real trouble supporting it. So you have to understand that your troops have to come briefed, and to come and behave. And Schwarzkopf accepted that from the beginning. So once they had that understanding -- that was even before we got there, or before a decision was made to get there -- the Command's response to Chas Freeman was, "Tell us what we need to avoid; what we need to do; and we'll do it -- because the most important thing is to make this work with the Saudis." And with that instruction from the top, Schwarzkopf had more trouble with his people internally than he had with the embassy. His people were furious with him: General Order One which said, No booze, No this, No that, and all the other things that were no-nos. Can you imagine the military saying: We're going to live by Muslim rules while we're here in Saudi Arabia? They didn't like it at all. But it was very important in setting the tone. It was important that the relationship with the Saudis be protected, and that we had to be almost leaning over backwards in order to avoid incidents. There was a lot of resentment in the military. But Schwarzkopf took it, and he said it was more important that we deal with the Saudis on a constructive basis than we have perpetual little picky fights with them. We still had lots of picky fights with them: every time a GI pissed on a wall for the first three weeks, we'd get a phone call from the Minister of Defense saying, "Your guy, or your woman, has desecrated the holy land!" And Schwarzkopf keep trying to kick it down to the working levels channels which Chas Freeman was trying to set up. And, of course, the Saudi decision making authority kicks everything up to the highest level, because nobody can decide at a low level. So we in fact made the Saudis, in the end, kick these kinds of issues down to the local commander level so they didn't become politicized. After a couple of weeks of working on it -- and Chas Freeman and his embassy, worked effectively with commanders as they came. He sent people from the embassy down to where the troops were being deployed and said, "General so-and-so, I want you to meet the governor of the province; this guy is important; you talk to him. You name the guy to be liaison with him, he'll liaison with you, call me if there is any problem. I don't want to hear anything about any problem going beyond that level." It worked. Freeman got the embassy to intercede. So the Pol-Mil side of the Command really didn't have to do this. The embassy was actively engaged in making sure that it worked at the unit level.

*Q: Obviously you were busy as hell. What after this network in relationship had been organized. Then what?*

BROWN: It was interesting because once the Command goes into a war-fighting, or war planning mode, they're interested in the political advisor only to tell them what's going on in the rest of the world. So my role from then on was in an essence to brief them about what the Syrians were saying, what the Jordanians were saying, etc. It was essentially briefing the General and the other members of the Command on what was going on. And in continuing to solve these

endless little operational problems as they came up. To say the systems were in place, and things worked, is not to say there weren't day to day crises; there were. But by and large they worked. We traveled a lot to the other states. I traveled with Schwarzkopf to help bed down the troops; to thank the local rulers for their support and assistance. We traveled to Taif to talk to the Kuwaitis, etc. There were always things to do. My role was not central, however, at that point. My role was definitely very much in support, and looking for places to make an input, and once again listening to what people were saying, and going to the staff meeting and saying, "Are you really thinking of doing that? Do you know what the political consequences are going to be if you work it through? Get your staff on the political consequences, because I can tell you right off the bat that X, Y, Z are likely to be a problem." So a lot of it was that, not even working with Schwarzkopf, but working with the Director of Plans, working with the Director of Operations, etc., as I saw them doing things which I thought were going to have political repercussions that they might not have thought about.

*Q: This incredible coalition with the Syrians, the Egyptians, French, British and almost anybody else you can think of. Normally a political advisor would sort of nudge the general and say, you've got this Syrian, you've got to watch this subject, get them ready. Would you find yourself in that position?*

BROWN: This is where a retentive memory was such a great boon to Schwarzkopf and to me. I would quite often learn that Schwarzkopf was meeting with somebody at the last minute, because the schedule kept changing, and I wouldn't have a chance to run into him and say, "Don't forget this guy is a cousin of the minister, of whatever the hell." He didn't have a briefing paper - - you couldn't do it, you didn't have time. And sometimes you didn't even get to sit in on the meeting, or you didn't know that the meeting was taking place. Then Schwarzkopf would come back to staff meeting and relate about what had gone on. I was so happy time after time to see Schwarzkopf, out of his memory, reflect things I'd told him a year before. Or he'd turn to me and say, "Did we do that right, or should we have...?etc." But quite often, you were playing catch-up -- and that was the hardest part of my job -- feeling that once they went into this frenzy of activity, the normal staff pace just disappeared, and I never could find a way to plug in in advance. On some things I couldn't find a way to plug in, particularly on Schwarzkopf's schedule. But he has a very retentive memory, as I said before, and was very conscious of the political impact of what he was doing, and he remembered things that we told him before on our trips, things that he'd done on his trips, and he was able, I think, to deal much more effectively in many ways with almost all of the foreigners, than he was with his own staff. He was really very good on the political side. But not thanks to me; I was running around and catching up.

*Q: How about with the Emirates and Bahrain? Any particular problems there?*

BROWN: No, really there were so few problems after the first couple of weeks that you got down to relatively routine things about negotiating status of forces agreements, introducing new elements into the mix -- like all of a sudden, I remember once, Baker had been to Rome and convinced the Italians that they wanted to contribute to the force, and the next thing we knew there were some Italian airplanes coming in. Nobody knew where to send them. Those kinds of things, and phoning an embassy and saying, "Could you please talk to the Minister of Defense and ask him if he'd take a wing of Italian aircraft, because we don't want them in Saudi Arabia.

We don't have a place to park them.” There were points in which even those super jumbo size Saudi airports were wing to wing with airplanes. Literally, if the Iraqis had had long range missiles it would have been a shooting match, a shooting gallery.

*Q: What about visitors? Chas Freeman said that one of the greatest crosses he had to bear during that thing was the literally thousands of visitors who came, Congress people, everybody wanted to get in. He said sometimes he'd cross the Saudi Peninsula three or four times a day. Did that intrude onto you?*

BROWN: No. Saudi Arabia became, as Chas likes to call it, a military theme park for people in Washington who came out to see it. A nice thing about a military command is its staffing: Schwarzkopf had a protocol division, and a press division -- this is a big command -- and a whole plans division which dealt with the protocol division. So when there were visitors -- the majority of them were Congressman, or military guys, the Secretary of Defense, the general of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Congressmen were the key ones, or journalists -- all those were dealt with by staff. In the staff, there were congressional relations people out in Riyadh to tell which congressmen had voted which way on the latest appropriations bills. So it was a complete staff operation out there after a while, and these visitors kept the general very very busy. I would have a role to play, sure, but I was never in charge of visits, or never run around like Chas Freeman was because I wasn't in the top echelon on those matters.

*Q: Was there any change in your role when the air war started? To catch the mood first, up until around October of 1990 what was the feeling that you had, and maybe others around you, about how this thing was going to play out?*

BROWN: To be perfectly honest, I think the majority of people in the Command always thought there was going to be a 12th hour political settlement, and the Arabs would cobble something together to get Saddam out. And most of them feared the terms would not be satisfactory from our point of view, but that we wouldn't have any option but to accept. I think it wasn't until really December, even January, that they began to realize that Saddam wasn't going to back out. I think even with the Russian last minute heroics in an effort to negotiate a deal in January, there was still expectation that the Russians would do it. People kept looking at me and saying, Gordon, aren't the politicos going to pull this one out, or are we going to have to go to war? The interesting thing was that a lot of those generals didn't want to go to war. The colonels kind of wanted to go to war. The colonels all have weapon systems, or something like that, which they wanted to prove. But the generals who were going to give the orders to get people killed weren't that gung-ho on the whole idea.

But your question raised something else. It seems to me that one of the things, before the air war started, one of the questions was: What is the effect of a bombing campaign? What are the psychological impacts? What impact does it have on maintaining the coalition? And one of the things we worried about in CENTCOM was what actions by the military forces would be counter-productive to coalition solidarity. There had been a long debate, never conclusively finished, as to how long the bombing campaign could survive before the Arab street, or whatever, became a factor in stopping the war politically. There would be riots in Cairo because the Americans were killing Arabs in Baghdad. I can recall as early as September we were still

saying a 20-day bombing campaign was the maximum we could manage: "After 20 days the Arab world will be seething with unrest, and the Arabs won't be able to go to war against Iraq as a result. We need the Arabs to make the whole thing credible to liberate Kuwait." So that was a big issue, and as a net result I got involved in some of the targeting. Not because people wanted me to, but because, as I said, it was one of the places where I would go. And I would say, "What are you planning to target in downtown Baghdad? Well, that's okay if you can get it surgically; that one isn't so good because if you miss you're going to kill 20,000 people because this is a crowded area of town; that's an antiquity site, don't touch it; that's a holy place, don't touch it." We red-lined a lot of places. But I got into that kind of through the side door. I knew some Majors who were working on it. Because, you see, that wasn't in CENTCOM. The actual bombing lists were made up over at what they called Black Hole, over in the CENTAF, the air command headquarters, and the actual bombing lists you didn't see until the night before. It was rather awkward. I didn't like this system and I tried to get it changed the whole time, and never succeeded. The bombing lists would come over the night before and you'd say, "This is what we're going to bomb tonight as 0200?" and I'd see some things on that list and I'd say, Holy shit. Sometimes we'd get them out, but too often we'd make a phone call and they'd say, Too late, the planes are already in the air and refueled over Iraq, or something like that.

Things got better, of course, after we hit the bunker, and we killed all those people who were taking shelter there.

*Q: We're talking about killing a lot of civilians in the bunkers.*

BROWN: In what we thought was a command bunker but turned out to be both a command bunker, and certainly a civilian air shelter. And then all of a sudden the sensitivity of the targeting became much more obvious. But that was already 20 days into the air war. The air war lasted, in the end, much longer than I thought would have thought possible. That was one of the major issues I got engaged in: how long the air war could last, and how destructive it would be to coalition morale. And frankly, it lasted almost 40 days if I'm not mistaken, and it didn't destroy coalition morale.

*Q: This is one of the big things that was talked about again and again by commentators, and people dealing in the Middle East. They kept talking about, wait until the Arab mobs start coming out in the streets. This was, I won't say a myth, but it was the idea that somehow, no matter what happened, you're going to have great mobs coming out and supporting Iraq, which didn't happen.*

BROWN: It really didn't. The Iraqis weren't successful in places where it would have counted, in places like Cairo, Damascus. Amman, of course, was pro-Iraqi but it could have been even more so, I suppose. The fact that mobs were organized in Tunis, Sanaa, and Rabat probably didn't matter all that much. Certainly, if there had been any in Saudi Arabia it would have been dangerous. Sometimes it pays to have autocratic regimes as your friends! In fact, the Saudis and the Egyptians and the Syrians could bottle up public opinion, and even more importantly bottle up the intelligence services. In some other countries, the Iraqi military attachés were seen on the street handing out money to people, but that didn't happen where it counted. The Iraqi military attachés were put under heavy surveillance.

*Q: Did you get at all involved in any of the discussions, what's going to happen with the Israelis. The Iraqis were trying to provoke the Israelis in the war.*

BROWN: No, for two reasons. One, Israel wasn't in our area of command. Two, that was handled entirely in Washington. The third reason, was that Israel was never mentioned in the coalition except by very high level people. Baker, if you read his book, went around to government chiefs and heads of state and said, "Would you continue to fight if Israel were brought into this war by Iraqi action?" And they would say yes. "Would you fight if Israel preempted?" Maybe. But at our level, we never, never dared raise that. It was too hot a subject, and we didn't have enough political guidance, and it was done entirely from Washington.

*Q: What was the feeling that you were getting in your part of the command about how the ground war would go? I mean, as things progressed and the air war went on.*

BROWN: Well, once we had a scenario that looked like a winning scenario -- and that was maybe mid-November when we began to develop the left hook, as it was called -- I think that the main fear was that the journalists would cotton on to it, and let the Iraqis know what was coming. Hence, the restrictions on journalists which they fought, and still are fighting, but which in the end made it possible for us to win the war. And the second consideration was how costly it would be; not whether we would win. Some of us thought maybe we'd have to fight for three weeks, two weeks, maybe lose up to 10,000 people. There were any number of estimates made by the people in the think tank part of the Command, but they were using attrition formulas (as they call it) which were developed for other kinds of warfare, and not the kind of warfare they had.

Which leads me to a point which has nothing at all to do with, I suppose, my career. But one of the things I did help deal with was the psy-war effort, the psychological warfare effort. And I think the psychological warfare effort was launched too late, and there wasn't enough of it. But even then, it was tremendously effective. The fact that we met, when our troops finally did cross the line, a demoralized Iraqi army, had as much to do with the psychological warfare effort as it had to do with the bombing. The two combined were absolutely deadly. The Iraqi troops were already so softened up by the time our troops came across the line, that they surrendered by droves. The psychological warfare campaign was hindered by limitation that you couldn't conduct a military psychological warfare campaign until war had actually been launched. So we couldn't do anything until January 17th, and then we started doing things against the front line troops. The front line troops were very softened up. They would get leaflets saying, We're going to bomb you tomorrow night; if you want to take a hike in the desert and come back and look at your destroyed equipment, that will be the smartest thing for you to do; if you want to take a hike south, and turn yourself in, that will be even smarter. We gave them leaflets: We're coming; turn this in you'll be a comfortable and well fed POW. What we never did, because we didn't have the equipment, or we didn't want to devote the equipment, or we didn't want to devote the time, was to do any psychological warfare in Baghdad. I think that was a mistake. I argued early on that we should be converting some of the long range missiles to...

*Q: Tomahawks.*



BROWN: ...particularly the air launched ones, which are relatively slow. We should change the warheads on those to leaflet warheads. We should cover Baghdad with leaflets saying, This is the war of your leaders; this is not your war-- take appropriate action, get rid of your leaders; refuse to fight, or sabotage the nearest electricity station, whatever. We never did it. They claimed that they didn't have those kind of warheads, and it would take too long to devise them. I really don't know, but in any event we tried at one point or another to put an aircraft in the air and broadcast radio to Baghdad. But it was too late, and we didn't have the range, and we didn't get the air cover that we needed to get closer in. I think we missed a shot in not engaging the propaganda warfare in the capital city. It might have given us a little bit better odds in getting rid of Saddam at that time.

*Q: Was it ever brought to your attention about what the terms would be for surrender?*

BROWN: Another failure on my part; I had a number of failures. They bombed too many bridges for my taste in Baghdad. I never got propaganda going in Baghdad, which I wanted. Probably, in retrospect, I should have raised it much more persistently at a much higher level than I did. And the third one was that we never had any planning for war termination. The Command wasn't prepared. That's political as far as the command was concerned and they wanted political instructions. And to every visitor who came through from Washington, I would say, "Where is the war termination scenario? My friend and I here have been sitting down, and we have some interesting pieces of paper we could present to you. Where's the scenario? When do we know that we've got what we want?" And they would all say yes, yes, and go back to Washington, and we'd hear nothing. My conclusion from talking to a lot of people is that there was a lot of war termination planning done at the staff level in various places around town, but the minute anybody tried to raise it at the policy level, it was killed. Partly because of the contradictions inherent in the coalition. You couldn't get the coalition to sign on to any one given plan, so you didn't even try. And partly because we ourselves didn't think...maybe we felt we had more time to think about it than we did. In the end the war was over so fast we didn't even think about a termination scenario. We were still negotiating the termination of the war ten days after it was over, and we negotiated it in New York. Schwarzkopf went to Safwan, which is the place where the cease-fire was signed, under instructions not to take me, or not to raise any political issue. And then, of course, there were political issues-flying helicopters, withdrawing to the borders, and things like that.

*Q: Why was he under instructions not to take you?*

BROWN: Because it was supposed to be a military cease-fire, period. Cessation of hostilities. And the minute you had a political advisor, the signal was that that made it a political negotiation. I never understood that, but he told me he couldn't take me, under instructions. I don't think I would have changed anything. There was no planning for the peace, and therefore they didn't want to address it at that point.

*Q: So he didn't have a list of things you want done.*

BROWN: He had a list of things he wanted done and he cleared it with the Defense Department, which cleared it with the State Department. But those were mainly military things: cease-fire in place, resupply, exchange of prisoners, who could move to join their units, really military things. Schwarzkopf said in his conversations with the Iraqi generals in Safwan, he said, "We will occupy your territory up to this point. You will get that back at some time. We do not intend to be there indefinitely. If you comply with the conditions of the cease-fire, you will get this back in due course." In fact, the minute he won, he wanted to start withdrawing his troops. He may or may not have turned down some proposals which I understand were made about putting in UN troops, buffer zones, and that kind of stuff. But there was never a national policy and Schwarzkopf never had any instructions. So he took his authority, went to Safwan, and made the decisions which made some other decisions impossible.

*Q: When he came back with the agreement, did you see it and vet it at all?*

BROWN: He'd already vetted it in Washington essentially. By the time he got back it had already been sent in to Washington. I didn't see any problems with it, except...in fact, in that respect I was surprised at myself....but I was pleased with the fact that he told the Iraqi generals that we were not alienating their territory, we were only occupying it temporarily. In retrospect, it would have been better if we'd left that gray, because it would have led them to perhaps make an effort at a coup with Saddam. Any pressure we could put on the regime at that time would have been useful.

*Q: You mentioned before on the bombing we shouldn't have bombed as many bridges in Baghdad. Why was that?*

BROWN: I didn't think bridges in Baghdad were a valid military target. You were going to cut out communications in Baghdad; you were fairly close in some places in downtown Baghdad to hitting heavily occupied areas. And, symbolically, you were going after civilian targets. People wouldn't accept that they were military targets that far from the front, and they were being taken out fairly late in the bombing campaign. I thought this was just a bad move; that basically there was no reason to do it. Their argument was that the Iraqis had buried cable communications and they didn't know where the cable was, but they knew that it had to cross the rivers. And they knew that the cables crossed the rivers under the bridges -- along the girders of the bridges they had cables. They didn't know which communication cable they were going to hit at any given time, but they had to hit all bridges in order to break the communication cables. So they did. Maybe one bridge they didn't hit, because I really convinced them that this was very dangerous. Sort of like hitting the Ponte Vecchio in Florence.

*Q: So the cease-fire was done. What happened to you? I thought we might finish up this particular phase.*

BROWN: Then we moved into questions of prisoners of war, treatment of prisoners of war, Geneva Convention, all these kinds of things that the army knows something about but always needs political advice. I was back and forth with the Political-Military Bureau about what could be done and what couldn't be done, and with the lawyers. How were the Saudis going to treat all these people who were coming across? Who were going to be transferred to Saudi control? Who

was going to be kept under military control? Reconstruction of Kuwaiti issues began to come through the Command at that point; I got involved in those. Took a trip up to Kuwait to look at some things and talked to people there. We immediately turned to the post-war in many ways. How do you get out? And, frankly, I remember the refrain in the Command in those days was... every day I'd show up, and people would say, "Okay Gordon, we've done our job, when are you going to do yours? Get us a peace, get us a withdrawal." If you remember, it took almost three weeks to get the UN resolution through which was the peace terms, and the Iraqis took another week or so to accept it. They couldn't even start talking withdrawal for quite a while, and even then Schwarzkopf refused to withdraw Command Headquarters until more than 50% of the troops had gone home. So his idea was to push the troops out as fast as he could. So the pushing out of the troops became mostly a logistical problem, but some of it was political too.

**WILLARD B. DEVLIN**  
**Chief of the Consular Section**  
**Baghdad (1963-1966)**

*Willard Devlin was born on September 30, 1924 in Massachusetts. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946. He received his BA from Tufts University in 1949 and his MA from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1950. Throughout his career he served in countries including Iraq, Peru, China, and the Dominican Republic. Mr. Devlin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 15, 1986.*

DEVLIN: Well, academically, after the war, I went to Tufts, majored in history and international relations, went to the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where I got my master's and completed my doctoral residence in international relations. Then I had a Fulbright scholarship in Cairo. So overall, I was oriented to the Foreign Service, really, ever since I got out of the Army in '46.

In terms of getting into consular work, my first consular assignment was in Baghdad. I had seen and had to take over some consular work while I was in Aden, because the young consular officers there obviously didn't know how to cope with unusual situations. So they fell into my hands.

After Aden, I requested a consular assignment, and accordingly, I was assigned to Baghdad as chief of the consular section.

*Q: With regard to the subject at hand, what were the main pressures for visas, both immigrant and non-immigrant, in Baghdad? You were in Baghdad when, to begin with?*

DEVLIN: '63 to '66. The main pressures for visas were primarily in the immigrant visa category, and the applicants for the visas were primarily members of the Iraqi Christian community, who wanted to get out.

*Q: This was after the revolution then?*

DEVLIN: King Faisal was overthrown in '58, and then in '63, shortly after I got there, Kassim, who had overthrown Nuri al Said and the monarchy, was overthrown. Then there were three or four abortive coups and lots of street fighting. The position of the minorities was one of increasing fear, so they were seeking to get out to the United States. Iraq had, of course, after the First World War, been created out of their mandated area by the British in 1921. It was independent, but with heavy British influence. But what the British did immediately after the war, in order to establish a government, was to take and train as clerks the Christians and the Christian Arabs. This gave the Christians a position within the government and a vested interest in the security of the government, a status envied by the Muslim Arabs.

With the growing nationalism in Iraq, some anger or resentment was necessarily or inevitably directed against these Christians because the Muslims tended to identify the Christian minorities with the Western conquering powers. So this was the primary reason for the desire of the Christians to get out. Many of the Christians were Arabs but probably most were refugees out of Turkey, Iran, and the Soviet Union, from the period of the end of the First World War. These refugees or migrants were not Arab and did not identify themselves with Arab nationalism though most considered themselves to be Iraqis.

*Q: Did they have eligibility for immigrant visas to the United States, most of these people?*

DEVLIN: They didn't have eligibility in terms of any of the professional categories. Some would go as non-immigrants and find a way to stay and some would wait out the list and go as immigrants under a family preference. In Detroit there was a Christian Iraqi community, and these people were doing their very best, which was quite good, to provide the necessary immigration documentation, writing affidavits and so on, to assist their religious brethren in getting to the United States.

*Q: There was no refugee program per se?*

DEVLIN: It was not a refugee program. These people were not refugees in any routine sense of the word, because this was 1960. They had fled from Turkey, Iran, and the Soviet Union in 1918, 1920-. So they had come to Iraq and had settled.

*Q: Were there any Iraqi Jews left by this time?*

DEVLIN: There were a few Iraqi Jews left, not very many, but there were some. They also were part of the movement to leave. The Iraqi Jews had historically deeper ties in Iraq than did the immigrant Christians. That is, there had been a Jewish community in Iraq, primarily in Baghdad, for centuries.

*Q: Did you have a long waiting list or were there any particular problems dealing with both the Christians and Jews in Iraq?*

DEVLIN: There was a long waiting list, yes, several years. I've forgotten now.

*Q: This was because of our laws, not Iraqi law?*

DEVLIN: That's right.

*Q: Did the Iraqis give you any difficulty as far as letting these people go?*

DEVLIN: No, no. The people were able to obtain passports. They probably had to do a certain amount of bribery and so on to get their documents, but basically they were able to get their passports. The Muslim rulers of the country really didn't mind at all if these people left.

*Q: Were there any pressures put on you from the United States to issue visas to people who probably weren't qualified because of relationships or something?*

DEVLIN: Not really. There were always cases when some attorneys would be pushing some cases. The people who were issuing these affidavits of support in Detroit, in the section of Detroit known to Iraqis as Telkaif, which was named after a town in Northern Iraq, where most of these Christian Arabs resided, continually pressed for acceptance of their often spurious documentation.

*Q: By the way, was there any particular fraud as far as you were concerned?*

DEVLIN: Primarily with these affidavits, it was a matter of keeping control on them, because if you didn't keep control and some sorts of records on them, you would find that one man, who had no relationship to any of the applicants, was busy issuing affidavits of support. As an example, he would have quite ample financial resources, but he may very well have granted about a dozen or two affidavits of support, though his personal connections to the applicants were nil. So the individual affidavits were highly suspect. What we had to do was reject these and go after possibly less financially impressive affidavits, from people who had a family relationship, who, in fact, we believed would provide the necessary financial assistance if needed.

*Q: You left Baghdad about when?*

DEVLIN: It was in '66.

**WALTER M. MCCLELLAND**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Baghdad (1964-1967)**

*Walter M. McClelland was born in 1922 and raised in Oklahoma. He graduated from University of Virginia, where he was Naval ROTC. He was commissioned when he joined the U.S. Navy in 1944. After his service ended in 1946, he entered Harvard Law School and graduate school until 1950. In addition to Egypt, his*

*Foreign Service career included tours in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, and the United Kingdom. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 20, 1995.*

*Q: Did you get your Home Leave before going to Iraq?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, we did get the leave -- just what we needed! And we were looking forward to Baghdad. My wife studied ancient Mesopotamia and was delighted to be going there. For me the assignment was an interesting one. I had never dreamed of going to such a place in my earlier days in the Service, but Baghdad has such a fascinating history that I was intrigued also.

*Q: The subject of Home Leave comes up. Did you find much interest when you came back on Home Leave -- people wanting to know about the Middle East, what you did, etc.?*

MCCLELLAND: Not too many people really wanted to know much about my Middle East experience. Early in my career I remember returning to Oklahoma City where I spent the first 16 years of my life. I felt that I had an obligation to tell people there about the Foreign Service and what my career was all about. One time I was invited to a talk show on the local radio station. The announcer began by saying "I don't know who this person McClelland really is. He says he is in the Diplomatic Service, but he doesn't have on striped pants and a cut-away jacket -- but we'll talk for a while. Then we just chatted about the Foreign Service for a few minutes.

Another time my wife and I were invited to be on a Morning TV Talk Show where coffee was being advertised. It was a pleasant, chatty experience -- we were viewed as being something a little out of the ordinary that might be interesting to viewers. Occasionally I would find someone who had been overseas, or wanted to go -- and they would be more interested. My old friends were glad to see me back, but they were usually too wrapped up in what they were doing to be very interested in my experience after the first few minutes.

*Q: Absolutely! I remember driving across the continent with Yugoslav plates on my car and thinking I would get a lot of questions -- and I'm ready to talk about American relations with Yugoslavia and all. Well, I had a Peugeot and the talk was about the Peugeot as a car and not about Yugoslavia! -- You served in Iraq from when to when?*

MCCLELLAND: From mid-1964 until the 1967 War in June, 1967, when all Embassy personnel were evacuated.

*Q: In 1964 Iraq had gone through its 1958 coup which left, and in a way continues to leave, a rather nasty regime. What was the political situation and just plain situation when you got there in 1964?*

MCCLELLAND: The Dictator at the time was Abdul Rahman Muhammad Arif -- and everywhere he went there was a long armed procession. A coup was always possible so soldiers were often in view. In fact there were one or two attempted coups while we were in Iraq. There was unrest between the ruling Shia Muslim minority and the Sunni Muslim minority. No sooner

had we arrived in Baghdad than the Government nationalized almost all of the businesses and banks in the country. About a year or so after our arrival Abdul Rahman was killed in a helicopter crash (some said it was a plot!), and this brother Abdul Salaam took over -- but nothing much changed. So things were a bit touchy.

On the other hand, day-to-day life went on fairly normally. A few American contractors were still working there, diplomats (and their families) were allowed to visit archeological sites and places of interest away from Baghdad from time to time. (My wife and other ladies were permitted to visit the Marshlands for a day or so.) Northern Iraq, home of the Kurds, was normally off limits, but on one occasion we were allowed to go there. Our local American School (Grades 1-8) was functioning, USIA showed films often, the Baghdad Symphony was still performing (thanks to the German Embassy), and we could call at government offices fairly freely and visit the British Alwiya Club and other restaurants whenever we wished. The British Council provided a lot of our entertainment and the British Chaplain had a Church and conducted church services. So life was pretty good.

*Q: I'm just wondering. I think it was during the '50s that Walter Rostow came up with his economic theory about the countries ready for takeoff. In the Middle East, Iraq was the country pointed to for its small population, good infrastructure, good farming country, high rate of literacy, etc. How did we view Iraq at this time?*

MCCLELLAND: Iraq had been our real hope in the Middle East when King Faisal was Ruler. Many American companies had been working on large projects there and long-term development was being planned with financial and technical support from the US and many other countries. After the Revolution, these Americans were no longer wanted and most development stopped. One of my jobs in the Economic Section was to try to collect claims of these American companies who were forced out. We were not very successful in our collection efforts.

When I was in Iraq there were still one or two American contractors. The one I remember most clearly is Hawaiian Agro-nomics. That company had a contract to desalinate a large tract of land along the Tigris River by grading the land and leaching the soil with water from the river. (The Iraqis had not irrigated the land properly so that the soil had become increasingly saline and would no longer grow the crops it had in the past.) This company carried on nobly, but it had tremendous problems trying to do its work.

*Q: What was the problem?*

MCCLELLAND: Doing business in Iraq was terribly frustrating. The Government was reluctant to pay in accordance with the contract; Government regulations were myriad; Iraqi Customs was very difficult when it came to importing equipment and personnel; the local market provided few items required; etc. The fact that the companies were American did not help them in their relations with the Iraqi Government.

*Q: The basic problem, was it that this was a military government trying to build up arms and nothing else, or were they falling under the blandishments of the Soviets? What was happening?*

MCCLELLAND: I do not know the Government's reasons for slowing down on development at this time, but there were several factors. The Soviets were indeed there and providing large amounts of equipment to the Iraqis for several kinds of factories, but I believe this equipment was generally regarded as obsolete and not very useful to the country. Then, too, some of the developments planned by King Faisal were not really appropriate for the new Revolutionary Government. For example, a spherical Opera House surrounded by water with 300 meter masts rising on either side of the entrance, a glass post office that would be almost impossible to cool in summer, an Island depicting the Garden of Eden in the Tigris River, etc. These were designed by Frank Lloyd Wright for the King, but never built. However, other projects, like a large dam in Northern Iraq, were more or less completed along with many other useful projects.

It seems to me that the regime was just trying to remain in power and did not give a high priority to long-term projects. It also wanted to show its independence of Western countries. And it did not seem to have the financing to continue many of these projects. Undoubtedly the Government was involved in strengthening its military forces, but I did not know much about that.

As a footnote, I should add that we came across many Iraqis who had studied in the US under our old Point IV Program. There was a very good butcher, a gardener who prepared frozen foods, and many other skilled people who were very grateful for the training they had had in the US and had a warm spot in their hearts for Americans. But they could not really put many of their skills to use because of Government restrictions -- so they did what they could in a small way.

*Q: Who was our Ambassador at the time?*

MCCLELLAND: Ambassador Robert C. Strong

*Q: How did he operate?*

MCCLELLAND: Ambassador Strong surely tried hard to keep our relations with the Iraqis as close as circumstances would allow. He gave many dinners and receptions for the Government Officials, but often not very many people came. I was in the Economic Section at the time and do not really know about the contacts he had in the political realm -- but I believe he did very well. I remember that he was enthusiastic about the Trade Fair that the Department of Commerce put on in Baghdad -- I was very active in that. He appointed me as Commercial Attaché at one point and we set up an office in the center of town where merchants could reach us more easily without the risks of visiting the Embassy. We were really trying to normalize our relations with Iraq, build up trade, promote mutual understanding -- that sort of thing -- but we were not sure we were making much headway.

*Q: During this time, was the Iraqi Government headed anywhere?*

MCCLELLAND: The Iraqi Government was taking more and more an anti-Western position. It was really strange. The Iraqis we knew were wonderful people and they did not seem bitter or hostile to us when we entertained them or visited them -- but the Government was something else. I remember being amazed that most people considered the Government their enemy, not



their friend and protector. Later I understood why. We really realized how deep this went when Iraq broke diplomatic relations very shortly after the beginning of the 1967 War, being convinced, I suppose, that the Americans had really started it. That meant that we all had to leave in 48 hours. But at the time, the Government was just trying to keep the lid on.

*Q: What about oil?*

MCCLELLAND: Oil was Iraq's principal revenue earner. My duties did not include relations with the oil company or the Petroleum Ministry, so I really don't know much about it. My particular concern was with Iraqi export of dates to the US. US law was strict about insects in the dates. According to the going US-Iraqi Treaty on the subject, the US would accept dates with a 5 percent "infestation rate" one year, but this would be lowered 1 percent per year until it reached 1 percent, I believe. (Infestation rate refers to the percentage of dates that have evidence of insect presence.)

When I was in Iraq the Iraqis were having a hard time meeting the current rate (around 3 percent?) and were pressing us for relief. We were not very helpful to them -- so this was another bone of contention.

*Q: Oil, was that nationalized at this point?*

MCCLELLAND: I certainly imagine so, but I really do not recall the details of what happened in the oil sector at that time.

*Q: Did you deal with the Ministry of Finance or Trade?*

MCCLELLAND: At my level, I had very good contacts at the Central Bank. I remember one or two of my counterparts there and we became close enough friends so that we saw each other socially from time to time. I cannot now remember just what we were discussing in terms of business, but I believe it had to do with some World Bank Projects, currency matters, and statistics from the Central Bank. Most of the officers there spoke very good English, so I didn't have too much opportunity to use my Arabic. One of my contacts was Jamil al-Hashimi. He apparently had very good credentials in the Bank because I remember an article he wrote in a local Arabic Newspaper that was critical of some Iraqi economic policies -- and he seemed to survive well. I was well received at my level, but this was below the top policy officials.

*Q: This is before the '67 War, but how did our Israeli policy sit there? Was this something you heard all the time?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, we heard criticism of US policy toward the Arabs very frequently -- usually in a public context where the President or some official was making a political statement. But in my day-to-day contacts, especially since I was not directly involved in political matters, I was not often taken personally to task. The situation was a bit easier than in Saudi Arabia where almost all of my contacts continually brought up the subject.

*Q: How about the Soviets?*

MCCLELLAND: The Soviets had a sizable presence in Iraq and they were deeply involved in the Iraqi Development Plan. They extended a lot of credit to Iraq for the purchase of factories and equipment. As I recall, however, the Iraqis were not very happy about the equipment that had been sent. It seemed to be obsolete machinery that the Soviets did not want --and much of it sat around in boxes for years before it was uncrated and put to use. I remember in particular the Pharmaceutical Factory at Samarra. The equipment was sitting out in the open all during my time there. Recent reports of a biological warfare plant in Samarra may be what it was about after all -- but progress was surely very slow.

*Q: How about when the '67 War hit, what happened then?*

MCCLELLAND: When I heard of the Israeli attack on Egypt, my first thought was that I was glad it was happening in the Mediterranean and not where we were. I hoped that the affair could remain localized and since the US had nothing to do with it, perhaps life could continue somewhat normally in Iraq. I was promptly disabused of this idea when, the very next day, we received a note from the Foreign Ministry, breaking diplomatic relations and giving us 48 hours to leave the country. (Actually the note gave most personnel a week, but certain officers, like the Chargé d'Affaires [the Ambassador was away] and Public Affairs Officer, were ordered out in 2 days. The Chargé decided that we all should leave together.)

So we had to turn our Embassy over to a "Protecting Power" and get ourselves safely out of the country. At that time I had a very demanding and urgent job to do. I had to prepare the "Reprise". Do you know what a reprise is?

*Q: No.*

MCCLELLAND: A Reprise is the document we had to turnover to the Belgians who agreed to act as our "Protecting Power". It gives a complete inventory of all USG property in the Embassy, including all the funds in the safe. The document was inches thick and bound together with a long piece of red tape, sealed and certified by the Chargé.

Just before the actual '67 war broke out, the Department decided to evacuate women and children from the post. Embassy Tehran sent two buses from Tehran, and they arrived, having driven straight through for two days, in the early evening of the day we received notice that all of us had to leave. Since it was urgent that the dependents leave at once, all of them jumped on the buses and headed back to Tehran, without any significant rest for the drivers. My wife says it was a real nightmare trying to keep the bus drivers awake and stop them from racing each other around curves and down narrow mountain roads! One child was having epileptic fits, others had chicken pox -- so all the kids caught chicken pox! But they did arrive safely in Tehran a day or so before we did.

*Q: Was there any concern about demonstration mobs, particularly after the '58 experience where Iraqi mobs were as nasty as they come. A couple of Americans were caught in this, people ripped apart.*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, I heard that story more than once! The Americans apparently were dragged out of their hotel and were killed in mob violence.

*Q: An Iraqi mob sounds like a pretty horrendous thing, any problems with that?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, Iraqi mobs are formidable! Fortunately the Embassy was located on the other side of the Tigris from the main downtown area of Baghdad. The mob had a longer way to come and we were surrounded by a high fence and protected, to some extent, by Iraqi police who made efforts to keep demonstrators away from the Embassy.

I remember one morning just before events came to a head, I called Franna and suggested that she come to the Embassy soon and do her shopping, so in case we had to stay home we would have some food in the house. She came all right, but just as she was leaving, a giant mob came down the street toward her. She quickly turned the car around, headed back to the Embassy, and stayed there safely until the mob dispersed. The mob managed to tear down our flag and burn it and break a few windows -- but did no real damage.

Another time, the night before we all left Baghdad, we were in the Embassy cleaning things up when another torch-lit mob came up the street and demonstrated in front. We turned out all the lights and watched them from the second floor -- we were mighty glad for our military protection! As far as I know, no Americans were hurt or killed in this process.

*Q: Were there Iraqi troops around the Embassy?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, we had pretty good protection. One or two protesters got over the fence to tear down the flag or throw rocks, but they were chased out. The mob did not get into the Embassy building. I felt protected, although that may not have been completely warranted. Probably the Iraqis wanted to protect the building -- it is now their Foreign Ministry, I understand.

*Q: What happened then? You all drove to Tehran?*

MCCLELLAND: The Iraqi authorities gave us safe passage out in our cars. We drove our cars in convoy, with all the pets and whatever valuable household items we could pack up. The drive to the Iran border was slow but met no hostility -- we had police cars in front of the convoy and behind it. The danger came from the fact that most of us had slept little the preceding two nights, so we were very sleepy. One officer fell asleep while driving and nearly drove off the road -- but thankfully he woke up in time to get back on the road safely. We spent a long time at the border with the formalities, but finally everyone got across -- and each of us headed off after some rest to find our families again.

*Q: Then where did you go?*

MCCLELLAND: Embassy Tehran was the main transit point in our evacuation. I found my family in a hotel not far from the Embassy -- and all the children had Chicken Pox! We stayed in Tehran for a few weeks. The Department was trying to get the Iraqis to agree to let one or two

Americans return to Baghdad as a part of the US Interests Section of the Belgian Embassy, but the Iraqis declined.

*Q: How about Egypt?*

MCCLELLAND: The Egyptians let us keep many Americans in the US Interest Section there, but Iraq was different. I was kept a while in Tehran as one who might be sent back, but when this did not happen, I was ordered to visit various US posts in Iran in preparation for a job as Economic-Military Officer in the State Department on the Iran Desk. I had a busy and interesting time in Iran, and enjoyed my work on the Iran Desk very much over the next three years.

**GRANT V. MCCLANAHAN**  
**Political Officer**  
**Baghdad (1965-1967)**

*Grant V. McClanahan was born in Egypt in 1919. He graduated from Muskingum College in 1941 and enlisted in the Navy in 1942. He began working for the Department of State in 1946 in INR until joining the Foreign Service in 1954. His overseas career included positions in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Iraq. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy January 1997.*

*Q: In '65, where did you go?*

MCCLANAHAN: I went to Baghdad. Then I came back in 1967 and was the Tunisian desk officer. I had been for 12 years in class three and, if you're not promoted by then, you are at the top of your class but are retired. So, I was retired on that ground. I would have liked to have stayed on, but...

*Q: Let's go to Baghdad.*

MCCLANAHAN: In '67, the Six Day War happened, and the British and Americans were expelled by the Iraqi government on a few days' notice. We were evacuated overnight by land in our cars to Teheran. The Department decided that I should be the one to go back with a couple of more junior officers if we could open an interests section with the Belgian embassy. I would be the head of the section. I waited three months based in the Teheran embassy. A Belgian officer came to Teheran from Baghdad and told me they saw no time in the foreseeable future that Baghdad was going to permit an American diplomat to be in Iraq. I reported that information to Washington, and we were allowed to come back to the Department.

*Q: Iraq was seven years into their overthrow of the King. What was the situation when you arrived there? What was your job?*

MCCLANAHAN: The ambassador was Robert Strong, whom I had known when he was head of the NE office in NEA. His DCM was Enoch Duncan, and I was number three in rank. Iraq had

overthrown the monarchy and killed King, and later Kassim, the officer who had carried out the coup. The regime in 1967 was military, under Abdul Rahman Arif. It was rather pro-Nasser and willing to give lip service to eventual unity between the Arab countries and Egypt. The Egyptians showed Arab solidarity by stationing a token force near Baghdad to demonstrate that they were trusted by the Iraqis. In Baghdad, I rented a very nice house and garden on the Tigris. It was very near the American embassy. After the first six months that I was in Baghdad, the president, Abd al Salam Arif, perished in an air accident. Later, there was an attempted coup that failed. The prime minister, Abdul Rahman Bazzaz, was educated in Britain, and I believe was an economist, very enlightened and moderate, someone who's policy was to make a compromise with the Kurds in the north. He was also rather friendly with Britain and America.

In general, it was a regime that was not easy to understand and therefore predict. For example, the cabinet was balanced but, the real power was the military. Our ambassador was invited to see and talk with the president of the country occasionally, but I never met anybody, cabinet members or even many senior officials. I met the minister of education once. The military attaché might meet some senior officers behind the scenes when they wanted to explore buying arms from the United States. So, you didn't have the normal direct sources of information, only the press, bazaar rumors, and contacts with the professional class. So we in the Political Section had to cultivate academics, architects, businessmen, artists, and such. And some of them welcomed casual contact with Americans, British, or Europeans.

*Q: Did you have any concerns about Soviet connotations in Iraq?*

MCCLANAHAN: Yes, we saw it as a real problem. They had a large embassy there. The CIA portion of the embassy naturally tried to keep a constant eye on them. The Bulgarians had extensive trade relations and contracts to construct highways. Iraq also had contracts with the Romanians and also had good relations with Hungary. With Kuwait, the relations were all right. When Kuwait's ruler visited, the theme was "my brother Arab," and Kuwait gave them some funds for development.

*Q: What about when President Abd al Salam Arik was killed?*

MCCLANAHAN: It was a good outcome in a way. He was succeeded by his brother and the prime minister was continued. I had a fairly good impression of him. However, even before the war, they installed a military officer, Naji Talib, as prime minister. When the war broke out, they reacted formally in severing relations with the U.S. and UK. They mobilized, but never acted. The president was replaced by a Baathist. And President Arif was fortunate in that they allowed him to leave the country. Our relations had considerably improved with Iraq until the war.

*Q: Was Saddam Hussain around then?*

MCCLANAHAN: Certainly, he was around, but the Baathist party did not install him until later. People had been very guarded about talking about the Baathists. I was sorry I didn't get to be in Baghdad longer because it is an interesting country with great potential. It has plenty of oil reserves and adequate water, and is not densely populated. Iraq had many trained people,

including engineers. If it could only get rid of its oppressive regime, it would probably do quite well.

*Q: What effect did the war have on the embassy?*

MCCLANAHAN: It came as a complete surprise to us. I have written a chapter in a book, Diplomacy Under a Foreign Flag, about the experience of closing the post and evacuating its personnel. We evacuated the dependants and the non-essential people first. It was a difficult time and a bit frightening to everybody. The Iraqis decided they wanted us out in a hurry, apparently wanting it to be a resounding diplomatic rejection. There were demonstrations and one mob came over the walls and broke some of the windows on the front of our fine embassy building. When we left, the police remained on guard at our compound, and they sent motorcycles to escort us all the way out of Baghdad. At night, we took off in a caravan of cars led by the military attaché. The police saluted us when they left us.

**ANDREW I. KILLGORE**  
**USIS, Public Affairs Officer**  
**Baghdad (1965-1967)**

*Andrew I. Killgore was born on a farm in Alabama, and graduated from a small teacher's training college in Livingston, Alabama. He entered the Foreign Service as a Wristonee, initially working as a service staff officer. He has served in Jordan, Baghdad, Iran, and Qatar. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 15, 1988.*

KILLGORE: It was a very interesting desk to work on.

*Q: What were our concerns there at that time? Iraq had had a repressive regime which, if I recall, I'm not sure we had relations at that point.*

KILLGORE: Let's see. In '58, of course, the King was killed; Nuri Said was killed. And Abdul Illah, the King's uncle, was killed. Abd- al-Karim Qasim took over. He was an unbalanced guy. He was a decent chap in this sense, he wanted to do something for the country. He was keenly interested in really helping Iraq, but he didn't know how. He didn't have the educational background. Abd al-Karim Qasim had taken over when the King was killed. This was, of course, before I took over the desk. I didn't take over the desk until the fall of '62. I forgot when he was overthrown.

Of course, on that desk, we had to make our peace with the post-royalist regime in Iraq. We were aware that Iraq had vast oil reserves, probably near Basra, fields second only in richness to those in Saudi Arabia. There was almost always a Kurdish war going on. The Kurds in the north were, one way or another, in a dissident mood or in actual rebellion. Of course, we were very much concerned to keep Jordan and the West Bank stable because of the Israel connection.

That was also a very satisfying period. One of my bosses in what we called NE, Office of Near Eastern Affairs, was not my favorite officer, but that's really neither here nor there.

*Q: Was this because of outlook?*

KILLGORE: Yes, because of outlook. He was a strong, zealous supporter of Israel, and he thought the Arab states were just crazy not to go ahead and recognize it, let them have what they wanted. Also, he was turned off by the fact that some Arab diplomats, he said, just chased these cute little blonde girls that really didn't have to be chased, they just grabbed them. He hurt my career, really, because, as I say, he was a zealous man. A very decent chap, though.

*Q: Was he a political appointee?*

KILLGORE: No, he was a Foreign Service officer. He was an Arabist, as a matter of fact. Most Arabists who study Arabic, as indeed most officers who study any foreign language and the culture of foreign lands, get to be rather fond of that people because they get to understand them. But this person, for example, he used to say, "Well, I can take my whole family and go on off on a picnic with the officers from the Israeli embassy, and all these young officers in the Arab embassies want to do is chase girls." Well, in fact, what he meant was in the Israeli embassy, they assigned their very attractive essentially Western officers, who were generally very attractive, whose English was excellent, who understood the West, and who understood us. But in any case, that was a challenging time.

In 1964, King Hussein came over. I had the privilege of getting in a big plane and talked the White House into giving us a plane, flew over to Amman to fetch him to the States in '64. flying off.

I talked southern. In any case, he'd stand up, and we'd always shake hands. He'd shake hands with me, and I was just a desk officer. We'd sit down there, and he'd look at the cable, and he'd read it over, and he had an unerring ability to pick out the weakest point in an argument. He'd hit that every time, and hit it very quickly. We'd talk about that a bit. Then all of a sudden, he would hit his knees with his hands, he was getting up. We all jumped, we'd all jump up, we'd shake hands with the Secretary, and we'd leave. And we walked back down the steps from the seventh floor, down to the sixth floor where we were. Bob Strong and Phil Talbot looked at each other. "What did he decide?" He hadn't decided anything. He simply would not decide. If he could possibly avoid a decision, he would.

Now, in those circumstances, a freebooter like Bill Crockett, who didn't understand anything except how to maneuver for power, became the most powerful man in the State Department. Crockett's idea was, "Because it'll be a bigger empire for me, let's make the Foreign Service, USIA, AID (though it was never quite certain what to do with CIA), we'll make them into some giant Foreign Service corps, a Foreign Service officer corps, which will include a few extra thousand people," of course, of which Crockett would still be the top guy.

And under that program, and, I think, under the influence of the guy who I mentioned didn't like me, I suddenly found myself shanghaied, really, off to Baghdad as a public affairs officer.

*Q: This was considered a peripheral assignment for the way you appeared to be going?*

KILLGORE: Stuart, in the first place, you never get out the agency or the department you're in. That's bad business. They don't understand how your system works.

*Q: You're speaking about USIA, which was its own agency.*

KILLGORE: It was at that time. Carl Rowan, who just shot a kid the other night--I don't blame Carl, either. I like Carl. One of the amusing things about Carl Rowan is that I called on him, a courtesy call before getting ready to take off for Baghdad, because my fight to avoid the assignment failed. As a matter of fact, I almost got myself thrown out of the Foreign Service then, because I fought it too hard. Rowan was very courtly and very nice to me. That afternoon, he resigned his job. I called on him that morning, and that afternoon, he resigned. He didn't mention anything to me about it.

In any case, I remember attending a staff meeting at USIA here. The first one I attended had a huge table. Ed Murrow had had a cancer operation, had a lung removed or something. Someone was acting. In any case, it got around to the fellow who handled congressional relations in USIA, and he said, "Well, the amalgamation will be going forward. I just haven't really had a chance to sit down and have a good conversation with Senator Fulbright (who was head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee), who's off somewhere on vacation overseas, but he'll be back next week, and I'll go up and have a talk." In fact, of course, the amalgamation which was supposed to take place never had any chance because Fulbright opposed it from the beginning. All they had to do was go up and talk with him. There was no chance of it, ever. In the first place, the Foreign Service officers didn't want it either, for God's sake. After all, what's the honor of being a Foreign Service officer if you let any and everybody in the business?

In any case, the idea was that since the amalgamation was going to take place, you would have an earnest-money thing. You would have officers start moving over from State to USIA, and USIA to State. And they say, "It's going to take place soon."

*Q: This is all based on a false presumption that everybody knew was false.*

KILLGORE: It was nonsense! It was too pathetic. Of course, we run our affairs very pathetically, because there's no one out there to advise us.

*Q: But then you were being used sort of as a sacrificial lamb, it sounds like--"Okay, we know this isn't going to go, but we've got to toss some meat to the lions." And you were some meat. At least you were in the Arab world.*

KILLGORE: I was in the Arab world, but I was outside my business, and that was a very, very bad assignment for me. It almost got me thrown out.

*Q: What were you doing in Baghdad as the public affairs officer?*



KILLGORE: You know what a public affairs officer does. You have an information side, and you have a cultural side of what you're trying to do. You bring speakers and you bring musicians.

*Q: But this is in a normal country. Had we had relations very long?*

KILLGORE: Ever since the royalist regime had been overthrown in 1958, and they had found in the archives that the CIA was heavy in everything. You see, we had been feuding with Gamal Abdel Nasser at that time, and we decided--"we," the CIA and whoever was running State. Most of our affairs seemed to be run by fools. We were going to turn Baghdad into Cairo. That was going to be the great movie center, was going to be intellectual center of the Arab world. Anyone who knows Baghdad knows it's never going to be. Cairo is always going to be the center for a variety of reasons.

In any case, the revolutionary regime had dug into the archives and found out that CIA was heavy into the royalist regime and all the ministries. As a consequence, the government was totally suspicious of everything we were trying to do. It was difficult to travel. You were afraid to see your Iraqi friends too much, for fear that you'd get them in trouble with the Mukhabarat, the intelligence people. That's the Arabic word for intelligence. We, of course, tried to help place certain material in the Arab press. We had some success at that.

*Q: Did we have an ambassador when you were there?*

KILLGORE: Yes, Robert C. Strong, who had been head of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs, was there as ambassador when I arrived. He served earlier in China as the Chinese Communists were taking control.

The problem with Dean Rusk was this: it was his basic--how would you put it?--was it his basic temperament? Was it a fundamental flaw of character? He grew up as a poor boy in Georgia, and by virtue of the fact that he had brains enough to go to college and get off to Oxford and become a Rhodes Scholar, then catch the eye of the Rockefellers, he went on up and got this, that, and the other, and became a famous man. But he essentially was always a poor southern boy supplicant. He never saw himself as a leader. He was a supplicant, trying to please somebody else. He never had a lead. It certainly was not his lack of brains. He was a terribly sharp man. I suppose he was. How do you analyze a man who will not make decisions if he can possibly avoid them?

As a matter of fact, the '67 War, you can almost point it at Dean Rusk. You can see a campaign starting as early as '63, '64. The Israelis and Israel lobby were turning Gamal Abdel Nasser into an Arab Hitler. And the objective was to cut off the PL 480 wheat, make things so bad that you can't continue to use the wheat program.

*Q: For the record, will you explain what the PL 480 wheat is?*

KILLGORE: That's the Public Law 480. It was, in effect, "Let's give the world free American grain because our farmers are producing more wheat than we can consume."

*Q: We were distributing our surplus under Public Law 480.*

KILLGORE: Eventually the wheat thing was killed. Then, in my opinion, relations with Nasser had become embittered, and the '67 War became inevitable. Rusk could have slowed that up or even stopped it if he had been willing to take a lead, been able to articulate what and where our interests were. He had the most felicitous turn of phrase you ever heard, but nevertheless, he was lacking in eloquence, literally, in the ability to articulate to the American people--to our ignorant American people--what our interests were. The people are willing to listen, and the people have a considerable amount of wisdom, once you can get through to them.

But that's why a guy like George Shultz is a pathetic character as a Secretary of State. He couldn't articulate, "Let's go have dinner." He is flat. He has no fire in him at all. He plods along like an old dirt farmer.

*Q: Back to Baghdad. That was a period, then, that you had very little contact. It was not a very productive period?*

KILLGORE: We had a good time. Our embassy was not very talented. The government was very unfriendly. I had a good time, I made lots of friends, I like the Iraqis, I had lots of friends among the foreign diplomats there. I traveled to the extent I could get permission to travel. I was well liked in the embassy. But I didn't think it was fair that I should be turned over to do a public affairs officer job in Iraq, when my essential business was political. I say, I suppose immodestly, I was well aware of the fact that I was not merely adequate; I was a damn good political officer, one of the best, one of the best writers, one who grasped concepts, and a real grasp of politics.

*Q: Going back to this diversion, you were saying this was really part of a maneuver on the part of Crockett management. This was not a matter of an Israeli lobby getting rid of--*

KILLGORE: Yes, I think the idea was to get me out.

*Q: Was this the Israeli lobby working on you?*

KILLGORE: Yes, someone had to have suggested that I would be a good one for that job.

*Q: You do sort of take a jolt out of the Arab world. Because after Baghdad, which is one remove from the major thing and also in sort of a public relations type job, you move then to Dacca. This is 1967 to 1970. That's still within the bureau, but way the hell over.*

KILLGORE: That's right, in the outer reaches.

*Q: Outer marches.*

KILLGORE: Outer marches, as they say. That's right. Well, you can kind of make an explanation there, Stuart, that we had suffered this disaster. The Israeli attack on the Egyptian Air Force, grabbing up all this territory, we were blamed, we were kicked out of Baghdad, out of

Damascus, essentially out of Cairo, out of Yemen, a lot kicked out of Sudan. We may have been closed up entirely in Algeria. I just can't remember all the countries now.

*Q: But our ties with the Arab world were--*

KILLGORE: That's right. The places you could go in the Arab world were much reduced.

*Q: The Arabists were really--*

KILLGORE: The next thing I know, "You're going to Bengal."

*Q: So this was just, "What do you do with an Arabist?" in a way.*

KILLGORE: After the '67 War, though, I can certainly--and as a matter of fact, you've heard of GLOP, Global Assignments Policy.

*Q: Yes. Could you explain for the record what GLOP means?*

KILLGORE: Well, they say that Henry Kissinger went down to a chiefs of mission meeting down to Mexico City, to meet our ambassadors from Latin America. Henry was planning a tour, apparently, down in Latin America at that time. The ambassadors were cautioning him about this, that, or the other problem, and "When you get to Brazil, watch this, and between Peru and Bolivia, there's this problem. Don't forget. So you have to be very careful how you handle this, that, and the other."

The great Henry, according to this story, was much put out by this. He accused our ambassadors from Latin America, in effect, to this "localitis" that you referred to earlier. He, of course, claimed he had the world view, but the others didn't have the world view. He had it. He managed to have it, but they didn't. Thus, he came back and came out with this GLOP telegram. I remember how the thing began. Do you remember it? "In these days of enhanced intellectual ferment," it began. Christ, when the hoe was invented, hey, this changed the whole world! The plow!

In any case, that happened. As you may know, there are some Arabists who are quite convinced--because Henry was the world's most devious man, without any doubt--who believe that Henry's real objective was to get out of the Middle East the Arabists that the Zionists didn't like. Because Henry was not so crypto--he just was Zionist. So I was sort of shot off to New Zealand for three years.

*Q: This is later on, after Dacca.*

KILLGORE: In any case, if you look at my career after the '67 War, one of the problems now, Stuart, even from earlier, from the period of '61 to '65, I was a rather outspoken person. I said what I thought. To a degree, I was guilty of naivete. I didn't quite realize that the system was as ruthless as it is, and I thought, "Well, I'm dealing mostly with my fellow Arabists, and they're honorable people, and I know they feel the same way. True, I'm speaking out more than they

are." You could kind of get by with it up until '67. But after the '67 War, there was a full-court press, to use a basketball term, by the Israelis and their lobby to shut off people who were going to be critical.

There's another factor here. You know, if, say, the Office of Near Eastern Affairs or Near East South Asian Bureau knows that due to the political situation of this country, U.S. policy is going to be a certain way, a Foreign Service Officer has to go along. In other words, what you had to do becomes a kind of a categorical imperative, to use Kant's phrase. Thus, an officer who is going around always complaining about this and saying, "Look, we're going the wrong way. We're hurting our interests. We're hurting our way with the Arabs. In the long run, we're hurting the Israelis," in a way he becomes sort of a pain to have around, because it is a constant sort of verbal finger-pointing at the people who are not acting in that way. You become a bit of a nuisance. It would have been far better for me, and my career would have gone probably a lot further than it had, if I had just probably intellectually said, "Look, Killgore, don't be an arrogant guy, thinking that you, one man, is going to push policy one way or another. You're caught up in a very strong stream going a certain direction. It's arrogant of you to think that you can turn it or that you can divert it." In other words, you must recognize political realities.

*Q: The political reality being that we are going to be a strong supporter of Israel.*

KILLGORE: Period.

*Q: That's it.*

KILLGORE: Now, there is a consequence, however, of this, and that is it doesn't apply just to Israel. You're supposed to keep your mouth shut with respect to other problems, too. In Iran, for example, we didn't even talk to the opposition after 1968, not a word. But this was also related to the whole Israel issue because the Israelis and the Iranians had a very close deal worked out together.

*Q: I'm sure today, in 1988, that it would be difficult to talk about how we deal with Central American policy, particularly Nicaragua.*

KILLGORE: The whole point is, things eventually blow up in your face. For your own personal advancement and aggrandizement and for the welfare of your family and getting ahead and getting the recognition, it's best to go along. To get along, you go along, as they used to say.

On the other hand, why do we go to all the extreme trouble we go to, to try to select the best and the brightest young boys and girls to be Foreign Service officers if you can't even use what they're saying, if, in fact, they are instructed, "Keep your mouth shut"? Literally, some officers have been instructed, "Get out to your post and don't talk so much about the Palestine problem." Did anyone say to the American Government, "You're going to have a big revolt in the West Bank in Gaza against the Israelis"? No! It sounds unpleasant. The line is that the occupation has been relatively benign. Besides, according to Ben Venisti, an Israeli, the occupation effectively has gone too far to turn back, so no need to talk about it any more.

In other words, our whole society is ignorant, and the Foreign Service officers know that in any area of the world that's controversial--that is, the realities there conflict with what the so-called conventional wisdom is in American society or in the American Government--the best thing for him to do is keep his mouth shut. Although we have every facility in the world to get things straight, we have a billion dollar communication system, we have many officers in many parts of the world to report. As an officer and an embassy, you have access, literally, to anyone practically you want to see. You can talk to the prime minister, even, you can talk to the best brains in the country, the best professional people, philosophers, professors, politicians. We have every way to know. If you have the wit to know, the wit to understand, and the opportunity to learn about something, then you can't report about it because it conflicts with something back in Washington, isn't it a sad show?

*Q: It is a sad show. I suppose it's probably not anything different from what I can imagine what Soviet diplomats have been reporting back to the Soviet Union for years. Even though they see one thing, they have to report it so that it meets with the Marxist scheme of things. We're going to return to this soon.*

*You were public affairs officer in Baghdad, sort of in exile, to some extent. Then in 1967 came the '67 War, the June War with Israel, in which most of the Arab countries severed relations with the United States, throwing all of you out. At that point, you were sent to Dacca.*

**DAVID L. MACK**  
**General Services/Rotation Officer**  
**Baghdad (1965-1967)**

*Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

*Q: It was a kind of a horror at the time, sure.*

MACK: I should probably mention, of course, at the end of the FS-100 class we had that memorable day when everybody is given their assignment. I very much wanted to go back to the Arab world. There were two Arabists in the class, myself and a person who is still a very close friend whom I had met in graduate school.

*Q: Who is that?*

MACK: Steve Buck, he's still in the Service. I was later best man at his wedding in Beirut. Steve and I were the two Arabists, and of course we very much wanted assignments in the Arab world. Fortunately, when the available posts were announced, there were two Arab world posts, one was Baghdad and one was Algiers. Steve, who had decent French, as well as basic Arabic, got Algiers and I got Baghdad. We were both pretty satisfied.

*Q: I was wondering, looking at your career, I don't think I've run across anybody who has been in the Arab world as completely as you have. Usually, at least for their sins, an Arabist is tossed into Madras or some place like that, or a time in London to be the resident Middle East expert, or something like that. Was anybody even at this time saying, okay, you've got to get out and find out what the world is like? I mean was anybody in Personnel giving you this early on, or not?*

MACK: I know it was an issue. I remember being impressed by one speaker who said he'd spent all of his time in the Arab world and he didn't think it had hurt his career. Because, of course, there were a lot of Arabic language posts as opposed to Thai language posts, for example. It became a much greater and institutionalized issue at the time of the global outlook program, or GLOP under Kissinger. By that time I very much wanted to have an assignment out of the Arab world and desperately tried very hard to get one. But I was turned down. Following Cairo, I had passed the Arabic test at entrance, barely meeting the minimum requirement of 2-2+ for one of the hard languages. As a result, even when I was trying to get assigned out of the Arab world, it didn't happen. Even in Washington, with the exception of a couple of brief assignments, my jobs were primarily connected with the Arab world.

*Q: So you went to Baghdad*

MACK: To Baghdad.

*Q: When did you get married? This came later on or...*

MACK: Yes, it came later. My wife and I said goodbye forever for the second time. The first time was when I went off to Cairo, and the second time when I went to Baghdad. We continued to correspond, but it was not at all clear how this story would come out at that point.

*Q: When you went out to Baghdad, if you could tell me a bit about. This was '65, you'd had your nastiness of July 14th, 1958, but Iraq was in pretty much of turmoil. What was the situation there?*

MACK: I should mention one thing first just to finish the story of my car. My Austin Healy was totaled out. I had no automobile to take with me. One of my classmates, who was married, had an old Ford Falcon that was on its last wheels. He was planning to abandon it on one of the streets in Washington. I said, don't do that. I'll pay you \$25.00 for it. And he said, well, okay, but only if you drive me and my wife to the train station when we leave. So I drove them to the train station, paid the \$25.00, they signed the title over to me, and I had a \$25.00 car which the U.S. Government shipped to Baghdad. So I did have a vehicle. But at any rate, I got to Baghdad with this \$25.00 car and air freight. I had no household effects, just air freight, that's all I had at that point.

Actually, our relations with Iraq were pretty good at that point. We had a very large embassy, including on the military side, and even the remnants of an AID program that was winding down. There were no longer any AID personnel, but we just sort of ran a few residual programs out of the economic section. Relations were not close, but they weren't bad. And as I say, we had a full range of activities.

*Q: Correct me if I'm wrong, but we were all working out of a text by Walter Rostow in those days, and the whole idea was nations reached a certain point of takeoff. And as I recall, Iraq was one of those that was right on the forefront. This is really going to start going places, and we were kind of enthusiastic.*

MACK: There was a feeling that Iraq could make it because it had oil, vast agricultural areas, and a population with a reasonable level of education, etc. Oil prices were still very low. We talked almost as much about their date exports, as about their oil exports. And they had, by all accounts, a poor government.

*Q: Who was then?*

MACK: When I arrived it was Abdul Salam Arif.

*Q: Abdul Karim Kassem had already been killed.*

MACK: Kassem had been killed. So it was another military dictatorship under Abdul Salam Arif. While I was there, Arif was killed in a helicopter crash and his brother Abdul Rahman Arif succeeded him. There was also an attempted coup by an Iraqi air force officer, who is still alive. There was a lot of political turmoil, and they weren't making the economic progress that they could be making. Their relations with Iran were improving a little bit. I arrived during a brief window in which they had a fairly farsighted Prime Minister who was trying to make economic reforms and improve Iraq's relations with Iran and other countries, including the United States. This was Abdul Rahman al-Bazzaz. It was a brief period. You think of the Prague Spring. By contrast with most of Iraq's history, the Bazzaz cabinet was the Baghdad spring, but it didn't last very long. In fact, he was subsequently dismissed, and subsequent to that assassinated in London, I believe.

I remember the coup particularly because I was in the embassy when it started. This was an officer who had previously tried to overthrow the government. So this was the second time. I can remember being in the embassy which was then in this big compound next to the presidential palace. I remember the Air Force jets screaming overhead to bomb the presidential palace. It felt like they were coming right at us. My job was to maintain contact with our Consulate in Basra, and we were doing that on a single 5-band radio. I was on the floor trying to communicate with Basra about the coup that was going on down there. We discovered later that the coup had started from the Mosul garrison. That turned out to be a bit of luck for me, because I had previously arranged a trip up there. I was at that time in my rotational tour in the embassy with the commercial section. I had this previously arranged trip up to Mosul. I was very excited, as a would-be political officer, and was given instructions by the ambassador and the political section

on what to look for. So I did a little bit of political officer work while I was in Mosul on this commercial trip.

Mind you, I was only in Baghdad for nine months.

Q: *Who was the ambassador?*

MACK: The ambassador was Robert Strong. He was very good with me and the other junior officer. He took a lot of time with us, would have us over to his house once in a while and could chat about our careers, about the Foreign Service, and about Iraq. He would invite us to functions. He once invited me over for tennis and a casual meeting with Foreign Minister Adnan Pachachi, who I got to know very well decades later, and the foreign minister's young doubles partner. I felt very much a part of the whole operation in Baghdad, and thought it seemed to be a pretty well run embassy. It functioned together and had good mission esprit.

I was supposed to have a full rotational tour but because my tour was cut short by a reassignment, I only had the segments doing economic-commercial work, and doing consular work. I found the consular work very interesting because it really got me in touch with a lot of Iraqis, mostly Christians, who were trying to emigrate from the country. I had this real contact there with Iraqis, and used my Arabic. I had a lot of frustrations with the economic-commercial work. We were not doing much business in the country, and it was a big economic section so I got the less interesting job assignments.

Q: *I was commercial officer in Dhahran some years before the Arab world was sort of relegated to the very bottom by American business. Somebody from Geneva would drop by. In Saudi Arabia they'd drop by, arrive on Thursday night and arranged to leave Saturday morning, which wasn't very useful.*

MACK: Iraq had kind of been left out of the early oil boom because under Kassem they had nationalized the oil companies. As a result the international oil companies, which then had dominant role in international petroleum affairs, tended to give Iraq the cold shoulder. Even though they had a certain level of oil exports, they didn't really get in on the early oil boom. Things were very stagnant in the petroleum part of their economy, and there was not much interest by U.S. business. We had three full-time economic officers, and one full-time commercial officer. So when I was put in as a rotational officer, I got not terribly interesting work.

I had a very social existence while I was in Baghdad. I was single, there was this brief period of detente in our relations with Iraq and I knew a lot of young Iraqis. We helped westernized Iraqis. I socialized with them often, and would see them in their offices as well. I found it pretty fulfilling but not so much because of what I was doing in the embassy.

Q: *Did you get any feel for the Iraqi character? They have always struck me as being a different type than most Arabs. For one thing, their mobs seem to be more vicious when they get going.*



MACK: Well, yes, taken individually they are extremely loyal to their friends, extremely sociable individuals, great party givers, and very smart, highly educated people. But, yes, I always had the understanding that an Iraqi mob was something to avoid, but that was more by reputation than anything else. It was nothing that I actually experienced firsthand during my time there. Overall, I found being in Iraq an exciting and fulfilling learning experience. I wasn't able to travel in the country as much as I wanted because there was a Kurdish insurgency going on in the north. Large areas of the country were off-bounds for travel. In fact, the most interesting month I had there was when I was sent down to Basra where we had this little consulate. Gosh, that could be a whole story in itself.

*Q: Well, let's tell about it.*

MACK: Yes, this was towards the end of my time in Iraq.

*Q: So we're talking about '66-ish?*

MACK: Yes, right. . I went down to Basra, it was May-June of 1966. Basra was already very hot and steamy, gulf-like as you know from Dhahran. There were three Americans at the post, consul, vice consul and an administrative assistant-communicator. The consul was Tom McAndrew. Vice consul Jim Bumpas was on leave, and I went down to take his place for a month as vice consul.

Basra was a real sleepy post, virtually nothing going on. Probably our main reason for being there was to watch the Russians, the Soviets. It was a major port for bringing in Soviet military equipment. The Soviets had a very close military relationship, or at least a well developed military relationship. They did a lot of things there. It was a small consular corps, there were maybe 15-16 consulates down there, and the old remnants of the British empire, the British community. I remember the British Club, where the US Consul was an honorary member. He invited me there several times, and made the mistake of inviting a bunch of Americans from some project up the Tigris at Amara where there was a big sugar plantation. It was a Hawaiian-American agri-economic company that was putting in this big sugar plantation. He invited them down to the British Club. When this group of Hawaiians of all shades and hues arrived, the children were just running toward this miserable little crummy pool. I remember the British moms going out plucking their children out of the pool so they wouldn't be contaminated by these children who obviously looked alien. This was such a miserable little remnant of the British Empire, yet there was still a sense of exclusivity. Afterwards there was a notice to all members that they could only bring non-members one at a time to the Club. So it was that kind of provincial atmosphere. Lots of little tempests in the teapot, including those I was involved in.

I'll tell two stories. First, Consul McAndrew took me for a call on his Soviet counterpart about 10:00 o'clock in the morning. He served whiskey, Scotch whiskey. He said, only in winter vodka, and whiskey at 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Then the conversation was going on about and things locally, and then toward the end he started saying, Tom, I have a dream that someday our two peoples will be allies again, as in the Great War. He went on and on in this vein. I was very excited, and afterwards I said, well, what will you do? Will you send a cable? So we'll have to get back and write up the telegram on this? And the consul said, no way. The first time I had

that conversation, I was very excited and I sent a telegram. The second time I had the conversation I realized that it might not be so important, so I sent an airgram. He said the Department never paid the least bit of attention to the reporting. Obviously, McAndrew concluded, this has nothing to do with Soviet policy. The guy is just going off on his own tangent. That was one example of the Basra I found in 1966.

The other example: the Soviets invited us over to the embassy along with other members of the diplomatic corps, and some local dignitaries, to a showing of the Bolshoi Ballet's production of Swan Lake. This was a big event in Basra, a movie of the Bolshoi Ballet. It was a very scratchy film, as you might imagine. This was by now early June, and Basra was steaming away in sweltering heat. During the intermission, I turned to these two guys next to me, thinking that they were local security people who had been invited or invited themselves to keep an eye on the foreigners. I said in Arabic, well, it's very high humidity today which probably means the wind is coming off the Arab Gulf instead of from the desert - because in Arabic you always refer to it as the Arab Gulf. Even the local newspaper referred to it as the Arabian Gulf. One of them said to me in English, what do you mean Arab Gulf? They turned out to be two Iranian vice consuls. The two largest consulates in Basra were headed by the Iranian consul general and the British consul general. The next day there was a call from the Iranian consul general to my consul to ask whether this indicated some change in U.S. Government policy. I had to go over and pay a call on him, apologize, and have the history of the area explained to me. There was this kind of constant tempest in the teapot kind of atmosphere there.

*Q: Sounds like it would make a wonderful British comedy setting.*

MACK: Yes. There were other events like that that made Basra kind of a memorable place, but not at all important to U.S. foreign policy.

*Q: You had this nine months and a spattering of a couple of interesting places, but at the same time you weren't really getting your teeth in anything.*

MACK: I was looking forward, of course, to being in the political section. But then with new US immigration laws, they established a new vice consular position in Amman, Jordan to deal with the increased visa work

*Q: This is the opening up of getting away from the quota system.*

MACK: Yes, and getting to major preferences for relatives. There was a very high demand, in Jordan which then included the West Bank and East Jerusalem. So I was sent over there as vice consul. I was rather disappointed actually. I had been looking forward to the rest of my tour, and by that point I had proposed by mail to my wife, who agreed. She was going to come out to Baghdad and we'd be married in Baghdad. Among other things, I had decided after a certain amount of covert dating with Iraqi girls that the Foreign Service was not a place for a single man.

*Q: You mentioned covert dating with Egyptians and covert dating with Iraqis. What was the situation?*

MACK: Well, you know, you would meet during the day at a friend's house, or at the school, or at a workplace, take them home, stopping in a park for tea, maybe even going to your apartment to listen to some music. There was always a sense that this was something that was certainly forbidden for them, and something that could get you in trouble too. And I'm not so sure it went very far, but it was the sort of thing that is memorable in retrospect more than anything else.

Fortunately, I ended up getting married in Jordan. I arrived in Jordan in late July of 1966, and my wife came out shortly thereafter. I took her down to Jerusalem, and we were married at St. George's church, an Anglican church in Jerusalem with just a few people from the embassy in Amman and consulate in Jerusalem. They included my boss, who was the head of the consular section in Amman, and the DCM, who had been with me in Baghdad as DCM, along with their wives. The DCM was in effect my best man.

**KENTON W. KEITH**  
**USIS, Rotation Officer**  
**Baghdad (1966-1967)**

*Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.*

*Q: How did Baghdad strike you?*

KEITH: It was exotic, it was wonderful. I was there at a very benign moment. I was there after the madness of Abdul Karim Qassim and the post-revolutionary violence, and before Saddam Hussein and the Baath revolution. There was a period in which the two Arif brothers were presidents, one succeeding the other. It was not Switzerland, but it was rather benign with a prime minister in a latter period who was quite keen on opening up to the West and particularly to the U.S. There were a lot of sophisticated people in Baghdad in those days. There were people who had been educated in Britain, France, and the U.S. The brain drain that followed had not yet occurred. Iraqis were very sociable, very open, very gossipy, very party loving. I found them extremely pleasant and very easy to be around.

*Q: You were in Iraq from when to when?*

KEITH: I was in Iraq for one year from the summer of '66 to the summer of '67. In June of '67, I left with everybody else because of the Six Day War.

*Q: Iraq is always quite interesting because it is the one country in the Arab world that really had everything going for it. It had a diverse economy, water, oil, a relatively small population, literate, and yet it seemed to be blessed with terrible leaders for a long time. When you arrived there, what was the attitude of our embassy?*

KEITH: It was quite optimistic. Our ambassador, Robert Strong, was a solid professional who took a special interest in the junior officers of the embassy. He would have us for tea occasionally and speak candidly about our relations with Iraq. In fact, we had a developing cultural and educational relationship with Iraq that had not existed before. That was new. Before, when Iraq looked to the West they were looking toward Britain. (They had of course strong relations with the Soviet Bloc, which supplied their arms.) But the mid-sixties the Iraqis were increasingly looking toward the United States. To illustrate, the Iraqi government encouraged the development of an important relationship between the University of Baghdad and the University of Texas. That may sound like a benign affair, but think of what was involved in exchanges of students, exchanges of professors, a kind of twinning relationship that got so deep that it had a life of its own and it was operating outside the context of our official relationship. It was a relationship that was of benefit to the Iraqis and of benefit to the long range interests of the U.S. When the end finally came with the 1967 war the Iraqis actually signaled that they would like to keep that relationship going even as they were breaking diplomatic relations. We had a growing economic relationship with the Iraqis. And the transportation link was there. People tend to forget that PanAm stopped in Baghdad in those days. There was a big PanAm office in Baghdad.

*Q: You spoke earlier about our ambassador.*

KEITH: Robert Strong.

*Q: What was his background?*

KEITH: A career officer. I don't know if he had a number of posts in the Arab world, but I didn't think of him as an Arabist. Enoch Duncan was his deputy, not an Arabist. Grant McClanahan was the political counselor, definitely an Arabist, as was Tom Scotese, one of his deputies. On the U.S. Information side, the PAO was an Arabist. The information officer was an Arabist and so was the cultural affairs officer. It was a very well staffed embassy.

*Q: What was your job there?*

KEITH: I was there to be trained. I had a period in the Cultural section to begin with and then in the information Section. Then I was assigned to the Political Section and was there for the last four months. As tensions were rising in the Middle East and the Political Section was shorthanded, I soon performing core tasks. There was something called the WEEKA, the weekly *tour d'horizon* review of political developments with Iraq. Drafting that document each week was a perfect task for a young officer. You started with the blank piece of paper and tried to capture the mood of the country and highlight important events, the tenor of press reporting, etc. They seemed to like the substance and style of my reports. In the midst of a deteriorating situation I was having a very good time.

*Q: What is the difference between information and cultural at that time?*

KEITH: The Cultural Officer was really working on educational exchange and trying to create some positive movement between Iraq and the U.S. on the cultural and educational side. The information officer's biggest challenge was a very controlled and very anti-American press. The Information Officer was a very talented man and accomplished Arabist named Dick Jeanneret. He would take me on some of his calls. I recall one such visit that provided me an object lesson in dealing with Arab world press of the time. We were visiting the man who was the country's most respected editor to complain about a particularly unfair anti-American editorial. After hearing Jeanneret out he said, "Well, if you want better coverage and more positive coverage, we need a new press." You help us and we'll help you." I was quite shocked, but Dick merely smiled. In the car heading back to the embassy, Dick laughingly said, "I thought it would be something like that. The editorial was just to get our attention."

*Q: You say you spent the last four months in the political section. In a way, things that were happening there in the Arab world really weren't happening in Baghdad. They were happening to the west.*

KEITH: Yes, that's true. Baghdad was not on the front line. It was not a confrontation state, as the term later developed. But there was a lot happening in Iraq. The Iraqis believed and with some justification that the Israelis were giving aid and comfort to the Kurds in the north of the country. The Israelis and the Iranians were cooperating. So, Iraq thought it had a legitimate grievance that went beyond a general Arab feeling of support for the Palestinians.

*Q: What about the influence at that time of the Soviet Union?*

KEITH: The Soviet Union was very influential in those days, but perhaps never as influential as we supposed and maybe as the Soviets themselves thought. The Soviets had a military supply relationship with Syria, Iraq, Egypt, that was thought to be an effective lever for Russian influence. The Soviets were never really able to make very maximum use of that for a variety of reasons, chiefly a deep Arab world antipathy toward Communism and the fear of Soviet influence in their societies. The USSR achieved its greatest influence in Egypt, Yemen, Iraq and Syria. Yet even at the height of that influence indigenous communists were suppressed and often jailed.

What always surprised me, however, was a kind of residual anti-Soviet feeling that you discovered among people wherever you went, whether it was Baghdad, Damascus, or Cairo. Conversely, there was a reservoir of pro-American feeling throughout the Arab world, even in places where we were virulently attacked every day in the press. I don't think you can say that Soviet influence in the Middle East was ever as important as we feared or as they thought.

*Q: Did you find that your conversations with Iraqis tended to center around our support of Israel?*

KEITH: Absolutely. That was the main issue when you talked about the politics of the area. However, depending on who you were talking to – if you were talking to a middle class engineer

or a professor or somebody that you would ordinarily associate with – I don't mean senior military officers or apparatchiks of the government – I would say that their overwhelming concern was not a political one with regard to Israel, but economic development and political and civil rights in their own country. As you said earlier, the Iraqis have always deserved better leadership than they've had. The leadership tends to be the expression of the worst aspects of the character of the country. Ever since I've known it, it's been run in one way or another by thugs.

*Q: What about the Baath Party? How did it stand at that time?*

KEITH: When I was there, the Baath Party was not in power and it was in some disarray. The Baath Party began as a secular Arab nationalist movement. It had very interesting roots and some very interesting people who were its philosophical fathers. But like a lot of things in the Middle East, these things tend to be overtaken by political opportunists and people who are not motivated by philosophical ideals. So, what happened in the early days of the Baath movement when it had come to some political prominence was a split along personal rather than ideological lines. By the time I got to Baghdad the Baath Party in Iraq was out. Some Baath Party leaders were in prison. Baath Party military figures were around but they were not in power. The Baath leader, Ahmed Hassan Bakr was around on the periphery in Baghdad biding his time. When in the late '60s he took over government in the Baath coup, he was a known quantity. People at the embassy knew him. I remember being in Beirut when the coup took place and hearing knowledgeable Arabists at the embassy in Beirut saying, "We know this guy and he's reasonable and he comes to our cocktail parties, so he ought to be alright." How ironic in retrospect.

*Q: How did the June war of 1967 develop for you all in Baghdad?*

KEITH: We went to work on Monday that morning and news was blaring from radios all over the city. In fact, the sound of Nasser's *Sawt al Arab* radio broadcasts provided the sound track for that entire period. I was taking my wife and infant son to the embassy that morning for his two month checkup. At the embassy there was a certain amount of controlled panic, but it was quite clear that the situation was drastic. We didn't know what was happening and we didn't know what the truth was. We heard a lot of statements being made about American involvement, American collusion, American support, and some of it was coming from our old friend Jordan. This was before diplomatic relations were cut, but we knew that we were going to be evacuated. I was asked to go with some passports to the Ministry of Interior to get exit visas. I dealt with a young Iraqi officer who was more disappointed than angry. He asked, "Why are you doing this to us?" He was gesticulating and he was very upset. I said, "We are not assisting the Israelis with bombs. We are not doing that. What you're hearing is a lie." He said, "I wish I could believe that." I said, "You can believe it. What you're hearing is a lie." I tried very hard to persuade him that the U.S. was not directly involved in this conflict at all. Eventually, he gave me the exit visas and I walked out. That night, the wives and children were put on busses and sent over the mountains into Iran. We also were told that night that diplomatic relations had been broken. I was duty officer, by the way, and got the call. I took the call from the Foreign Ministry. I told the person who was calling, "I cannot take this call. I'm just a duty officer. You have to speak to our chargé." It was a very complicated night.

*Q: While you were getting ready for the evacuation, were the events of July 1958 when Iraqi bombs did nasty things uppermost in your minds?*

KEITH: It never got far away from me. One of the things that we were doing in those final days was burning files. There was a file including photographs of some of the things that had happened in the 1958 revolution, the atrocities. They were in file folders in the bottom of a filing cabinet. They left an impression.

*Q: We're talking about mobs attacking and dragging some Americans out and hanging them.*

KEITH: The pictures I saw were of mobs attacking the King and his pro-West Prime Minister Nuri Said, dragging the regime's supporters through the streets behind jeeps, hanging them from light poles. There was another file that contained documentation of the regime of Abdul Karim Qassim, who was the post-revolutionary strong man. There were reports on Qassim's principal collaborator, a man named Mehdawi, who conducted public courts against enemies – real or perceived --the people's courts and had the power to pronounce death sentences on a whim. He was one of the most feared men in the history of a country with a long history of cruel men. So, yes, history of mob violence and moments of great cruelty was definitely was very much on our minds.

*Q: When one examines the Middle East in the last 50 years, there is always this talk about the Arab mob. When it boils down to it, as far as real lethal action, it's the Iraqis.*

KEITH: Yes. Certainly when it comes down to the kind of show trials and public executions and so on, I would agree.

*Q: While you were there, did Saddam Hussein cross anyone's books?*

KEITH: No. In fact, Saddam Hussein was not a prominent figure at all until Ahmed Hassan Bakr's coup. Saddam was not a soldier. He was a Baath Party functionary. He was a tough. He was a party strong-arm. He was not a brilliant theorist. He wasn't somebody who wrote political treatises. He was a bully and he was a party enforcer. He worked for Ahmed Hassan Bakr and people who were smart, people who were ideologically coherent. He was not.

*Q: How did the evacuation work out for you and your family?*

KEITH: The evacuation was tiring. The embassy family lost a child in the evacuation. The baby was ill but probably wouldn't have died under normal circumstances. The long trek was very hard on everybody. The evacuation began on Monday night, the first night of the war. We had organized busses and a car caravan. A lot of people left Iraq that night, including all the wives, children and dependent family members. The next day, another convoy was put together, which I led, of non-official Americans and embassy secretaries. The following day, the rest of the embassy came out. We drove over the mountains to Tehran, where we, along with other Americans and many other nationalities who were evacuated from Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, were welcomed enthusiastically by the Iranian people. It was very heartwarming to see the welcome and the hospitality and the many acts of kindness in a very difficult time. Many of us were in

Tehran for a month or two while Washington figured what to do with us. We left Iraq in the first week of June, and we saw the Fourth of July fireworks at our Embassy in Tehran.

*Q: Was it the feeling that you were not going to be going back soon?*

KEITH: It was quite clear that we weren't going back to Baghdad for some time. By the time two or three weeks rolled around, people were beginning to be assigned elsewhere or brought back to the United States. I was assigned to Saudi Arabia, to Jeddah.

**ARTHUR L. LOWRIE**  
**Chief of Interests Section**  
**Baghdad (1972-1975)**

*Arthur L. Lowrie served in U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He graduated from Allegheny College with a degree in international relations and studied at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. In addition to serving on the Algeria Desk, Mr. Lowrie served in Syria, the Sudan, Tunis, Iraq, and Egypt. He was interviewed by Patricia Lessard and Theodore Lowrie on December 23, 1989.*

LOWRIE: Following the Algerian Desk, I persuaded NEA that I was the man to reopen the post in Baghdad, since it had been manned by Belgian diplomats from 1967 until my arrival in Baghdad in September 1972. There is an interesting historical footnote connected with Belgium being the protecting power. It is not a role that Belgium traditionally assumes. The Belgian Ambassador in 1967 was a famous war hero and a great friend of the United States. The American Embassy had been given a very short time to evacuate in 1967 and no country had yet agreed to take over our interests. The Belgian Ambassador on his own initiative said Belgium would be the protecting power. For that reason, perhaps, the US scrutiny of the Belgian performance was not as close as it might have been even on the Washington side and a considerable scandal developed in later years when it was found that one of the Iraqi employees had absconded with a large amount of money. The Belgian Ambassador who had by then gone on to other things was then Ambassador to Morocco and was one of the diplomats killed in that shooting in the early 1970s at King Hassan's garden party. Baghdad was a wonderful assignment professionally. I was, for all practical purposes, the American Ambassador. I was treated that way by the other diplomats and to a lesser extent by the Iraqi government.

*Q: What were the key issues between Iraq and the United States at that time?*

LOWRIE: There were many issues at which we were at odds, very few about which anything could be done. The nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company was a very big issue. The seizure of our embassy, including the Ambassador's residence which was by then serving as the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, was another. We were completely at odds over the Arab-Israeli conflict in which Iraq continued to portray itself as the most staunch defender of the Palestinians. The Kurdish struggle against the Iraqi government turned again to armed conflict. We professed



neutrality, and I so informed the Iraqi government, but in fact we were assisting the Kurds. I didn't find that out until I was back in Washington at the end of my assignment in mid-1975 when I was talking with Roy Atherton who was then Assistant Secretary for NEA. The newspapers just a few days before our meeting had come out with the story that Nixon and Kissinger had contributed several million dollars to the Shah for support of the Kurds. I protested to Roy Atherton about being kept completely in the dark and, even worse, given instructions that I could assure the Iraqi government that the United States was in no way involved. Roy Atherton, despite his very high position in the State Department, assured me that he too had learned of this just a few days prior to the media disclosures.

*Q: When did relations between the United States and Iraq begin to improve?*

LOWRIE: As in Algeria, the first improvement in our relations followed the arrival of the Boeing aircraft that the Iraqis had bought. That was an interesting incident in itself because Boeing put on quite an elaborate arrival ceremony for the first aircraft and brought to Baghdad many of its senior executives and their wives, most of whom had never been in the Middle East before. In any case, the 727 arrived right on time and taxied up to the front of the spectators to unload. As soon as it turned off its motors, a group of Iraqis went in front of the plane with several sheep and goats, cut their throats and began spreading blood on the nose of the plane for good luck. At this moment the Boeing executives and their wives began coming out of the plane, walking down the gangplank a little concerned, perhaps, about being in Iraq with its reputation stemming from the 1958 bloody revolution. And as they got off the plane they looked around and the first thing they saw was this blood being rubbed all over the nose of the plane. Some of them turned around and went right back inside the plane. Next to Boeing, the companies Iraq was most interested in attracting were high-tech companies related to the oil industry, and oil companies that were willing to sign service contracts. And they all began arriving in droves after the October War when the money began pouring into Baghdad.

*Q: Continuation of interview: November 17, 1990. Mr. Lowrie, what kind of impression were you able to make or form of Saddam Hussein during the period of time you were there between 1972 and 1975?*

LOWRIE: Although Saddam Hussein was the Vice President every one knew he was the real power running Iraq. He had succeeded in establishing the most effective police state that had ever existed in the Arab world. None of them could approach the effectiveness and widespread nature of the competing security services, the Baath Party security apparatus, etc. And his ruthlessness, too, was already well known. An example of the total arrogance and the unlimited power of the intelligence services occurred in late-1974/early-1975 when my driver Abbas, a good, stubborn, Kurdish employee of the US Government for many years, was arrested and held at the local police station. I went down immediately to find out what had happened. There was a police traffic lieutenant there and two security types in their dark glasses. They insisted there had been an automobile accident and Abbas was under arrest and there was nothing I could do about it. I demanded to see the automobiles. We went out and looked at them. Our Chevrolet Impala had a tiny little mark on the bumper. The Land Rover that the security types had been driving had no marks whatsoever. We came back in and I told the police lieutenant, there's been no accident here. This whole thing is ridiculous, trumped up and you can't take Abbas away. He just

shrugged and threw up his hands. The security people just sat back and smirked and didn't even attempt to provide any justification, but the net result was Abbas went off to prison. He was held incommunicado for about three weeks, tortured, and one day unceremoniously dumped out in the street in his pajamas in fairly bad shape. But he was very tough and immediately went back to work and carried out his duties for the US, which I believe he's still doing today. Despite the police state atmosphere in Iraq, by March 1975, when the fighting against the Kurds ended with the Algiers Treaty, it was an exciting time because Iraq was making a major push for importing western technology, the petrodollars were pouring in and so were American businessmen. I had the opportunity to get to know people like Cy Sulzberger--a wonderful man--and David Rockefeller--the first big corporate executive to be received by Saddam. Senator Ted Kennedy came in 1975 with an entourage of family and aides and stayed for three or four days. It was a very exciting time full of promise for the future of US-Iraqi relations if we could ever get over some of the political hurdles. Saddam had told Sulzberger that his model was Boumedienne and the kind of hard headed, pragmatic nationalism he represented. The March 1975 Algiers Agreement was a major turning point. I remember doing an analysis of that agreement for Washington emphasizing the parallel interests of Iraq and Iran with their both having a Kurdish problem, both being major oil producers, members of OPEC, having a long common border, desire for rapid economic development and everything seemed to point to the durability of this Agreement. My prediction was that the agreement would last. Unfortunately, it only lasted five years. It may well have been durable had it not been for the Iranian Revolution.

*Q: Did you ever meet Saddam Hussein?*

LOWRIE: I shook his hand at a large reception for the diplomatic corp. He was very secretive in his movements even then. He traveled in one of four identical black Mercedes with lots of bodyguards carrying AK-47s. Educated Iraqis were totally intimidated by his regime and shunned all but official contact with foreigners.

Additional highlights of my tour in Baghdad: In March 1973, six months before the Yom Kippur War, there was a Chiefs of Mission meeting of all NEA Ambassadors held in Tehran which I attended. The two principals from Washington were the Deputy Secretary Kenneth Rush and NEA Assistant Secretary Joseph Sisco. Kenneth Rush's message basically was, don't be concerned about the Arab threat to use oil as a weapon because in his words "they can't drink the oil"! Joe Sisco's message was basically, don't worry about another Arab-Israeli war, Israeli military superiority is such that "Arab irrationality does not extend that far"! What was particularly striking about that meeting with all these distinguished Ambassadors and area experts, was that there was only one person in the room who disputed Sisco's comments and he was not a Middle East specialist but the Chargé d'Affaires in Tel Aviv, Owen Zurhellen. He said that at some point, given their numerical superiority in aircraft, artillery and tanks, the Arabs may well decide to go to war against Israel.

I mentioned David Rockefeller visited Baghdad in January 1975. His reception was initially quite cool. He was accompanied by Joseph Verner Reed who was then his Chief of Staff, later Ambassador in Morocco. David Rockefeller was having a couple of martinis at our house about 9:30pm when a phone call came saying that Saddam Hussein would see him. He went over and had a two hour relaxed, good natured tour d'horizon with Saddam and he returned very

impressed with Saddam. He apparently had some personal message for Saddam from Henry Kissinger suggesting some kind of dialogue to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. He elicited some interest from Saddam but no real response. Saddam, who was enjoying his newfound wealth by this time, also welcomed US economic activity including a mission from Chase Manhattan to look at the new five-year plan. He expressed to Rockefeller his perception that US strategy in the region was a pincer movement involving Israel and Iran directed at destroying the Iraqi revolution. David Rockefeller found that rather ridiculous and rebutted it at some length. But it is a good indication of the isolated, ethnocentric mentality of Saddam at that time. David Rockefeller impressed me as a real gentleman, very considerate, among the most pleasant VIPs I ever had to deal with.

Commercial activity kept growing and in January 1975 my longstanding request for a full-time commercial officer was met. On January 31, 1975, Boeing signed with Iraqi Airways the biggest single contract it had ever concluded in the Middle East, under which Iraq would buy one 737, three 727s, four 747s and the total was valued at \$220 million worth of aircraft for which the Iraqis were to pay in cash.

*Q: Is there anything else of significance about the tour in Iraq before you left in August 1975?*

LOWRIE: I remember being quite optimistic about the possibility of future US-Iraqi relations, based not on political understandings but because Saddam had shown a big streak of pragmatism by seeking western technology, western help, and dealing with people like David Rockefeller. Also Joe Draft, Rolland Evans, and others who had met him found him extremely intelligent, pragmatic, tough minded, but someone we could deal with. That, plus his decision in March 1975 to make the agreement with the Shah, giving up part of the Shatt Al Arab, ending the Kurdish revolt, and other border rectifications, all those things pointed to a leader that was ready to do what was necessary to move his country forward. The extent of his ambitions showed up only in terms of his threats and his subversive efforts in the Gulf states. The Gulf states, the small ones particularly, were obviously very concerned about his ambitions towards them.

**GARY S. USREY**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Baghdad (1974-1976)**

*Gary S. Usrey was born in North Carolina in 1948. He graduated from the University of Maryland in 1970. His postings abroad during his Foreign Service Career included Baghdad, Buenos Aires, Alexandria, Bilbao, Panama City and Rabat. Mr. Usrey was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 21, 2002.*

USREY: Art was doing the political work, and I was doing the administrative and consular work at the post. That was fine. It seemed good to me. There wasn't much administrative work to do there. So, I didn't expect I would be in a visa mill like in London, where they really use the stuff intensely. In fact, the visa stuff became pretty interesting. I enjoyed that. The citizenship work

was really interesting, some of the cases we got in Iraq. But, the course was a terrible, dry sort of uninspiring thing, awful.

*Q: Well, Baghdad was your first post. Was that by request or lucof the draw?*

USREY: It seems to me that the way it was put to me... I got a 73 on the MLATs, which was deemed to be prime for hard language study. They said, "You have two choices. Either you can go to Adana, Turkey; or Baghdad." I asked them if I could talk with my wife over night, and let them know. So, we got the map out. There were all of two countries at the time where we had embassies that used Turkish. One was Cyprus, and one was Ankara. There were plenty of countries where you could speak Arabic. We got the post report. It sounded exotic, and indeed it was. When were you first there?

*Q: I've never been to Baghdad.*

USREY: It wasn't a hard decision to choose Baghdad. I knew that in Adana we would basically be a passport service for the ancillary air base. I wanted none of that. Also, it's pretty bleak down there. There isn't much to that part of Turkey. They still have something there, I believe. There is still a small post. So, it was pretty easy to choose Baghdad. We were excited.

*Q: You were in Baghdad from when to when?*

USREY: It was a two-year tour. It's funny, because I was in the six-month Arabic course. I started that around January 1974. I had been doing some other training, regional area studies and all that. FSI had a Shiite Lebanese guy from the Bekaa Valley, who was my teacher. It was a six-month thing, which is meant to get you up to an S -3. No reading was taught in this one. It was a fast course at the time. Then, about two months into the course, we started getting cables from the post and messages from my predecessor, a guy named Ron Main. He was killed years later in a motorcycle accident in South Africa. He was under big pressure from the ambassador in Bahrain, his next post, who I think must have been Joe Twinam, to get there ASAP, to come early. His normal transfer schedule would have overlapped with mine, which Art thought was essential, which was right. So, I didn't get to finish up the Arabic. I finished up at three months at an S-2, which was enough to get off language probation. We raced to Baghdad in April 1974. So, the tour was April 1974 to April 1976. My wife had to leave a little early. She had to beat the eight-month deadline back in...

*Q: In 1974, what was the situation there?*

USREY: Well, they were actively fighting the Kurdish insurgency in the north, led by Mustafa Barzani. This was a big thing. Arzani was getting, if not material support from Iran, certainly the ability to move back and forth across the border. So, he was able to operate and escape the Iraqi chases. They were trying to track him down out there. So, it was war time. I remember seeing trucks going through at night full of people. I heard later from Abbas, our Kurdish driver, who got tortured and was subject to a lot of trouble at the embassy, that these were Kurds and they were being sent into the south. The president was a man named Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Saddam Hussein was number two at the time. This wasn't too long after the Yom Kippur War.

*Q: The '73 war.*

USREY: Yes. So, we had not reestablished diplomatic relations. We were part of the U.S. Interests intersection of the Belgian embassy. There was no formal relationship, hence the small post. There was a rabidly hostile press. It was unbelievable. It was in the press. I had never seen anything like that before. You heard about the "Zionist entity," and blaming America for everything, but this was unbelievable. I will never forget, they had on sale at the kiosk in town, you could get Newsweek and you could get Time. The Arab League boycott of Israel was operating heavily then. No Coke, only Pepsi. All that stuff that was on the boycott list was banned. You would buy these magazines. You could get precious little besides the BBC, so you wanted to get your hands on one of these magazines. Every time the word "Israel" had been printed, they had censors that had meticulously scratched it out and had written "Zionist Entity" over it, in every magazine. The amount of work involved there is impressive. It was a police state, as it still is. It was all powerful, and people were scared to death of the security forces. There was this nasty war with the Kurds. It was off a way, it really didn't affect downtown Baghdad, although you could still see blacked out windows. People had in their cars windows painted from the 1973 war, before I got there. They were afraid of air raids, from Israel or something. So, you sort of knew a war was going on. We would get into diplomatic chatter about it, and so forth, but it wasn't manifested in town, or anything like that. So, we were trying to establish some channels with a very nasty regime that hated us and excoriated us in the papers.

One of the things I worked on was, I had been instructed to try to go in and negotiate a price for... We had withheld some U.S. aid to Iraq... Maybe we had sold them something... Maybe they had paid for something in advance, and we hadn't delivered the product. It was possibly military goods, or something, because of the war. Then in 1973 they seized our embassy. So, we were looking for a barter exchange. I was involved in negotiations with the foreign ministry, to see if we could advance that, which wasn't really moving anywhere. So, it was highly adversarial all the time. In fact, we had our phones tapped, and could hear the Iraqi agents who were monitoring our calls making noises on the line.

I'll give you the flavor of what it was like. My wife signed up for French lessons at the Alliance Française downtown. She went off to do this French thing, and met a couple. The woman was a Czechoslovakian, and her Iraqi husband had been sent by the regime to study in Czechoslovakia. They got married and came back. They were in this course. They said, "Please come over for drinks with us at our house. We would like to meet your husband." My wife said, "Well, you know, we're with the U.S. interests section." "Ah, it's okay, we're not political." So, after some arm twisting, we agreed. I said we would do it. We had to get directions over to that neighborhood, and parked the car a couple blocks from the house. Our plates were marked with what country it was. They said "United States." So we wanted to be careful. We went in and had a couple drinks, and some snacks. They were a charming couple. They were clearly thirsty for outside contact. The next day, my wife went to class and these people weren't there. They didn't show up for about three weeks. They had been reached by the security police who said, "Don't ever do that again." Finally, when they came back to French, they wouldn't talk to my wife. So, they clearly had been reached by the security police. That's the way it was. We were limited

almost completely in our contacts with the diplomatic community and ex-patriates, business people.

*Q: How did we view the government there? Were we looking at power struggles? What were we looking at?*

USREY: Yes, the power struggles, to the extent we could. We had no intelligence, no way to do it. Washington was very interested in the progress of the Kurdish War. I remember when our desk officer came out. We went up to Mosul, north of Iraq. She had a camera. She brought a camera and lots of rolls of film. We probably could have gotten into some trouble. We took pictures of the MIGs taking off from the airfield right next to Mosul there. Anyway, it was mostly about power struggles. Where was Iraq? There was intimacy between Syria and Iraq, where was that going? Where was the Baath party? Was that fully entrenched and secure? What were the chances of improved relations with the U.S. and Iraq, that sort of stuff? We were only two people. I don't think Washington expected an avalanche of political reporting on it. But, Art did a good job. He did some good reporting.

*Q: Now, was he charge?*

USREY: Well, no he was not charge because it was only an interests section. You were called principal officer. He was called principal officer.

*Q: So, it was just the two of you?*

USREY: Yes, just the two of us. Later, we got a third guy. A guy named Patrick Killough, who was the commercial officer. He was about a mid-grade officer. He came about midway through my tour. So, we were up to three. Art's wife was working as the decoder. We had these ancient one time pads. We had all the typing and stuff to do, so she was the classified secretary.

*Q: Did you get your news and what was happening? The paper...*

USREY: No, they weren't very good. They were all propaganda. They reflected the thinking of the leadership. Of course, we paid attention to it, and drew some inferences from that. Art and I would get some of our information from key ambassadors. Some were better than others. Art stayed in touch closely with the French ambassador. The British were very good. They had a bigger embassy, and they took us under their wings. We were members of their Oasis Club, which had a pool. For all intents and purposes, we were part of the British embassy family. They had their people who did all kinds of work there. They made it easy for us to get more information than we could have gotten. The Italians were pretty good, I think. I always thought the Spaniards were well informed there. Iraq had a big diplomatic community. It was just beginning to come into its own, in terms of oil money. The big wealth hadn't come in, but given the economic interest there, Baghdad had a large foreign diplomatic presence. So, every country was represented. The Papal Nuncio was pretty well informed, we found out. He had good access. We just picked up those nuggets and the crumbs from where we could, and did the best we could. That's all that was expected. I had a little budget. We kept the vehicle fleet running. I used to have to go to the Rafidain Bank, and get our cash transfers. In fact, we would take a briefcase

and fill it with these dinars. It was pretty primitive stuff. We were out almost every night, at some diplomatic function. Sometimes, there were two a night. My wife and I were having fun. We thought it was exciting. I had never seen any other kind of operation, so I thought that was pretty normal. I realized later how unusual it was, for instance, when I got to Argentina.

*Q: On the consular side, what were you doing*

USREY: In retrospect, what I was seeing was a pretty steady trickle of people, minorities, like Coptic Christians, who wanted the hell out of there. There was a growing community in places like the Detroit area, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, because it was a place where they were concentrated. There were Armenians. There was a huge Armenian neighborhood in Baghdad. We went to a wedding there once; it was like Armenian city, another Baghdad. There was a very rapidly dwindling ancient Jewish community there. So, almost all the Jews had gone before. So, I had to be pretty careful about whom I gave a visa to, because most folks didn't have a reason for coming back to Iraq, particularly non-Muslims. So, there was that. There was some legitimate academic stuff. Some of the Iraqi students still went to the U.S. to study, although not very many. The regime made its own trips for official UN visits. We gave visas for the New York staff. Sometimes, there would be an official trip to Washington from the director general level of the Foreign Ministry. So, it wasn't a heavy flow of visas, but the Iraqis were looking for foreign investment. There was American business there. So, the finance ministry would go to the World Bank/IMF meetings, or the economy ministry would go drumming up business, and go to California, and Chicago, for instance. It was typical cross-section. But, in retrospect, I'm sure there was a big demand by ethnic minorities for visas that must have been fairly elevated. I never analyzed it much. I did each interview the best I could, but we didn't keep statistics or anything. It was interesting, all our FSNs, local employees there, after so many years, you're entitled to something called an immigration visa... After you've worked for 20 plus years and had distinguished service, you can get an immigration visa to the U.S. To a person, they all planned to take advantage of that. Everybody wanted out of there. We knew that was coming. I had processed one or two of those for ex-employees, but the consular side was generally pretty quiet.

*Q: How about Americans going through there getting into trouble?*

USREY: We had some interesting cases. There was one horrific case of an oil field worker up in the north, an American working a contract for some project. A pick-up truck rolled over and he died. We found out about two days later when a phone call came in from northern Iraq saying, "Hey, this guy perished in an auto accident." They had had him in the company's offices with the air conditioning turned up full blast. It was the summer time. They were trying to keep the body reasonably intact. We got the news, and then I had to contact the family, and find out what their wishes were for the disposal of the body. Whether she wanted him buried locally or have the remains sent back for burial in the U.S. It took about two days each way to get the information. We went down to the PTT and sent a night letter. It turned out the wife wanted the body sent back for burial in the U.S. Then, we had to get the money transferred to do that. They had to put a trust deposit in with the State Department to finance this. Now, a week or so, has passed, and this body is up north. They moved it to the company headquarters in Baghdad. We finally found some little Armenian undertaker, somebody who knew something about embalming. In the Middle East, when people die, they are buried immediately. Very few people were equipped to

prepare bodies for shipment. This body was finally prepared by this not very experienced undertaker, and with a crude coffin. I remember seeing the soldering joints on the thing. It was tin, or like zinc, or something. He put it in a box, and then we got Swissair to ship it, through Zurich and then onto the U.S. It was a nightmare. I had to open the thing to do a certificate, some sort of notarial certificate so it could enter into the U.S.

*Q: You had to do that to make sure...*

USREY: Yes, it was really a body. I had to look at the deceased about eight days after the fact. It's not something I would want to do again. We put this thing on the plane, it finally wheels up, and I thought, "My God, what a nightmare." Well about two days later, I went over to the Alwiya Club to play tennis. I used to play doubles with this Swissair representative. I said, "Thanks again for your help." He said, "You won't believe what happened." It turns out that in changing planes in Zurich, the moving and shifting and torquing, the seam broke on this coffin. The fluid leaked out of the thing, all over the luggage. They had to decontaminate the luggage. They basically had to destroy the luggage. The plane was effectively ruined. I don't know if the body ever made it, or in what state. They took the body and some little Swiss guy did a proper job and put it in a real coffin. It was horrific. We had stuff like that. Also, we had a child custody case. Some Iraqi had met an American, and absconded with the kids following a divorce, and come back to Baghdad. The American mother's Congressman was all up in arms. I had to try to negotiate with the husband to abide by the California terms of the divorce decree. Actually, it was successful. He put the kids on a plane after about two months. I got lots of kudos for that one. I think he realized he had done the wrong thing, and the kids were eventually shipped back. So, it was stuff like that. There were businessmen around who needed visas. They needed passport services and so forth, and extensions.

*Q: Did anybody get in jail?*

USREY: Yes, we had one American. I was allowed to attend the trial. It was an interesting procedure. I think he was a dual national, Iraqi-American. I think the trial was political. I think his charges were political. I wasn't any help in ever getting him out, but we did the visits that we had to do. There wasn't a lot of tourist traffic. Babylon is not much to look at. They were very strict about limiting visas to Americans who didn't have business reasons to go there. So, we didn't get much of the average tourist trade.

*Q: Did you get any feel about the relationship with Saddam Hussein? What was his name?*

USREY: Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr. We all knew the history of the people in the revolutionary command council. Saddam was a brutal guy. His background was well known. I think everyone knew he would be coming up. Hassan al-Bakr died a few years later in a helicopter accident; I'm not sure Saddam had any role. I remember seeing Saddam one time at the Iranian embassy. It was Iranian National Day in Baghdad. This was before the 10-year war between the two countries. A huge Persian silk carpet was in the middle of the room, and I and other diplomats were standing there, and Saddam sort of surprised everybody by showing up. As a sign of good relations, he came to the reception briefly. There was a lot of murmuring as he walked in and shook some hands. I don't remember if he shook mine or not, I can't remember. He was in the



room. That was pretty interesting. There was no question that this guy was, if not the power behind al-Bakr, a soon to be player. It was hard to overstate the degree to which this was a police state. If we wanted to leave the city for a picnic on the weekend, we had to apply 10 days in advance for a permit to leave the environs of Baghdad. There were checkpoints on all the roads. If you didn't have the paper saying, you could leave... This was for all diplomats, not just Americans. We were often held in the city and couldn't leave until we had something that proved... Finally, toward the end of my tour, I befriended a younger, second secretary type at the Foreign Ministry; a Kurdish guy, who got me permission to go to Kurdistan. I got to drive up there. That was fun. But we had pretty strained and tense contact with the Iraqis.

*Q: How about the Soviet influence there at that time?*

USREY: Huge. A big embassy there, immense. It still is an important relationship, of course. It was huge. All of their military kit was Russian. It was very, very big. Of course, in those days, the border of the Soviet Union was just a hop, skip and a jump across Turkey. What's now Armenia was the U.S.S.R. Iran had a border with the Soviet Union. Then, the oil emerged. The oil people knew that Iraq had the second largest proven reserves in the world, after Saudi Arabia. It has huge reserves there, which they have squandered largely. So, there was a pretty rapidly growing commercial interest in it. Just as I was leaving, they were starting to build the kind of hotels you had seen in Kuwait, the Intercontinental, the Meridians, the big world-class. They didn't have that. The old Al Rasheed Hotel was the best they had in Baghdad.

*Q: Was there the feeling that the Iraqis were not spending their money wisely? Were they trying to build up a military regime then, or what?*

USREY: No, I guess you're right. I should have spoken more carefully. No, in fact, I think the view was that Iraq was smarter than most Arab regimes, at that time, plowing money into development. Clearly, there was a military. They had enough money to spend on nearly everything, and to do it with breathtaking generosity. There was immense infrastructure and improvement in irrigation, roads, energy. There were ports they were trying to fix, at Um Qasr in the South. No, they were spending in all sectors. By some standards, it was a pretty enlightened administration, in terms of putting the money all around. There was no parliament to respond to. It was pretty remarkable the way they did, I guess, address a lot of the sectors.

*Q: Well, back in 1960, when Gene Rostov, or something, wrote about commies taking off. Iraq was pointed to as the place that had the greatest potential, by the small population...*

USREY: Two big rivers.

*Q: Two big rivers...*

USREY: Good agriculture.

*Q: Good agriculture, oil and high literacy. They had all thingredients together.*

USREY: Absolutely.

*Q: They really haven't had a decent government ever.*

USREY: No. I still think of the Iraqis I met as some of the most intelligent people I've known. It's hard to generalize about a nation of people as bright, but they are like the Indians in that respect. They're an impressive people. Very, very sharp. Baghdad was the place where I formed the opinion, which I haven't relinquished, which is that your personality is formed very much by your physical environment. That is why the Italians are not like the Finns, and why Hawaiians are not like the Bolivians. It really does matter where you live. That environment, if you've ever been there... You lived in Saudi Arabia, right, or was it Egypt?

*Q: Saudi Arabia.*

USREY: Well, you know when it's 130 degrees in the summer for six months, and one of the coldest places I've ever been in the winter, it's freezing there. That harsh, nasty climate effects the kind of people that are produced. I really think it does.

*Q: Did the events of 1968, is that it, when the king was overthrown? I mean, 1958?*

USREY: Faisal, yes.

*Q: When, July 14th... I think of that particularly because that is sort of used through the Arab world as the Arab street. This was one of the few times, when there really was an Arab street, where some Americans were yanked off a bus, and were literally torn apart. Was that kind of in the backs of our minds when you were there?*

USREY: Yes. The stories of brutality, and Saddam digging a bullet out of his own leg... Was it Prime Minister Nuri Said who had his genitals cut off and stuffed in his mouth, and hung from a street lamp? These are savage people. You were aware all the time that violence was possible. In fact, not too long after I got there... I mentioned our phones were tapped, but I didn't mention that one of the women who was part of our char force at the embassy had revealed... I'm vague on the details, but she talked to Art about it. She admitted that she had been approached to put a bomb in the trash. I have to believe that almost nothing happened there without the regime wanting it to happen that way, so who knows what the real deal was there. But, we were afraid they might try to do something to us. It was a dangerous place. On the other hand, it was very safe, in terms of street crime, and all that. Yes, the nastiness and the brutality of the regime was known. What they were doing to the Kurds, the gassing, which we didn't know about at the time. Well, maybe it hadn't happened yet, possibly it was later. Unbelievable.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Shuez, the Sumis, the Kurds, the diversities, and the animosities?*

USREY: Yes, in fact, Moharram was an important holiday then, and it still is in cities like Najaf and Karbala, the big Shiites and Shrine towns... People would march and beat their chest and back. It's dramatic. I had never seen that. I would never get close enough to a Moharam procession like that to witness that, that would be foolish. But, we heard about it from other Iraqis. One of the things about diversity that I thought was really interesting was, the first

Christmas we were there, it was a diplomatic event that we got invited to, organized by the Papal Nuncio, some sort of a Christmas mass. They had all the prelates of all the various Eastern churches, resident in Baghdad. It was the most unbelievable thing. They all had these mitres and gowns. Baghdad might have been the holy see of the Chaldean Church. The Copts who are based in Alexandria were there; but also the Chaldeans, the Assyrians, the Armenian archbishop was there. It was unbelievable to look at these people. It was like you were in the ninth century or something. All these subsets of Christianity existing in close proximity. I mentioned the wedding we went to in the Armenian village. There was an Armenian ghetto right downtown. Ghetto was the right word. They were living in a very defined area. Then, you had a very closely divided society, mostly Arab, probably about 88% or so. Then, the rest were others, such as Kurds. There were Jews there too.

My driver, for example, Abbas was illiterate, but he spoke seven languages. He spoke Arabic, English, Kurdish was his mother tongue, Turkish, Farsi, Chaldean, and one other one that I can't remember. He could speak seven languages but he couldn't read any of them. I only found out once when I asked him to read something. He admitted that he couldn't read. He was ashamed of it. He was a fabulous guy. He once was tortured. He was kept for several days in jail. Art was beside himself trying to get access to see him. Of course, he had no consular rights because he was not an American. Art kept at it, and finally he was released. He had been beaten up pretty good. I guess the regime thought he was involved in Kurdish resistance or something, and was reporting to the Americans, which he wasn't. Anyway, he must have been beaten up pretty badly. He went home, washed up, got a clean shirt, and drove to the airport to pick up the diplomatic pouch that night at the airport. Few marines would do that. He wasn't even an American, but he was determined to get the American pouch. He was an astonishing person. So, you had these little stories among the minorities who were there, so diverse was the word. It was quite a place.

*Q: How about with this Kurdish war? This is during the time of Henry Kissinger and the State Department, and all. We sort of turned that Kurdish rebellion on and off, without much regard for the Kurds, particularly. Rather cynical, I think. Did you get any feel for that?*

USREY: Well, the deciding event, or the main event that enabled Iraq to really crush this insurgency, and put it down, was... You remember, the Shah and the Iraqis disagreeing on the border line on the Shatt al-Arab, where it was. The Iranians claimed it was on the Iraqi shore, their national boundary right along the Iraqi side, and the Iraqis claimed that it was on the Iranian side. They agreed on a defining line, down the middle. This was seen as a big concession to Iran. What we later found out was what the Iraqis got in exchange was Iran made an agreement to close the border up north, in Kurdish areas, so that the Kurds couldn't with impunity, move back and forth, into Iran after clashes with the Iraqi forces. So, they were able to polish them off. Not so much anything the U.S. did, although we were partial to the Shah's regime at that time. I never got to Tehran. My wife drove the van over there with a French woman friend. They went to the commissary. I got to Hamadan, Isfahan, and to Shiraz on another trip; but I never actually got to Tehran. I regret that. Ron Neumann was up in... Tabriz I think, reporting from up there on the internal situation in Western Iraq. I remember seeing his cables.

*Q: Who is this?*

USREY: Ron Neumann, who is now our ambassador in UAE, I think.

*Q: How about Basra? Did you ever get down there?*

USREY: Yes, I got to Basra. In fact, there's an interesting story. I don't know if I told you at dinner or not. In 1967, we had a consulate there; and then a little house, a little villa attached to it. It was very nice living, actually. It was right on the water, down on the main street. It was a nice little area. That was closed up, sealed by the departing... I guess the Belgians might have done it. They put a wax seal on the door, and all that stuff. It was never reentered, ever, since 1967. Some U.S. firm, Brown & Root, or whoever it was, got a contract to build a sewer system in Basra. It was a big contract. There was no USAID or anything. It was a straight commercial deal. There was really no commercial office space down there. They had no place to put their people up. They saw the U.S. compound, and expressed interest through Washington, in having a look. So, I was dispatched down to Basra, with orders to go down there and open it up and look at it, and give a tour. I remember breaking the seal, taking a little crow bar type thing, snapping the wooden bar there. The dust was about that thick on the floor (three or 4 inches), fine talcum powder. I turned on the light, and the light came on. The bulb worked, after seven years, or whatever it was. They ended up taking it. They cleaned it up. It had a little pool, and a nice villa, all of good architecture. It was a sweet deal. Without having to sell the property, we were getting some nice rent on it, and they had a place where the project manager could be. So, I got down to Basra. It's all dates down there. Iraq was then, and may still be the world's largest source of dates. All you saw was just a sea of date palms. We must have eaten dinner there, but there wasn't much to see in those days. I don't think we did much else. We stopped at Ur, the ruins. I went to the marshes to see the marsh Arabs, on the way back, but there was nothing much in Basra. We went down there just to do our thing there with the office.

*Q: How about the British and others? Who was doing the oil?*

USREY: BP, British Petroleum had been nationalized. It was now Basra Petroleum. They had retained some of the British expatriate workers, the experts and financial types. They were some of the people we saw socially in Baghdad. British Petroleum had been nationalized, just like ARAMCO had nationalized US interests. So, they went on to work, and made enough money to make it worth their while. They were no longer solely holding the thing, so the Brits were there. There was oil in the north, as you know too. There is oil all over the place, up around Kirkuk. Oil fields are very, very large, and all over the country. But, the biggest fields are down in the south.

*Q: Were we seeing Iraq as a military menace in the area at that time?*

USREY: No, I don't think so. The way I would characterize it is we saw Iraq as an ideological leader of this Baath, Arab Nationalist hard line movement that was opposed to our Middle East policy and was part of the larger Arab movement which denied recognizing Israel as existing, and chimed a continual state of war with Israel, and keeping the boycott going. All the things we didn't like about Middle East politics in those days was being fueled by the resistance of the hard line states like Iraq and Syria, and Libya, I guess, after the king left. Iraq and Syria vied for the leadership of the hard line states. Iraq was more, I think, a political force. I don't think anyone could know they were going to invade Kuwait. No one could have foreseen that brutal 10-year

ghastly war with Iran. But, they fought the Iranians to a standstill. If you look at the maps, despite the human carnage, the amount of land lost is about the size of Fairfax County. It was ridiculous, this ten-year blood bath. We certainly didn't know anything about Saddam Hussein's future plans for weapons of mass destruction or even nuclear. None of that stuff was even conceivable. It wouldn't have been hard to predict that someday there would be a military force to reckon with. But our focus on Iraq was more political at the time.

*Q: Were you and Art working on Baathism, trying to figure out what the Baath Party was? The difference between the Iraqi Baaths and Syrian Baaths?*

USREY: It's an arcane difference probably. Art did spend some time thinking about that, reporting on it. I had other duties that kept me busy with the consular and administrative work, so I pitched in less on political issues. But, it was an interesting philosophy. "Baath" means renaissance, I think, doesn't it, in Arabic? So, it was part of an Arab nationalist, revivalist thing. We knew we had to reckon with it at some point. It continues to be between Syria and Iraq a source of some friction. Which would prevail and what would that mean for the larger U.S. regional interest? I didn't plumb the depths of that issue... I was out playing tennis, basically.

*Q: What about Israel? Did that come up all the time, or not?*

USREY: It did. I mentioned the Newsweek magazines where the word "Israel" was scratched out and "Zionist entity" was written in. Those were the days when if you had a businessman who came through the region, and went to Iraq, and had already been to Israel, if they saw the stamp, he wouldn't be allowed in. So, we were issuing Americans separate passports for the Israel portion, so the Iraqis would not know that they had even been to Israel. It was nothing but hardline, rejectionist Baathism. It was the most vehement propaganda you could imagine. Israel didn't exist, but if it did exist, we've been in a constant state of war since 1948 with them.

*Q: I assume the papers were also attacking opposition, vis a vis Israel?*

USREY: Unbelievable. To a degree that was breathtaking. I give them credit. The guys they had writing for these papers, for instance, Al Thawra, the big newspaper there, the regime mouthpiece. It was pretty crap. It was crap, but it was pretty creative crap. I learned a lot about "running dogs," "hireling puppets," "stooge puppets," "illegitimate regime," all this classic Soviet lexicon.

*Q: The Soviets were there as a major presence, but did you get any feel about there being any affinity between the Iraqis and the Soviets? Was it a marriage of convenience? My question really is predicate on the idea of the Soviets don't seem to fit into other cultures very well.*

USREY: No, they don't. The story I'm about to tell you is one that actually took place in Egypt. It's a joke, but I think it would have fit in Iraq. We once went to the beach, near Alexandria. This vendor was selling melons. We bought some melons and some cokes and stuff. The vendor said, "I like Americans, but I don't like Russians." We asked why and he said, "Well, the Russians would buy one melon and split it between two people." They didn't have enough money to buy each of them one. They didn't like their niggardly ways. Russians didn't like the Arabs either, I

don't guess. I think it was a very utilitarian relationship. Clearly, Iraq had what Russia needed, which was grain, oil. Russia had what Iraq needed, the planes, arms and tanks. It worked perfectly. They could pay cash for it and were happy to do so. It was very cold-hearted, commercial. Although, a lot of the Baath philosophy is very Marxist in its nature. They had a very Soviet style organization. They had the political officers, the secret police, and all that stuff. The heavy interior ministry was very Soviet. That is typical of a lot of third world countries anyway.

*Q: Were there any young Iraqis going to the United States to study, or were they headed off to the Soviet Union?*

USREY: Mostly to Eastern Europe and Russia. The regime was clear-eyed about that. They realized that the best education was probably in the U.S. I remember now since this 9/11 stuff, we had a number of pilots. There was a number of flight school students. Penn State, Texas, and in some cases, Harvard, and the top ivies, too, Berkeley. These were smart people. They were often scholarship students of the Iraqi government. Even then, an Ivy League education was still a lot of money. There was a flow. I don't think we were the main target of overseas study, but... I wish I had some numbers I could run by you. It was more than occasional.

*Q: Did you get any feel for Iran and relations between the two there?*

USREY: It must be a lot like the way India and Pakistan relate to each other, I would think. I'm trying to think of another relationship. It wasn't ethnic in that sense. Iran is Shia Muslim, and Iraq is mixed. Whereas, with India and Pakistan, it's Hindu versus Muslim. But, I think, both countries had tremendous histories. They had glorious historic pasts. Iran was clearly stronger, bigger. They had a bigger military, a bigger economy. It was quite a different government. They had this pro-American Shah, and there was a Baath People's Republic in Iraq. There was a certain built-in tension based on that. I think nobody would have been surprised if one day they said they were going to clash for regional influence, or something. Also, the Kurdish thing was sensitive. I mentioned that before they cut that deal on the Shatt al- Arab, the Iranians were letting the border stay open, and letting the Kurds have their way up there. This was very deeply resented by the Iraqis. There were some tensions. Look at Iraq; they are wedged in between Syria and Iran. What a tough neighborhood, with Saudi Arabia to the south. It's easy to be paranoid if you are an Iraqi, looking around you. There had been historic invasions of the Persians into Mesopotamia, and all that. That weighs heavy in Middle East politics. Ctesiphon Arch, is the biggest unsupported arch in the world, which I think is still standing. One of the Persian emperors, Darius, or whomever it was, built the thing when they came into Mesopotamia. You felt that it was a palpable rivalry, like you had with Syria.

*Q: How about religion? Did Islam, or any particular persuasion play much of a role, that you noticed in Iraq, or not?*

USREY: I thought it did at the time. I only realized later when I went to Egypt, and then later to Morocco, that Ramadan, for example, was observed a lot less widely. This is often the stuff of fads in the Middle East. The Hijab and how closely Ramadan is adhered to is a social fad today in the Middle East. In retrospect, Iraq was quite a secular place. The symbols of Islam were not

used overtly. Certainly, the Hajj is a big thing, and the Iraqis followed the Hajj, and so you could do it pretty easily. It's a border trip into Mecca. In retrospect, I think it was probably the most secular Arab country I had ever been in, in that way. They demystified some of it. The leadership didn't have to employ Islam for legitimacy. They used other stuff.

*Q: At some point, I'm not sure when, but Ayatollah Khomeini was in Iraq for a while.*

USREY: Yes, I think he was in Karbala for a while, that was waback, and then he went to France.

*Q: He wasn't a name or anything*

USREY: No. Maybe to students of Islamist politics he might have been a known figure. It wasn't anything we reported on or knew about, as I recall.

*Q: How did you find relations with the most important power, Washington? Was there much interest in what was going on, did you feel? Or, in the bordering states from our embassy, or were you two guys out there feeling like people weren't paying much attention to?*

USREY: Our communications were so primitive that I guess you had to draw the conclusion that if Washington wanted more real time thinking from Baghdad, they would have paid for it. It was the mid-1970s, and we didn't have full commo, since we didn't have marines there to protect it. So, we had to do this one-time pad system and send night letters through the local PTT. It was very unbelievably primitive to get a message out. What we normally would do is type a message up and send it in a weekly classified courier to Kuwait. Sometimes I was the courier to Kuwait. My wife and I both made runs down there. We became non pro-couriers, got deputized to go down there and deliver a bag. Once I was filmed at Baghdad Airport carrying it. This was probably the TV broadcast: "Here's the running dog American imperialist taking secrets to the Hirelong Stoooge faction in Washington," or something like that. Everything was so slow. We got the cables, and it was a big feast day. We got the stuff from Kuwait in hard copy, reporting from Tehran, reporting from Beirut. We began seeing the regional embassy, such as from our large embassy in Beirut and from much smaller posts, such as in Cairo. We didn't even have relations in Egypt. You would get this stuff one week, 10 days late, and say, "Ah." A lot of our news was interpreted that way. You had to assume that Washington, in terms of the Assistant Secretary of State, whoever that was at the time...

*Q: Was it Atherton?*

USREY: It may have been before Atherton. Who's the guy at the Council for Foreign Relations, up there now? I can't even think. I don't know who it was.

*Q: We were talking about Roy Atherton, most of the time.*

USREY: There was Egypt, there was Israel, there was Saudi Arabia. There was the whole range. We had embassies in places like Oman.

*Q: Did you get many visitors?*

USREY: Not too many. We got a few visitors. Art was thrilled one time, I remember, when a regional ambassadorial chief of mission conference, which I think took place in Riyadh, or Jeddah. Jeddah at the time was the capital. Kissinger came out. They went around the table, and Art got to speak in the forum. He gave his view. He said it was very well received by Kissinger. He thanked him for it. He found it very enlightening. It made me think that they weren't thinking much about Iraq as the Assistant Secretary and above level then. That began to change, as you know, later.

**MARSHALL W. WILEY**  
**Jordan-Iraq Desk Officer**  
**Washington, DC (1965-1968)**

**Principal Officer, U.S. Interests Section**  
**Baghdad (1974-1976)**

*Marshall W. Wiley was born in Illinois in 1925. He attended the University of Chicago, where he received a Ph.D. in 1943, a J.D. in 1948, and an M.B.A. in 1949. Mr. Wiley was a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1945. He joined the State Department in 1958 and his career included posts in Yemen, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.*

*Q: At that same time you dealt with Iraq. What were our interests in Iraq? We are talking about '65 to '68.*

WILEY: Iraq was going through a pretty difficult period in those days. After the overthrow of the Nuri al-Said regime back in '57, the country really went through quite an unstable period. The Baath party took over briefly in '63, and then they were in power only about nine months before they were kicked out again. Then there were various military dictatorships that ran the country, until the Baath party came back in '67, and at that time managed to hang on to control, and they are still in power now. But from '57 to '67, the country was very unstable with a series of coups and coup attempts, until the Baath party consolidated its power in '67.

*Q: Were we doing much then, or did we have representation there?*

WILEY: Oh, sure, we had an embassy, a rather big embassy, in fact, until the '67 War, when relations were broken. We had a fairly substantial aid mission up until '67.

*Q: What were our interests in Iraq at that time?*

WILEY: There were some substantial reserves of oil that we were aware of, even then, although they have since proven to be much greater than we had realized at the time. And it's one of the



larger countries of the Middle East. It has a population now of about 16 million or so, a little less in those days, of course. It was potentially a fairly wealthy country. It had water. It had oil. It had a relatively well-educated population in terms of an infrastructure which the Baath party has done a lot to build, incidentally, since they have gotten into office, for which they were starting on in those days. It had a relatively key geographic position there in controlling the river valley, the Tigris and Euphrates. It was a player in the Arab and Israel situation, of course.

*Q: How did Iraq fit into the Israeli equation? Again we're talking about the '65 to '68 period.*

WILEY: When the Baath party consolidated its control over the country, I think it attempted to use the Israeli issue as a means of exerting some leadership in the Arab world. You see, the Baath party does not have aspirations limited to Iraq. It was a Pan-Arab party, and they had Baath parties in various Arab countries, although it is only in Iraq and in Syria where they succeeded in taking power. But they had parties in places like Jordan and even in Saudi Arabia and the gulf states, the Yemen, there is a Baath party there.

They saw the Arab-Israeli issue as a means of promoting themselves in the Pan-Arab contacts, by becoming more outspoken against the Israelis than other countries were. So they talked a very hard line. They, for a long time, maintained very cool relations with the U.S., as part of that policy, because of our support for Israel.

After the '67 War, they were one of the last countries to finally resume diplomatic relations with the United States, you know, although we had intersections in each other's countries for a long time. But the one reason that they were cool to the U.S. was that they were trying to make the point to the other Arabs that they were stronger anti-Israelis than the other Arabs were. I think that may have changed now as a result of the war. They found out, I think during the war, that it was important not to be too isolated in this world, as they had been prior to the war.

*Q: When you're speaking about the war, you're speaking about the Iranian-Iraqi war that lasted about 7 years.*

WILEY: It started in 1980 and just finished in '88, about an eight-year war. So the Iraqis always did try to ride that issue. At the same time, they didn't actively do much about it. They did have some terrorist groups working out of Iraq. Abdul Nidal was held up there for quite a while. Finally, they expelled Abdul Nidal.

*Q: Abdul Nidal being sort of the preeminent terrorist, and we're talking about the 1980s.*

WILEY: Yes, they did expel him finally. But they told us, when they expelled him, "This isn't going to help you very much because, when he was here in Iraq, we did exercise a certain amount of influence over him. When he is out of the country, we are not going to have any influence over him." They had a point. If anything, his terrorism increased, as a result of his being expelled from Iraq, at that stage.

Basically, the Iraqis came to power with a anti-Western philosophy. They felt that their country had been dominated by an elite, who were exploiting the rest of the population in cooperation

with the Western capitalist countries. Their philosophy called for the overthrow of that elite, and the establishment of a socialist economy. Their role models were more in the communist bloc than in the West as far as the kind of society they wanted to set up. So there was nothing here that made them natural partners of the U.S., until the Iraq-Iran war came along. I think now, they are moving in the direction of free enterprise, as is the Soviet Union and is Eastern Europe, of course. They are part of that movement. As part of that movement they are anxious to get on better commercial and economic terms with us.

*Q: In the '65-'68 period, were we trying to get them to do anything, or stay out of it? Do we have any particular control there?*

WILEY: After our break in relations at the time of the '67 War, Iraq did not play an important role in the minds of the policy makers in Washington. For a long time, we didn't have any representation there at all. It finally started with an intersection, when I arrived there in late '74-'75. There had been one officer there ahead of me, Art Lowery was a head of the intersection before me for about two years. So he got there about '72, or thereabouts. But from '67 until '72, there were no diplomats at all stationed in--there was no intersection. Then it was a very low level operation until we finally resumed relations back in '85, I believe it was, when full diplomatic relations were restored.

During that time, there was minimal contact between the United States and Iraq. There was some oil activity of interest to American oil companies, but that had all been nationalized by the Iraqis in '67. They had to sell their oil, of course, and some of the international oil companies were lifting oil from Iraq. But we weren't involved in the exploration or production. That was done by the Iraqis themselves, largely with Soviet assistance, and Soviet technology in those days.

*Q: We must have been quite concerned though about the penetration of Soviets into the area?*

WILEY: Yes, that was a concern.

*Q: Could we do anything about it? Was it sort of, "Let's hope it doesn't spread"?*

WILEY: We didn't have much influence in the Iraqi regime. They, in fact, the Baath party suppressed the Communist party in Iraq, rather brutally, after they consolidated their power because they saw the Communists as a threat to their power. They managed to maintain fairly good relations with the Soviet Union, in spite of that, and, of course, the Soviet Union was their main supplier of weapons during the Iraq-Iran war. Largely, because, I think, they saw the Iraqis as being ideologically closer to the Soviet Union in terms of their social and economic structure, which they were.

*Q: Again, trying to go back to this period in the mid- to the later '60s, could we look with a certain amount of lack of apprehensions--poor word--on Soviet influence in Iraq, on the assumption that here is a regime, that is, essentially, going to be doing its own thing, and it is not going to be a cat's-paw of the Soviets, or were we more concerned than that?*

WILEY: I think there was probably more concern here than was warranted by the facts of the situation. The extent to which Iraq was becoming a puppet of the Soviet Union. The Iraqis are nobody's puppets. I think the Russians, at times, found them pretty difficult to deal with. They were willing to go along with the Soviets on international issues that were not of immediate concern to them in voting in the U.N. But when it came to regional politics they were very independent, and they didn't take orders from the Soviet Union or anybody else.

*Q: Looking at our policy, particularly, in many of the post-war years, there is a tendency to feel that once somebody turned to the Soviet Union for assistance, they became a puppet of the Soviets, when, actually, almost all these countries had their own self-sealing devices which would prevent allowing any sort of Communist regime to take over.*

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*Q: Then you served a rather solid period as the head of our U.S. interests in Iraq from '74 to '77.*

WILEY: Yes, in between, I was back here for awhile and became the country director for North Africa. I held that job for about a year before I went out to Baghdad and set up an intersection there.

*Q: Why don't we move to the Iraq situation. We've already talked quite a bit about Iraq, but what were you doing there? I mean, what developed during this '74 to '77 period?*

WILEY: That was a very interesting period, because our relations with Iraq had really been almost non-existent from '67 on, from the time of '67 War, and after the Baath party took power in Iraq. So there we were really trying to re-establish relations. In the case of Egypt, even though we formally broke diplomatic relations, we still had a lot of dialogue back and forth, a lot of economic matters. We even had cultural programs running using the accumulating currency that we had in the bank accounts, and so on. But, in the case of Iraq, there really was very little contact between the two sides, either privately, or at the government level. So this was much more virgin territory, in a sense, where we had to start from the scratch.

*Q: Were you sort of given orders to do something about it? Where did the initiative come to try to re-build the relationship?*

WILEY: I don't think there was any strong urging on the part of the U.S. government to rebuild the relationship. It was, I think, just the feeling that this was a fairly large, fairly important country in Arab contexts. They seemed to be willing to establish intersections, so we would be willing to reciprocate, and have our intersections.

When I first went out there, I don't think we had any particular policy designs about Iraq, other than to gradually improve relations to the extent that the Iraqis were willing to do so, but we weren't going to force the issue. In fact, my original contacts were limited to a young lady in the protocol office of the foreign ministry. I really couldn't see anybody else when I first got there, though, later, I was able to make some higher level contacts in the foreign ministry.

*Q: But what were we doing? When you are dealing with the protocol office, you are at the bottom of any list practically.*

WILEY: That's right, we were. We did some reporting in Iraq. There was a dearth of information about Iraq, of course, back here in the government, since we hadn't had an embassy there. It's hard to get information there, but through contacts in the diplomatic community and elsewhere, we did do some reporting on what was happening in the country. Some assessment of the Baath party and the leading personalities of the party, and so on. Really, there was a total void of information about Iraq back in Washington in those days.

*Q: I would assume, in a case such as this, more than in many other places, where you find other diplomats are coming to the United States to find out what have you heard in the diplomatic corps. I mean, there is also a sharing of information, but often you don't see this as a larger mission, and it's felt as a key player, that you must have been spending a lot of time sitting at the feet of the French and British, and other ambassadors finding out what was going on in this case?*

WILEY: Yes, and some of the Arabic ambassadors were quite helpful. The Egyptian ambassador, who was pretty well plugged in there, and the Tunisian ambassador had pretty good contacts. I was on good terms with them, so I got a lot of information through them, as well.

We, again, were concerned about Iraq's rather militant anti-Israeli posture and we had hoped to moderate that, of course, when I was there. We viewed Iraq as, potentially, an important trading partner for the U.S., just because it's got the oil. The oil companies, of course, were interested in getting involved in Iraq in the long run, because of the substantial oil reserves. I still think it's going to be a very important commercial partner for the United States. If the country develops, it's going to be, probably, the most important trading partner we have in that part of the world, if things develop properly. But these were all potentials at that stage. We had very little active going on.

*Q: As far as Washington, or the State Department's, concern, it was what you might call a holding brief there. Nobody was pressing you to get things moving again?*

WILEY: No, I think there was some feeling that the time had come when we probably should renew diplomatic relations, but there was no great pressure on it.

*Q: This was more tidying up matters?*

WILEY: Yes, we had resumed with almost all the other countries at that stage, with whom we had broken in '67, at the time of the '67 War. Iraq was practically the only hold out apart from--I guess, maybe, no, I guess--Iraq was the last one to finally resume diplomatic relations with us. The feeling was that it was potentially an important country. One that, if they ever got their act together, could be quite important, both politically and economically, in that part of the world. To the extent that we could gradually establish better government relations, fine, but there was no great pressure to do it, I don't think. There was more pressure on the reporting side, to fill this void of information that had developed about Iraq.

*Q: Granted, you were not in much of a position of power, but were you concerned from your vantage point about the very close relations that, particularly, Kissinger and Nixon seemed to be pushing toward Iran? There seemed to be a loading of Iran down with a lot of armament and all this. Was this a concern?*

WILEY: It was to me. In those days, Arabists commenting on Iran were not very well received in the department. There was a kind of saying going around--"Scratch an Arabist, and you'll find an anti-Iranian."

*Q: That's interesting. Why was that?*

WILEY: It was a feeling that you had localitis, and that the Arabs and the Iranians were enemies. You tended naturally to side with the Arabs. Therefore, you didn't like the Shah and things in Iraq. But it was a little broader than that, I think. In the bureaucracy as a whole, there was, I thought, a more objective evaluation of the Shah's regime than you found in the top levels of government. The Shah, as you know, had this great charm and he was able to work it on a succession of American Presidents. No one down in the bureaucracy could quite understand how he did it, but he was always able to convince a series of Presidents that he was their kind of man, and they really want to support him in the future. I could never quite understand the attraction that the Shah had for our Presidents, but they certainly did, and this was reflected through the bureaucracy. It was certainly reflected in Kissinger's days, where it was just not very good for your career to be too critical of the Shah.

I think a lot of people were discouraged from saying things that were critical, even if they honestly believed them about the Iranian regime, because of the interest at a high level of improving relations with Iran and making Iran kind of the linchpin of our policies in that part of the world.

*Q: Were you getting any reflections, or you just really didn't have enough connection with the Iraqi government? Was anybody saying, "What the hell are you doing with these Iranians?"*

WILEY: I didn't get that from the Iraqi government so much, in fact, I was in Iraq in the period following the signing of the 1975 agreement in Algiers that Kissinger brokered. In effect, where Iraq and Iran signed this agreement, whereby, Iran would stop supporting the Kurds, and Iraq would recognize Iranian planes to the Shatt al-Arab, to the Iranian boundary. I mean to the middle of the Shatt al-Arab.

*Q: Shatt al-Arab being the delta river, or whatever you want to call it.*

WILEY: The confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. They flowed together.

*Q: Over which the later Iran-Iraq War, that was the cause of the war.*

WILEY: It was one of the causes. It's still in dispute right now. Iran claims that the deepest part of the river, should be the boundary between the two sides. Iraq claims all of the shot up to the

Iranian shore, and this is what the British had given them when they were running both sides, really, back in the old days. The Iranians were claiming half the river, up to the deepest part of the river, which they still claim.

In '75 agreement had been reached where Iraq represent accepted Iran's claim to the middle of the river, and, in return, the Iranians stopped supporting the Kurds. We had been assisting the Iranians covertly to help the Kurds. So we stopped doing it, too, at that point. In other words, the Kurds were cut off, and the Iraqis were able to quell the Kurd resistance in the north as a result of that agreement. For awhile there, after that agreement, relations improved between Iraq and Iran.

In fact, I can remember an Iranian national day, where I was present, and Saddam Hussein actually showed up at the national day. That was quite a signal, you know, that he wanted better relations with Iran at that stage. He didn't come to any national days normally, and this was an exception. He showed up at the Iranian national day with all the camera men taking pictures, and it all spread in the papers the next day, and so on and so forth. So, when I was there, there was a temporary period when relations were actually improving between Iraq and Iran. Later they deteriorated again.

*Q: How were you reporting on the Kurd situation, because for many, Kissinger, first we supported this and then we cut the feet out from under the Kurds, and Barzani, who was the leader and all. We left them high and dry, and many of them went into either exile or were killed.*

WILEY: Yes.

*Q: Looking at it from your vantage point, what were you all saying from our interest group there?*

WILEY: Generally speaking, I was always a little skeptical that we were following the right policy with our support for the Shah, and, of course, this was related to it. The Iraqis were working out a relationship with the Kurds. That, you know, left the government, obviously, in power. When you really look at the situation, they had not treated the Kurds as badly as a lot of minorities are treated around the Middle East area. The Kurds did have their own representatives in the Iraqi parliament. They were able to keep their language, their customs, their traditions, and so on. The Iraqis never tried to stop them from this, as the Turks did, for instance. The Turks refused to recognize Kurdish culture in any way, and they called them Mountain Turks, instead of Kurds. The Iraqis were more forthcoming than other countries around the area were in dealing with the minority groups.

I was never convinced that Kissinger and Nixon were on the right track with the Shah. I thought that we overdid it. Certainly, we overdid it in the arms supply relationship. Kissinger really gave orders to the bureaucracy to not question, in any way, any request that the Shah made for U.S. military equipment or support. It didn't go through any of the usual review processes, or the usual committees, didn't consider anything else. It was just automatically granted, if the Shah wanted it, and that was Kissinger's personal orders.

*Q: This is one of the things that often arises in these interviews, about how there was a complete stoppage of criticism of the Shah, a real stoppage of the entire objective reporting process, of what U.S. interests were. Why was this? You know you can make your decision after hearing the other side?*

WILEY: I don't know, other than the stability that the Shah had, on a personal basis, to appeal to the President and the Secretary of State, and convince them that he was their man in the area, and they didn't want any static out of the bureaucracy on this. They had made up their mind about the Shah.

*Q: You were feeling some reflection of this, too, from your point, that this is territory where it's best to stick to your own country and stay out of this particular one.*

WILEY: I occasionally got into disputes with Dick Helms, who was then the ambassador to Iran, when I was head of the intersection at Baghdad on things that involved Iraq and Iran. I know we had a couple of rather vigorous exchanges.

*Q: Can you think of any particular issues that got you?*

WILEY: Well, it had to do more of the Shah's attitude toward Arab affairs. The Shah was always looking at it from his point of view, of course. He was always concerned that maybe Syria and Iraq would get back together, to get on the same wave length, and that would be a threat to him. He was hoping that the United States, at times, would take steps that would make sure that Syria and Iraq did not get back on the same wave lengths. I would object to that, saying that does not help us with either country. We are carrying the Shah's water here, in a way, that is contrary to U.S. interests in the area. So I did get involved, sometimes, in our relations to Iran.

Before I went out to Baghdad, while I was in Washington and was the country director for North Africa, I was detailed for a brief period of time to the inspector's office to do what was called a policy inspection. Jerry Livingston and I went out and traveled all around the gulf including a visit to Tehran, and then wrote a long report on our policy to the area, where a lot of these issues did come up, not only the Arabs, but our relationship with Iran was part of this study. But even in that study, we were told by our bosses, in no uncertain way, that we should not be critical of Iran.

*Q: This is how the system breaks down. If you have a strong Secretary of State who doesn't want to hear, he doesn't hear.*

WILEY: That's right. He doesn't want any opposition out of the bureaucracy. Of course, Kissinger was notorious for this, anyhow. He viewed the bureaucracy as just another element to manipulate in the external environment that he had to deal with. He dealt with foreign countries. He dealt with the bureaucracy, and he played them off against each other. He retained information from the bureaucracy, if he thought it would help him in his maneuvering with the bureaucracy. I thought his policies, as far as being the head of an organization, were quite destructive to the organization. I'm sure you've gotten this feedback from others.

**MORRIS DRAPER**  
**Country Director for Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon**  
**Washington, DC (1976-1978)**

*Morris Draper was born in California in 1928 and graduated from the University of Southern California in 1952. An Arabic language officer, Mr. Draper served in a number of Middle East posts including Beirut, Baghdad, Jeddah, Ankara, Jerusalem, and Washington, DC. Mr. Draper was interviewed in 1991 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: What was the situation in Iraq when you were there?*

DRAPER: We did not have diplomatic relations with Iraq at this time. We had an "interest section"--a small staff--which was part of the Belgian embassy. There was virtually no dialogue. Our people did not see senior Iraqi officials. The Iraqis largely stone-walled on issues such as compensation for the seized American Embassy, which they had turned into their Foreign Ministry without a cent of compensation. There was some commercial business. The Iraqis were buying from America. American businessmen were interested in trade because the Iraqis paid well from their oil revenues. Saddam Hussein was not yet in full power; he was in the shadows until 1978. We knew who he was; he was one of the two most powerful people in Baghdad. He was during this period having some problems with some military rivals; he had made an alliance with one of his cousins from the Tikrit area. That cousin, General Bakar, was the head of the Armed Forces. Saddam had not yet consolidated his power. By 1978, it had become quite clear who was running the country and that the power was his unless he got on the wrong side of the Iraqi military, who resented him because he had made himself a general even though he had had no military experience. They also were uncomfortable with the way he moved people around and changed appointments. We weren't certain what his future would be because in a transition phase, a man like Saddam is quite vulnerable until he has his own coterie around him to protect him.

*Q: Did we view Syria and Iraq as Soviet satellites?*

DRAPER: No, not at all. To call either of them satraps of the Soviet Union would have been to overstate the case. They were very dependent on the Soviets for military assistance -- their armies were completely Sovietized -- but both countries retained considerable freedom of action and were very careful that there be no perception of Soviet domination. They did not want to join the ranks of the Eastern European countries. Both Syria and Iraq were reluctant to sign "Treaties of Friendship and Cooperation" with the Soviets. They dragged their feet for a long time. These treaties were the means through which Moscow got a grip on the affairs of the other country. Both eventually signed the treaties, but that didn't make Iraq and Syria close friends. Quite the contrary! They were intense rivals.

*Q: Did we make any attempts to bring these two countries together?*

DRAPER: No, they were completely different. In fact, we liked the idea that they were rivals. We never wanted a coalition of Arabs because that would just increase the strength of the forces



arrayed against Israel. The Iraqis did not join in the 1973 war and played only a very minor role in 1967. It was just as well that these rivalries existed. Our principal concern with Iraq at the time was the support that was being provided certain Palestinian groups, including some of the most radical. That was always a bone of contention.

What we really wanted then from Iraq was similar to what we want from Iran today: a modicum of dialogue. It is very awkward to have an important country in a strategically important area of the world with huge reserves of oil which is not willing to talk to us. It doesn't mean that we have to love them, but it is important to have some sort of dialogue. The absence of that is very frustrating. We were always fearful of what might happen when Iraq would become a major player in the Middle East. We watching carefully what equipment and material was being sold to it. The Iraqis could almost match what the Syrians were buying, even though this was long before Iraq had embarked on its major procurement program which it did when the war with Iran broke out. The Iraqi Army was sizeable, but not gigantic. The Air Force was puny by comparison with others in the region like the Iranians. The Shah was still in power and he was building up his forces--on paper at least, the Iranians were stronger than the Iraqis and we were content to let it be that way because even then, the Gulf States, including Saudi, were nervous about Iraq and had every right to be.

The relations between Iraq and Jordan were very poor as they had been ever since 1958. The King of Jordan was not very keen about the Iraqis. They were doing some dreadful things, such as hanging people. Their human rights record was as bad then as it is today--maybe even worse. The Iraqis had embarked on a development program--housing compounds, factories, parks (they were planting million of trees). Egyptians had been invited to take up farming and increase agricultural production. Some of the development projects were very interesting. There were some American business interests in Iraq, over and beyond oil investments.

*Q: Did our policy toward Iraq change after Carter took over from Ford?*

DRAPER: There was some change. The transition of administrations was managed by Phil Habib, who stayed on as Under Secretary for Political Affairs. That made for a very, very smooth transition. It was also exciting because, as is customary, we prepared transition papers on every country and every issue. On the Middle East, around Christmas time--that is after election, but before Inauguration--we had reason to believe that the Secretary of State-designate and probably Carter himself had looked over our papers and were considering a major initiative. If historians will ever examine these transition papers, they will find that the quality was very, very high. Moreover, we were encouraged by Habib to be imaginative and not to prepare the papers just as a bureaucratic exercise. I remember the period quite vividly because I submitted an paper early on the Lebanon problem, which Habib circulated to the bureaus as a model of what he wanted in terms of the thrusts and options. So there was a lot of excitement in the Near East Bureau at the time which may not have been shared by others. Of course, Carter was also introducing other concepts into our foreign policy like the emphasis on human rights. Our relations with the USSR were also of great interest to the new administration because Brzezinski was obviously going to be major factor in the new higher councils. Many of us knew Vance from his days at the Council of Foreign Relations and in the Pentagon and from his efforts in 1967 to mediate the Turkish-Greek battle over Cyprus. He was widely admired as one of the post-war

Establishment figures--in the same tradition with Clark Clifford, Dean Acheson and so on. In any case, we had some signals even before the Inauguration that there would be some initiatives in the Middle East. Very early on in his administration, it was clear that Carter had decided to go beyond the Kissinger concept of step-by-step agreements--we had had three of them--to a major over-all effort designed to bring general peace between Israel and all of its adversaries. This was far too ambitious and was not supported by any State official, but we were all good soldiers and accepted the decision to try with great enthusiasm. Carter embarked on a series of meetings in 1977 with the major players--Sadat, Begin, Assad. He met them in Washington and overseas. Assad didn't want to come to Washington for various reasons--he has never been there. His Prime Ministers and others have, but he wouldn't in part because of his linkage to the Soviets and of his image in the Middle East--he didn't want to be seen as an American errand boy. So we met him in Geneva in a hotel suite. Vance and Carter pursued their goals with great determination.

In the summer of 1977, a number of things happen which almost destroyed the peace process. One was the issuance of a Soviet-American communiqué about the next steps in the Middle East peace process which Israel felt had brought the Soviets unnecessarily into the picture. The communiqué was seen as the two super powers talking for their respective clients. The Israelis went ballistic and Sadat was equally upset because he saw all the peace possibilities die.

Also the realities of the Middle East became known. It became clear that an over-riding, all encompassing peace was not achievable; something less ambitious was called for. The Israelis were very insistent that an over-all agreement was not desired, but that bilateral understandings with each Arab country was the right goal. That objective eventually resulted in Camp David and the agreement between Egypt and Israel. Sadat took the initiative when he saw that the total peace package was not achievable. Sadat saw the Israeli reaction to the US-USSR communiqué as a disaster for the peace initiative and he stepped in to try to turn things to a more positive level. He had been cynical about the Carter-Vance initiatives, but he had gone along with them both because he wanted an over-all agreement but also because he wanted to be seen as associated with the Saudis and others in a peace effort. He decided that nothing would happen unless he took his own initiative. Of course, he knew that he would isolate himself in the Arab world, which he did ultimately, but he was a brave man. When Sadat made his move, all of us in the Near East Bureau were overjoyed with excitement and went full blast to do what we could to help the process along. We encountered disappointments and problems, of course. As a matter of fact, they were not long in coming. After Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the nitty-gritty bargaining started and it was pretty bad. The atmosphere between the Israelis and the Egyptians was not good.

#### **DAVID E. LONG**

**Director, Near East and North Africa, Bureau of Intelligence and Research  
Washington, DC (1976-1982)**

*Mr. Long was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. He was educated at Davidson College, the Fletcher School and the University of*

*North Carolina. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, Mr. Long studied Arabic and was posted to Khartoum. Subsequent postings were Jeddah and, for further Arabic language studies, Tangier and Beirut. Mr. Long became one of the Departments senior Arab and Middle East experts, serving in INR as Director and on the Policy Planning Staff. He authored several books dealing with Arab and Middle East matters as well as on Terrorism and Counter- Terrorism. His expertise brought him visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and the Coast Guard Academy. Mr. Long was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: What about, say, on the Gulf States? How about Iraq? How were we doing in Iraq at the time?*

LONG: Our view of Iraq, if you remember – during that period – went through a series of changes, and it was basically pretty low on the scope, because, yes, it was a confrontation scene against Israel and that made them bad guys. They were steadfastly against us as a competition state. We had no diplomatic relations with them at the time. Therefore, they didn't come up very much, and when they did, they were bad. They were demonized as they became currently, but they were bad guys and not that much attention was placed on them because they weren't perceived as that direct a threat except the ongoing position that they held. So we didn't look at Iraq per se but rather as a security threat to other people, Israel I've mentioned, but also the Gulf States. And the Gulf States, which had become independent in 1971, were scared to death of Iraq. So our main concern with Iraq, even back in the '70s, was as a threat to the oil fields, which was a major strategic vital interest of the United States. That remained so into the '80s when there was a fall, in part because of the Iran-Iraq War. Then they were bad guys again, and at the end of the Iran-Iraq War we tried to convince them that they should act civilized. We told them there was more in it for them if they were civilized than if they were uncivilized, a policy we'd try over and over, but high risk, and it didn't, as you know, didn't work. But that came in the '80s; that was not during this period.

*Q: I would think that some of the goals of... You had what was going on in Iran, but other than that I would have thought the Gulf would have been in a rather quiet period, this '80-'84 period – no, '78 to '82 was it?*

LONG: We're talking '76 to '82. But, yes, pretty much except for the Dhofar War. Dhofar is a province of Oman, and there was an insurgency that we got into, a Communist insurgency, well, it was, but it was a lot of things. It was ethnic, it was ideological, and it was all sorts of things. It was pretty complicated, and the British were mostly fighting it. But because it was Communist, this made it really, really, really bad.

*Q: Because of the connections in North Yemen, wasn't it?*

LONG: South Yemen, yes, right, and a lot of the people who were insurgents had been in South Yemen, which when it was run by the British was at a high level of education. A lot of these people were workers over there or they were workers up the Gulf. Then as the Gulfies, their economy, struck it rich with money, they started laying off the Dhofari and hiring locals or

cheaper other people. And a lot of them became unemployed. A lot of them had been in the police force. So it's a complicated thing. Suffice it to say that, if seen in Washington, it was a Communist thing, which it was but it was a lot more. The Shah sent a group of, I think, 150 Iranians over for the war effort, which probably stirred up more concern among the Gulfies than the insurgents themselves. These guys came with every piece of equipment that you could possibly put on somebody's back. Washington couldn't figure out, never admitted, that these people were not welcome because, after all, the Shah was anti-Communist and they were anti-Communist, and this is a Communist insurgency. They should be welcomed with open arms. Well, the Iranians were not Arab. The Arab-Iranian gulf (i.e., divide) – and I'm not speaking of a piece of water – was far broader than was ever given credit for back then. This is a good example of how, if you just look at something in a superficial way and put a label on it, out there 99 times out of 100 you're not going to catch what's really going on very well.

*Q: Did this Dhofar War, did that end while you were there?*

LONG: Yes, it ended – I'm trying to think now when it did end. You can see my sense of historical dates is terrible. It ended in the '70s and it ended when the British drew out – it may have even ended before that, so I might even be talking about an earlier period, but I was still covering it. I'll have to look at a history book, my own – I have a book on it. But at any rate, the dynamics lasted throughout the period. The dynamics of this started when the British left the Gulf and they announced in 1968 they were going to leave and then in 1971 they did leave. That forced the UAE, which had been the Trucial States, Qatar and Oman, to fend for themselves. There was a major policy call, a two-pillar policy in Washington. The two pillars were Iran and Saudi Arabia. That was one of my failures. I couldn't get it through to anybody, because either they knew and wouldn't say or they didn't know and didn't care, but these two guys really didn't get along with each other. So that's the dynamics. We had a pro-Western Shah and we had a pro-Western Saudi Arabia who were not pro-each other terribly much at all. In fact, there were some incidents during the '70s. There was an oil rig incident where the Iranian navy took a Saudi four-rig because it was in a disputed area, even though it was on part of the disputed area that even the Iranians could see would eventually be Saudi, and they took this boat, or this rig, into Kharg Island. This was in the earlier period, but it shows there just wasn't any love lost between these guys. That lasted all the way through the Shah's regime, and we would not recognize this. So the major change then, of course, was the Iranian revolution, which changed the whole dynamic. All of a sudden the Iranians were the bad guys to us and we demonized them. The Cold War then ultimately got over, and that brings us up to date. But these dynamics, I think, are as important or more important than looking at the topical details year by year, and they really didn't change very much during that whole period.

*Q: When you were there, were there any things, aside from the obvious of Iran, in Saudi Arabia or the Gulf States? Were issues coming up such as military equipment and all that? Was this something...*

LONG: Yes, again, that's an old dynamic. The Gulf States, particularly the smaller Gulf States after the British left, wanted us there to defend them. They needed us, be it fear of Iran, Iraq, the Soviets or whomever, but they didn't want us to be there until we were needed. So they rose to the concept of over-the-horizon. They didn't want us visible, they wanted us over the horizon,

and the military kept saying, “We can’t be over the horizon and get there in time.” This is part of the reasoning that P. X. Kelley used to...

*Q: Head of the Marine Corps.*

LONG:... – yes – to introduce the concept of a rapid deployment force. If you’re not stationed in the country and they need you quick, how do you get there quick. That was really the origin of that whole train of thought which has led to, well, the way CENTCOM is set up right now. It’s supposed to be rapid deployment. Which now, back during the Kuwait War we had the luxury of having six months to set it up, so I’m not talking about how well it worked. But the idea of it was not even thought about until then. It was because these people didn’t and still don’t want us visible, they want us over the horizon. This has always been true in that part...

*Q: Well, these are actually very small populations, and bringing a bunch of American military in can be very destabilizing.*

LONG: Oh, yes. There are a thousand war stories or, I guess, sea stories about this, about how some aircraft carrier skipper wants shore leave for his ship in Dubai. Well, God, if they all got off that aircraft carrier, all 5000 strong of them, in Dubai, they’d sink the place. You’re right, these are small little places, and they can’t handle that big a ship. So, yes, the two-pillar policy, which never really worked very well, of the ‘70s then was replaced, of course, when the Shah was overcome. But up to that time – it was something that had been done way earlier and had kept on, I guess, by its own momentum. A word here: During this period Jimmy Carter came in as President and this is when Governor John West of South Carolina became ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He had been Governor of South Carolina when Carter was Governor of Georgia. I think Carter wanted him to be Secretary of Commerce, and he really wanted to be Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He had induced Kuwaitis to come and develop Kiawah Island in South Carolina. He liked Arabs and he wanted to do this, and he wanted to expand American trade in the area. So when he came to town, I was delegated to lead the group of people that were going to give him his ambassadorial briefing, and it was a god-awful briefing. It was terrible. It was the kind you give to political appointees that you really wish would disappear and go away. He was seen also, I think, by some as one of the Southern pride cornpone governors, mainly by people who didn’t know what kind of smarts it took, to be a Southern pride cornpone governor. And I thought the briefing was terrible. I dutifully gave it because that was my job. But I talked to a mutual friend and said, “You know, we owe it to this guy to give him a better briefing than he got.” So, totally sub rosa, although I did tell the Assistant Secretary for the Near East about it and he said, “Sure, go ahead,” I met West for lunch downtown and told him how the country really worked. It was kind of funny because my college roommate was from South Carolina and so I drew on this. Talk about *chutzpah*. I sort of used by analogy the way politics in South Carolina worked – it was really kind of nervy on my part – and I said, “It’s all done by interaction. The name on the door doesn’t indicate anything. It’s all eyeball to eyeball, and so you really have to know who the players are and why they’re players and not just assume that because they’re a minister or a deputy minister that they’re a player, or because they’re a member of the royal family either.” I gave as an example a fellow named Edgar Brown, who way back when I was in college in the ‘50s ran South Carolina for about 50 years, never had an elected office in his life. And West laughed and laughed and said, “Let me tell you a story about Edgar Brown. When I

was a state senator, I was instructed by the then governor to go down to Barnwell, South Carolina, and ask Mr. Brown if he would give up his license plate, which was SC1, because the Governor thought that the Governor should have it, not just himself but any Governor. So he went to Barnwell and he saw Mr. Brown, and Mr. Brown said, "Son, I've seen a lot of governors come and go and this one's pretty good but tell him the answer's still no" and I said "John you're gonna do okay in Saudi Arabia" because it's a very esoteric communications system, it's very much like the American South, you very much have to hear the grass grow.

**DAVID L. MACK**  
**Counselor, U.S. Interests Section; Belgium Embassy**  
**Baghdad (1977-1979)**

*Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

Q: *Where did you go in '77?*

MACK: In the early part of January 1977, I arrived in Baghdad where I was to be the number two officer in the U.S. Interests Section, nominally part of the Belgian Embassy. We had not had diplomatic relations with Iraq since 1967 when relations were broken as the result of the June '67 war between the Arabs and the Israelis. We had established an Interests Section in Iraq run by the Belgians from '67 to '72. In '72 the first U.S. personnel went out to the Interests Section. By 1976 the head of our Interests Section was Marshall Wiley, and Marshall asked me to come and fill a new position, to be the number two person and the political officer. Our office was in the former Romanian embassy building, but it was well located in town. The office was very small, still under the Belgian flag with a picture of King Baudouin on the wall. My identity card described me as a Counselor of the Belgian Embassy, and in smaller print it said Section for the Protection of U.S. Interests. We dealt directly with the Iraqi government, albeit below the ministerial level. Lacking diplomatic relations, the Iraqi Foreign Ministry told us that we were not to deal with government cabinet rank members, and I suppose we were also a little more suspect than everybody else. During my time in Iraq in the late 1970s, I found that the Iraqis suspected everybody, including Arab diplomats. We were maybe a little bit less trusted and less well treated than the other foreign diplomats.

Q: *You were there from when to when?*

MACK: I was in Baghdad for a total of two and a half years. This, of course, was my second assignment there, but I was in Baghdad from January of 1977 to the summer of 1979. I believe I left early in July 1979, shortly before Saddam Hussein took full control.

Q: *What was the situation in Iraq at that time?*

MACK: Iraq was a genuine hardship post, and relations between U.S. and Iraq were quite bad. My goal was very modest really. In fact I didn't go there with the idea that we would restore diplomatic relations necessarily during my time there. I merely wanted to turn our relations into something that would be a little bit more proper, and for there to be a degree of confidence on both sides. It was only a couple of years after the U.S. had conspired or colluded with the Shah of Iran to destabilize the Iraqi government by supporting the Kurds in the northern part of the country. As a result, the Iraqis had very good reason from their point of view to be suspicious of us. I felt I was under surveillance virtually all the time I was there. Any diplomat had to get permission to go out of Baghdad to other parts of the country, but it was clear that permission was a little more difficult for somebody from the U.S. Interests Section in the Belgian embassy.

I had Iraqi friends from my previous assignment. Occasionally, I would meet old friends in a government office or in somebody else's diplomatic function, and they would whisper, "You know I'd really like to get together some time, but I can't". And they couldn't. Everybody was subject to interrogation by the secret police for having contacts with foreign diplomats, let alone American diplomats. Outside of official contacts, mostly in the foreign ministry, those Iraqis who did have regular contacts with us were probably authorized to do so by the Iraqi intelligence, and we generally primed that into our understanding. It's fair to say the Iraqis were not overjoyed at having a political officer at this point attached to our little office, but they did accept it in the end. After I'd been there for some months, they also discovered -- it was right there on my CV -- that I had served at the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem. I remember this led to not one but two very difficult conversations between me and the chief of protocol, until he was satisfied that my assignment in Jerusalem had not made me a Zionist spy.

We had to be very careful. I made it a point to always go out of my way to telegraph my movements. Since our local employees could be depended upon to be interrogated, I would tell them that I was going down to the foreign ministry to see so-and-so. When I was in the foreign ministry itself I might drop into another office, but I would always have a reason for everything I was doing. I also made it a point to raise international issues like the Law of the Sea and global disarmament issues, to try to get the Iraqis used to the idea that the U.S. was prepared to deal with Iraq seriously and openly on international issues beyond bi-lateral or regional concerns. I would raise Arab-Israeli matters with them, of course. Our policies were radically different, but rather than avoiding these issues I thought it was best to get them out on the table. Gradually, they came to appreciate that they could have a genuine diplomatic dialogue with us. In the foreign ministry I met with under secretaries and other fairly senior people. I also developed a pretty good rapport with Iraqis in some of the economic ministries, since American business was gradually developing in the country, and they were interested in getting access to American technology. In some of the economic ministries we had fairly useful discussions. In fact, on issues like the Arab boycott of Israel, we made more progress during this period with Iraq than we did with most of the Arab countries.

Nonetheless, it remained a very touchy relationship. A lot of the reporting I did came second hand from other diplomats, particularly the Arab diplomats. I drew shamelessly on their perceptions. Because I spoke Arabic fairly well, I was almost a part of the Arab diplomatic corps in Baghdad. I spent a lot of time talking with them, and once in a while they would come to my house to see me. I think they found it a break from the Baghdad. Iraq was not an especially pleasant place to be for an Arab diplomat seeking a more relaxed environment. During the oil boom, a lot of people were coming to Baghdad from all over the world. It was very much on the third world and Arab-Islamic world circuits. So there were a lot of senior visitors. I remember after one of these high level visits an Arab ambassador arriving at a reception, grabbing an alcoholic drink with great gusto and saying, you don't know how lucky you are that you don't have diplomatic relations with Iraq. If I have to go to another one of these airport receptions and stand out there for three hours with nothing but warm Coca-Cola...

*Q: Again, who was the big enchilada, who was the top man in Iraq at this time?*

MACK: The president was President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, a former general, distinguished, older. I had a lot of respect for him, but clearly the strong man of the regime by this time the man everybody called "His Excellency, the deputy," was Saddam Hussein. He was Bakr's number two in various positions, but not all. Bakr was president of the Iraqi Republic, but that was not his most important position. His most important position was chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council. His second most important position, probably, was as chairman of the Regional Leadership of the Baath Party. The Arabic title for all three positions was *ra'is*. The President of the Republic was a government position where Bakr's deputy as vice president was nominally a Kurd, Taha Mohieddin Marouf. Bakr's second position was head of the Revolutionary Command Council, which was mostly military but included also non-military Baath Party civilians like Saddam Hussein, Bakr's deputy for this body. And then third was the Regional Command of the Baath Party. By regional they meant Iraq. There was a national Baath Party Command which had its headquarters in Baghdad, but that was for the whole Arab world. This Pan-Arab organization was headed by a Syrian Christian ideologue, Michel Aflaq, one of the founders of the Baath Party. They were one of the groups that were the Iraqi regime considered off-limits to people like me. I wasn't supposed to talk to them. It was interesting, because there was another Baath Party regime in Syria. They had their own national command that was at odds with the national command in Baghdad, and the rivalry between the Iraqi and Syrian wings of the Baath Party was very intense.

American diplomats were not the only pariahs in Baghdad. The Syrians, most of the time I was there, were probably less trusted and more under surveillance than we were. Moreover, the Syrians were subjected to a lot of active harassment like having their cars bombed at one point. The Iranians were not in particularly good grace. So for starters there were two diplomats who always welcomed seeing me, the Iranians and the Syrians.

Most of the foreign diplomats in Baghdad appreciated the strategic importance of Iraq and its economic potential, since it was clearly becoming an economic power house in the area. They respected the political strength of the regime, but they were dismayed by the social and political difficulties that Iraqis had to undergo, and to which diplomats also were subjected to a greater or



lesser degree. For example, you had to request travel permits out of Baghdad two weeks in advance. You never knew until the last whether you were going to get your travel permit granted or not. Some people with more secure relationships probably ignored the travel permit requirement, but I knew that personnel in the U.S. Interests Section should not. This would be like doing an illegal foreign currency transaction. These were the sort of things that could be grounds for blackmail and pressure, if you tried to play fast and loose with the restrictions. So we were pretty careful to mind our p's and q's. Occasionally, I would take some risks. There was an Iraqi neighbor, for example, a woman who had a man visiting her from time to time, probably her lover. He was an Iraqi physician who treated a number of very high ranking people in the government. I could slip over to their house for tea and have interesting conversations. There were a few other occasions where I was able to have the sort of conversations that we as Foreign Service officers all delight in. But most of the time I was in situations where I had to assume that my conversation was being recorded, that it would be listened to by Iraqi intelligence, or might be listened to by Iraqi intelligence, so I was fairly cautious.

The working environment was difficult in other ways, and we had to run the Interests Section in a manner that was often not by the book. It was not easy to get qualified local hire personnel. The economy was booming. There was a very low level of unemployment in Iraq, and the U.S. Interests Section in the Belgium embassy was not a prestigious work address. So our employees tended to be a mixed bag. A lot of our employees had been with us for years, if not decades, going back to the time when we had diplomatic relations. They were usually from the minorities -- Christians and Kurds. We benefited by hiring women, because some very capable women were not as employable in the Iraqi economy as men were, even though Iraq is pretty advanced in bringing women into the work force. But we had some truly incompetent employees that we were keeping on simply because we couldn't get better replacements. We knew they were under pressure to report to the Iraqi authorities. We told them, don't resist this. Your job is totally okay, tell them what you do, you don't have anything to hide, we don't expect you to hide anything.

At one point we had an exceptional employee walk in and apply for a job as our commercial assistant. This was very important to us because we were beginning to have a growing commercial activity with trade missions from the Department of Commerce. Khalid Talia was a Chaldean Christian but spoke fluent English and seemed to be the kind of person who could get a much better job than this. We suspected that he had been sent to us by the intelligence, mukhabarat. He was hired just before I got there. He immediately wanted to get to know me as the political officer. After a short period of time it became very obvious that to me that he was an intelligence officer. He never came out flatly and told me so, but he liked to let on that he was more important than he might seem. He was able to do things that nobody else could do. I remember one of the little things we did was to reestablish cultural exchange in the archeological area. Fr. Carney Gavin, a senior faculty member of the Harvard Semitic Museum came to Baghdad to bring back to Iraq the first token return of some cuneiform Hittite clay tablets that had been taken out of Iraq back in the '30s by a Harvard archeological exhibition. Senator Edward Kennedy, who had made a visit to Baghdad, had brokered this agreement. Hopefully, this first token return would help reestablish a wider U.S. – Iraqi relationship. The State Department sent a cable to us saying that Fr. Gavin would be coming into the airport with this sealed container, and it was terribly important that it not be opened in the airport since the very fragile clay tablet could be damaged if it were mishandled. I spent weeks working with the

people at the Iraqi National Museum, who were quite excited by the visit. At the very last minute they said, we can't go with you to the airport, it's too dangerous for us, and it would raise too many questions. They were afraid to go to the airport to help receive this American with his package about 12" x 12", the size of a bomb I suppose. I took the problem to Khalid Talia, our commercial assistant. Khalid readily said he would go with me to the airport. It was like having a senior official of the Baath Party with me! As we walked through, customs and immigration officials would all but salute. They obviously recognized Khalid for what he was. We were extremely well treated. They whisked us through customs with no questions, perfectly happy that we bring this sealed container in. No problem at all. That was the first of a number of occasions when Khalid proved his value.

One of the things I did was to take a trip through northern Iraq. No U.S. diplomat had taken a trip to northern Iraq since before the break in relations in 1967. And you'll recall we had been involved with Iran in the effort to help the Kurds. I had applied to take this trip to northern Iraq, been turned down several times, and finally again I asked for Khalid's advice. He said maybe it would help if traveled with me. I said, fine. So I sent in a request to go accompanied by a member of the embassy staff. No problem. Trip approved. So Khalid and I took this trip through northern Iraq, giving me a chance to get to know him better. He gradually became more open about his curious relationship. And it was very much a two-way street, because he was able to verify to the intelligence people that we were not up to things we shouldn't be doing. I was able to feed through him the U.S. government line on some bilateral U.S.-Iraq issues in a way that perhaps had more credibility than they would when I made the same points at the foreign ministry. Khalid Talia, who has since died of a heart attack, continued to be the key Foreign Service locally hired employee at our office in Baghdad until the time when we had diplomatic relations.

Our security people from Washington, when they came out on an inspection, were absolutely outraged. How could we let such a thing happen? Well, it was an unusual situation in Baghdad. When I arrived there, for example, we had no communication facilities. When we wanted to have a classified communication, we would do a one-time pad encryption, take it down to the PT&T, and send it through commercial channels. We got other classified correspondence by pouch from Kuwait, once a week. After reading classified material, we would destroy it, trying to keep the absolute minimum of classified material. We gradually upgraded our communications, but even by the time I'd left, two and a half years later, they were far short of first class communications. Our Kurdish driver and his wife had an apartment in the chancery. Yes, we had a secure area, but it wouldn't have taken much for them to get in during the course of the night when all the Americans were away, and I suspect that they did let Iraqi intelligence in. Perhaps not. They were Kurds, and the Kurds can be both loyal to friends and very stubborn.

I also suspected the Kurdish driver was raking off the embassy on his purchase for us of airplane tickets. This gave him the wherewithal to do illegal currency transactions. He was an illiterate Kurdish driver, but he was in some ways very shrewd, very reckless and dumb in other ways. Partly because of the Kurdish driver's stubbornness and also because I think he was doing things that were questionable, he was held in jail for over a year. I know this because the Kurdish cleaning woman would come in every day and cry to me about what was I going to do about it.

Over and over, I raised the matter at the Foreign Ministry, where I was blandly told that they would refer my query to “the competent authorities.”

In a bit of black humor, I would describe the Kurdish cleaning lady as our security officer. This was before the seizure of our Tehran embassy, when you didn't worry about burning classified material, you just shredded it. Afterwards, we would give the shredded material to her, and she would burn it in the incinerator. And, of course, she had access to all the declassified area of the building at night. It was a highly irregular situation, but we were not doing particularly sensitive work during this period. We were simply trying to reestablish a normal kind of relationship, and it was one of those little steps along the way to full relations.

Normally, I was the number two in the Interests Section. However, for a period of about nine months in late 1977 and early 1978, I was acting in charge between Marshall Wiley and Edward Peck, who later came out to be the head of the Interests Section. During this period I became well known in the Baghdad diplomatic corps and at the foreign ministry. That paid off later when I dealt with Iraqis in Washington.

*Q: What about the Soviet relationship? How did we see that? I mean they were giving them all their equipment.*

MACK: That's right. I retrospect, I think we exaggerated the strength of the Soviet-Iraqi relationship. The Soviet relationship with Iraq was very important. It was one of the things we reported on, to the extent we were able to do so. I can remember calling on the number two man, the DCM if you will, or Soviet counselor of embassy a couple of times. The Soviets had a very broad, well established relationship. It was party to party between the communist party and the Baath party. It was military to military. It was through all the different ministries. We were aware that both sides had deep suspicions of one another. It was such a broad relationship, there were so many Soviet military – perhaps something like 1500 Soviet military advisers, but I forget what we estimated the number to be - that we tended to exaggerate the depth of the relationship.

The Soviet-Iraqi relationship was quite a broad one. It was strengthened, I believe, by oil swaps in return for arms. The Iraqis would provide oil to the Soviets, who would then ship it to India or other places and use it in sort of counterpart trade. Even though the Iraqis were very keen to get more into hard currency dealings and away from their dependence upon barter trade, they had barter trade arrangements with all the communist bloc countries. The Iraqis wanted to get back into the western market system. The Iraqi economy at that time was very much socialist and state controlled. As a result, along with the political-social deprivations, there were serious economic deprivations which weren't necessary. Typically, the Iraqis had all the worst aspects of both an underdeveloped country and a socialist country. They tried to set all the prices, for example, for agricultural produce. They did so in such an inept fashion that in this country of great agricultural potential, you almost never saw more than one fresh vegetable at a time on the market. Typically, they would set prices a little bit too low in the market, and the farmers would withhold produce. You would only see potatoes for a short period of the year, so I grew potatoes in the garden of my house. You would only see imported bananas once in a while, and they tended to disappear into the back alley black market where prices were higher than the public

market place. Since we had a 15 months old daughter when we arrived, and a few years older when we left, we were always scavenging the market. My wife spent a lot of time standing in lines for tomatoes and other delicacies. There were conditions of artificial scarcity that didn't need to be the case. Diplomats were shielded from this a little bit but not entirely. In the Interests Section we could see the potential for Iraq, but we often despaired that they would open up and begin to loosen up on the reins of power.

*Q: That's the tragedy of Iraq, isn't it? Here is that country with lots of potential.*

MACK: Very much so. But they were definitely on the upswing during this period. Tight though the government controls were, the economics of the country were improving year to year to year. Baghdad was scheduled to be the location for a non-aligned summit in, I believe, 1980. The outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war prevented that from taking place. But relations were very good, for example, between Cuba and Baghdad. As a result, sugar was one thing that was plentiful on the market. There were anomalies like this because of the barter trade that they entered with so many different countries. Relationships were very good with Yugoslavia, a certain appreciation on the part of the Iraqis of a socialist country that could maintain its independence from Moscow. They were worried about how they were going to do this. They worried about an over dependence upon the Russians.

So we could see the potential for a stronger American role, but I felt it was important not to rush things, but to gradually build up trust. We built up a little bit of a cultural exchange relationship, but not much of a one. We were making some very substantial strides in the commercial area, mostly things like American agricultural products, but also other American items were beginning to come in. Still there were areas where there couldn't be any direct relationship. The Iraqis would not import American cars. We saw American cars everywhere; anybody who had the right contacts in the Baath party, or in the government, could go to Kuwait and buy American Chevrolets. White Chevrolet Impalas were common in Iraq, but they all showed up in the U.S. exports to Kuwait and enriched the Chevrolet dealership in Kuwait. There was a great premium for used American vehicles.

A lot of my time was spent trying to dope out how the Iraqi system worked. I often felt that nobody was interested in what we were reporting. In fact, at the end of my time in Baghdad, when I came back and had a de-briefing by the intelligence community, a huge number of people showed up. There was a lot of interest in everything we were reporting, and I reported everything from biographic information on Saddam Hussein and his family relationships, to Soviet-Iraqi relationships, Syrian-Iraqi relationships, whatever.

The Arab Summit in Baghdad in 1978 was a key event. It took place after the Camp David agreements, and the summit resulted in the expulsion of Egypt from the Arab League. There was obviously a lot of interest in Washington because of the Arab-Israeli issue. I went to see one of my Arab diplomatic colleagues, one of the Arab ambassadors right after the summit ended, because everybody wanted to know what the secret agreements were, particularly regarding Egypt. This was a case where all that cultivation and drinking coffee together paid off, because he received me and was helpful. I said Washington is very interested in finding out about the summit. He said, I know exactly what you need, here's the final agreement, I will go to the next

room. The secret agreements were in Arabic, of course. I did the fastest, quick translation from Arabic into English that I've ever done of an important document. I scooped the U.S. intelligence community, when they got it from some of the other Arab capitals by about five or six days later. At least, that pleased me.

This second assignment in Baghdad was a great intellectual challenge, trying to figure out what was going on. I felt personally drained because I didn't have as much contact with Iraqis as I would have liked to have had. I often had to rely on analysis of what I gleaned from the Iraqi media in addition to chance conversations. In this way, for example, I was able to analyze the shift by Saddam Hussein from confrontation with the Iraqi Shia during their religious observances in early 1977 to appeasing them a year later by praying in the Shia manner at the shrine in Karbala.

One of the people I had gotten to meet was an Iraqi who served as an interpreter for Saddam Hussein. He was from the ministry of information, but he very often served as interpreter for Saddam Hussein. He was a bit of a character, rather flamboyant. He was as near to a flaming fairy as would be tolerated in the rather strict and sedate Iraqi society.

*Q: For somebody who might not know the terminology, we're talking about a homosexual.*

MACK: Yes. As I was leaving in the summer of 1979, he said, I want to have you to a farewell luncheon. Of course, I was delighted. He was the only Iraqi who had asked me to a farewell social event. I remember he offered to pick me up outside the U.S. Interests Section and go to a restaurant, just the two of us. Well, I thought that was He said, "Hold it very carefully, because you can't get these radios here. I got it when I went with Saddam Hussein to Cuba." He said he got it in the duty free, and "It's really a good radio, so I don't want to leave it in the car, we'll bring it into the restaurant." We went to a restaurant that was called The Ruby, *Al-Yaqut* in Arabic. It was a houseboat on the Tigris River, and we had an exceptionally good meal. The government interpreter took this radio in with him, telling me he was afraid it would be stolen if he left it in the car. He put the radio on a seat between him and me. So I proceeded to deliver my lines into what I knew was a bugged radio. I recited everything that I wanted to tell the Iraqi government, particularly what I understood to be very strong U.S. concerns at that point about what seemed to be a drift to war with Iran. This was in the summer of 1979, and our concern was that this would be very destabilizing for the area and would work against U.S. and Iraqi interests in the long run. I remember the interpreter making the other argument that, no, no, the government here knows what they're doing. What he said tracked with other indications I had seen that they felt that Iran was breaking up, and Iraq could grab the part of Iran which was across the border east of the Iraqi province of Basra. This area was often shown on Iraqi produced maps of the region as Arabistan, while the Iranians called it Khuzestan. It was one of the main oil producing areas and had an indigenous Arab-speaking population. In Baathi ideology as expounded by some Iraqis, this was part of the greater Arab nation. It was clear that they thought they could move in and have this area for the taking.

This was my last reporting cable from Baghdad. I expressed my concern that Iraqi officials seemed so confident about their ability to pick up part of what they saw as a collapsing and disintegrating Iranian empire in the period after the Islamic revolution. I never had the feeling

that the Iraqis felt threatened by Iran. It was much more a question of some Iraqis being motivated by a combination of Arab nationalism and their own territorial greed. It was arrogant and reckless to a remarkable degree. I remember people in Washington disbelieving and saying no, they wouldn't be so crazy. But it turned out to be one of the occasions, and not the last, when Iraqi leaders allowed a combination of political arrogance and greed, and I think a bit of parochialism about the way the world really works, to overcome good sense and prudence.

*Q: Were they making any noises about Kuwait at that time?*

MACK: Oh, no. There hadn't been any threats expressed against Kuwait. The Kuwaiti ambassador was one of the people I saw very often. He had total disdain, I remember, for the Iraqis, and there were a lot of Kuwaitis who came to Iraq as tourists because in Iraq they could drink, and there were also looser social standards as far as relations between the sexes. And Iraq was green, greenery and water, so it was a very popular destination for Kuwaiti tourists. When they could get an exit permit, and when they could get the hard currency, Iraqis loved to go down to Kuwait to shop. Kuwait had the free market that Iraq lacked. Iraq had the relaxed social mores, the greenery that Kuwait lacked. So it seemed like a pretty good relationship, and one that could go on for a long time.

*Q: Do you have any comments about how Marshall Wiley and Ed Peck got along?*

MACK: I would say that both of them came there with the idea of the relationship becoming a much more elevated one. Both left a little discouraged that during their time all they had been able to do is push the ball a little further. Neither one of them found a good reason why the Iraqis didn't establish diplomatic relations with us. Sure, our relations were not very good, they were marked by a lot of suspicion, but that was true for a lot of other countries. I felt the Iraqi leadership believed it gained a little bit of leverage in the Arab world by posing as being purer than other Arabs. They weren't going to compromise their principles. They always talked about the Palestine issue as if it was the issue of destiny. In fact, it was quite clear to me that strategically they ought to be a lot more concerned about Iran than about Israel. Why would they be concerned about Israel? In my conversations with them, I would try to make the point. But they would have none of it. In their view, I did not understand the importance of their nationalist mission, and they felt threatened whenever and anywhere an Arab was threatened. They felt as brothers to Palestinians. This was very much in their rhetoric. A lot of the Arab ambassadors were very cynical about this rhetoric and tended to say it was just a mask for Iraqi efforts to establish their leadership in the Arab world. That's partly true, but there was a large dose of true belief. It was a combination of Baath party ideology with realpolitik, and this was the kind of thing that prevented them from moving to a full diplomatic relations with us.

*Q: Did you get a feel for...you know, something that goes back, we're talking about way back, a couple of millennia back, the Cairo versus Baghdad axis for the Arab world?*

MACK: Yes, of course. They were glad to see Sadat out of the Arab League. The Egyptians immediately became another group of pariah diplomats. The Egyptian embassy people, who had previously avoided me, suddenly were happy to come to my house or exchange visits. The real tension during most of my time there was between Damascus and Baghdad. They were

ideologically so close, and yet so much at odds in personal antagonisms between the leaders, plus there was a geopolitical aspect. The Cairo-Baghdad rivalry is an old one but not as old in Arab and Islamic history as the Damascus-Baghdad rivalry. That one, which goes right back to the first centuries of Islam, is very deep. In the run-up to the Baghdad summit, when the Iraqis tried to assert their leadership, they made a tactical decision for a rapprochement with the Syrians. It lasted for a few weeks, just long enough for the Baghdad summit and a short period afterwards. It seemed very unnatural. Neither country had kept an ambassador in the other's capital. The charge d'affaires of the Syrian embassy described the bizarre events in the days just before the summit when the Iraqis suddenly realized that it wouldn't look too good when Hafez al Assad arrived to have burned out cars in front of the Syrian embassy. The Syrian embassy cars had been trashed by an Iraqi mob, and there were no Iraqi mobs that weren't inspired by the Iraqi regime. After having ignored them for a long time, the Iraqis told the Syrian embassy to please remove the cars. The head of the Syrian embassy, told them, not on your life. You trashed the cars, you remove them. Sure enough, about a day before the Syrian delegation to the summit arrived, the Iraqis dragged away the burned out vehicles.

We did not see Iraq as being the natural leader of the Arab world, but it was definitely in contention with both Egypt and Syria. Temporarily, however, after the Baghdad summit, it had emerged as the nominal leader of the Arab world. To the extent that the Iraqis thought strategically, a claim to leadership arose from some of Saddam Hussein's occasional writings that you wouldn't necessarily see but you'd hear about. These were internal Baath party documents sometimes echoed in the Iraqi press. It seemed clear he thought in terms of an emerging multipolarity in the world. It would not be just an East-West U.S.-Soviet bloc conflict, but there would be different blocs. Europe, with which Iraq was establishing good relations, particularly with the French, would be one bloc. The French were establishing very good relations with Iraq in the military supply area. Iraqi strategists saw Europe as one pole, along with the Far East as another. They saw the Soviet Union, they saw the U.S., but they also saw the Arab world as one of the power poles, and clearly Saddam Hussein saw Iraq as being the leader of the Arab bloc. So I suppose this kind of strategic view, along with their ideological commitment to Arab unity, those two things kind of went together. Moreover, the needs of a dictatorial regime to survive and to repress any kind of dissent, together with Iraq's growing economic power, fed these notions of strategy.

*Q: I guess to just wrap this up for this time, you left there in the summer of '79.*

MACK: I left in the summer of '79 after the Islamic revolution in Iran. The Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been living in exile in the Iraqi Shia city of Najaf, was expelled from Iraq when the regime was trying to improve its relations with Iran under the Shah. They lived to regret that. I left before Iraq and Iran went to actual hostilities, but you could see the tensions rising. I also left shortly before President Bakr retired and Saddam Hussein became the supreme leader of the country. Soon after he became the top man, nominally as well as actually, Saddam conducted a thorough going purge at the leadership level. This astonished people, because many who thought they were long time comrades in arms of Saddam, even close friends, were executed. He was a formidable character. Nonetheless, many of the Iraqis saw him as the human face of the regime. He was known to be tough and ruthless, but he was also known to be willing to make exceptions to the Baath party rules. There was a kind of ombudsman system set up, whereby people could

send messages and complaints about the bureaucracy to His Excellency, the deputy. Of course, this was one of the ways that Saddam Hussein could gain information useful to his system of control.

*Q: I even saw this with King Saud in Arabia.*

MACK: Petitioners wouldn't have direct contact with Saddam Hussein, but they could get messages to him, in effect reporting on corruption or something that might take place. During this time, there was virtually no crime in Iraq. They were going through a period of economic prosperity, but also the penalties for law breaking were quite ruthless.

There was none of the kind of petty crime that one associates with a third world country. If there was corruption, it was very, very well hidden, and there were highly publicized cases of government officials being executed for corrupt practices. Corruption was a capital crime. Illegal currency transactions were capital crimes. Illegal border crossings were dealt with very ruthlessly. This was very much a Stalinist society. It was a Stalinist political system but with a heavy dose of third world incompetence that gave it just a little bit of a human touch. Security in Baghdad, at least, was good for people who had no involvement in politics. My wife and baby daughter went everywhere in the city unprotected, and I never gave it a thought.

*Q: Just to put it on record, you left there in the summer of 1979, just as things were heating up. We're going to have a war between Iran-Iraq, you're going to have our embassy seized, all hell is going to break loose.*

MACK: The Tehran embassy had been seized briefly but let go. At the time, we did not know that the embassy would be seized again with U.S. diplomats held hostage for over a year.

*Q: So where did you go from there?*

MACK: I was assigned to Tunis as DCM. Something like 21 people bid that job. It was one of the more desirable jobs that came up that year at my grade, and I didn't think I'd have much chance. I got the job partly because of my reporting from Baghdad, but also because I had volunteered to take the trip to Beirut in 1976. That was remembered by a staff assistant in NEA who mentioned it to the senior Deputy who was considering the DCM possibilities. They remembered that I had been there when they needed me. This is the kind of thing that built loyalty between the NEA bureau and the people who worked there.

**EDWARD L. PECK  
Minister Counselor  
Baghdad (1977-1980)**

*Edward L. Peck was born in Los Angeles, California in 1929. As a Foreign Service officer, he was posted to Algeria, Sweden, Morocco, Tunisia, Washington,*



*DC, Egypt, Iraq, and Mauritania. He was interviewed in 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

PECK: Personnel. I said, "What's the matter, Charles?" He said, "I have just found out that my wife will not be cleared for overseas duty." I said, "Oh, my God. That's terrible, where were you going?" He said, "I had gotten myself the principal officership in Baghdad, and now I can't go." I said the right things and went out the door, and they caught up with me in San Francisco. I called my sister to tell her when I was arriving in L.A., and she said, "Oh, they're trying to get you from the State Department, Ed." I said, "Baghdad", and she said, "No, the name was Christensen." [Laughter]

Okay. I called Christensen. He said, "Would you like to go to Baghdad", and I said, "Yes." So Charles Martinson got Egyptian Affairs, and I got Baghdad.

*Q: Dan Newberry probably ended up back in Turkey, didn't he?*

PECK: Oh, Dan Newberry went from that to be, I think, a deputy assistant secretary in CU and then to Istanbul after that. A wonderful guy, Dan Newberry.

*Q: Now what was the situation--what were our interests and what was the situation vis-a-vis the United States in Iraq? We're talking about 19--*

PECK: '77.

*Q: 1977.*

PECK: I didn't go for a couple of months because they had to work out some details, some problems. The fellow who had been the principal officer there, who'd gone off to be ambassador in Oman, Marshall Wiley, was recommending very strongly that he not be replaced, as a signal to the Iraqis of U.S. displeasure over the fact that the embassy's longest--one of the embassy's senior local employees, a driver, had been taken out of Marshall Wiley's official car, and the Iraqi police called and said to collect the car, which was parked on the side of the road. And they ran the driver off into seclusion. He was a Kurd.

Anyway, Marshall Wiley suggested that he not be replaced, and the State Department was feeling that he should not only be replaced, but that the person who replaced him, Peck, should have the title of Minister-Counselor, instead of just counselor in the Belgian embassy. So while that was being thrashed out, I was held in Washington, waiting to go.

By the way, I should mention in passing that I have served overseas under three flags: the Swiss flag in Algeria, the Belgian flag in Iraq, and the American flag. I missed the Spanish flag in Cairo by about three months. I still have my I.D. cards identifying me as a Swiss diplomat and as a Belgian diplomat.

Jimmy Carter had announced several times publicly that he wanted diplomatic relations with every country in the world, and had specifically mentioned Iraq on more than one occasion. So

this was an issue of some concern to the administration, because they wanted Carter to be able to do it. Throughout the two and a half years of my tenure in Baghdad, we were constantly being nattered at by Washington about the reestablishment of relations. And every time a foreign minister or prime minister or chief of state came through, the ambassador from that country would immediately call me and say, "Ed, Ed, wonderful news! You know, my prime minister--or king, or whatever it was--spoke to Saddam Hussein about having relations reestablished with the United States."

I said, "Yes, thank you very kindly." That was one of the big interests. We wanted that because Carter felt it was something important. I wrote some dissenting telegrams saying, "Look--"

*Q: He felt it was something important really for almost geopolitical terms, in other words, we talk to everybody.*

PECK: He didn't really understand what the situation was, and I wrote a number of telegrams on this issue, pointing out that the American government representatives in Iraq had as good access to the host government, which is to say, bad, as most of the other people here. If you're not French or East German or Russian or Kuwaiti, you don't get in to see anybody anyway. So we do perfectly well. The presence of a flag and somebody with the title of ambassador will not change a goddamn thing. We tell the Iraqis everything we want them to know. They tell us everything they want us to know, and this is the way it is here. You don't need to keep running around, "Yap, yap, yap," about a flag and an ambassador. Let's be honest. It won't make a goddamn bit of difference. But the White House wanted it.

*Q: Well, I might say that this represents some of the ideas that come often out of campaigns and all. I was in South Korea at the same time when Carter had said, well, we're going to withdraw our troops from Korea. This absolutely made no sense.*

PECK: Yes. It's the kind of thing in which once you've said it, it becomes a fact and it's a--it was a source of some distress to me. But anyway, that's how I got the assignment. Notice the key things, for anybody who's listening to this, who really knows the system. Had I been assigned as the Director of Egyptian Affairs, I would not have been available to go to Baghdad. It's only because, although already picked, I had not yet been assigned--so when you push the button to get a list of people who are available to go to Baghdad, beep, beep, beep, here's Peck. Otherwise I would have been assigned to Egyptian Affairs. My name would not have been on the scope, and Nick Veliotis, the senior NEA deputy, would not have been able to say, "Yes. There's your guy."

*Q: I might add that in a certain number of these interviews, not of your era or my era, but an era before, I can't tell you the number of interviews I've had, "How did you get such and such as assignment?"*

"Well, I was in the men's room, and Loy Henderson came next to me and said, 'Where are you off to?' And then he'd say, 'Oh, you don't want to go there, why don't you go here?'" Or he'd meet him in the hall.

PECK: When I worked for Vice President Bush on the Terrorism Task Force, the former Chief of Naval Operations, Jim Holloway, was my boss. He said, "In the Navy, at Harvard, The New York Times, the State Department, anywhere, your career depends partly on what you know, partly on who you know, but above all, where you happen to be standing when they need somebody." And it's true.

*Q: Oh, it is.*

PECK: It's absolutely true. That's how I got that Oran job. When I came through from Tunis, they were desperately trying to find somebody to fill the job. If I had been three weeks later, they would have found somebody. If I had been three weeks earlier, they wouldn't have been so frantic. I walked in and [snaps fingers] got the job just like that, which was a wonderful thing.

*Q: What did you do? Well, first place, what was the situation in Iraq at that time while you were there?*

PECK: Well, at that time the Iraqis were the big threat to the future and stability of all the kings, princes, and sheiks in the area, because they have an expansionist foreign policy based on their Baathi ideology, which means that the Arab world, in order to deal with its problems, must be unified. And how do you unify it? Forceful and violent overthrow or armed intervention.

So all of those people in the Gulf were scared shitless of the Iraqis, who were very rich and very aggressive and who was it that held the Iraqis back?

*Q: Our great ally.*

PECK: The Shah of Iran! Who said, "Don't you be after touching me boys down there." When the Shah fell, you had a big role reversal. The big danger became Iran, and the big protector became Iraq, because it was suddenly in Iraq's best interests to keep all the sheiks and princes and emirs from falling.

*Q: Well, before we move to the--putting this in perspective--let's take the first half of your tour there, while Iraq was the big threat. First place, Saddam Hussein--could you--your impression, your perspective of this gentleman who still is in power, I might add, today.*

PECK: I became the U.S. Government's ranking expert on everything Iraqi, by definition. The day I definitively left that job, I no longer had any standing whatsoever. The guy who took my place got the title and all the prestige, so nobody ever spoke to me again. "The king is dead, long live the king." When I came back on consultations, however, I went to the White House, the CIA, Defense Department--when I came back at the end of the tour, nobody had the time of day for me. It was kind of interesting. But it's happened thousands of times before.

Iraq was very, very wealthy. They were spending money by the quart. A lot of companies were making a lot of dough, selling and building things for the Iraqis. The American interests section had three buildings over which the Belgian flag flew. It was the former Romanian embassy,

because the American embassy had been taken over by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They had expropriated it. The residence was their School of Foreign Service, in the back of the compound.

I should digress for a second. Jack Jernegan--had been the ambassador in Algeria when I was the consul in Oran, had earlier served as ambassador in Iraq. I was able to write to him and say that I inherited, along with his majordomo and houseboy, all the furniture that had been in his residence.

We had a lot of interests there because they were a powerful force in the region, because they had a lot of money and a lot of oil, because they were an implacable foe, as we saw it, of Israel. They threatened all of the nice little guys in the area that we thought were good fellows.

*Q: We're speaking particularly of Jordan, Saudi Arabia--*

PECK: Kuwait.

*Q: Kuwait.*

PECK: Yemen, Oman, all those folks down there. The Iraqis were active everywhere and had limitless money to use. Extraordinary amounts of money. So that there were, I think, thirteen Americans assigned there at the time. We had a fairly heavy consular workload--an awful lot of Iraqis trying to get to the States, for one reason or another, with a very high fraud rate. We had a lot of business goings-on. We had the usual political and economic reporting. Things like that. It was an interesting little fiefdom to have, because it was my own country. I'd already had my own little post, you know, in Oran, but now I had a whole country to work on, and the nice thing about serving in Iraq was that there was no pro-Iraqi voice in the United States Government, and so we were allowed to say the nastiest things we wanted to say, but nobody gave us any flack for it.

*Q: Were you getting instructions from Washington: do this, protest that, or something?*

PECK: Oh, yes. When I went there we didn't have communications with Washington, you see. We didn't even have a telex, and most of our stuff was either double-talked over the phone, or it was sent down to and came up from Kuwait by courier. I was able, before I left, working with Under Secretary Phil Habib, to shake loose an effort to put in the world's only one-way communications system, in which we, by using the Voice of America receiving antennas on the roof of the building, were able to receive our telegraphic traffic from Athens, but we couldn't send anything back because we weren't allowed to operate radios. So we sent all our message traffic out either one-time pad, which was terrible, or we sent it down to Kuwait and they transmitted it.

*Q: A one-time pad being a coding device--*

PECK: Done by hand. We sent some stuff out by the telex we finally got, but it was very slow and laborious. By the time I'd been there for, I think, eight months we had one-way communications, and they went to two-way shortly after I left. But it worked.

*Q: Well, now, let's go back. What was your impression of Saddam Hussein?*

PECK: Saddam Hussein was a village thug who wore Pierre Cardin suits and had lovely bridgework and a nice mustache and all that. I always thought that one of the nicest things that could happen for the Palestinian cause, if you're interested in nice things happening to the Palestinian cause, would be to have Yasser Arafat meet Saddam Hussein's tailor and barber. Because Arafat looks like a thug and really isn't, and Saddam Hussein doesn't look it but really is. When I got there he was the number two man to a fellow named Ahmed Hassan El Bakr, the "founder of modern Iraq." Saddam Hussein had been number two for about ten years. The people here in Washington made a great big thing about El Bakr's health, and they wanted me to report on it frequently. I told them, flat out and repetitively, that I would not become involved in something like the 20 years of Tito-watching. You know: "Yes, he's staying. No, no, he's going. Yes, he's going. No, he's fine." I said, "When there's something to tell you, I'll tell you, otherwise I ain't going to say a goddamn word."

So in--I think it was May of '78, I've forgotten--I sent a telegram to Washington, the only one I ever sent on the subject saying, "He is going. Been watching him on television, the man is failing fast."

Twenty-eight days later he resigned. Okay, hey. [whistles] Cigar. "I told you so." He resigned and the expected took place, Saddam Hussein's smooth transition, except that two weeks later he machine-gunned twenty-five of his closest associates. Because I think that they felt that now it would be a little more collegial, and he wanted to make sure that they understood that it wasn't going to be at all collegial. He squashed that one very quickly, and he ruled Iraq with what can only be described as an iron hand.

It's impossible for people to understand what that meant until they went to a place like Damascus, also ruled by a tough guy, Hafez El-Assad.

The streets of Damascus were filled with sandbagged guard posts, half tracks, armed patrols marching down the road in step, barricaded buildings, tanks at the street corners. I never saw an armed soldier in Baghdad. Not once. Some of the journalists who had been there at the time, said that when they had census day in Baghdad, you were supposed to stay at home. The streets looked like the final scene in *On the Beach*, if you remember the movie: there was not a living person in sight, anywhere. Just as if they'd all been vaporized. That country--you don't step out of line or you are gone.

*Q: Sounds like North Korea.*

PECK: Well, I hate to--it's kind of a Germanic people, yes, like North Korea. They're very, very--they don't smile either, you know, Iraqis. And they have nothing to do with us. They were afraid to come close to us because that was dangerous. As long as you don't step out of line the Iraqi Government never bothers you. Free schooling, free medical care, free housing--free all these nice things, you know. Group liberties, no individual liberties. Freedoms, I should say. But boy, they controlled that place--it was scary.

*Q: How did they control it?*

PECK: Just by a knowledge that if you stepped out of line, you were a dead man. And the people are controllable. I mean it's, you know--when the stoplight turns red in Iraq, everybody stops. In Egypt they drive up over the sidewalks and around the policeman. It's a different approach. There are these cultural differences--between the Swedes and the Danes. Between the Germans and the Dutch. There are cultural differences.

*Q: Well, did you have any dealings with Hussein?*

PECK: No, never saw him in my life. But I knew him very well. I watched him a lot on television. If you're a careful observer--I would sit in my little house, especially the last six months I was there because all the dependents were evacuated, and I was there alone. My wife couldn't come the first six months because she was pregnant with our first child, and she was evacuated the last six months because the hostages were taken in Tehran.

But Saddam Hussein would do some interesting things, Stu, which were insightful. When the Shah fell, and Iraq--which has a high percentage of Shiites in its population, concentrated down at Basra, and that was a source of concern. Saddam Hussein went down to Basra, and Iraqi television followed him everywhere, driving his own Chevrolet down the street.

He would stop and get out, wave to the people, and he would walk into a shop on the streets of Basra with the thugs and the goons and the TV cameras and the floodlights coming in right over his shoulder. Inside, selling light bulbs and switches and wires and stuff, some poor guy with his turban on, looking up, you know, horror--here comes Saddam Hussein. And Saddam Hussein would sit down across at his little desk, and he would say, "My name is Saddam Hussein." "Yes, yes, I know." "What is your name?" "Ahmed Fulani." He'd say, "Well, Ahmed. How are things here?" "Oh, they're fine, fine." "Well, do you like the way the government is running things?" "Oh yes, yes, yes." [Laughter] "And do you approve of the steps we have taken to--" "Oh yes, yes, yes, yes."

And then Saddam could announce to the country that, "I've spoken to the people, and they're all in favor of what we're doing." Saddam, you could see in his face, honestly believed that the shopkeeper sitting there was leveling with him. Oh, Saddam, uh uhnnn. That ain't how you find out.

Two nights later Saddam called a meeting of the revolutionary command council, and there'd be twenty-six guys there, all of them mustached, several of them in uniform, sitting around this room, and Saddam Hussein, at the head table, with his Fidel Castro cigar and his Pierre Cardin suit and Louis Jourdan necktie, would say something ponderous. Then he would stop and just look at them for twenty seconds. It's a long time. And for the next twenty seconds he would take a big draw on and exhale smoke from his cigar, and for the next thirty seconds, he would just look around the room without a change of expression and without saying anything. And the camera would pan around looking at these people. None of them were scratching, or shifting, or moving. They were sitting like graven images.

The next night he would have a meeting of two thousand cadre to announce what he'd told to the command council, what he'd seen in Basra. Same approach, the same awesome display of raw, naked power. In the middle of one of his long silences in that large theater, somebody would jump to his feet and scream, "Long live Saddam Hussein! Long live the Baathi party! Long live the Arab revolution! Long live the--"

And the people sitting next to him and in front of him wouldn't even look up. They would all sit staring at the front of the goddamn theater. They didn't even look up at the guy next to them. It was extraordinary.

I said, "Hey, this tells me something. I'm a trained observer, and this place is being run! Saddam Hussein would come into the presidential guest house to greet a visitor. They had a lovely palace there. He'd come in wearing a thobe, you know, it's a black gold bordered cape-like garment, over his western suit. He would come in, and the cameras would be on him, and he would take the thobe up off his shoulders and just throw it backwards, and there was always somebody there to catch it. Just like Cecil B. De Mille sitting down on the movie set? You know, there's a chair under him. Saddam didn't look back to see if anybody was ready--he just threw it. They were there. The man was a king, he was an emperor, he was a prince, he was a god.

When I was getting ready to leave Baghdad, I sat down and wrote a half dozen summations of what I had learned there, which got very nice reviews from my colleagues. In one of them, I think it was the final one, I said, "There is one single issue on which every knowledgeable observer in the city of Baghdad will agree. To wit: there is no logical reason whatsoever for Iraq to go to war with Iran."

And people attacked me afterwards, when the war broke. I said, "But notice what I said: there wasn't any logical reason, and I was right, even though logic's got nothing to do with it." Saddam Hussein discovered an immutable law of international relations. It is easy to start a war, but it's a hell of a lot harder to stop it. Saddam Hussein has nobody in his country to advise him who has lived anywhere or done anything or learned anything, which is supposed to give them the experience to avoid that kind of mistake. [Not that they would because America replicates its mistakes anyway.] But there is no think tank, no voice of the press, no university, no nothing except Saddam Hussein, who says, "Anybody not in favor of what I've just suggested? Please step up to the wall and put on your blindfold. The rest of you are excused to carry out my orders." But he won the war, sort of.

*Q: Well, how did you deal with the government?*

PECK: Whenever possible. We were allowed to see officials up to a certain level, depending on the issue, but not too frequently. The highest level I ever got to was when I was asked to deliver a message from Jimmy Carter to the Foreign Minister of Iraq, whom I had met in New York but never saw afterwards, Sa'dun Hammadi. He was a Ph.D. graduate of the University of Minnesota, I think.

I was asked to make a demarche to demand protection for the American interests section in Baghdad after the hostages were taken in Tehran. I was directed not to accept a lower level meeting, so I made a hell of a fuss about it. I told the assistant chief of protocol, who was a woman, a graduate of the George Washington University, "If you do not get me an appropriate meeting, I will call Saddam Hussein and believe me, I have his number. And I know he takes calls from people in the country." She said, "You have no right." I said, "I have my instructions." So I saw an under secretary. He said, "Please do not be frightened." I said, "I am not frightened. I am carrying out my orders." "Don't be nervous." "I am not nervous. I carrying out my instructions to demand protection for my installation and my people."

Anyway, normally we dealt with them on a low-level basis which reflected, amongst other things, fairly severe and--I'll use the word again--basic hostilities, disagreement on various issues. Israel, you know, was one of them. The Palestinian cause was another, closely related issue.

Recognizing what this tape is for, let me say this. The Americans have an exercise they go through with their embassies abroad called "goals and objectives." I received mine for Iraq, and I had to laugh. The number one objective, goal, sent to a man in a country with which we did not have diplomatic relations and in which we had in fact very, limited low-level official contacts, was to "persuade the Iraqi Government to abandon its hostility to Israel." [Laughter] Which I thought was a worthwhile objective but somewhat unrealistic under the circumstances.

And I sent a telegram back to Washington, which I wish I'd had somebody smart enough to advise me not to send. I said, "I am offended and insulted. Don't you want to make my number two objective to persuade Saddam Hussein to become a Hasid?"

*Q: A Hasidic Jew, right?*

PECK: Yes, that's right. I mean, you know, shouldn't my number one objective have been "Endeavor to open a dialogue with the Iraqi Government?" Number two to "Establish some form of proper communications." I said, "Can I assume that my Iraqi counterpart in Washington has a message which says, 'Get the United States Government to abandon its support for Israel?' And is that any more realistic than what you assholes have asked me to do?" Anyway, I wasn't quite that intemperate. But I got a message that said, "Shut up and carry out your orders."

It was ridiculous. For Christ's sake. The number one issue on which the Iraqi government's effort are based was hostility to Israel. And I'm going to change that? It was an entirely commendable and worthwhile goal, but totally unrealistic.

*Q: Reminds me of a friend of mine who was deputy chief of mission of Dublin, whose ambassador, as he was leaving, was unhappy that he'd been unable to solve the northern Ireland question, and my friend was afraid that this might reflect on his efficiency report.*

PECK: "Despite my instructions, he failed to solve"--you know, that's the kind of asinine thing you can get into.



*Q: Things must have taken quite a dramatic turn for you as far as everybody's outlook on the area when the Shah of Iran fell, and there was the hostage crisis. It started to crumble around '78, wasn't it?*

PECK: Yes.

*Q: '79 the Shah left, and the hostages were taken--*

PECK: Taken in November of '79, and we evacuated all the dependents. Yes, except that some people assumed that other people wouldn't make the kinds of miscalculations they actually made. Saddam Hussein announced that he went to war with Iran to topple the Ayatollah. The Ayatollah said his reason for fighting back was to topple Saddam. You know, they were out to get each other. I had already left when the war broke out. Things were tough enough, when I was there.

*Q: But you say logic was saying there's no reason for Iraq to attack Iran. Do you think--was the problem of navigation on the Shatt-al-Arab a real issue?*

PECK: No, Saddam Hussein was very concerned because the Ayatollah and his people were spending a lot of time and effort and money trying to get the Shiites of Iraq to rise up against the Baathi regime, which is a secular regime.

*Q: The Shiite being one of the two--Iranian more or less branch of the--*

PECK: Well, I used to call it that, yeah.

*Q: Not quite, I mean--*

PECK: For the purposes of this discussion. So the eastern branch. Saddam Hussein felt that when he went to war, that the Arabs of southwestern Iran would rise up against the Ayatollah. Neither one of these uprisings occurred for various reasons, but it was the kind of miscalculation that even the best-informed, intelligent and experienced government can make. Saddam did it, but there was no one to say him nay. He felt that he was being provoked by all the broadcasts and the rest of it, and he also felt that he could do something about it. He was partly right.

The American embassy by that time had built up a little bit. We had a--USIS was in there. The CIA station had opened--commerce wanted to put in commercial service people, because they'd taken one of our positions from Foreign Service and converted it--I think it was fifteen Americans there then.

I might mention, just in passing, because this is my recording, that another Meritorious Honor Award came out of that assignment, in which my boss, a fellow named Maury Draper, wrote in my efficiency report that "The reporting program from Baghdad, which is based only on secondary and tertiary sourcing, is as good as that which we get from any country in the Middle East, including ones in which the embassy people are practically living in the palace." You know, like Jordan and Saudi Arabia. He said, "It was a dynamite program."

I got promoted on the basis of that assignment, again, from FSO-2 to FSO-1 in three years.

*Q: Well, how did this work, I mean let's talk just for a minute before we close this down for today. You had to go secondary, tertiary sources. I mean how do you report? You watch TV and watch how--*

PECK: Watch TV, you talk to the Swiss, you go over and call on the Japanese, you go in to see the Saudi, you visit the Syrian--he'll talk to you, you know. You walk down streets, you listen to radio, you listen to the East German and analyze what he says. You talk to the Turkish military attaché. You go to a cocktail party and spend a half an hour jolly up the Bulgarian and the Russian consuls. Back and forth, and you listen, you experiment, you discuss it amongst yourselves, and then you distill what's happening. This is factual, that's not. This is suppositional, that sounds pretty close to being on. So we were able to tell, with remarkable success. I had a crackerjack team of people.

*Q: Could you name some of the names?*

PECK: Sure. David Mack was my first deputy. He went on to be DCM in Tunis, and he's now ambassador in the United Arab Emirates. He was replaced by Elizabeth Jones.

There's a story there. I was back in Washington and I had already had a hand in getting David Mack's DCM position. Hal Saunders, who was the assistant secretary said, "Ed, can David Mack be replaced by a woman?" I said, "The answer to that question is a question. Who?" He said, "Beth Jones." I said, "Yes. Yes, Beth Jones could replace him." Some other women couldn't. There are also guys who couldn't. You know. But he asked the wrong question. Beth Jones, yes. She's an Arabist, I worked with her in Cairo, she's bright. She's now the DCM in Pakistan. Ryan Crocker. He's another Arabist, who is now the political counselor in Cairo. Alan Kieswetter, another Arabist who later wound up as political counselor in Yemen. David Robbins, another Arabist, who's now the econ counselor in Rabat. Whitney Brunner, another Arabist, who's now the political counselor--I mean I had more Arabists there, by fluke, than they had in either Egypt or Saudi Arabia. Hard-working, bright, intelligent. It was a nice, congenial group, and we did dynamite reporting, but using our own intelligence, our backgrounds, reading papers, watching traffic, talking to people, sorting out the wheat from the chaff. And it worked.

*Q: How about the Soviets? How did we view the Soviet threat to American interests there? I mean here was a place that was supplying almost everything, and we've often painted these areas, you know, in pink if not in red.*

PECK: But that is so self-deluding. The last people in the world that the Iraqis would ever want to get closely involved with a governmental basis are the Russians. They'd much prefer to buy their stuff from us, but we won't sell to them. I'm talking about armaments now. If you can't buy from the U.S., who's the only other supplier who can give you the full range? The Soviets. But the minute they had the money to do it, they began to buy from France, from the U.K., and elsewhere. Anywhere they could afford. They don't want to futz around with the Russians.

*Q: Why not?*

PECK: Because they're afraid of them. There's no clandestine Republican Party in Baghdad waiting to overthrow the government, but there's a communist party there. We don't pose a threat of an internal kind. CIA is a little different sort of business, but--the Russians are not popular, are not liked. In Egypt, I mean Sadat threw them out as soon as he could. If you don't have any other option--I once suggested, only semi-facetiously, years ago, that the way we could guarantee Israel's security, while not losing our Arab friendships, was to switch sides and go with the Arabs, because the minute we did that the Soviets would be forced to come in and take care of Israel to balance us. Let the Russkies worry about Israel. As I say, that's semi-facetious. But it works like that.

The Russians were big suppliers on the military side, very big, they had some access because of it. But the Iraqis are terribly xenophobic. They didn't deal closely with anybody, and they didn't let the Russians get any closer than they were required to in order to maintain the military supply. To keep that inflow coming.

*Q: Well, did you find yourself intervening during the Carter Administration? Obviously, human rights was a major issue, and the Kurds were being--*

PECK: The Kurds--well, that was largely over. Barzani was here in the States.

*Q: Barzani being the leader of the Kurds.*

PECK: That's right. He was here in the States, and the Kurdish revolt was pretty much over. The Kurds were already being resettled. You'd drive up to some of the places, and you could see their former villages and the new ones. People were being kind of quiet about it, and it was not a front burner issue. Iraqis still patrolled, and there were occasional shootings and fires, but not any worse than the kind of stuff that the Basques were doing in Spain, or the IRA--

*Q: So this was not something you were finding yourself with pressure from Washington.*

PECK: No, very little pressure on that score. They liked to know what was happening, but they'd pretty much written it off. That the revolt was over when the Iraqis began to get the helicopters and the tanks from the Soviets in large numbers and developed the skills--they were able to take care of the Kurds. They couldn't fight in those mountains anymore, successfully. So that was not an issue, but civil rights were an issue because we were doing human rights reports.

The report on Iraq was terrible in terms of our view of individual freedoms. They don't have any of those. But on the other hand, as all the diplomats say, nobody died in Iraq because they couldn't afford medical care. And nobody had to give up education because they couldn't afford it. That was all taken care of. So from that perspective, their belief that individual freedoms are not so important, and collective freedoms are, put them at cross purposes with us from our human rights perspective.

*Q: Did you have problems about the fact you'd send in a report, and that would be published the next year, in a report to Congress?*

PECK: No.

*Q: I mean they just didn't give a damn.*

PECK: The Iraqis didn't care. They didn't care. The Iraqis also had some human rights problems in that--you may remember--I'm sure you don't--that a lot of Christians were trying to get out of Iraq. A whole planeload of them were transiting through the States, and there was a lawyer waiting for them. The plane landed, and they weren't allowed to get off, but they fought their way off and claimed asylum.

The Iraqis called me in, and the Director of the First International Directorate, which includes Europe and the U.S., a graduate of UCLA just like I was, named Mohsen Zahawey, called me in to lecture me about this.

I said, "You know, your people have already announced in the press and on the radio that this was a CIA paid-for plot to embarrass your government. Do you know what you did? You just made them certifiable refugees. Because now we can't possibly send them back. Otherwise we would have, because we don't accept their claim as grounds for refugee status, but now you've made them refugees! We're not going to send them back now when you've accused them of involvement in 'A paid CIA plot'" beep. That's it. Forget it now.

But there were large numbers of Iraqis trying to get to the States. The Coptic Church here, some of the other eastern churches, have big major programs to get them in under refugee status.

*Q: Do you have many American women who've married Iraqis, trying to get children and American women out?*

PECK: No.

*Q: That had been taken care of before.*

PECK: Americans had a rough time. There were a couple of them. The only one I could think off-hand married to an Iraqi was an older woman. He was a doctor, and their kids had grown up and gone away long since. Interesting you should mention that because I'd never really thought about it. We didn't have any--

*Q: We've had this trouble in places like Ethiopia.*

PECK: Kuwait and Egypt.

*Q: Egypt. And when I was in Saudi Arabia it was a problem, too.*

PECK: I'm sorry about that. I'm embarrassed about that, sorry. Anyway, that was not an issue there. The American community there, the only woman that--our embassy nurse was married to an Iraqi, and they had some kids. She was still with him--there were no problems.

*Q: Why don't we call this to an end for today?*

PECK: That's fine. Getting hoarse.

*Q: Yes, we're both--you particularly. Okay, and so that sort of ends the Iraq side, doesn't it? Or is there anything else you'd like to say that we might forget?*

PECK: If I think of it, I'll call it to your attention.

**DAVID L. MACK**  
**Director, Office of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1982-1985)**

*Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

*Q: Well then we'll pick it up the next time when you become the...*

MACK: Country director for an office called NEA/ARN, Arab Region North, which included at that time Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

*Q: One of the questions I'd like to ask, I'll put it at the end here. This was the Lebanese invasion by Israel, really represented what I would call an almost earth change in the attitude within the United States. I mean both the body politic and elsewhere in the general public about the way we looked at Israel. It wasn't complete but the Israelis are no longer the shining knight in armor. I thought we might talk about your perception of that from the vantage point in NEA.*

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*Today is the 12th of April 1996. David, in the first place you were director of Northern Arab affairs. When to when?*

MACK: This was an office that was called Arab Region North, or ARN, and it was from July of 1982 until the summer of 1985.

*Q: How did you get the job?*

MACK: Well, it was not my choice. I wanted to stay overseas longer. I bid for other overseas assignments and I remember the cable from the central personnel system very well. It said, you have received none of the jobs for which you bid but do not be concerned, you will be named as a director for one of the NEA offices. This was exactly what I had feared! Shortly thereafter, Assistant Secretary Nick Veliotis came through Tunis. At the ambassador's house he drew me aside on the balcony overlooking the Mediterranean, grabbed hold of my arm, and said something to the effect that, "this is a terrible job, this is one of the worse jobs in the Foreign Service, it's so hard, you're going to hate it. But dammit, we've got to do it, and you're the person." Nick really knew how to make a major appeal to my sense of duty, so that I felt that I was having a great patriotic opportunity.

Prior to taking the assignment, I was able to join the incumbent in the position, Nat Howell [W. Nathaniel Howell, later to be the U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait], in visiting several of the countries for which I was to have responsibility. They were Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Iraq. After that, I visited Israel for talks with Israeli officials. My visit to Beirut in May of 1982 included an intimate dinner at the ambassador's residence. The ambassador was away, but Mrs. Dillon, the ambassador's wife, hosted the occasion for Bashir Gemayel, Nat and me. Bashir was head of the leading Maronite militia group that was locked in combat against Palestinians and others. I had met his iconic father Pierre and his elder brother Amin in my brief visit to Lebanon in 1976. Bashir was a probable next president of Lebanon, and he was in fact receiving a considerable amount of support from the U.S. government at that time. Together with Howell, I also met with a number of other Lebanese leaders, but I had no foretaste at that time of the degree to which Lebanese issues would dominate the assignment during my three year tenure.

Shortly after I returned to Tunis, the Israelis invaded Lebanon in early June of 1982.

*Q: I've been interviewing Chas Freeman who was our ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time of Desert Storm and Desert Shield and he mentions this micromanagement coming particularly from Brent Scowcroft and others at the NSC during the time. You know, couldn't keep their hands off running something. It's pernicious, but it's probably there with everybody wants to get in on the action.*

MACK: It was about this time, as well, that Phil Habib was no longer actively engaged. For serious health reasons, Phil had gone back to his retirement. The White House brought in a new special Middle East mediator, Donald Rumsfeld, former Secretary of Defense and a former White House chief of staff.

*Q: ...former Congressman.*

MACK: Rumsfeld made four trips to the Middle East as presidential envoy, and I went on his second and third trips. My immediate boss, Bob Pelletreau, accompanied him on visits one and four. We functioned as his regional experts and were joined by two other State Department officers in addition to security personnel. We traveled in a small U.S. Air Force executive jet, and Rumsfeld was generous about sharing his views and experiences. He worked hard, and he expected that his staff would do so as well. It was very labor intensive diplomacy. As we

traveled, we were constantly writing papers to prime Rumsfeld for his meetings, and he would discuss the personalities and issues with us in some depth. Although the Rumsfeld mission was high profile, in my view it accomplished actually very little. He had good access to high level leaders along the itinerary, meetings were sometimes lengthy but, at the end of a day, it was hard to see where all this activity was heading.

Rumsfeld started the second trip by telling us that the problem in Lebanon lay with Syria, which echoed George Shultz, and we needed to figure out ways to increase pressures on the Syrians. Throughout the whole trip, as we were traveling with Rumsfeld, he would pepper us with short notes – the Rumsfeld “snow flakes” – and we were expected to react with papers and ideas of our own. The most memorable paper he had us do involved pressure points on Syria. At his urging, we were throwing in all kinds of things that seemed totally absurd, the kinds of ideas that the State and Defense bureaucracies would swat down for one reason or another. I came up with one that I thought might actually serve a useful political purpose, in addition to putting pressure on Syria.

One of the four countries for which I had responsibility was Iraq, and our slowly improving relations, still short of diplomatic ties, seemed to be at an impasse. I proposed to Rumsfeld that one way of seriously pressuring Syria and to make the Syrian government realize it wasn't a free ride for them to go after us in Lebanon, would be to bring Iraq back into a normal relationship with some of our friends in the area, such as the Egyptians and the Jordanians. I used muscular language, which seemed to appeal to Rumsfeld. It went something like, “We could drive Hafez al-Asad crazy by strengthening the Cairo-Amman-Baghdad Axis.” We had already described Syria's long standing rivalry with these other Arab states and, in particular, the bad relations between Baghdad and Damascus. Rumsfeld seemed to really love the idea. He called me up to his seat in the aircraft to discuss it further. He asked what I had in mind. I rejected some of the more imaginative ways of improving U.S. relations with Baghdad, suggesting that it was up to the Iraqis to respond first to our offer to re-establish formal diplomatic ties, something that would require them to show a minimum of respect to the U.S., rather than posing as more uncompromising than other Arab states. U.S. generosity to Iraq would not be appropriate at that stage, but it had been years since a high level U.S. official had visited Baghdad. Rumsfeld asked what I had in mind, and I suggested that for a presidential envoy for the Middle East to include Baghdad on his itinerary would sound good to me. When we got back from this trip, Rumsfeld promoted the idea around the higher levels in Washington, and I put it into the formal pipeline as an idea for the next Rumsfeld trip.

The core countries for the Rumsfeld mission were Israel, Lebanon and Syria, but we also visited a number of other countries that I recall, such as Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Morocco. Rumsfeld's third trip to the region, and my second with him, included Iraq. To our disappointment, we did not see Saddam Hussein on that visit. Typically for the Iraqi government, as we took a step toward them, they got coy. Rumsfeld was able to meet with Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yassin Ramadan, who was one of Saddam's top colleagues in the Iraqi Baath Party and the government. Ramadan, as I recall, listened to Rumsfeld but said little, and what he said was Iraqi government boiler plate language, including the reasons why they were not ready for a closer relationship with the U.S. Our primary contact, however, was Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. He was a first class diplomat, even if he worked for a thug, and he played his role with

Rumsfeld very well. Although he had met with us formally in his office, Aziz also came to the government guest house where we were staying for a relaxed meeting. Aziz offered Cuban cigars. I don't remember whether Rumsfeld accepted one. Rumsfeld was smoking his Chesterfields, as I recall, while Aziz leaned back with a cigar and poured on the charm. His words were something like this: "It was a great pleasure to see you in Baghdad, Ambassador Rumsfeld. You have had very interesting things to say, most interesting ideas. What a shame that His Excellency the President was unable to meet with you. He has a terribly busy schedule, you know. Perhaps, if you were to visit again it could be arranged. You would be very welcome."

It seemed likely to me that Rumsfeld would. He did come to Baghdad on his fourth trip as presidential envoy for the Middle East. This was one of the reasons why not too long after that we moved toward resumption of diplomatic relations with Iraq. I felt that I had sold a good idea, and a timely idea, for basically the wrong reasons. In my mind, there were better reasons to try to improve relations with Iraq than the value of annoying Syria.

When Rumsfeld left Washington on the fourth trip, conditions in Lebanon were deteriorating rapidly. NEA needed me in Washington, but the idea was that I would come to the region to join the Rumsfeld party in February, after his second visit to Baghdad, and as part of another effort to resolve the Lebanon crisis favorably.

*Q: Tunis being where?*

MACK: Tunis being where the PLO now had its headquarters. These were not very formal messages, and there was certainly no dialogue. Basically, Jawad would tell me what he had been told in Tunis. I really had nothing to say back to him, but we did develop a close relationship. When he died, at a rather young age while still in his job at NAAA, I went to a memorial service. It was in a big hotel in Washington and, of course, I was the only U.S. government official that came. All the Arab-Americans were thrilled to see me. To my personal chagrin, I had to leave the service; I couldn't stay because I realized they were going to have speakers up on a platform making speeches about Jawad, and one of the people on the platform was the head of the Washington office of the Palestine Information Office. He was another Arab-American, Hassan Abdul Rahman. Unlike Jawad, Hassan had an official position working for the PLO, and I was forbidden to have direct contact with him at that point. Hassan is still in the same job, if I'm not mistaken, and years later we were able to get to know one another after U.S. talks had developed into a formal relationship with the PLO. Prohibitions on such contacts were generally unwise, as they restricted U.S. diplomatic flexibility and kept us in the dark about developments. Personally, I had lost any respect for Arafat as a leader after his behavior in 1983, but he continued to count for a lot in Arab politics. Ironically, the Israelis eventually got closer to his people in the secret talks at Oslo, when the PLO position evolved in a positive way, while we continued the fruitless effort to isolate the PLO.

During my time as office director, we were able to make only desultory efforts to get the Arab-Israel peace process back underway. It was always understood that if could get Jordan into an active and open peace process, then we could do bilateral military things with Jordan as well. Unfortunately, none of that happened. As a result, relations with Jordan did not develop much during my three years as office director.



Relations with Iraq did develop, resulting in resumed diplomatic ties. I came into the job with a lot of knowledge about Iraq, and also a fairly skeptical attitude toward the Iraqis. During two tours in Baghdad, including my assignment in the Interests Section, I'd had some difficult experiences. One of the views that I held by 1982 was that fancy efforts to improve relations with Iraq were doomed to failure. When he was Secretary of State, Kissinger had held a secret meeting with Tariq Aziz in Paris. It had gone nowhere after that. When Brzezinski was National Security Advisor, at a time when I was in Baghdad, Washington tried at times to launch initiatives through third party emissaries, the foreign minister of Italy, for example. The Carter administration was trying to make Iraq their China, or Brzezinski was trying to make it his China. So they kept trying unusual initiatives. The Iraqi reaction, as best I could judge in Baghdad, was one of great suspicion. The Iraqis seemed to be thinking, "Why are the Americans trying to do this? They're clearly trying to entrap us in something we don't want to have any part of."

Baghdad's attitude toward Washington began changing as the Iraq-Iran war continued, often badly for Iraq, and they began to see some potential benefit from having an improved relationship with the United States. While I was working as officer director, after the Rumsfeld visits I described above, Iraq sent a new Interests Section chief to Baghdad. Previously, we'd had very difficult dealings with the Iraqi Interests Section. They were basically a bunch of low-lives who tried to do foolish things like smuggling guns out of the country. We kept them on a pretty tight leash. In the spring of 1984, we hosted an official visit to Washington of Foreign Ministry Under Secretary Ismat Katani, a very capable, professional Iraqi diplomat whom I had known in Baghdad. This invitation was our reciprocity for the Rumsfeld visit to Baghdad, and it made sense as a part of the gradual warming between the two governments. Katani had been the U.S. Interests Section's most senior official contact in Baghdad. He was by nature cordial, correct and polite with foreign diplomats in Baghdad, and he had been very kind to me personally, despite my junior and unusual status there. Katani was also one of the senior Kurds in the Iraqi government, and a useful representative for his government. We had promising high level meetings with Katani in Washington. I can't remember whether he met Shultz, but he did meet with Under Secretary Eagleburger.

Katani had brought with him the new head of the Interest Section, Nizar Hamdoun, whom he introduced at an NEA hosted luncheon. I took one look at this guy, and thought to myself, my gosh, what is this? He looked like a Baath party thug, and his resume matched the visual impression. He had very good Baath party credentials, and Katani told us he had a personal relationship with Saddam Hussein. Hamdoun had been the head of the Syria office of the Regional Command of the Baath party in Baghdad. This was the office that had been responsible for setting in motion bombings in Damascus, among other matters connected with the relations between the two feuding wings of the Arab Baath Party. His English wasn't very good, and even his Arabic seemed closer to the Iraqi street than to the foreign ministry.

Initially, the State Department kept dealings with Hamdoun at a fairly low level. I would be his principal contact, along with Frank Ricciardone, my talented Iraqi desk officer. Frank and I soon came to appreciate Hamdoun's talent and resourcefulness. He worked his butt off and had a great natural talent for diplomacy, belying my first impression. Hamdoun had never had a diplomatic

position, but he was really determined to succeed and he was not too proud to ask for advice. He would come in and see me fairly often, using most any excuse, behavior that reminded me of my own efforts in Baghdad. I would deliver the usual hard message from Washington about policies of the Iraqi government, and then Hamdoun would ask me, what else he could do. Could he meet with officials in other departments or members of Congress? Very carefully, and bearing in mind our own diplomatic needs in Baghdad, I would say yes, you can start meeting people down on the Hill. Here's the name of a senior staffer you could start with, and maybe he will agree for you to meet with a congressman. Gradually, Hamdoun started spreading his wings, and relations between our two governments began improving. The Iraqis started making desirable public statements about the peace process, essentially saying that whatever the Palestinians agree to, fine with them. The Iraqis suggested they weren't a principal party to the Arab-Israel dispute. Of course, this was music to the Israeli ears. Hamdoun was very adept in the Washington political environment. He played the media, he contacted the Jewish groups. There was nobody that he would not try to cultivate in Washington. Eventually relations were restored between the two countries, and Nizar Hamdoun stayed on as ambassador.

That makes it sound like the resumption of U.S. Iraqi relations happened very quickly. For my first two years as office director, however, the relations remained stalled. There were some suggestions from the U.S. intelligence agencies to establish a regular intelligence liaison with the Iraqis. I came up with a number of criteria that I thought the Iraqis would have to meet first. I'm not sure exactly what was when a liaison began, but I was not keen for jumping too fast into advanced relationships, either of a military nature or of an intelligence nature, until such time as the Iraqis were prepared to have a normal diplomatic relationship, and until they started doing and saying the right things with regard to issues like the peace process.

I can attest that at least until I left the job in the summer of 1985, there were no military items, or even items that I recognized as dual purpose items, sent to the Iraqis. One thing that I supported was to sell armored ambulances, made by Cadillac-Gage, to the Iraqis. This proposed cash sale had domestic political support, because it would keep a U.S. industry in business and American workers employed at a time when the U.S. military had little demand for the vehicles. The Iraqis were locked in this increasingly bloody war with the Iranians, and it seemed to me an armored ambulance was okay. While it was military equipment, it would be used to save lives, not kill other people. But the Seventh Floor turned down this proposal, I believe because it would break the U.S. policy against arms sales to either side in the Iraq-Iran war. I think we were fairly pure on this issue, at least all the time I was there. In fact I haven't seen anything subsequently that indicated that there were any significant U.S. military sales. Later, in response to allegations in 1992, the State Department did a full search of the files. There were some dual purpose sales in the later years of the Iraq-Iran war, but they were a tiny part of the overall Iraqi defense program. They still made some minor contribution, I suppose, to Iraqi military capabilities. U.S. sales of military significance were also nothing like what the Swiss, Germans, Italians or French were doing. While the later course of U.S.-Iraqi relations did not go well, I felt that getting Iraq back into a more normal and correct relationship with the United States was one of the achievements of my three years as office director.

*Q: To put it into context, Iran and Iraq were in this horrendous war, and Iran was very definitely not in our good graces. Does this have an effect?*

MACK: It is absolutely the case that while there were still questions about Iraq, an Iranian victory looked worse for U.S. interests in the region. That was even more so in the early 1980s than today [in 1996]. Iran was in everybody's bad book in Washington because of what they had done with us bilaterally, because of the threats they were periodically making against the Israelis, because of the rising tempo of their interference with shipping in the Gulf. Certainly, all of our friends in the Arab world were dead set against Iran. The Syrians were about the only Arab country that had a decent relationship with Iran during that period. We were constantly being urged by the Saudis, Jordanians and Egyptians to improve relations with Iraq. There was a lot going for it, and particularly when the Israelis started saying, in effect, why not? Resumption of relations with Iraq became a natural thing to do. Strategically, it made no sense for us not to have a relationship with Iraq, if they were prepared to behave in a responsible manner. [Discussion of marginal U.S. military sales to Iraq misses the major U.S. contributions to Iraq's ability to withstand the Iranians. See below.]

I have spoken, for example, about going to Baghdad with Donald Rumsfeld on one of his shuttles, and how Tariq Aziz in particular made a good and favorable impression on Rumsfeld. The Iraqis generally were minding their Ps and Qs in the early 1980s. So this was quite a natural thing to do.

I might mention one thing that I ducked at the time but I think I want to put it on the tape, just so I don't forget the names. It regards the two AIPAC officials who had the luncheon with me in 1985 and attempted to put some money in the bank on their account. One of them was Steve Rosen, who was in fact the number two person in AIPAC. The other was Martin Indyk, who subsequently went on to head an AIPAC spin-off think tank called the Washington Institute. Martin is now our ambassador in Israel. At that time, Martin was the head of AIPAC's research office. He was still an Australian citizen. Martin was a good scholar of the Middle East, but he was obviously a person who never hid his strong feelings of sympathy with Israel. [By 2008, Steve Rosen had been fired by AIPAC and was under a legal cloud. Steve stoutly maintained that the charges against him were unfair. Martin Indyk had gone on from his job as Israeli Ambassador to be Assistant Secretary of State for NEA. Once out of government, he founded and is heading the Saban Center at the Brookings Institute. Although his work as ambassador and assistant secretary was after my time in government, I gained respect for the job that Martin did in both positions, and I have shared my more positive views with both Americans and Arabs.]

*Q: Back to the Iraq thing. One of the things that later became quite well known was that we were sharing satellite pictures with the Iraqis, which from a military point of view... I mean, it was one of the great toys that we had. It was also extremely useful. Was this anything that was going on that you were aware of?*

MACK: No, not that I was aware of. I think the intelligence sharing started after I left. I knew the CIA had tried to a liaison relationship with Iraq, which I disapproved of as long as we didn't have diplomatic relations. As far as I was concerned, once the Iraqis were prepared to have diplomatic relations, there was no reason we shouldn't have and active intelligence relationship both through the military attaché out there and through Central Intelligence Agency personnel. If I knew at the time, I don't remember the details of what may have developed after we reestablished relations.

*Q: By the time you left we had an ambassador?*

MACK: Yes, although I don't know whether he had been confirmed yet. In effect, we took a page out of the Iraqi's book. We had a capable Interests Section chief, David Newton, who is now our ambassador in Yemen. After Washington considered a qualified alternative candidate, David was given the nod to stay on as ambassador. He remained in Baghdad throughout the end of the Iraqi-Iran war, including during the very difficult Iran-gate period. David was an exceptionally good choice for the job. Even before he was an ambassador and had the added access that came with the position, we could see a tremendous improvement in the quality of the political reporting from the U.S. Interests Section.

I believe I was gone by the time David was confirmed, so I was less aware of how well he handled the high level relationships with the Iraqi government after he became ambassador. From what I heard indirectly, however, he did well.

*Q: You left the job when?*

MACK: In the summer of '85.

*Q: Where did you go then.*

MACK: I had a year at the Senior Seminar.

*Q: When you left the job how did you feel about whither the Middle East?*

MACK: I felt very discouraged about our failure to even find a kind of preliminary resolution of the Lebanon issue. Because I had invested a lot of time and effort into that. I had been half convinced by Phil Habib and George Shultz of the wisdom of our trying to be the main actor in Lebanon. But when that didn't work, I certainly embraced the idea of trying to have an indirect Syrian-Israeli entente from which Lebanon would benefit. In the end, that didn't work either. I had placed a lot of hope in getting the peace process underway, mostly because I thought that Yasser Arafat would take the plunge. During the course of my three years, I think I went from optimism about Arafat to total contempt. I could not have believed at that point that he would evolve in the way he has evolved in recent years. By the middle of 1985, I had very little use for Arafat. I thought we had done everything we could to get him into the peace process, and he was beyond hope.

Despite serving in Baghdad and having Iraqi friends, I did not have a lot of personal feeling invested in the outcome of the Iraq-Iran war. I did wish that terrible war would end sooner rather than later on terms that would leave Iraq intact. It was in our strategic interest that Iran not be able to overrun Iraq. Iraq wanted to stop the war after a few years, after its early victories had been reversed and Iraq's very existence as an independent nation seemed at risk. The U.S. supported the U.N. Security Council resolution calling for an end to the war, which Iran resisted for many years.

In the earlier discussion about the U.S. tilt to Iraq in its war with Iran, I forgot to mention the support and enthusiasm of my office for the so-called Operation Staunch. This was the effort to prevent countries with which we had influence from sending weapons or military spare parts to Iran. We also sent a number of Americans or residents in the U.S. to jail for violation of the embargo on arms to Iran. Unlike the Iraqi situation, the U.S. had been a major military supplier to Iran during the time of the Shah, so there were Iranian aspirations for more U.S. arms for their inventory and Iranian needs for U.S. spare parts. Iraq did not have a similar need for arms supplies from the U.S. Although we weren't a provider of weapons to Iraq, it's also true that we didn't apply pressure to other countries that were supplying weapons, outside of the suppliers of chemical pre-cursors where we did make efforts, for example with the German government. We certainly made no apologies for the fact that Operation Staunch was one-sided. I think it was the right thing to do to tilt in the sense that we made great diplomatic and political efforts, often using our intelligence capabilities, to persuade governments to stop arms relationships with Iran. I think that was an important contribution to the eventual resolution of the war.

*Q: I forgot to ask about Iraq, what was the role of the Soviet Union as we were seeing it then? Was this a concern to us?*

MACK: The Soviets had played both sides in the Iran-Iraq war. They were an arms supplier to both Iraq and Iran. One of the reasons why I felt it was important for us to restore relationships in Baghdad was that we were leaving the field open to the Soviets. Despite what would seem to be their handicaps in many ways, it appeared that the Soviets might emerge as the power broker with significant positions in both Iraq and Iran. This would give the Soviets the ability to threaten vital U.S. national interests in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula. In the 1980s, these kinds of cold war strategic calculations were never far from the minds of U.S. policy makers.

**JAMES A. PLACKE**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Bureau**  
**Washington, DC (1982-1985)**

*Mr. Placke was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at the University of Nebraska. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. An Arabic Language Officer and Economic specialist, Mr. Placke was posted to Baghdad, Frankfurt, Kuwait, Tripoli, Ottawa and in Jeddah, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. Placke dealt primarily with Near East affairs. From 1982 to 1985 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East. Mr. Placke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: In '82 you left and came back to Washington, is that right?*

PLACKE: Right. Came back to be Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA. In those days there were four deputies and each of them got a war. My war was the Iran and Iraq War. Things had evolved since the war began in September of 1980 when I was in Saudi Arabia from where I had

a view from sort of nearby, but not any direct involvement. Now it became much more of a direct concern.

We had a briefing every morning by INR and the two INR briefers who brought me up to date on what had happened were there when I got to the office. The Agency, NSA, and others also paid the war a lot of attention.. Then I kind of became the manager, was in fact the manager of the American policy dimension of that war. Well, one of the little sidelights is Larry Eagleburger who has been undersecretary for political affairs called Nick Veliotis who was the Assistant Secretary for Near East affairs at the time and Nick took me along to the meeting and a couple of other people and said, “Look, we’ve got to think of a way to manage this activity better. It’s becoming a threat to our regional security interests”, which it was. The policy on both sides was beginning to attack each other’s oil shipments in the Gulf and it was becoming more and more of a headache. The Iraqis were using, Mirage F-1s and missiles. The Iranians didn’t have anything comparable to that so they were tending to go at it with small gunboats and mines and that sort of thing, but it was becoming a real hazard. Shipping rates were going up because of much higher insurance rates and generally making everybody uncomfortable, not least of whom were the Saudis. So, Larry said, “Look, we’ve got to figure out a way to get a handle on it, at least the Iranian dimension of this. Isn’t there something we can do to starve the Iranian military machine?” Out of that meeting was born the staunching operation, which became known in the press, in the U.S. press and I think I guess internationally as well, became known as Operation Staunch. It came from some press guidance I had written after the meeting talking about staunching the flow of arms into Iran, which then became the fairly significant U.S. policy initiative. We hammered on everybody. We hammered on the Europeans. We hammered on the Brazilians, anybody that was in the arms business with the Iranians. We sustained it; it was a very concentrated and sustained effort that ultimately had some effect.

Rafsanjani, during the time he was president after the war was over, on one occasion in a speech said that the main reason that they ultimately had to make a truce with Iraq and could not prevail in the war was because they couldn’t get arms. The policy, which I would say Larry Eagleburger who is really the author, ultimately I think filled its purpose. Well, just carrying out that activity, took up a lot of our time. As always NEA was staffed with extremely good officers and had good support in trying to get that done. I had, I was out of that position by the time it happened, but a turning point really in our whole policy toward the Gulf came when Kuwaiti shipping particularly became a target of the Iranians and the Kuwaitis did what was called reflagging and that is registering their maritime particularly their oil carriers as U.S. flagged vessels and thereby eligible for U.S. naval protection. That was kind of the beginnings of the Fifth Fleet in the Gulf. My contribution in the same sense was to put forward the argument that it was pretty clear that Iran was a much greater threat to our interests than Iraq and that within limits we had a parallel set of interests, not identical by any means, but a parallel set of interests with Iraq in the region because they were the military barrier to expansion of Iranian revolutionary ideology and at that time. Ayatollah Khomeini was very much intent upon spreading by force if necessary the Iranian revolution as an Islamic revolution. The Iraqis being a secular society were opposed to it and also because it would cost them their country.

The Iraqis in the summer of 1983 sent a new head of their interests section to Washington  
[Editor’s Note: Reference is probably to Nizar Hamdoon, who replaced Zuhair al-Omar as head

of the Iraqi Interest Section sometime in second half of 1983], with whom I got well acquainted. He came here with a knowledge of English, but not fluent, but within six months was going toe to toe with Ted Koppel on ABC News' Nightline to give you some idea of his dedication as well as his ability. I would say one of the best, if not the best diplomats that I've met in my entire career, very good. Well, to make what would be an indefinitely long story a little bit shorter, it became accepted in Washington that we had a degree of parallel interest with Iraq and we ought to try to escalate and normalize our relationship and that was something that the Iraqis were interested in. Saddam Hussein in those days was making some of the right noises. He gave a speech that was very prominent at the time about the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and changed the Iraqi position, which had been absolute rigid rejection. They had been part of what was once called the Arab rejectionist camp which included Syria as well, changed it completely and said, whatever the Palestinians agree to, we will support. It's their issue, it's their interest, they are the ones who primarily have a stake and we will accept whatever they agree to. Well, that was a significant step in the right direction as far as the United States was concerned. It helped a lot. The other thing they did was get rid of Abu-Nidal who was the sort of number one terrorist at the time. They had given him refuge in Baghdad and after the process of normalization was complete and the announcement of full diplomatic relations was made, Secretary Schultz invited Tariq Aziz who was his Iraqi counterpart as foreign minister and also deputy prime minister to lunch at the Department and I was there and had the opportunity to ask [him] why they got rid of Abu-Nidal because that enabled us to take him off the terrorism list which they thought we couldn't have government relations if they were going to be on the terrorist list and they were right and we didn't have any disagreement with that, but doing it was another matter. Getting rid of Abu-Nidal was critical for that, so I asked [him] why they chose to do that expecting that he would say something about creating the right atmosphere between the two sides. His answer was very interesting. He said, "Because we realized that we couldn't completely control him and that he was doing things that weren't necessarily in our interest so we got rid of him."

*Q: How did you go about staunching the flow of arms?*

PLACKE: By publicizing what we knew about the activities of other governments who were supplying arms. Iran was pretty widely regarded at the time as an international bad man. Not only because of the hostage taking, which of course was a major threat to conventional diplomacy anywhere in the world, but the ideology that Ayatollah Khomeini was promoting and trying to export as an Islamic revolution. That was pretty disturbing to certainly the OECD group of countries and I think world widely. So, well other governments in some cases were interested in providing weapons that would be used in the Iran and Iraq War. They didn't publicize it. So, our principal weapon was simply publicity and we would make announcements and fairly regularly talk publicly about things that they wanted to maintain quietly in the background and Dick Fairbanks who has been Ambassador at Large under Secretary Schultz was assigned the task of providing us the diplomatic fire power to go in at senior levels in other government's foreign ministry, prime ministry occasionally, and have a heart to heart talk with them about how we saw our interests and how what they were doing was not consistent with those interests and let them draw their own conclusions as to what the consequences might be. We did a lot of that. On one occasion the British DCM was called in to meet with Dick Fairbanks and the Iranians had bought under the Shah a large number of Centurion tanks from the UK which were one of

the superior tanks of the day, and of course the Shah always bought the best, F-14s from us and Centurion tanks from Britain and so on. The issue was supplying tank engines as spare engines or replacement engines for the existing inventory of tanks that had been sold to the Iranians. We had this bizarre conversation where his brief was to persuade us that a Centurion tank engine had no lethal properties about it unless you happened to drop it on your foot. Apart from that it wasn't going to do anybody any harm. So, we pretended that we understood this and he pretended that you know, he had persuaded the American government that it was too dumb to recognize that a tank needed an engine in order to do anything, but the deal was, okay, we recognize that we can't prevent you from selling these engines. Their argument was this is a preexisting contract. We have an obligation to fulfill this contract and also their contractor happened to be important and going to make a lot of money out of it, but that would be the end. Once that contract was fulfilled they'd cut it off altogether, which they did. So, you know, we were doing those kinds of things with a lot of different countries.

We approached the Portuguese on a couple of occasions. The Portuguese were selling large caliber artillery to the Iranians and on Dick's maybe second trip to Lisbon - he would go over to Europe periodically, go around to all the capitals and give them our latest version of the story. In Lisbon, I think it was the second time around, they finally said, "Ambassador Fairbanks, we must be candid with you. We're going to continue to sell the Iranians artillery because it is very important to us commercially." At least it was candid.

*Q: Did we in a way retaliate to a certain extent by making it, in other words?*

PLACKE: We didn't threaten anybody with sanctions or anything.

*Q: No, but I mean would we have somebody call in Seymour Hirsch of the New York Times or something like that?*

PLACKE: We'd just do it in the regular Department briefing. I usually wrote the press guidance myself.

*Q: You left that job when?*

PLACKE: I left it in 1985. During this tour there were a lot of other interesting things that happened. The first Saudi astronaut was launched. The relationship with Saudi Arabia was always a subject of great interest and concern. Prince Bandar who is to this day the Saudi ambassador in Washington and has been the military attaché. I knew Bandar in Saudi Arabia when I was DCM and just keeping track of the Saudis, keeping track of the Iraqis, keeping track of the Iranians, that was pretty much of a full time job.

**PARKER W. BORG**  
**Office of Counter Terrorism**  
**Washington, DC (1984-1986)**



*Ambassador Borg was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College and Cornell University. In 1965, after a tour with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During his career he served in Vietnam and Zaire, and in the State Department in senior positions concerning Vietnam, West Africa and Counter Terrorism. He served as US Ambassador to Mali (1981-1984) and to Iceland from 1993 to 1996. Ambassador Borg was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: The war with Iraq was going on at this time.*

BORG: No, the war with Iraq had ended.

*Q: No, the war with Iraq didn't end until 1989, because it was '90, just after the war, that...*

BORG: No, no, the war with Iraq hadn't begun. The Iran-Iraq war had not begun when we were doing this. The Iran-Iraq war began in maybe '87 or '88.

*Q: It was a long war, about seven years, I thought.*

BORG: I'll have to check this out. But Iran was interested in American equipment, spare parts for the planes that they had, and if we could provide these things, then perhaps they'd be helpful in getting the Hezbollah to release the hostages, and he thought they'd be willing to pay for this as well. What he didn't tell me was what he was going to do with the money that they were paying. He explained this story of how they were going to provide the Iranians with some of the military equipment that they needed. I went back and, after briefing Bob about this, I went and talked with the people in the Executive Secretariat, Ken Quinn specifically, and told him, "Here's what the National Security Council is doing right now on Iran." I told Ollie also that I really didn't think this was the best way to go about this because there was a ban on selling weapons to Iran and that we would get in trouble. Ollie made one of his statements - he made this statement more than once - "You know, at some point everybody will turn against me, but I know I'm doing what's right, so I've got to keep pursuing this. This is the right cause." I said, "I think you're going to have problems with this one." Anyway, I explained to Ken Quinn what had happened, Ken Quinn explained it to somebody, maybe the Secretary directly, and there was a meeting of the National Security Council in December in which the issue of arms to Iran came up, and there was a confrontation between Shultz and Weinberger with Shultz arguing very strongly that we should not be doing this. Again, I provided sort of the specifics about how much, what the quantity was, and it wasn't just a few submachine guns; it was a lot of stuff that they were talking about sending over.

*Q: TON missiles and...*

BORG: Yes, all that sort of stuff. So Shultz argued against it. Oliver called me after the meeting and said, "Well, I want to assure you that this is not going ahead. The National Security Council decided that they're not going to provide arms to the Iranians, and we're not going to be doing this." So we then thought, well, we've prevailed. Little did we realize at the time - this didn't

come out for another year or so - that they cut Shultz out of the subsequent meetings, and they went right ahead with their plans for arms for Iran with Weinberger. Shultz was not involved in the subsequent meetings. This came out in the Iran Contra discussions subsequently. Again, we knew what Ollie was doing in providing arms to Iran, but we didn't know the other side of it. We knew that he also had the account for dealing with the Contras, but we didn't know that he was using the money that he got from the Iranians to fund the Contras, so when all of the scandal broke about Oliver North, all of us in the State Department were essentially protected because Ollie hadn't shared the interconnection between his two accounts with any of us. The people in ARA - who was running it at the time? he's back again, Eliot Abrams - probably knew what he was doing with the Contras, but he didn't know where the money was coming from. I guess I can fill in details of things I might have forgotten when I get the written transcript.

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*Q: In '86 to '87 where did we see the threat?*

BORG: Again, as I had been working in '84 to '86, the threat that had evolved at that time was the state support for terrorism, the terrorism that came particularly from Libya, from Syria, from Iran. Surprisingly, there was little talk about Iraq at the time although it was known even then that, I believe, Abu Nidal and other terrorists had sought refuge there, but Iraq was not part of the big picture.

**DAVID G. NEWTON**  
**Ambassador**  
**Iraq (1984-1988)**

*Ambassador Newton was raised in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard University and the University of Michigan. An Arabic speaking Middle East Specialist, he served both in Washington and abroad in positions dealing with Middle Eastern matters. His overseas postings include Yemen (three times), Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iraq. From 1984 to 1988 he served as US Ambassador to Iraq and from 1994 to 1997 as US Ambassador to Yemen. A graduate of the National War College, he was also assigned there as Deputy International Affairs Advisor, and in 1997 he was Special Envoy to Iraq. Following retirement, Ambassador Newton joined Radio Free Europe in Prague. Ambassador Newton was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.*

*Q: Well, in the region I would think during this period that there could have been sort of a split personality. One, the fear of Iraq because it has Saddam Hussein, a very large army. At the same time you have Iran with Khomeini spreading his thing. I mean, how did they, I mean were they taking any side, tactical sides at the time or—*

NEWTON: Well, the Saudis were in the first year of the war gave like the other Gulf states they gave Iraq quite a bit of money because they were afraid, but of course that, it was expensive and

after a year or so their contribution was reduced. I mean, basically they were, at this point I think, they were more afraid of Iran. But they were trying to deal with the Iranians and to maintain some distance from the Iraqis, but they didn't want the Iraqis to lose either. So they live in a dangerous neighborhood.

*Q: Well, at any point was it implicit or discussed at all about what would happen if in the future either Iran or Iraq got so powerful that we might, they would look to the United States to introduce forces?*

NEWTON: Oh they looked, they certainly looked to the United States to protect them. In extremis they certainly would've looked to that. Of course they did--. When Kuwait was overthrown, they did reluctantly agree. There were of course as you know differences of opinion. The king, King Fahd was less reluctant to have a visible American connection than crown prince, now King Abdullah. Abdullah was not anti-American at all. But he was perhaps in balance a bit more responsive to Arab opinion and so forth and a bit more nervous of the high visibility of the U.S. connection. But certainly in extremis they always looked on us to protect them. Of course we had a great stake in the country and—

*Q: Was anything playing out down in Yemen, I mean on the Saudi side at all or at that time?*

NEWTON: No, not very much. The Saudis, at that point not very much the Saudis did not like the Yemeni president at the time or the current one at that time they were pretty hostile and generally just rather dismissive of the Yemenis. But I don't think they, it wasn't a great deal of focus on Yemen at that point.

*Q: How about—*

NEWTON: I should correct though and say, let me see when it was, at that, it was later that the Arab Cooperation Council came into existence. That disturbed them. That was, I guess that, trying to think. My timing is getting a little off. But the Arab Cooperation Council pre-dated the Gulf War. Of course it was, this was later. It was Iraq arranging Jordan, Yemen and I've forgotten one other country joining in kind of a union or something like modeled after the Gulf Cooperation Council. They didn't, they did not like Yemen's ties to Iraq, which were generally were pretty good.

*Q: What about Egypt and Saudi Arabia at the time?*

NEWTON: Reasonably good relations, I think. Yeah, by this, the Egyptian government was moderate. They were not any real issues.

*Q: Did they still have quite a few Egyptian doctors, professional people and all there in that or—*

NEWTON: Yes, yes, they did. Of course on the religious side they took people from the Muslim Brotherhood, but they also had doctors and they were, as their economy with oil, when oil reached a low point, they tended to go down market. So then they would go more for Egyptians and Pakistanis who cost less.

*Q: That's the market forces at work, I guess.*

NEWTON: Well, I've seen it. I saw that when I was there. I mean, they might get a Brit to replace an American who would be excellent but would be cheaper, or they begin to get more and more unaccompanied males without families to save money or get Filipinos who are often well-educated and didn't cost much. Indians and so forth. But also little by little they were training their own people at least in some fields.

*Q: Well, were you noticing this? I mean one of the things, I go back to the '50s, but Saudis who say went to United States to get medical training would come back and open pharmaceutical companies and immediately go into business and not practice medicine. In other words were the Saudis entering the professions?*

NEWTON: Yes, they had for example some very good Saudi lawyers. Doctors, even in the '70s I remember we had an ophthalmologist in Jeddah who was very good. I think the thing you really worried about more was the quality of hospitals and so forth. Nursing care was poor. Sometimes the lab results were questionable but also had to worry about standards. Did people really keep the standards? We, very close to our embassy in Jeddah, which we then moved subsequently moved in '84 to Riyadh, was this very large surgical hospital, did a lot of cardiac bypasses and so forth and was later evaluated and found out it had a huge death rate. I think because of the lack of insistence on absolutely the top standards. But these people were well-educated. But the Saudis, I mean, the rich Saudis they would continue to go the Cleveland Clinic. I remember the mayor of Jeddah very proudly holding a reception for ambassadors and senior diplomats to, we went of course because it was in honor of Dr. DeBakey. He'd done his quadruple bypass, and I guess different countries have the premier disease. I always joke that if you wanted to really be considered a senior Saudi, you had to have a quadruple bypass. Because what happened of course is the Saudis began to eat every day what they used to eat once a month or twice a month and that is camel or sheep on rice, doused with the fat of the animal. They also got many of them got very big and fat, and we saw that with King Fahd, Prince Sultan and others. They really put on huge amounts of weight, and they ate a very unhealthy diet.

*Q: Did you have to go to lots of, I used to, in Saudi, in Dhahran we used to go out to the sheep dip—*

NEWTON: The military used to call these things goat crabs. No, you could see. They'd come in and take the animal fat and just spread it all over.

*Q: Ghee, but I guess not.*

NEWTON: Well, I think it was—they had ghee or also—

*Q: Maybe not ghee but just animal fat.*

NEWTON: The fat from the animal.

*Q: Not good. Well, then by '84 whither?*

NEWTON: Well, by '84, I had my eye on Baghdad for a couple of years. I had always wanted to go there. I got, way back when I got out of language school and went to Yemen, I was looking hoping to go to Iraq as my second choice. But the war intervened as my second tour as an Arabist. I'd been to Iraq on my field trip from Beirut from the language school. As it happened, it worked out because Bill Eagleton extended for a year and that put it right in my window, and so maybe I was the only one who applied. I don't know, but because Baghdad was really the Camp Swampy of NEA believe me. I went there on a visit a month or two ahead of time, stayed with Bill, and I was really shocked. The post was, and I don't blame him. The post, I've never seen a post poorly supported. I mean, here's the place where you couldn't get anything. Everything was, you couldn't get anything repaired because all the people had gone off into the Army. You didn't have a single spare refrigerator, stove, washing machine, air conditioner, at the post at all. The place was, what they'd done is the post was slowly growing. It was then up to sixteen. You'd get a couple of, they'd ordered a couple of sets of furniture a year, but then they'd get two new people, and they'd give the furniture to the two new people. They'd never replace anything. A lot of furniture they resurrected from the 1967 embassy including the residence. I tell the story that Bill was very good. He realized that we were expanding and we'd need a better residence. So he took over this very nice but very rundown house that belonged to Total, the French oil company. I came in, and after I'd been there a few days as chief of mission, and I saw in the back of the living room we had this love seat and sofa and two chairs here. Up against the wall we had a high boy. I said, that looks really strange. "Why are you doing that?" I said to the houseboy. I said, "I'm going off to work." I said, "Put the sofa on the wall and put the love seat on one side and the two chairs on the other side." Which he did and I came back and I discovered why. There was a huge hole in the wall because there'd been an air conditioner in there, and the French had taken out the air conditioner and there wasn't even a board or anything over it. This was June in Baghdad. You looked out, and there was the outside. In fact in the first year, we had five fires on the compound from electrical overheating and shorts including one in the house.

*Q: Well, speaking to the administrative side. Couldn't you get somebody to come out from ARA executive—*

NEWTON: Yeah, we did. We began to get some money, but the difficulty was that nobody had anything. I mean, I was a little bit caught. I needed a place that was representational, but I didn't want to hog all the money and so forth. The other people in the embassy needed a decent--. So what we did first of all in the first two years is we got rid of every single house in the embassy except one which we, the DCM's house which we downgraded to a political officer's house. The housing was terrible, and we really worked on getting furniture and everything. But for the house, for the residence for example, we were still working on it four years because I was trying to do it slowly. It was not only money, but we only had so many workmen and things like that. It would've been very bad if we had monopolized all the assets of the embassy. So we tried piece by piece to build it up, and instead of throwing things away and getting new things, we insisted on reupholstering things and refinishing things and things like that. I got some help from Kuwait, the embassy in Kuwait where they could get things done.

*Q: Well, you were there from '84—*

NEWTON: Four to, summer of '84 to the summer of '88.

*Q: That's a long tour.*

NEWTON: Yeah, it's funny. I came in '84 as principal officer and chief of mission. In November Tariq Aziz came to the United States. At that time I was told I was the department's nominee to be ambassador. That whole process took about seven or eight months. So it wasn't until July that I actually was sworn in, July of '85. So a year or so later, I said to Dick Murphy, I said, "You know, I'm starting my third year, but it's only my second year as ambassador. So don't I get to stay an extra year." He said, "No I can't do that. We have to rotate people. We have to give people a chance."

So then I was supposed to leave in '87, and I was supposed to exchange jobs with April Glaspie. April was really wound up in Lebanon. She was the action officer. That's the job I was going to take from her. She kept, so she kept delaying her departure and I kept getting extended one or two months at a time. I was eventually extended for a whole year, which was very disconcerting in a way, because it's very hard to run an embassy when you think, well, I'm leaving in two months. This is an issue I should leave for my successor. Then six months later you said, dammit I should've dealt with that issue four months ago. But I thought I was leaving. It did have one advantage, and that is my daughter was in her last year of boarding school. So that helped me financially, but it began to get rather unpleasant I mean because then in late '86 came the first news of Irangate.

The first news was so bizarre it just had to be true. You remember the thing about the cake and in the form of a cross and a Bible and everything. Well, it was amateur hour at the NSC (National Security Council) and headed by a man who was really carried away with his own what he thought was his own smarts.

*Q: Talking about Ollie North.*

NEWTON: Yeah, and made a terrible mess.

*Q: Well, let's talk about when you arrived there. What, first place while you were there, what was the war situation? How did it, when you first arrived how did you view the war at that point?*

NEWTON: Well, by that time the war was going very badly for the Iraqis. The first year they had attacked or they had basically destroyed the Iranian army, and their expectation was that Khomeini's regime would collapse. They didn't, they got (\_\_\_\_\_), but they couldn't get Abadan. So instead of course they turned this into a national struggle—

*Q: The Iranians did.*

NEWTON: Yeah, I mean the result of the Iraqi attack was to make this a national issue for the Iranians, and people rallied to the cause of course. The Iraqis didn't have a plan B. So they just hunkered down, and the Iranians built up and eventually drove them back across the border

taking a lot of prisoners. Then in the wintertime in the offensive, they would attack, and the Iraqis would counterattack and get back most but not all the territories. So little, they were being chewed up and the Iraqis had no strategic depth because of all their people live in the eastern half of the country. It was getting pretty tricky, and we were seriously concerned that it would be a mistake on, the Iraqis would make some kind of a mistake or something unpredictable happens in war and things would go to pieces. The Iraqis who were outnumbered substantially had better equipment, but something happened they might not get a second chance to try to retrieve the situation.

Morale among Iraqis was very bad and got worse all the time for two reasons. Number one, everybody was losing family members, were killed or wounded in the war. Number two, the living standard was going straight down. The Iraqi dinar was diving. When I arrived, it was officially \$3.22. When I arrived, I think the black market value was about a dollar. When I left, it was about 40 cents. So people were not getting pay raises or anything. So their living standard was going down. Iraqis were just getting, they didn't want to quit. They didn't want to lose this war to the Iranians. But they were getting terribly weary. It seemed like a war without end.

*Q: Well, had the Battle of the Cities started, the shooting of Scuds at each other?*

NEWTON: Yeah, there was by that, no, by that point not yet. It came later and got much more intense toward the end. I think maybe '85 or '86 the Scuds began to come in but only one a week or something like that. As I remember later it got sometimes several a day. They were very inaccurate.

*Q: But that doesn't make you feel any better.*

NEWTON: No. Not, yeah. Not at all. Mostly they didn't do a lot of damage, but occasionally one would really do something horrible. For the people in the embassy it was very hard because as I say the living conditions weren't great. The working conditions in the post were very poor. Until about the last year we were using one-time tapes. We had a machine that belonged in a museum. I remember we, somebody got carried away that the non-aligned summit, which was supposed to be happening in Baghdad, that happened in Baghdad was transferred to New Delhi, and somebody got carried away in New Delhi and sent the final communiqué out by cable. It was something like twenty-five pages. Took us a whole day to get the message. It tied us up for an entire day. So things were hard.

Also things were very expensive. When I came the new people were stuck in hotels because we had no guest quarters. We'd pay the hotel bill, but you know breakfast, this is 1984 breakfast cost them ten dollars because of the exchange rate, and the temporary lodging allowance didn't come close to covering. We got a little bit extra but you had to get some pretty dedicated people, and it was, we also didn't get a lot of volunteers for Baghdad as you can imagine.

*Q: Did you have family?*

NEWTON: Yes, we did. Yeah, yeah. But we didn't have a suitable school so we didn't have very many children.

*Q: Well, then okay, you're there for what four years.*

NEWTON: Four years.

*Q: Four years. What were you doing? I mean, on the first place, did you have any relations with Saddam Hussein?*

NEWTON: Well, what we were doing, when the Iraqis said when we reestablished relations, they were very kind of formal about it. They said, now we can do all kinds of things we couldn't do before when we didn't have relations. We began working on the economic and commercial side. We had already started and expanded our commodity credit corporation program. That amounted at its peak to a billion dollars a year. We did manage to get some short-term credits from the XM (export import) Bank. Of course we were trying to develop business. I managed to get one fertilizer, and it was a fertilizer plant, contract, the main contract for that by saying that look you need to send American business a signal that you want them. So you should give us the contract.

We started, we had a very active USIS program under difficult circumstances. We reestablished university and university relations between University of Texas and Mosul for example. We began sending some international visitors. That didn't always work so well. I remember the, I think it was the economic officer went over their, what was it--. Their scientific research institute was interested in visiting the states. I had him go over there to talk to them and he came back and said they want to go to Lawrence Livermore. They wanted to go to all the nuclear energy labs. I said, "Don't go back. Forget about that one." So there was a lot going on and of course we were even trying to get a piece of land in the new diplomatic quarter to have a proper embassy. There was plenty to do and of course and war reporting. We were trying to keep track of what was going on in the war. So there was plenty going on.

*Q: Well, what about, did you, what, were we seeing Saddam Hussein as the monster?*

NEWTON: Yeah—

*Q: He was portrayed.*

NEWTON: Well, we knew who Saddam was. We knew what kind of a person he was. People like that sometimes change their behavior at least to some degree. I don't mean to make comparisons, but Menachem Begin in his youth was viewed as a terrorist. Eventually he won the Nobel Peace prize. Ariel Sharon by some standards committed war crimes is now considered the great man of peace in Israel. There are people who do change. I don't think any of us ever thought that Saddam was ever going to be a nice man or a democrat or anything like that. But I mean my longer term requirement was the do everything that we could to help within legal limits to make sure the Iraqis didn't lose the war. The longer term aim we had was to see Saddam's government was talking about when they resumed relations, they used the terms they said they were now mature, responsible and realistic. They never said moderate. The way I put it is that they wanted to be respectable. Saddam gave every sign that he wanted to be viewed as a



statesman and wanted to be seen as a respectable statesman. So there was a hope that he would at least ease up a little on his own population and not be as repressive and that he might, and he said he was going to stop trying to subvert his neighbors. I got quoted, it was kind of funny. You saw probably saw the book the Arabist, Kauffman.

*Q: I, Robert Kaplan.*

NEWTON: Kaplan, Robert Kaplan. He asked, I was over at the National War College, and he interviewed me, and he asked me what people thought might happen after the war with Iran. I said, "Nobody ever expected Saddam to permit the country to become a democracy. But the hope was that the level of repression in Iraq would be reduced to the level of repression in Syria, that the country would be," and that's all the Iraqis really hoped for. They, just make their life a little easier. Let them travel again and give them a little more money. Just not have to live in fear all the time from the secret police. That's all, they would've been quite satisfied with that. There was no prospect of any regime change of course. So Saddam was firmly in charge. So the only thing realistic you could look at was maybe you could encourage him along this line to be more respectable, to act more respectably, and therefore to make life a little easier for his people.

*Q: Was what were our military, do we have a military attaché there?*

NEWTON: Yeah, we had a defense attaché and, but of course he was very much restricted. One of them got PNGed ("persona non grata", unacceptable person), something very foolish.

*Q: What happened?*

NEWTON: He went, he wasn't PN, well, he went down on a food run. I mean as well all did—to Kuwait and decided somehow, he'd been in the Soviet Union before. He knew how you dealt with the Soviets. He wanted to, there was a question whether the, whether the Iraqis were getting I think MiG (Mikoyan and Gurevich) 25s, and they were getting military equipment through Kuwait. So he decided, he heard there as a shipment in the port. He decided, and that would move out. So he went out at three o'clock in the morning was sitting on one of the ring roads in Kuwait in his Jeep, four-wheel drive Jeep by the side of the road. Convoy came by and being led by Kuwaiti military police. They stopped and asked who he was, and he said who he was. They asked him what he was doing. He said, "Well, I wanted to take a look at the convoy." This was a standard procedure I guess in the Soviet Union. The problem was Kuwait did not allow military attachés. He wasn't accredited or anything. So they put him in the cooler for a couple of days and made him sleep on the floor and so forth. He got back to Iraq, and I was just waiting for the other shoe to drop. He didn't think it was going to happen, but I knew it was. Of course the Kuwaitis told the Iraqis and the Iraqis PNGed him. They did it in a friendly way, but they just said he has to leave in 48 hours. But we were kept very much at arm's length by the state of fear. We did after the Stark affair—

*Q: Were you there during the Stark?*

NEWTON: Yeah, yeah.

*Q: You might explain what the Stark affair.*

NEWTON: Yeah, it was the U.S. destroyer, which was hit by two French Exocet missiles fired by an Iraqi pilot flying in a Mirage. After that we became very, I'll talk about this a little more, but we became very much in what was called deconfliction. In other words make sure nothing like this could ever happen again. We were then allowed to send up an air force officer who was able to deal on a regular basis with the air force ministry in working out procedures to ensure that something like that, which we felt was a mistake wouldn't happen again. It was very hard to, you couldn't get near the war zone. The military attachés were watched very carefully.

*Q: The story was that we were supplying the Iraqis with photos. Did you get involved in that?*

NEWTON: Well, I think no one is every officially said we were. Although the Iraqis have said this repeatedly. You also to understand that of course speaking just in theoretically that the intelligence community does not give out satellite photos. They might be willing to give out information obtained from satellite photos but not to give out photos themselves. But we did have a lot of contacts with the Iraqis, and as a matter of fact, when the Iranians took Faw, Taha Yassin Ramadan who was the vice president who was not a friend of ours, said--no, he was deputy prime minister, but he was number two—

*Q: This is Tariq Aziz.*

NEWTON: No, this is Taha Yassin Ramadan who is number two in the government. Said the Americans deliberately misled us. They told us the attack was going to take place around Basra. Well, I remember the attack at the time, and in fact the main Iranian attack was against Basra. There were secondary attacks north and south. The secondary attack on Faw caught the, what do you call, the national guard troops, these reservists who'd been pressed back into service. It was the fog or they were asleep at night or they weren't very watchful, and once the Iranians got this bridgehead, they then switched their attack and went their way. You could tell general, from the build up because the Iranians only had a limited amount of artillery. So they would always mass their artillery against the main attack. They had massed their artillery against Basra. But then they switched when they had this opportunity to exploit it. But I used to think of Faw, Faw was the appendix of Iraq because it was the little tip on the end. But it didn't have any function and didn't lead anywhere. I mean, the Iranians were on the other side of Faw, but they couldn't go anywhere. They were blocked.

*Q: Well, what, how did the Iran-Contra affair play out? There you are and we're supplying equipment to the Iranians while in order to help our people in Lebanon.*

NEWTON: Yeah, I mean as you remember the case I'm sure you do. These naïve idiots were trading arms for hostages, and they did get a couple of hostages, and then the hostage takers grabbed a couple more, a couple more. So they were really terminally naïve in this. Well, it was a terrible shock to the Iraqis, and I've said this to many people. I would never use the word trust with the Iraqis. The Iraqis didn't trust anyone, but they had decided that our behavior was predictable. They'd analyzed us, and they knew from their point of view what the good things

were and what the bad things were. But they felt pretty confident they predict how we would behave.

One we had been doing before was Operation Staunch, and that we were working quite hard to cut off weapons to the Iranians. At the higher tech level we were pretty successful on that. With the exception of it was the clear the Israelis were giving spare parts for the Phantoms but couldn't do much about that. But they said, "Restart Staunch," and the other thing was they wanted a resolution in the security council calling for an end to the war, demanding an end to the war. We were really pretty ashamed. So we jumped on that. Out of that came Resolution 598, which Iraq of course immediately accepted. The Iranians didn't want to accept it. Finally only at the very end did they do that. It's the only time to that point that the security council had called for an end of hostilities without having the prior agreement of the two parties. I mean it had done this before in the Arab-Israeli issue, but by that time we had worked out an agreement from both Arabs and Israelis that they would stop. In this case we had no such agreement from the Iranians. So relations resumed, but they were damaged clearly. The intelligence services who had a somewhat more benign view of us before became quite hostile. And of course the people who like Tariq Aziz and others still cooperated, but they had to be a little more careful. Then I must say in the last year or so it was just a whole series of crises. I was saying sort of to myself by the end, "Dear God let me out of here before something else happens," because then you had the Stark and the War of the Cities, Halabja, the at the same time—

*Q: What is Halabja?*

NEWTON: Halabja was the gassing of the Kurds.

*Q: Gassing of the--*

NEWTON: That whole village. The related to the fact was the fact that the Iranians had broken in through Kurdistan. The Iraqis, at a time when there was very a great deal of water coming down the rivers especially the Tigris that ran through Baghdad had to drain two of their dams, their reservoirs so that Baghdad began to sink under water. We had streets sinking and geysers appearing in the streets and so forth. Very serious threat. We came very close to having a major flood in the whole city. So it was just and of course the War of the Cities, which got the Iranians got the worst end of it. But we still got a lot of Scud missiles. In the end I think we had well over a hundred Scud missiles hitting, hitting Baghdad while I was there.

*Q: Well, how about the, what was the role of the Soviets in Iraq?*

NEWTON: Well, the Soviets were of course were the chief arms supplier. They also under the kind of theory that such countries had, they had party-to-party relations with the Baath, although the Baath were by principle anti-Communist. They did have advisors in the country, but the Iraqis would not let them anywhere near their combat units or their training facilities. But they were the chief arms supplier, and I constantly see or read accusations that we supplied the Iraqis with weapons. We didn't supply them with weapons. First of all it was illegal, but I suppose we could've done something like Irangate. But the second thing was they didn't need any of our weapons. They had very good Soviet weapons at a much cheaper price, and the specialized

things they wanted for the tanker war that the Soviets couldn't supply they got from the French who are not neutral in the war. The French sided with the Iraqis. They provided, first they lent the plane and then sold planes, and they sold the missiles used to attack the tankers. There were, I don't know all the details because it happened before I arrived. We sold them some small Hughes helicopters, and I even saw Kim Coughlin's book from Saddam claiming that they were retrofitted with tow missiles. Well, number one these, I'm not an expert on helicopters, but I don't think these small helicopters could be retrofitted into missile firing helicopters. They're too small. Besides the Iraqis had plenty of gunships. Number two, they didn't have any tow missiles. Those are Americans. And we also sold them Bell 214 transport helicopters, which I flew in one. It was a VIP squadron. They were taking people around because it was dangerous and took a long time. They were taking people around the country or taking generals and officers back and forth to the battlefield. But we never, never provided them with any weapons. I seriously doubt that anything, certainly not on my watch, because I would, I was strongly opposed to anyone who ever suggested that provided them with weapons. That's something we didn't need to do.

*Q: Talk about dealing with the government. I mean, did you, could you sit down and talk to Iraqi officials, high officials.*

NEWTON: Yeah, the foreign ministry was one of the most professional. They were senior people, had some very good people. They did have some senior people at the top who were Baathis, I guess the functional equivalent of our political appointees. But the people like Tariq Aziz and Izzat ad-Douri of the senior undersecretary, two senior undersecretaries (\_\_\_\_\_) Khatani who later became a very senior UN Official and was at one point president of the general assembly who died a few years ago. Then (\_\_\_\_\_), the other senior undersecretary really fine people and long time career diplomats who were patriots, who tried to do the best that they can. They were not Ba'athis by any stretch of the imagination. We had good relations with the minister of, minister of economy because we, because of our food sales. We were highly restricted in our contacts. I mean you had to have business with people. Ordinary Iraqis were afraid to be seen with us because they would have to report it to their local Baath party cell and would have to explain the contact, could be risky for them. Nobody wanted to do that. But if we had business, we had no problem with contacts with the officials. The foreign ministry people as I say were very, very good.

*Q: How about Saddam Hussein, was he, did you have any contact with him?*

NEWTON: I was one of the last ambassadors to present credentials to him. He delegated that job down to his meaningless deputy after that. I think I was there with Dick Murphy once. I was there with Judge Clark, William Clark after he left the NSC. I think one other time I don't recall. You know he was very full of himself and spouting his version of wisdom. Not a stupid man by any means, and convinced he was really the father of his country. But he always managed to do most of the talking.

*Q: Did, what was our, the impression that we had of the Iraqi military capability? What were we thinking of, you know, this was an army that may not make it or—*

NEWTON: Well, the Iraqis had some very good generals. General Rashid whose daughter married (\_\_\_\_\_). They were, career generals were always suspect, but Saddam needed them because of the war, and at one point he really intervened in the war after Faw and made such a horrendous mess that he had to get out of trying to run the war. The Iraqis had a pretty good army, and they fought very well against the Iranians. They fought hard in '87, east of Basra to keep the Iranians back because they didn't want these people to take them over. But they were war wearied and tired. There was a certain amount of corruption in the army. The officers were taking bribes to give leaves and things like that. But they were well equipped, and they used a lot of Soviet tactics, but they used them, they used them pretty well. They used hedgehogs, defend. They generally, when there was an Iranian offensive allowed themselves to fall back a certain distance to avoid casualties, and then they would feed in the reserves. And if it got really bad, they'd feed in the republican guard, which was the strategic reserve. Then they generally recovered most of the land, but they wouldn't try to get every last inch because that would probably take unacceptable casualties. They were outnumbered three to one. But they certainly were superior in aircraft, in tanks, in artillery and in the various high tech areas.

*Q: Did, were we able to do anything about looking at what was happening with the Kurds?*

NEWTON: We could get some information about the Kurds, but it was really quite difficult. The problem I used to say in Baghdad it's, something happens. It's like being in the middle of the night in an electrical storm or something. There's suddenly a flash of light, and everything is clear for two or three seconds, and then it goes dark again and you think you've seen what you've seen. Well, you would hear something, but you'd have no way really of confirming it. You'd have to decide really whether it was met the smell test and if it sounded reliable. Different people, we were probably many respects better informed than anyone else. The British were well informed too. The Turks were quite well informed, especially up north. The French, if they would share much were pretty well informed, but it was a complete police state. You'd have to work very hard to get information.

*Q: You're saying, were the French playing quite very much to their own game as you say or—*

NEWTON: Well, the French did not declare neutrality, and they provided aircraft and missiles. They hoped to get access to Iraqi oil. They continued that all through the sanctions regime. They openly sided with the Iraqis. They also, the Iraqis I know had investments, owned some pieces of French armament companies. The French clearly thought they could benefit from the relationship with Saddam after the war.

*Q: Were you there during the quietening of the tankers?*

NEWTON: Yes, uh huh.

*Q: How, did you get a chance to weigh in on the decision to do this or not?*

NEWTON: No. Well, just to say of course this would, was very much something that the Iraqis also wanted. They wanted the tankers protected and, but I mean it wasn't that important to them who protected them. I mean they had no particular problem with the Soviets. But for them the

issue was just to make sure the tankers continued to flow. And of course they continued to attack tankers going to Iran.

*Q: What about, were we looking at or could we look at sort of the Kurds, Sunni, Shia equation within the country?*

NEWTON: This is something of course particularly has come about after this last war that where I'm afraid we have fostered the division of the country because of course the Ba'athis would never tell you who is Shia and who is Sunni. They believed this was attacking their unity. But there wasn't, at least among educated people there wasn't such a division. Although Sunnis tended to be prejudiced down deep against Shia. But they didn't, there was no open discrimination against. The Ba'ath of course was heavily Sunni. In its early days it was much more Shia, but their Shia tended to be more radical. They had been pushed out. It wasn't really featured. I mean, the Kurds were repressed, suppressed and badly mistreated and massacred. Again we would, when we would get reports of killings and massacring, we'd get up to Kurdistan and what, you could see what you could see. You could see villages were gone. You could see the forts that had been built all around the areas so that they could keep the Kurds under control. There was a whole string of them actually built by a Kurd. There were Kurds, Kurdish tribes which were pro-government who were providing the--. The Kurds because it was legal autonomy for Kurdistan under Saddam. They had their own legislative council, their own presidential council. They had their own language. Everything except of course all the police and security people and military were Ba'athis. So they had no freedom at all, but in cultural terms and so forth, they were much freer than in Turkey. So you could see things in Kurdistan, but you couldn't really talk to people very easily. My predecessor spent a lot of time in Kurdistan, but he later wrote a book on Kurdish rugs, which I think was really probably his major purpose for going there.

*Q: Yeah, I was talking to Jimmy Young who was in Oman. At the time I was saying rugs seemed to be the prime preoccupation of our ambassador to Iraq.*

NEWTON: Yeah, it was. It was. He was, he still didn't have relations. He had a small embassy, and he was not allowed to have very much contact. So it wasn't nearly as busy. But Bill spoke Kurdish. He'd been in Tabriz I think at the end of World War Two and had written a book on the Kurdish republic of Mahabad republic. He was very much liked by the Kurds. But a number of Kurdish tribes were pro-government, and they provided these I said, there was autonomy. Well, one of the factors about the autonomy was that the Kurds didn't have to serve in the regular army. They could serve in their own units in the North defending Kurdistan from the Iranians. They were called the [Foresan?], the noble horsemen by the government. They were known by the other Kurds as the [Jash?], the little donkeys. People who didn't like them, but often you'd find that they would fight for the government and the daytime and shoot at the government at night. I went up, I went up to Kurdistan a number of times. I usually get permits without any difficulty and went up to Amadia way up North. The local government didn't want me to go there. But I had a permit, and it was amusing because I'd brought along my economic commercial local whose other job--. He was the desk, the American desk officer for the Iraqi intelligence service, and when the governor tried to discourage me, he flashed his Iraqi intelligence service ID. So the governor backed off. So I got up there, but to get in there I had to

go into a military zone, and the governor, the military commander gave me two truckloads of soldiers, maybe around thirty soldiers to go with me. It's a beautiful area and about every ten minutes I wanted to stop and take a picture. It was just gorgeous. Every time I stopped the thirty soldiers piled out of the truck and formed a perimeter around me.

*Q: What was the role of the Turks while you were there?*

NEWTON: Role of, well we now had the pipeline through Turkey. and it was very important to both countries to keep that pipeline running. The Turks also were beginning to do good business. They were in the process of building the Bakhma Dam, yeah. The Bakhma Dam was on the Greater Zab River, which was one of the biggest river which fed the Tigris. Unlike the Euphrates, the Tigris has a number of rivers coming down from the mountains as it comes down into Iraq. They were building a very large dam there and there were hoping to do quite a lot of business in Iraq, and they were developing good relations with Saddam because they like the fact that Saddam was keeping his Kurds under control politically at least. For them it was a very important country. The first ambassador I was there was a very capable man, went back and became the senior permanent undersecretary in the foreign ministry, became the number two.

*Q: What about Jordan?*

NEWTON: Well, Jordan had very good relations with Iraq. King Hussein thought he was going to be the mentor of Saddam. He'd been around longer. He was very clever in foreign affairs and able. He saw himself as the mentor. But Saddam tended to play him as he wanted, and I remember one time the Jordanians gave a yearly credit to encourage the Iraqis to buy things in Jordan. The Iraqis ran through the credit in about two months. The result is, then they had to clamp down then. The result is when the war came along the invasion of Kuwait and everything, the Jordanians were hurt pretty badly, quite a bit of money owed to them.

*Q: During this time Kuwait was cooperating with Iraq.*

NEWTON: Yeah, warily cooperating with Iraq because they knew that the Ba'athis were not nice people and that they could make a lot of trouble for them. But they were a lot of, a lot of imports into Iraq including military equipment were coming to the port of Kuwait because it was too-- Basra of course was closed because of the, from the early days of the war. Um Qasr is a rather small port with a very narrow entrance and shallow entrance. So Kuwait was very important to them. But they knew that the Iraqis were bullies, and they were afraid something would happen after the war, which it did.

*Q: What about while you were there were you getting delegations, groups from the States coming in to see the elephant and all that?*

NEWTON: Yeah, we got I wouldn't say a huge number. I remember we did get the house armed services committee who is, the chairman what's his name, later became the secretary of defense, Les Aspin. I told people that story. It was rather, I thought rather amusing because we actually remonstrated with the Iraqis quite a bit about their use of chemical weapons. We got absolutely nowhere of course, but the Iraqis were becoming irritated by our demarches, and I don't

remember whether I asked Les Aspin or whether he had instructions or how it came about. But anyway he with his dozen members of the committee raised it with Tariq Aziz, and Tariq Aziz would normally say who us, chemical weapons? What us? This time he said, "Yes, of course we're using chemical weapons." He was irritated. "Yes, yes. Of course we're using them. You have to understand we're fighting these benighted medieval Khomeini types. They want to destroy our country, conquer us, of course we'll use every means at our disposal. Why if we had nuclear weapons we'd use those too." All the jaws around the room fell open at that point. But Tariq Aziz was a little irritated. We didn't get a lot of congressmen and senators. It was still a rather unpleasant country, I suppose. I'm getting ahead of myself but in 1990 I did go back and escort Bob Dole and Allen Simpson and three other senators on a tour of the Middle East, an April tour, and they met Saddam in Mosul. But that got to be quite controversial after.

*Q: Absolutely, yeah. Well, then how did you find morale at your post?*

NEWTON: We worked very hard on morale. Morale I think was pretty good. It was a very tough place. I mean, and I remember when we got there, the two state communicators, both of them refused to come to the residence. We really worked hard entertaining people in the embassy and cajoled them to come and so forth. There were a couple of people who were unhappy. But on the whole I think morale was about as good as we could make it. It was difficult. But we spent a great deal of time, my wife and I, on morale trying to take care of people. We take the new people down to show them around town. I'd lead tours around the city to show them, and whenever I took a lot of trips because I liked to, I'd always try to take a marine along or some of the staff people who wouldn't have a chance to get out, didn't speak Arabic. We really worked at it. But I'd be foolish to say morale was great. We could never make morale great. This country was at war. We had a, we began to get, I remember get a bit of a crime problem, and then when the War of the Cities started we took all the families who had children, we managed to get them placed outside the city in different camps or so forth. Anyone, almost everybody wanted to go. I also told people that if they wanted a transfer, I would support anybody who felt they, it was too much. One communicator did want to leave. His wife had just come back with a new baby. Someone had tried to break into their house, and then the War of the Cities came along. So they got transferred to Muscat. They were non-state people. We really, we knew it was a problem and worked on it very hard. There were a couple of people who were difficult personalities, didn't help the situation.

*Q: Did, who was your DCM?*

NEWTON: The first DCM was Ted Kattouf and then Steve Buck was my second DCM. Two years and two years.

*Q: I'm interviewing Ted right now.*

NEWTON: Oh you are. Yeah, Ted is a fine person. We were a lot together. I knew him a bit in Damascus. Then for personal reasons he left early. But then when I went back, from there I went back to Washington as ARN director. He became back as my deputy. When I left, he became the head of ARN. We've been friends over the years.



*Q: Well, then you left there in '88.*

NEWTON: '88, um hmm.

*Q: Whither?*

NEWTON: Well, whither back to ARN. I was drafted into this job, which I didn't want. I tried to get, in '86 I came back for a COM meeting and Dick Murphy asked to see me and told me he wanted me to switch jobs with April in '87. I remember telling Dick the thought filled me with dread because getting involved with Lebanon again and all of this. I really wanted to change. I was getting burned out. Well, at that point I wasn't, but he, and in fact the very next day I got a message that Bill Harrop was looking for me, and I called him up, and he offered me a job as a team leader with the IG [inspector general]. I said I'd like to do that. That would be fun. I'd see parts of the world I'd never seen. I told Dick Murphy found out. He called Bill Harrop and had the offer withdrawn. So I was trapped, I mean trapped. I didn't want to do it. But Dick Murphy's a friend of mine. I like him, admire him, worked with him, for him, and so I did it. And but I really needed a break. I was really getting burned out, and going through Irangate wasn't much fun and the War of the Cities and the floods. As I've said, I was saying to myself for the last six months, "Dear God let me out of here before some other crisis hit."

*Q: Well, go back to the floods. I'm not quite sure, was this there was so much water coming or—*

NEWTON: Well, it was the year there had been a lot of summer, winter rains. Normally the Iraqis had dams, which could handle all of this. But when the revolutionary guards broke in at the time of Halabja, they were threatening two of the dams. The Iraqis couldn't risk that they would capture the dams and just open them and this wall of water would sweep down. So they began to drain, they drained the dams in a controlled fashion. So the amount of water coming down just got higher and higher. If you look at a map of Baghdad the river coming down like this from the west. Then comes down and turns all the way back up. There's a very small piece at the end with the rivers on both sides, and actually the river at that point was one meter higher than the city, but it had a levee all the way around on both sides. They were adding sandbags and everything. But it was within, it was within about a foot of, I don't think the sandbags would've stopped it. It was within about a foot of the levees, and I know that my house was in the middle in the saucer. The Italian ambassador's house on the other side was outside the levee. He was flooded up to the ceiling of his first floor. It was like New Orleans. In that part of town streets were collapsing and huge geysers were shooting up and so forth. I would go down every day and look at the meter on the bridge to see what it was. I mean, we were completely unprepared. We tried to get sandbags, but there was not nearly enough for the different houses, and fortunately it held and then slowly began to sink. But this is in the middle of the War of the Cities.

*Q: You were doing what?*

NEWTON: In 1988 I had been, well through December I was ambassador in Iraq. I was drafted to become director of Northern Arab States, NEA/ARN. Dick Murphy was the assistant secretary. I was political counselor in Saudi Arabia. We worked very hard through, particularly through much of two years working with the Saudis on trying to get peace for Lebanon. April

Glaspie had been the office director. So he decided we would switch jobs because he wanted someone who had worked on Lebanon. Dick was really trying to bring peace to the country. Actually I tried to get out of the job because I really felt I was getting burned out in Iraq, and I needed a change of pace. But I was offered a job as one of the ambassadors in the inspection corps. But Dick killed it. So I was brought in. Dick unfortunately left after a year and a half, but in any case I did that for two years and—

**HAYWOOD RANKIN**  
**Political Officer**  
**Baghdad (1986-1988)**

*Haywood Rankin was born in the District of Columbia in 1946. He received both his bachelor's degree and law degree from the University of North Carolina in 1968 and 1971, respectively. His career has included positions in Tangier, Algiers, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Muscat, and Abidjan. Haywood Rankin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 24, 1998.*

RANKIN: Direct assignment to Baghdad.

*Q: I almost take it that when you came back they said, okay, you had your fun at Oxford now get back to the real world.*

RANKIN: I really liked those assignments to tell you the truth. Looking back in retrospect, that would have been the moment in my career to leave NEA and to seek a different bureau. The fact that I am now being separated from the Foreign Service without reaching ambassador level is at least in part a function of having chosen extremely difficult and hardship assignments without wider geographical experience. The Department never rewards officers for hardship. I loved being a political officer in the fertile crescent - but you cannot remain a political officer or remain in the fertile crescent for long. Not in our service.

*Q: You were in Iraq from '86 to when?*

RANKIN: It was meant to be a three-year tour because I went as chief of political section. However, I was thrown out of Iraq in November 1988, and so it was only a two and something year assignment.

*Q: Could you describe the situation when you arrived in Iraq in 1986?*

RANKIN: It was the middle of the Iran-Iraq War. Iraq had managed to stave off the Iranians. You recall the history of that incredibly bloody war. Saddam had invaded Iran. Iraq had plunged fairly deep into Khuzestan, the Iranians had turned the Iraqis back and then crushed the Iraqis but had not themselves been able to cross the Shatt al-Arab and press deeply into Iraq. From early on, I suppose '81 until I arrived in '86, there was a grinding World War I-like stalemate. The thinking at that time was that although Iraq had successfully held back the Iranians, Iraq could

still very well be defeated by Iran. By the time I had left in November 1988, it was the Iraqis that had defeated the Iranians, Khomeini had thrown in the towel and given up the war, but when I arrived in the summer of 1986, the perception was quite different. One forgets these things but the perception was that Iraq could be overwhelmed by Iran.

Iraq had run through its resources horribly. This is a country which had had something like 35 billion dollars in reserves and was spending it on a vast scale in 1980: extraordinary palaces to Saddam Hussein, great public buildings, great highways, huge infrastructure expenditures, diversion of the rivers in the south, draining of the swamps, and that sort of thing. By the time that I had arrived, they were at least 35 billion in the red. They had managed to go through at least 70 billion dollars. This is a country which when I arrived had a population of only 14 million people you understand. Kurdistan was never really controlled. There were still problems down in the marshes. People rising in revolt and never really trustworthy down there. There was always the question, will the Shia (who represented a majority of the Iraqi population) remain loyal? These were the sorts of questions that we constantly had to ask ourselves.

I must say it was quite something going from Damascus to Baghdad on direct transfer. I figured that if I could survive the autocratic system in Syria that I wouldn't have any problems in Iraq. Which is true. I survived the autocratic system in Iraq, but there was and I think there is no comparison between the two systems. They are both autocratic but there the similarity stops.

The society in Syria was relatively open; its people were relatively free. They certainly were very open in their private conversations. As a political officer, it was a joy to be in Syria. You could talk to the Christians and Sunnis for hours one-on-one. It was amazing how openly critical of Hafez al-Assad they were. And, yes, the Mukhabarat, the Alawi intelligence services, were everywhere, but you could usually recognize them. They tried to go around in casual clothes but they were always a little too casual. It was something in the way they swaggered you just knew instantly who they were. Syria was not a country in which everybody was spying on everybody. It was not a country of terror. The elite was relatively sophisticated. There was the heavy hand of autocracy and of the centrist socialism. That was sad because one knew that Syria had a lot more dynamism than was allowed to be expressed, but basically it was an open society.

Iraq was a closed society. It was a society of cops and terror and fear, and I was ill-prepared for it when I arrived. I was wrong in my theory that being in Syria would prepare me for Iraq. In the first instance, it is because they are very fundamentally different countries historically. Iraq is an Asiatic country; Syria is a Mediterranean country. Iraq is a closed country with an eternal history of bloodletting. It is a plains country facing the mountains to the north and to the east. Iraqis are suspicious and inward-looking. Syrians are Mediterranean, a trading people, used to traveling and to travelers. They are much more lighthearted. Just a completely different psychology.

But leave all the cultural things aside, the system is totally different. Saddam Hussein had managed to create a reign of terror in a way that I think Hafez al-Assad could never even imagine. To this day it is amazing to me, and mysterious to me, that anyone can achieve an unrelenting reign of terror. I think it has not been achieved all that often, thank goodness: Hitler in Germany, North Korea comes to mind, perhaps China under Mao. But I think the only place in

the Arab world where that has ever succeeded in happening (maybe Libya to a certain extent, but Libya is such a different country) is Iraq.

Some years later when Saddam had invaded Kuwait, and then we launched our quick and successful counterattack and then the war effort was stopped, there was all this talk about letting the Iraqis overthrow Saddam Hussein. At that time I was in Muscat as deputy chief of mission. I was very perplexed because this was an assessment of an Iraq I had not known: the idea that the Iraqis would overthrow Saddam Hussein, even under the duress of having been badly beaten in Kuwait, was completely strange to me! I had been there in '86 to '88 at a time of extraordinary duress in which the Iranians were launching Scud missiles into Baghdad virtually every week. There was an enormous sense of fear of defeat of Iraq. I am here to tell you that there was no thought of the Iraqis rising up to get rid of Saddam Hussein. Ever.

I concluded that if you want to be an absolute dictator, you must do it absolutely, leave no stone unturned, and make it a total full-time job. That is what Saddam Hussein has done. He trusted no one. Ruthless, ruthless in every cell in his body. A killer and somebody who I think would expect anybody that he met to be of the same type. I think it is hard for us as Americans, with the soft life that we lead, to imagine this type of person. Mafia perhaps, a godfather type, that's who he is. He used the techniques that Hafez al-Assad and Qadhafi and others have mastered, of multiple intelligence services, vertical systems that don't talk to each other and that only report directly up line. But he perfected it with a system of neighborhood spying networks and so on.

Saddam is also similar to Hafez al-Assad in coming from a minority. The minority mentality says that if we don't have full control, then not only I will be killed but there will be a blood bath for my entire minority. There are some differences obviously in the minority, but it's a minority mentality which deepens the determination and the will to maintain this type of extraordinarily repressive society.

*Q: How did you operate as a political officer?*

RANKIN: Good question. It was not easy. I did make some contacts and I had some Iraqi friends but I always felt guilty about it because I knew that anybody I talked to would be reported to one of the many secret services. At a moment's notice, people I talked to could disappear and be killed and their family members killed. It was a very heavy responsibility for me.

We had working on our staff a senior political FSN who was a pretty clearly a paid employee of the Iraqi secret services. I had many FSNs working for me over the years, but no one who came so close to admitting he worked for the other side. He actually provided some incredibly good information. Obviously, it was information that this FSN was fed by the secret services, but it was nevertheless useful. There were some other sources like that that I tapped into. Obviously, we had to take what they told us sometimes with a grain of salt and sometimes not, and making this judgment was not easy.

There was of course the diplomatic community and each diplomat had maybe one or two good sources. It was, I have to say, the most satisfying diplomatic community I ever worked in. For some reason everybody who had embassies in Baghdad, and there were a lot who did (even the

Australians and Brazilians had embassies there in Baghdad), tended to send some of their best people. So there were a lot of very bright diplomats in Baghdad, and surprisingly a lot of Arabic speakers. I say this in comparison to other places where I have served where the diplomatic corps was not much to talk about. Circumstances pushed the diplomats very close together because there was real fear. The general fear in the air plus the wave of Scud missiles raining on Baghdad. It was very difficult to get out of the city and travel, so diplomats were thrown together. It was a very intelligent, very energetic and very able diplomatic community.

I knew many good journalists as well. Lots of journalists passed through Iraq. It is amazing how many. The best journalists in the world passed through Baghdad because the Iran-Iraq War was still going on. They got a lot of information and they were always interested in talking to me. I was the point man for the journalists that came through and I must have seen a journalist a day. I am talking about the best there was in the world from Le Monde, to the Times, to the New York Times, whoever, wherever, they came through, and saw me. Very often they were traveling under great danger to places like Kurdistan that I couldn't even get to. Or they had just been in Iran and seen things from the Iranian standpoint.

Finally, I did get out of Baghdad. It was not easy. One had to apply two weeks in advance. I almost always got the authorization. You had to say where you were going. I usually took my family and my small daughters with me. First, because I loved them and wanted them always to be with me. Second, because it tended to help break the ice and make people less suspicious. The Iraqis after all were Arabs and, being Arabs, they were very family-oriented, so it made things look a lot less suspicious. We really did get around the country. Everywhere except the remoter regions of Kurdistan we visited. I was always talking to people and getting a sense of how they were bearing up. We got to most of the great ancient sites, both Sumerian and Akkadian. We were even able to visit Babylon before it was recreated in the image of Saddam Hussein. When I ask my wife today what was our favorite assignment, you'd be surprised to learn that she would probably say Iraq, although it was incredibly onerous.

We were lucky. Our principal officer, who was elevated to ambassador, was David Newton. He was a very gentle man, a very learned man, a very able diplomat. He manfully resisted the Department's inevitable urge to evacuate families and reduce the size of the embassy in the face of the Iranian Scuds. The frame of mind of the State Department today is that we take no risks ever about anything. The dominant questions today are, "What if we are sued? What if the Washington Post asks how could we have had family members?" There is no way in today's Foreign Service we could possibly have had families in Baghdad because during my two years there, we probably had 150 Scuds hit Baghdad. There was never a single foreigner killed and we always knew that the moment any diplomat was killed, we would face evacuation, but it never happened.

It was unpleasant to live in that kind of an environment. And you may well ask how could you have possibly have had your family with you under these conditions? That's the old Foreign Service. In the old Foreign Service you went to dangerous places. You went to difficult places and you had your family with you because you were a family and your family faced these dangers with you. That's the way we did things and if I had to do it again, I would do it again that way.

*Q: What was the sounding you were getting from the diplomats, from your own sources about the Kurds? Did you see the Kurds as being a force to be reckoned with up in northern Iraq or did you see this as something that was under control?*

RANKIN: During the period I was in Iraq, the Kurdish rebellion had two focuses. One was in the far north and one was in the far northeast, one led by the Barzanis and the other by Jalal Talabani. The rebellion was ongoing, but it was very much relegated to pockets. The regime had full control of the principal Kurdish cities Sulaymanian, Arbil, and Dohuk. Some of the outlying Kurdish cities were also under government control.

I remember making a trip with Ambassador Newton toward the end of his time, toward the end of the Iran-Iraq War. We went deep into Barzani terrain to a town that was theoretically under government control, but the escort we had was truly a military escort. Every time we stopped for a pit stop, we had 25 soldiers jump out and form a ring with their guns pointed around us while we did the necessary. This illustrates the kind of government control Iraq had in the far, far north, in the countryside.

You have to understand that the Kurdish rebellion had been waxing and waning for many, many years. It was largely under control but by no means did the government have control of the areas along the Turkish border and the Iranian border and leading up to that tri-junction. One would never have imagined just getting in a car and traveling along there, particularly at night. Certainly the Kurdish cities were under Iraqi control and I was able to visit them and in fact that was my later undoing. When I was PNGed, made persona non grata, in November 1988 it was ostensibly because I had made a trip to the Kurdish cities.

*Q: Was our analysis, yours and talking to people, that the idea of a Kurdish state just didn't seem to be in the cards?*

RANKIN: Yes. I don't think that there have been very many people in the State Department for a great many years who, on knowing the Kurds, and I think I can even speak for Ambassador Eagleton, who probably knew Kurds better than anybody, who felt that it was realistic to talk about a Kurdish state. That's even leaving aside the extraordinarily fierce opposition to such an idea on the part of the states involved, particularly Turkey.

That is because the Kurds themselves are so incredibly badly split. If you were to hand them their independence tomorrow, they would be unable to sustain it. This virtually happened, as you know, after the Gulf war when we took over Iraqi Kurdistan and essentially said to the Iraqi Kurds, "Here you are. Please set up the state." Of course, we didn't say those words and we would never admit to such a thing but that's effectively what happened. They were totally unable to bring it off. That's just with Iraqi Kurdistan. Imagine trying to unite all of Kurdistan. These are mountain people. They have preserved their own language but they have never had any kind of unity. The individual Kurdish leaders have all been incapable of compromise. That has been the story for years, and years, and years.

*Q: That's true of the Caucasian states today.*

RANKIN: Very similar. Absolutely.

*Q: These little states that came out of the Soviet Union are not really getting it together. It depends what valley you are from.*

RANKIN: It depends what valley you are from. The sense of national Kurdishness is just not there. Your individual Kurd will have his own dialect and his own chieftain, and that's about the extent of his sense of allegiance. People like Jim Hoagland romanticize about the Kurds. He must write about the Kurds at least once a month.

*Q: The newspaper columnist?*

RANKIN: Yes, with the Washington Post. He must have had a lovely interview at one time with the old Barzani before he died and has always dreamed of a Kurdistan without, I think, much realistic understanding of Kurdish disunity.

*Q: While you were in Iraq the war was going on and here were two states which we didn't like. The one we didn't like the most was obviously Iran because it had not done us well with taking hostages from our embassy and all. There was supposedly a certain amount of cooperation with Iraq. Sharing limited intelligence with satellite pictures, I don't know. Did you have any feeling that we were slightly tilting towards Iraq or were we just kind of hoping these two people would bloody themselves and continue to do it? How did we feel?*

RANKIN: We were tilting toward Iraq, but without any enthusiasm. Iran seemed to be winning the war. Iran had committed an extraordinary outrage against us by taking our diplomats as hostages. Khomeini was still in power. His whole vocabulary was incredibly anti-American. We in the United States had a deep loathing of the prospect of this clerical regime domination the region, particularly one both as repressive and as anti-American as Khomeini's. An Iraqi defeat seemed all too possible.

There you have it. There you have one of the most terrible foreign dilemmas that we have ever faced. I saw this every day as political officer in Iraq. No one in our embassy had any illusions about Saddam Hussein. It was obvious that he was a horrible dictator and we hated everything about him. But we wanted Iraq to stop an advance which would not stop with Iraq but would keep right on going right through the Gulf once it got going. The only way to stop the Iranians was through Saddam Hussein. Now there was a classic diplomatic dilemma. In the future, if I have the opportunity to be a lecturer on the art of diplomacy, I will cite that as your classic damned if you do and damned if you don't.

There we were. We tried to be realistic. We saw that Iraq must not be defeated, must not be overrun by Khomeini. That much was clear and yet we were obviously not going to be providing Saddam Hussein any of our armaments and materiel or military assistance. The French were there, selling the Mirage and other advanced military equipment. The Soviets at the time were very much there. Iraq was a huge, huge market for Russian armaments. Our arms were not needed. Even though Iraq was going deeper and deeper and deeper into debt, the Russians were

on the hook to continue to provide stuff. The Russians for their part were no more interested in seeing a resurgent Khomeini than were we or the French or anybody else. So, the Soviet Union and the United States were to some extent on the same side in this one. We were not able to benefit commercially from sales of arms, but we certainly saw it as a good thing that somebody was arming Iraq, not Saddam Hussein, but Iraq, against Iran.

You ask about military intelligence. The subsequent condemnations of the Reagan and then Bush policies were founded on both military intelligence and on a substantial agricultural sales program. The answer to both of those is yes, we had very substantial agricultural sales and we had something of a military intelligence link with Iraq. I am not an intelligence officer and I didn't know that much about it but it was there as far as I know.

I never thought intelligence-sharing helped Iraq that much. Looking at it from a political standpoint rather than a military standpoint, we hoped it would give us a little leverage with Saddam Hussein. How much leverage and to what end could we use that leverage? It was the same question with Hafez al-Assad. How do you influence a dictator? In Saddam's case, a horrible dictator. How do you influence him to be somewhat less of a horrible dictator? The theory was if you had a little bit of an intelligence relationship and if you had a substantial food relationship, then you had a little bit of leverage with this horrible man perhaps to make him a little less horrible.

You can say that's totally naive and ridiculous and subsequent events have proved that this was totally naive and ridiculous but how else precisely do you operate, if I may ask, in such a situation? How else can a diplomat operate? Do you not try to have a little bit of leverage even with the most horrible people in the world? Especially if you have to deal with them. And especially if you not only have to deal with them but if you actually need them in your own interests? Our own American interests as we perceived them at the time were not to have a victorious Khomeini. I submit that that was indeed our interest and it made sense to give Iraq a little help.

*Q: The timing I'm not sure but did the Iran-contra business come up when you were there?*

RANKIN: Yes.

*Q: Could you talk about that? Could you explain a little bit what it was as far as what your particular area of the world was and also the repercussions.*

RANKIN: This was all learned by me, and I suspect by my entire embassy, after the fact. It was in the latter days, the second term of the Reagan administration. One learned that the Israelis, despite their fervent condemnation of Khomeini, still maintained certain relations with Iran, a holdover from the days of the Shah. There were Israelis who were close advisors of the NSC and President Reagan.

As I looked at it myself it seemed a bit crude. I am certainly not an Iranian scholar or expert but it seemed a very crude way to have tried to develop a relationship with the Iranians. In Baghdad, we were of course analyzing it from the Iraqi standpoint. I can't say the Iraqis were surprised by



it. Saddam Hussein, as I said, has to be one of the most suspicious people in the world, and I would think that he would expect even his best friends in the world to be hobnobbing with the devil. I think that is the way Saddam Hussein is.

If anything, therefore, the Iraqi reaction to these revelations was much milder than I expected. I think they kind of enjoyed it in a way because it actually made it easier for them to develop a relationship with the U.S. that might be more useful to them. I think that's how they viewed it. That's the sense I got from the high level Iraqis that we dealt with. I am talking about the Nizar Hamdous and Riad al-Qaysis and Tariq Aziz that we dealt with. Those very sophisticated international types that Saddam Hussein used and continues to this day to use as his face to the world, as his link to the outer world. Saddam himself is someone who understands the external world very poorly, but he has been smart enough to take some of these very, very able western-educated types and to use them. They were the types, of course, that we tended to see the most of. We as diplomats, our ambassador, we ourselves. My sense from them was that they saw Iran-Contra as an opportunity to eke more out of us.

*Q: How did you get kicked out?*

RANKIN: Things began to change quickly in the summer of 1988. The Iraqis suddenly had defeated the Iranians on the battlefield and were positioning themselves to recross the Shatt al-Arab. Khomeini sent up the white flag in July of 1988, and the war suddenly was over. About the same time our new ambassador arrived, April Glaspie, and a new deputy chief of mission. It was a small embassy and I was effectively the institutional memory, having served at the post for two years. I really looked forward to a year with April whom I had known in two previous assignments and with the new DCM whom I didn't know, Joe Wilson, an Africanist. It was a very hopeful moment.

We had had one black cloud on the horizon already in the spring in March when Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons against the Kurds in a town called Halabcha. Halabcha had already begun to shake our theory that if you have a little bit of leverage with a dictator like Saddam Hussein he will be a nice guy and when peace comes you will find that he is going to become more democratic and use civilized methods. The gas attack in March on Halabcha, it turned out, was a correct signal. Shortly after Khomeini ended the war in July, in August, Saddam, instead of doing what he should have done - consolidate his international position and his victory, try to refurbish himself as somehow a "nice autocrat" along the lines of Mubarak - instead of doing that, he used his newly amassed chemical weapons against his own Kurdish population in substantial attacks on northern villages with results that were gruesome.

His first priority, as always, was absolute power. One of the first things he wanted to do after defeating Iran was to defeat the Kurds, to get that Kurdish rebellion finally off the boards and control Kurdistan once and for all. The easy way, if you like, was to use gas, rather like our use of atomic bombs. Gas didn't involve a lot of his own troops dying. It would scare the Kurdish population. What Saddam didn't understand - because Saddam has always had a weak understanding of the rest of the world - was that the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds would be the beginning of the end of his relationship with the United States and to some extent with the rest of the civilized world.

As political officer it was my job to investigate as well as I could on the ground what had happened and how the Kurds felt about it. That was my job to do. The earliest opportunity I had for that was in October. I put in requests to visit two Kurdish cities. I'm not talking about remote Kurdistan, I'm talking about Dohuk and Arbil. I didn't even attempt to go to Sulaymania. By then after two years I had developed a certain little network of contacts up in Arbil and I knew people who were associated with the Barzanis and Talabani. I applied to the foreign ministry to travel to the north and got permission to do so. I also contacted my network of people who are Kurds and let them know that I would be wanting to see some of their people in the north.

I even went with a British colleague called Charles Hollis who had newly arrived. I did not take my family on that but I did take Hollis. We met a lot of Kurds both in Dohuk and Arbil and I learned even from Kurds who were traditionally bought off by the regime that they were really horrified by the use of gas. My political reporting was basically to say that Saddam Hussein had managed to humiliate even his own Kurdish allies in Arbil and Dohuk.

It was not until November that we got the news. Suddenly, April Glaspie, the ambassador, was called into the foreign ministry and was told that Mr. Rankin would have a week to leave. The ministry cited my trip to Kurdistan as the pretext. She was irate and did everything in her power to drive home the message that this would be another body blow to the American-Iraqi relationship and hoped that they would rethink it, but they didn't. Within a week, we were gone.

In retrospect, as I look back on it and taking into account the time it took the Iraqis to arrive at their decision, my suspicion is that my expulsion wasn't a reaction to the trip I made to the north. They would have expected me to talk to the Kurds. I'm a political officer and when they gave me permission to go to the north it was perfectly obvious what I was going to do. They always knew whom I talked with and I actually talked mostly to Saddam Hussein's bought-off Kurds, even if what they told me was actually extremely interesting. What burned them was the American reaction to the use of gas against the Kurds.

One of their senior advisors to Saddam Hussein, Saadoun Hammadi, had traveled to the United States in September. He was to have met Secretary of State George Shultz. When he arrived he was treated very coldly. He did not get his meeting with the Secretary. He was fobbed off on the head of Iraq-Iran Affairs, as I recall, or perhaps the Assistant Secretary. That very same day, Charles Redman, who was the State Department spokesman, read out an announcement which could not have been more critical of Iraq. We had chosen that moment to tell Iraq that we totally opposed what it had done. Saadoun Hammadi, who was actually a graduate of an American university, was humiliated. Saddam Hussein was angry.

This is now only my speculation, but given the amount of time it took Saddam to act - and Saddam Hussein is not usually one to take time to act - I suspect he probably had considered PNGing April Glaspie. (End of tape)

We were talking about my expulsion from Iraq and my own speculation on what I believe to be the real reasons why it took Saddam Hussein a while, more than a month, six weeks actually, to decide upon it and why it was me. I was saying that I think judging by the amount of time it

took, his first inclination must have been to expel the ambassador, April Glaspie. On further reflection he decided that that would be an extreme thing to do and would really set in concrete the downturn in American-Iraqi relations. Throwing me out made good sense because there had been such a turnover in the embassy in the summer and I was then the institutional memory. I was the logical person to throw out. I was the closest substantive advisor to the ambassador and I had had this trip to the north which served as a perfect pretext if they even needed one.

I returned to Washington as a hero. I was even in the papers for a very short while. It was the high point of my career. Little did I realize things would go downhill in my career from that moment. I had just received promotion into the O1 rank.

*Q: It's approximately the colonel rank?*

RANKIN: That's right, the colonel rank. That is what I have just retired as, as well. I did not make it into the senior service. I was subsequently to have two DCMships, as we say, postings as deputy chief of mission at two missions as well as deputy director of an office in the State Department. Things did not go so very well for me professionally although I continued to have extremely interesting assignments.

*Q: And in a way that's what counts.*

RANKIN: That's true.

*Q: In '88 what did you do? What did they do with you? It was '89 probably.*

RANKIN: It took me some time to get myself collected after this departure from Baghdad. I almost immediately interviewed with Richard Boehm who was meant to have gone out to Muscat to be ambassador to Oman. He was caught up in the longest, what's the word I'm looking for? Ambassadors are held in limbo after they get agreement, they've been named and then Congress has to do its thing. Richard Boehm had previously been ambassador to Cyprus and this was to be his last ambassadorship. He was meant to have gone out before the elections in November 1988 but for some reason he didn't get through the congressional process either in the summer or in the fall. Congress finished and he didn't make it. The whole process had to start all over again and the man finally arrived in October 1989.

He was looking for a DCM. He was interviewing a lot of people. I happened to arrive in Washington at the perfect moment, December 1988. I see in retrospect that I probably should have gone somewhere other than NEA to get bureau diversity. I was offered also the consul general job in Belfast and I would have been wise in retrospect to have taken that posting. But I wanted to use my area knowledge of the Arab world and my linguistic knowledge of Arabic. I liked Ambassador Boehm from the first moment, despite his reputation as a still, "old school" ambassador. I thought he had a superb sense of humor, but it certainly is true that Dick Boehm did not suffer fools lightly.

I had just been made into an O1 and wouldn't it be great to be immediately made a DCM? In retrospect, I think it is unwise to be a DCM too soon after becoming an O1. What happens is, and

I only know this in hindsight, people look at you after you've been a DCM once and then you're DCM twice and they say he has already been DCM. He hasn't made it to ambassador, he hasn't made it into the Senior Service, we don't want him. If you go too soon to DCM, you can find yourself in trouble. That's not a substantive issue but it is interesting to show you how the Foreign Service works.

**PAUL H. TYSON**  
**Deputy Principal Officer**  
**Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (1986-1988)**

*Mr. Tyson was born in Virginia into a US military family and was raised in army posts in the United States and abroad. Educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University he entered the Foreign Service in 1974. As a trained Economic Officer, Mr. Tyson served in a number of foreign posts, including Bonn, Dhahran, London and Kuwait City. His Washington Assignments were primarily in the petroleum and international economic fields. Mr. Tyson also served with the Sinai Multi-National Force & Observers. Mr. Tyson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: At this time, '86 to '88, did Iraq come into the equation at all?*

TYSON: Well, what do you mean by "into the equation?"

*Q: I mean, when you were sitting there, very obviously, even back when I was there in '58 to '60, we were looking at Iran. I mean, it was the Shah, it was friendly and all that, but you couldn't help but figure that Iran is a big country with a lot of people and Saudi Arabia is a rich country with not many people. Iran was seen like the "big boy" in the house.*

TYSON: It was, and there was a lot of ambivalence about this, and of course the Gulf states had more than tilted towards supporting Iraq in this; mostly in terms of cash, to some degree oil and other things. Something important that absolutely happened, and it happened more than once. The DPOs house had a flat roof. My wife and I were out on the patio – we were actually doing something up on the roof, and a plane came in very low that just didn't look like any one of the Saudi or the U.S. planes. It was an Iraqi Mirage. What would happen is they would fly down the Gulf and attempt to bomb Khark or another Island depending upon the conditions, if the weather wasn't good and they were going low on fuel, they'd come into Dhahran and gas-and-go. "No one ever saw them and it never happened," but they came in low over the house and were gone in the next forty minutes.

*Q: Were you there when the USS Stark was EXOCETed?*

TYSON: I left Dhahran that evening and found out about it in the basement of the American Embassy in London the next day.

*Q: Ah. Well now, was Iraq seen, you know we had various things, one police when I was there he had something called the Dhahran Liaison Group. I don't know if that still existed, but it was essentially an emergency center for evacuating that part of the Middle East. In your emergency plans for getting the hell out if all hell broke loose, was Iraq seen as a possible problem?*

TYSON: Not really, particularly at that time. If it was, it would've been sort of an unintentional overspill. We were a bit of a distance from Iraq and, as I said, Iraq was depending upon the Arabs for money and other support, so I think the perception was that they would be unlikely to "slaughter the golden goose."

**JOSEPH C. WILSON, IV**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Baghdad (1988-1991)**

*Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, IV was born in Connecticut in 1949. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara and after working in a variety of fields joined the Foreign Service in 1976. Wilson has served overseas in Niger, Togo, South Africa, Burundi, the Congo, and as the ambassador to Gabon. He has also worked in the Bureau of African Affairs, as the political advisor to the Commander in Chief, US Armed Forces, Europe, and as the senior director for African Affairs at the National Security Council. Ambassador Wilson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.*

*Q: Okay. Well, let's pick up on Baghdad then. In the first place, how did this hit you when you got told this?*

WILSON: I had had on a number of assignments; this was one of those times in my career when I thought it was probably useful to get out of Africa. I'd been in Africa for a long time, and I needed to do something else - put my foot in some other bureau. I bid on Algiers, Kathmandu and maybe a half dozen other DCM jobs, because by this time it was pretty clear that "conal" niche was the DCM world more than the administrative world. I wasn't going to be "reconed" as a political officer. I had good DCM experiences. I'd spent five years as a DCM, so I bid on other DCM jobs. I didn't want to go back to Washington. I got a call, or a message, from my career development officer saying, "Look, you're in the running obviously for all these DCM jobs, but you ought to know that for Kathmandu there's 142 people who want to be the DCM there. For Algiers the ambassador hasn't yet been named, but the ambassador undoubtedly is going to want to take his or her own person. These are not sure things. But would you be interested in going to Baghdad?" Nobody's bidding on Baghdad. It was the middle of the Iran-Iraq War. "Would you like us to put your name forward?" I thought about it, and concluded what the heck, why not. It might be very interesting. I said, "Sure. Put my name forward." I talked to the ambassador, and the match-up between what she wanted and what I had to offer was pretty good. She wanted somebody with management experience.

*Q: The ambassador?*

WILSON: The ambassador was April Glaspie. She wanted somebody with management experience, somebody who'd help her take this embassy that had been sort of a backwater operation during the Iran-Iraq War and make it, in the aftermath of the war, an embassy in an important Middle Eastern country at an important time. The Faustian deal was that, in exchange, she would teach me all there was to know about our role in the Middle East, in which I had no experience. She was, and is, a real master of Middle East. She knows it very, very well. She knows all the players. She knows all the issues backwards and forwards. So it was a great opportunity. I said "yes," not knowing that the Near East Bureau is an entity unto itself, which even if nobody bids on a DCM job in a place like Baghdad, resents the idea that an outsider would be useful, particularly one who was not an Arabist. I went ahead and took the job, and had a hell of a time. It was a great job. But the day I received the official communication saying that I had been approved also was the day that the Herald Tribune headlines boldly stated that the missile war had resumed between Tehran and Baghdad. They were lobbing these scud missiles back and forth between the two capitals. We had with mixed feelings when we read the message assigning us to Baghdad.

*Q: You had a wife and family?*

WILSON: I had a wife. My kids were living in California, with their mother. They would come out every summer either to France or to the Congo - wherever we were.

I arrived in Baghdad on Labor Day of 1988 and left on January 12, 1991. I arrived at a time when Iran and Iraq had signed their cease-fire as called for by UN Security Council Resolution 598 which was a step forward for negotiating their differences. So the two countries were not at war when I arrived, but the Iraq regime had just gassed its Kurdish population in the north and photos of that were just beginning to seep out into the international media. Saddam was under a fair amount of international criticism for gassing his own population - criticism well merited. We arrived at a very, very interesting time in the history of US-Iraqi relations.

*Q: In the first place, can you describe the embassy? What size was it and how did it operate? What was the state of relations?*

WILSON: We had a pretty good presence in Iraq. We had an agricultural attaché, we had a commercial office, we had a defense attaché, we had a USIA office, and then we had the usual State functions. We were pretty well staffed up. We were located right along the river in a nice part of town. Our political focus was basically how do we deal with a very bellicose, thuggish regime in the aftermath of a 10-year war with Iran. Virtually everything that regime did was an affront to our own value system; yet it was an important player in Gulf politics and, as a consequence, in Arab politics, where its enormous wealth and power and military might made it a force to be reckoned with. All of our Arab friends in the region were telling us that Saddam was a changed man as a consequence of the Iran-Iraq War and that we should not isolate him, but rather that our policy ought to embrace him and attempt to weave a cocoon of moderation around him, both to reinforce his new maturity after 10 years of war and also to encourage a continued move towards moderate and more expansive behavior. This was the Arab take on the situation, which showed in their relationships with him by and large, with the exception maybe

of Kuwait which had a somewhat different slant on the situation. So to the extent to which we could, we tried to develop a relationship with was some substance to it.

With Iraq we had gone from 1967 to 1972 without having any presence in Baghdad whatsoever. From 1972, we'd had an interest section located in the Belgian embassy. We'd had one person staffing the interest section whom we raised to be chargé when we opened our embassy. Subsequently we elevated that position to the ambassador level through a series of moves throughout the 1980s. By the time April and I got there in 1988, we were looking at ways to actually put some meat on the bones of this relationship. The theory was that if we had something to lose and they had something to lose, there might be more incentives to try to find ways of accommodating our concerns on human rights and other issues. One of the tools in our diplomatic toolbag was agricultural credits, which was one of our major programs with Iraq. At the height of this program, we had extended about a billion dollars of commodity credits to Iraq which came under some criticism for being the second largest program in the world after Mexico. In fact, for one year, our Iraq program was larger than Mexico's.

At the same time that people were becoming critical and concerned about the size of the program, we were just then beginning to realize that we were actually getting more of a return on our investment every year than we were actually investing giving us a net advantage. The agricultural credits was one of the most important programs we had in place.

We also actively supported U.S. business efforts to help rebuild Iraq. Westinghouse, General Electric, everybody was in there trying to build up the infrastructure -electric grids, power plants, and things like that. Our relationship with Iraq was always tough. Shortly after I got there, we had people who wanted to travel around the country. To get permission to do that, they had to give the Iraqis three weeks' advance notice if they wanted to go beyond 25 miles outside of Baghdad; if permission was granted, then you had to be escorted or followed. One's freedom to poke around was inhibited in any way the Iraqis could do it. Iraq itself was probably one of the two most paranoid countries in the world, vying with North Korea for the number one spot. Yet it was a lot of fun.

The Iraqis were very interesting people. They have a finely honed sense of their own history. They have an intellectual class that is the equal of any intellectual class in any other society even at a time they lived under this truly brutal dictatorship. The markets were great to visit - the kilims and the rugs and the copper and all the stuff that you could find in these places. Iraq is the heart of the Old Testament, with its ruins of Mesopotamia and Babylonia. It was interesting in that respect.

We were of interest to the Iraqis during this time because of our position on the UN Security Council. When I first got there, the Iraqis were embarked upon a campaign to persuade the Council of their positions on the issues related to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 598. To persuade us of their position, we would be invited, or convoked, maybe once every couple of months to what amounted to a seminar on Persian hegemonic ambitions and designs over the previous 150 years. The Iraqis would get out their maps and show us how the Persians have been encroaching on the Shatt al Arab over literally the last 150 years; where the border was in 1850; where it was in 1910 and where the Iranians tried to redraw the

border - here, here and there. Much of the relationship between Iran and Iraq was often played out through the Kurds. There were Iranian Kurdish dissident groups supported in the northwest by the Iraqis. Some Iraqi Kurdish dissident groups were in exile in Iran supported by the Iranians and operating out of Iranian territory to try to undermine the Iraqi government. Politics within Iraq were always very interesting. We had the Shia in the south and the so-called "Marsh Arabs" in southern Iraq. Of the three significant Shia shrines, one is in Baghdad and the two are in southern Iraq. It was an interesting mix, sort of conflicting alliance, with the Arab Shias, the Iranian Shias, the Kurds in the north - both Iranian and Iraqi Kurds. All of that got played out in countries that were destabilized.

When I first got there, right after the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqis had brought back to Baghdad war booty that they had captured at the front. In New Baghdad, they had created a fairground -miles upon miles - for Iranian war booty - everything from helmets with bullet holes in them to light weaponry to heavy equipment, tanks and armored personnel carriers, trucks, bulldozers and things like that. You could walk for miles up and down this field and see all this equipment that they had captured. It gave you a real sense of the enormity of the war. If you remember, between 1980 and 1990, we all got pretty numb to this land war that was going on and on and on. But once you got to Iraq and you were living in a country of 17-20 million - not counting the 1 million who had lost their lives in the previous decade on the Iran-Iraq front. As Tariq Aziz said in one of the few truthful statements I ever heard him mutter, virtually every Iraqi family had somebody in their family who had been lost in the Iran-Iraq War. It had been a terrible, terrible war for the Iraqi population, and you could see that. Saddam attempted to run a guns and butter economy. He wanted to pay a peace dividend to his country in terms of increased imports of products wanted by the population, but at the same time he wanted to maintain a significant military machine including 1 million soldiers at the front and another 1 million who were basically guarding the oil pipelines. That's a very significant military. He had already mortgaged a good part of his future prosecuting the Iran-Iraq War, and his post war program required an additional debt burden - the money had to come from somewhere. Hence, as we approached 1990, tensions began to emerge between Iraq and Kuwait. Kuwait had been a major financier of the war effort; it had financed a lot of the war effort through loans rather than just grant funds for development assistance.

*Q: What were you getting from your Iraqi contacts about the value of the war? Was anybody able to question it?*

WILSON: Nobody would question the Saddam regime; it was not done in Iraq -in polite Iraqi society. Saddam came to the presidency through the security apparatus, and, in his years of running the security apparatus, had created a number of concentric and overlapping circles of intelligence services. Some people estimated that perhaps there were as many as seven, some of which existed just to spy on the other ones. We used to say that, if you wanted to do your Iraqi friends a favor, the best thing you could do for them would be never to be seen with them. I have been told that very senior Iraqi officials would be invited to dinners by other Iraqis. The next day, the host Iraqis would have to go in and explain to the intelligence people what the senior officials had said at the dinner - and these people were presumably close to the leadership. There was no open dialogue, real candid dialogue, on what the Iran-Iraq War meant other than what the official word which was essentially that Iraq was defending the Arab world - in the broadest



sense of the term - against Persian hegemonic ambitions along the Shatt al Arab. Tariq used to say that, "We defended, with the blood of our sons, Arab independence against the Persian onslaught."

The Iraqis would take the spouses of ambassadors to some of the key battlefields and show them exactly how the battle had played out along the coast, for example. They went there and took pictures of what that battle was all about. That was one of the really big battles in the Iran-Iraq War. You'd go down to Basra and see that along the waterfront of the Shatt al Arab there were statues of Iraqi generals who had given their lives in the Iran-Iraq War. There were those who said that the Iraqi military pension policy was to give a general a bullet in the head about the same time you gave him his third or fourth star to prevent the development of a cadre of military officers who might form the nucleus of a threat for Saddam autocratic power; that was probably pretty accurate. There were a lot of generals who just disappeared or just died. It was a very brutal regime.

During the time that we were there, there were a number of interesting things that we did. Chevrolet came in and basically displaced Volkswagen as the automobile of choice in Iraq. The Iraqis all made it very clear that, despite the fact that we hadn't had relations with them for so many years, they were interested in having American products as opposed to those of other countries. In the two and a half years that I was there, the vehicle fleet literally turned over so that Chevrolets became the vehicle of choice in Iraqi society. These were Chevrolets made in Canada, although it's hard to, even in Iraqi minds as well as ours, to view a Chevrolet as a Canadian product. I used to say that if you had only one time to be in the Middle East and one place to be, this was the time and Iraq was the place, because it was involved in everything. They had just emerged from the Iran-Iraq War. They were asserting themselves as a leader of the Arab League, and they were taking positions on the Arab-Israeli conflict, as they always had been -positions that some U.S. Senators initially thought that might serve as a basis for moderation the position of the Arab states on Palestinian issues.

We had an inspection team look over our operation. Senator Larry Pressler came out a couple times to talk to them about various issues. Yasser Arafat would come to town all the time; he took refuge in Baghdad when he wasn't living somewhere else. His relationship with Saddam later almost cost the Palestinians any sort of power and authority in their quest.

One other interesting issue that we worked on during the first year or year and a half of my tour was Lebanon. The Iraqis saw Beirut and Lebanon as an opportunity to get back at Syria for what they viewed as Assad's betrayal of the Arab cause by the position he took on the Iran-Iraq War. The Iraqis quite openly were sending these frog surface-to-surface missiles from Baghdad to Beirut through Aqaba. We actually intercepted a ship to keep it from landing in Beirut; it turned back. As April Glaspie pointed out to Tariq Aziz, the Iraqis found themselves in a very odd position as a tacit ally of Israel by supporting General Aoun in his efforts to keep Beirut free of Syrian interference. For the Iraqis it had nothing to do with Israel; it had much more to do with giving Assad a bloody nose and using Beirut as a way to do it. The road to Damascus from Baghdad went through Beirut.

*Q: Were we getting a reading on what Saddam was up to? There was a quite a debate, as I recall it, over what his purpose was. He was going after major weapons systems, long-range artillery and everything. Were we looking hard at that to try to figure out what this was all about?*

WILSON: Yes, sure; we watched it very carefully -as carefully as we could given the sort of meager resources at our disposal. We had an aggressive program to try and find out everything we could about his nuclear, chemical and biological weapons development programs. If he in fact had used chemical weapons, that was something of great concern. So we watched with great interest every time that they would come up with some reverse engineered type program. They came up with a cannon at one point; they had this long gun, which didn't work very well. It was fascinating to watch. We were not the most effective and we were certainly not the most aggressive in subverting what they were doing. I think the Israelis' intelligence services was ahead of us on that score. There were people who developed the big gun working with the Iraqis; they were found dead in odd places around Europe as they got closer to sort of realizing their goals. The Israelis, who had already blown up the Iraqi's nuclear reactor once, were watching developments very closely as well. We did everything we could, given our resources, to try and make sure that we had a handle on those programs. I'm not sure even to this day that we had a perfect understanding of what's going on, but we were certainly concerned about it and we followed it. We ran a lot of stuff at the time to keep tabs on what the Iraqis were doing internationally.

*Q: Were there concerns about our relations with Iraq - we were too close or not. Was that an issue that was being played out in Washington?*

WILSON: Clearly, when the Iraqis gassed the Kurds, that was a real problem for a lot of people including people up on the Hill. Claiborne Pell was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at that time. He had a guy on his staff, Peter Galbraith, who later went on Zagreb as ambassador in the Clinton Administration, who was very concerned about what was happening in Iraq and what Saddam was doing. He and Pell brought a lot of pressure to bear, and they forced us to really think about the sort of relationship we were having with the Iraqis. We shared their concerns. We were under no illusions that this was anything other than a very brutal regime. The question was always which was the better approach. Was it to isolate them like we treated Libya and Cuba, or would it be better to develop a network of relations with them to encouraged moderate behavior because moderate behavior might lead to better relations? The aim was to discourage extremist behavior because those circumstances could potentially lose what we already achieved in terms of improving substantive relations, whether in the commercial or political areas.

We felt that a better approach - and it was not just us; all our friends in the Arab world were counseling us the same way - to an Iraq that was emerging from a terrible war with Iran, was to encourage moderation by developing a whole network of relationships that would benefit both parties. Those relationships would provide the anchor which would stabilize the relations as the political wind blew back and forth - political winds being generated principally by Iraq and Saddam. When he would arrest generals and shoot them, if we had a relationship that basically established constraints on Iraqi temptation to do something more outrageous, we would then be

able to moderate their behavior over the long term; that was something that was just generally believed by the Arab world as well. I wouldn't say it was forced upon us, but I would say that to a large extent, the Arab counsel was to do that, and that counsel was accepted at the highest reaches of our government. So, even as we would produce these human rights report which were, I think, accurate in their depiction of Iraq as a brutal totalitarian regime, at the same time were we attempting to put into place policies and programs that would provide some substance to our relationship in the hopes that that would then moderate Iraqi behavior.

*Q: When you got to Baghdad, how did April Glaspie use you? Could you all communicate with the government?*

WILSON: First and foremost, April used me basically to be the chief operating officer in the embassy, although she was very much a hands-on person herself. But I managed the operation in the sense of directly supervising all the elements and serving as the go-between her and the staff. We put into place a large-scale program designed to turn our embassy, in the aftermath of the Iraq-Iran war, into a real embassy rather than an outpost on the front line of a major war. That involved coming up with new staffing patterns, coming up with a new budget, making significant equipment buys. We had the undersecretary for management come out and take a look at the sort of space we needed. We were negotiating a settlement with the Iraqi government on property that they had taken from us - our old embassy of 20 years earlier worth about \$35-40 million. We were looking to buy new property. We were going through all the classic stuff that one does when one is establishing a significant organization, including spending a fair amount of money to do so. That is what I spent much of my time on.

The other thing I did as DCM was to serve as counselor to the ambassador and to be her alter ego; she was very good about making us about as interchangeable as we could be. So I spent a lot of time with her learning about the Gulf - the issues, the players, the position of the United States on issues, where the strengths and weaknesses were in various positions, the role of the Arab League in politics, etc. This was material that I had to learn since I was in a region with which I was not been terribly familiar. In that respect it was a great learning experience. As I said earlier, the Iraqis helped on that because they had made it a goal of their policy to try and persuade us of their position on UN Security Council Resolution 590; we had a lot of exchanges with the Iraqis on those issues.

*Q: That resolution dealt with what?*

WILSON: That was the resolution that dealt with the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War. It provided the framework for the two parties to negotiate a peaceful settlement. So we had a lot of exchanges with the Iraqis literally from day one. I used to see everybody from Tariq Aziz on down.

*Q: My understanding is that we had been helpful during the Iran-Iraq War by supplying satellite information and things like that. Was there any residue of good will?*

WILSON: No. The Iraqis always took the position that we never did anything that wasn't in our national interest and, therefore, we earned no brownie points with them for having done

something that was totally in our own interest. On the other hand, we did earn a fair amount of criticism from the Iraqis whenever it was suggested that we had done something to benefit the Iranians. For example, at one point we were accused of having given the Iranians the Iraqi order of battle - whether done deliberately or through some loose talk that got into the newspapers. The Iraqis used to always accuse us of having favored the Iranians because of that. One of the early negotiations that we were involved had to do with a resolution of an Iraqi attack on a US destroyer cruiser, the Stark, during which 34 sailors had been killed or injured and which caused a significant amount of damage to the ship. We actually were able to negotiate the first payment of that. We negotiated with them and received some compensation.

*Q: The Shah had had a hell a lot of American equipment, and Iraq had a lot of Soviet equipment. Were there any comparison made and lessons learned?*

WILSON: To the extent to which the Iraqis learned any lessons, they learned the wrong ones. If they thought that by having held the Iranian military to a stalemate, they might somehow concluded that their equipment was as good as the Iranian American equipment. They were dead wrong. As we moved into the Gulf War, that was one of the things that we, the embassy in Baghdad, wanted to make sure that they understood - that this was not going to be a military action along the lines of the one that they had just fought against Iran - this would be an entirely different war.

*Q: You were the new boy on the block; so I guess you were asking a lot of questions. What was your impression of the military tactics of both sides during this war?*

WILSON: The Iran-Iraq War?

*Q: Yes.*

WILSON: Having gotten there after the last battle was fought, there wasn't a lot of sort of post mortems to be done. I guess principally the most sort of shocking and surprising result of the was the level of casualties and how a population of 17 million could take as many casualties.

*Q: It sounds like the Battle of the Verdun played over.*

WILSON: In fact, that's exactly right. I think that we really saw in the Iran-Iraq War, a replay of World War I complete with mustard gas and rudimentary chemical weapons, and with trench warfare and sort of slogging it out on a front line forever and ever and ever with very little forward movement - no more than five kilometers one way or the other, during the course of the 10 years of the war. One thing became very clear. As we extrapolate the Iran-Iraq conflict into the Gulf War, one of the real weaknesses of the Iraqi military tactics and strategy was their ability to have effective logistics. They could move their troops, but they couldn't get the logistic support to them. This became again very clear when they invaded Kuwait. They just couldn't go any further because they had outrun their supply lines. If you look at the Iran-Iraq War, you can see that. They could get troops five miles down the road, but then they couldn't support their forward position.

*Q: Dealing with the government, you mentioned Tariq Aziz. He had a whole series of positions while you were there. Who was he?*

WILSON: Tariq was Foreign Minister at that time. Tariq is a very interesting character. He speaks very good English, although, as far as I know, he has never been educated outside Iraq. All his education was in Iraqi schools. As a Christian, Tariq had no independent political base whatsoever; he owed everything to Saddam; so he was kind of a loyal flunkie - I used to tell people that Tariq Aziz is somebody who is very bright and very articulate - far brighter and far more articulate than I will ever be - and very powerful through the authority that he got from Saddam. He used to articulate the position of his government, his country, with great authority. Yet the bottom line on Tariq is what you say to yourself when you go to a used car lot - can you trust the salesman? In Tariq's case, you couldn't. I would never trust him particularly when we are talking about the Gulf War. I had some experiences with him that proved that I couldn't trust him.

*Q: Was Tariq the person the embassy went through? Was there any direct contact with Saddam Hussein?*

WILSON: Saddam almost never met an ambassador. When one presented his or her letters of accreditation, the letters were always taken by Izzat Ibrahim or by Yassin Ramadan, who were Saddam's two chief lieutenants. Saddam would meet ambassadors only when they were escorting distinguished visitors from their own country to a meeting that had been granted with Saddam. So the only times that we met Saddam during the two and a half years that I was there were either when people like Arlen Specter and other Senators came to Baghdad. John Kelly met one time with Saddam when he was assistant secretary of State. There were the two occasions for meetings with Saddam as events were leading up to the Gulf War: April Glaspie saw him on July 26th and then when I saw him 10 or 11 days later on August 6th. Those were the only two times that anybody can remember our meeting with him when we weren't escorting a VIP or a part of a Congressional delegation. Those two were the only one-on-one meetings. April might have met with him one other time, but I just don't remember.

*Q: Where were we able to tap into the mafia in the town of Tikrit?*

WILSON: Most of our work with Iraqis were in very formal channels, and most of our relations with the Iraqi government went through Nezar Hamdun. He was the undersecretary. He had been in Washington as the head of the Iraqi Interests section, then as ambassador, had returned to Baghdad to become the undersecretary. He was basically the guy that handled U.S. relations. So virtually everything that we had to do went through him first. We could then have a series of other relationships within the foreign ministry depending on the nature of the business. Our contacts would be with the protocol office or the desk officer or with Tariq occasionally or with the office director depending on the issue. Relations beyond that with the broader Iraqi community were very rare. We had some of it with Hussein Kamel, who was the minister of industry and military industrialization. He was Saddam's son-in-law who later fled to Jordan and then decided he could come back because he was told all was forgiven, only to return to be shot. We had some relationship with the minister of commerce and the minister of agriculture because of the specific programs that we were funding. But those relationships were very perfunctory,

very formalistic and were not terribly authentic. As I said earlier, we had a saying at the embassy that the best thing that you could do for your Iraqi friends is never be seen with them. Normally, Iraqis could not come to our houses; only on very rare occasions did they show up - primarily those very few who had this permission to circulate in the broader international community. There were really only about a half a dozen of them, and you sort of had to wonder what their role in all of this was. But, by and large, there were really very, very few - in fact, virtually none - meaningful relationships that allowed us to actually sit with an Iraqi and talk about issues and get something other than the party line.

*Q: What about the role of other embassies? Was it sort of like Moscow in the bad old days when everybody went to other embassies and asked what's going on and trying to share this information maybe?*

WILSON: Because the contacts with Iraqis were so few and far between, the main avenue for gathering of information came by attending all National Day celebrations. There were 110 embassies, so there were 110 National Days. Because the Iraqis were a significant military power and had just fought a significant war, there were military attachés attached to all embassies. So depending on whether a country had one military day or whether each service had its own day, you would have another 110-odd military days. That meant that on 250 days of the year you were out at one reception or another. That was the way we figured out who was seeing whom and who was saying what to whom; there was a lot of gossip that went on in these receptions. Now we, as I mentioned earlier, because of the nature of our relationship with the Iraqis, were often the ones who were the providers of information on contacts with the Iraqis because we had lots of them. On the other hand, the Soviets had some very experienced hands assigned to Baghdad. As we moved to the Gulf War, this became increasingly the case especially with the emergence of Primakov, who was a close personal friend of Saddam. Their DCM, my counterpart, was a guy by the name of Sasha Kalugin, who was the son of Kalugin, the KGB guy who's written a couple books. Some other embassies that were particularly good - e.g the Egyptian embassy was very good because there were 4 million Egyptians in the country; so they had lots of contact.

*Q: What were they doing?*

WILSON: They were rebuilding Babylon; they were doing a lot of manual labor that the Iraqis didn't do anymore. They basically filled a void. As all Iraqi men became soldiers, Egyptians came in and did the road work. And the Turks were also active. The Turks had an ambassador there who's currently their ambassador in Paris. He went from Iraq to be the Turkish ambassador to the European Union in Strasbourg, and then he went to be the head of Turkish Central Intelligence organization and then to Paris. He was a very distinguished Turkish diplomat and a very savvy guy; they had a good embassy there. Because of the nature of their relationship with Iraqis, i.e., big trade back and forth across the border, they had lots of good information and lots of good insights into what was happening in Iraq.

*Q: This was prior to the build-up of the Gulf War. How about the Kurd situation? Were you following that?*

WILSON: Yes, we followed it a lot. One of our key employees was a Kurd. His clan had been pretty much coopted by the Iraqi regime, but he was still able to give us a fair amount of insight into what was going on. The head of the Kurdish Democratic Party, KDP, was a good friend of ours. He was based in the mountains outside of Sulaymaniyah in Iraq; he used to come in fairly often and give us some good insight into what was going on up there. So we had pretty good Kurdish contacts. We couldn't get to their area as often as we wanted because of travel restrictions. I actually got up to the Iranian border during the second year of my tour when restrictions were loosening up; I got up to Ronya, Rawanduz and Sulaymaniyah and up to Mosul and Irbil, which are primarily Kurdish and Iraqi Christian towns in the north. We were able to follow Iraqi efforts to move the Kurds out of sensitive areas to other towns and historic villages. We would build other villages for them and things like that. So we followed that and we followed the various discussions that were going on between Kurdish groups and then between the Kurds and the Iraqi government as they were working through all their political issues. The Kurds, when they weren't fighting the Iraqis and the Arabs, were fighting each other.

*Q: Did you have the classic problem of trying to establish relations with a brutal regime like Saddam's, while some junior officers were saying, "This is terrible?" I was just wondering whether you had this.*

WILSON: I suppose to a certain extent we did. We didn't have that many junior officers who were qualified to be "bomb throwers." They were mostly first-tour officers who didn't have enough experience to really be that. Baghdad was a tough post to fill; we had some people who may have been disgruntled for other reasons other than that. During my confirmation hearings for Gabon, I got nothing but questions on Iraq; all the questions related to how we approached the human rights issue. I could truthfully say that we were very clear eyed in our criticism of the brutality of the Iraqi regime, as stated in our annual human rights reports. I don't think that we were under any illusions that this was a good regime and that it was worthy of our magnanimity. On the other hand, we made a conscious decision that the best way to encourage future moderated behavior was to develop a network of relations based on our own interests and the commonly perceived interests both with Iraq and with the region. This position, I think, enabled us to a certain extent to ward off whatever criticism of the brutality of the regime there might have been. Now, there were instances when people were absolutely disgusted with what the Iraqis were doing - whether it was "PNGing" one of our employees or whether it was killing an Iranian journalist whose girlfriend happened also to be the girlfriend of one of our employees. There were incidents like that. Certainly there was general revulsion at the Iraqi regime but not a lot of opposition to what we were trying to accomplish with our approach.

So the basic tenets of our policy in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War were to encourage Iraqi moderation through a series of incentives including the Agricultural Commodity Credit Program, commercial relations, etc. This policy was not developed unilaterally, but it was conceived with the support and advice of our Arab friends in the region who told us that Saddam had been through this bloody war and had moderated his approach. Even if he hadn't moderated, they thought that this was the best way to deal with this tiger in their midst - to weave a commercial and trading and investment cocoon around him that created disincentives to lash out as he had done in the past. So that was what we did.

As I mentioned earlier, we did not hide or under-report the really gross human rights violations. We were very clear about the travesties and excesses of the Iraqi regime. But the agreed-upon approach was to try and moderate his behavior by encouraging him to behave correctly. Obviously it didn't work. Had it worked, we would have been hugely successful and we wouldn't have had the war.

Lets turn to the run-up to the war with Kuwait, which started when the Iraqis began beating the war drums against Israel. There was a lot of talk in March-April 1990. Saddam said in a speech that Iraq was prepared to set fire to half of Israel and burn it to the ground. That raised a lot of alarm bells in Washington as well as elsewhere. Nobody really quite understood what was causing him to act this way. The United States at that point decided that it wanted to calm down the rhetoric. It didn't want this escalating beyond control. We had been through a number of exercises with the Iraqis including, as I mentioned earlier, interdicting them from shipping frog surface-to-surface missiles to downtown Beirut. The Iraqis were increasingly aggressive in the region and they were being very bellicose in their rhetoric against Israel. They were beginning to put soldiers on maneuvers in the south. The word that was that this was preparatory to a sweep into Israel. That was apparently the word that Saddam was giving to his soldiers; i.e. that they were exercising in anticipation of an operation against Israel. On our recommendation, President Bush sent a delegation of American Senators including Bob Dole, Frank Murkowski of Alaska, McClure of Idaho, Metzenbaum of Ohio, and Allen Simpson of Wyoming. They came out during their Easter break. They went to Egypt and other countries. They came to Baghdad bearing a message to Saddam from the president which was, "Knock off the rhetoric. Israel is not planning to do anything against you, and all you're doing is escalating tensions in the region." The message wasn't delivered very well. They were very disappointed. I'll just cite you two examples. After Bob Dole had gone through his piece, Saddam replied - in which he said, "I didn't really say I was going to set fire to half of Israel. What I said was that if they attacked me, then I will set fire to half of Israel." After his reply, Senator Metzenbaum leaned forward in his chair and he said "Mr. President, I can tell you're an honorable man." I remember this very distinctly because I was the notetaker at this meeting. Then Allen Simpson, who is about 6'7" or something like that, leaned forward in one of these low chairs - when he leaned forward it gave the impression he was getting on bended knee before this potentate -said, "Mr. President, I can see that what you have here isn't really a policy problem. What you have is a public relations problem. You've got a problem with the press. I know all about that, because I've got problems with the press back home. What you need is you need a good press guy to insure that the message is as you want it to be." So you can imagine, Saddam is listening to these Senators say this, "You're an honorable man," and "Gee, you really don't have a policy problem." What he took away from that meeting was quite fair.

*Q: At that point why was Saddam doing this? You said he'd done it before. Was this just a general keeping his people on boil?*

WILSON: A number of things were happening. Saddam at the end of the Iran-Iraq War did not demobilize; he was keeping his key troops under arms and he was keeping another million as a home guard to basically guard the pipeline. That was 2 million men out of a population of 17 million. You can assume that another million or so had either been killed or injured in the Iran-Iraq War, so there was a very high percentage of the population under arms or involved in



national defense, all of which is pretty costly. He was running a rearmament campaign on a “guns-and-butter” budget. He was attempting to provide all the goods that his country needed, and he was basically chronically short on cash and credit. He had mortgaged the future of his country for several years forward. We all realized that; so, I think in retrospect, that the rhetoric against Israel was largely camouflage to what his real intentions were, which was to get the Arabs to underwrite his “guns-and-butter budget.” In terms of the maneuvers, that was also a deception: saying that they were maneuvering in anticipation of an invasion of Israel was a deception because they were maneuvering in the south obviously preparing for some sort of action on the Kuwaiti border.

*Q: Wasn't there any dissension in Iraq on this stance ? The Israelis were not exactly a target that you wanted to overemphasize that you were going to do something about.*

WILSON: But they were a natural target for the Iraqis because of the Israelis attack on the Iraqi nuclear plant several years earlier. They were, in light of their situation in the region, a natural external enemy in the absence of other external enemies. I think the idea was to keep the tension level high in order try to get other Arabs to underwrite the “guns- and-butter” budget - keep people thinking about Iraq as a threat, so that there would be concessions made to it. The Iraqis were hoping to keep people outside of the region thinking of it as a threat to Israel in the hopes that they would react in a diplomatic way as opposed to a military way. Of course, all the Arabs were telling us through all this, “Don't do anything to provoke him, because all this is bluster.” This became even more apparent when Saddam turned his sights on Kuwait. In the March-April time-frame, there was a lot of movement of material to the south. The Turks in particular, who had the best information in the country because they had so many trading relationships, were beginning to sense that there would be another war in the region and they were anticipating that it might be against Kuwait. The Iraqi- Kuwait relationships was beset by a number of issues: forgiveness of Iraqi debt to Kuwait, increases in Kuwaiti aid to Iraq, Kuwaiti adherence to the OPEC-imposed quotas to maintain the price of petroleum at a high level - allowing Iraq to realize more benefit from the export of its own petroleum. Kuwait had stopped slant drilling in one of the southern oil fields along the border between Kuwait and Iraq.

*Q: You might explain why slant drilling was a problem.*

WILSON: They were drilling from Kuwait territory into oil that Iraq thought belonged to it -across the border basically. Iraq was looking at its southern frontier. It realized that it was going to be a long time, if ever, before it could ever use Basra again as its principal outlet to the Gulf despite the fact that it had built a huge port facility in a place called Um Kasr which was maybe 20 or 25 miles to the west of Basra situated on a very narrow part of the Gulf. At the other side of this narrow strip of Iraq was Kuwaiti territory. At the opening to the Gulf stood two islands - Bubiyan and Warba. The Iraqis wanted Kuwait to give the Iraqis the right to garrison troops on that side of the outlet to enhance their security of the port and access to the Gulf.

This all came to a head in July when the Iraqis sent a delegation either Jeddah or Riyadh to meet a Kuwaiti delegation to negotiate an agreement on all outstanding issues. The Iraqis sent down Ali Hassan Al-Tikriti, who was known for overseeing the gassing of the Kurds in the north - he was called “the butcher of Kurdistan.” Later he became known, when he was the temporary

governor of the 19th Province, i.e., Kuwait, when it was annexed to Iraq, as “the butcher of Kuwait.” What a terrible man. He was one of the members of the delegation. The other members were Izzat Ibrahim, who was number two or number three in the regime. He is kind of titular head, under Saddam, of the Baath Party apparatus. They also sent Yassin Ramadan, who also was quite a thug.

*Q: Were these all more or less from this one town?*

WILSON: They’ve all were tied to Saddam from the very beginning. Ali Hassan Al-Tikriti is from Tikrit. I am not sure where the others came from.

*Q: But still it was...*

WILSON: This was the “A” team. If the Kuwaitis had understood the situation properly, they would have realized that the Iraqis were giving them an ultimatum; they were not coming to negotiate. During this period we noticed troop movements and the movement of tanks on rail cars to the south. Everybody was getting very nervous. There was a lot of back and forth with Washington about what actions we should take. The Arab League met in late July. Preparatory to that meeting, Arab leaders told us not to do anything because they would solve the problem; they insisted that Saddam was bluffing, and that if we made any moves, we ran the risk of provoking Saddam into taking those actions which we wanted to avoid. The Arab states wanted us to let them take the lead on dealing with Saddam’s activities.

*Q: Were relations such that you were meeting Iraqis to say, “Hey, you’d better watch out,” or give them some warning?*

WILSON: As I mentioned, we met with Saddam in April with when Dole and his delegation came to Baghdad. Dole went in and delivered a message. We met with Iraqi officials on a regular basis at the foreign ministry and particularly we’d meet Nezar Hamdun, who was then the undersecretary. At all those meetings we were basically briefed on the issues I just outlined and were told that the Iraqis were going to continue negotiating.

On July 25th or 26th, April Glaspie was scheduled to go talk to the foreign minister. She went over to the foreign ministry, but was then put into a car and taken over to the president’s office to meet Saddam. During the course of that meeting, Saddam said to her, “We will not take any action military so long as there is a negotiation process ongoing.” Just before the meeting began, Saddam was called out of his office to take a phone call from President Mubarak. He took the phone call from Mubarak, and then came out and told April - I wasn’t there; this is how it was reported back to me - that he had just told Mubarak that there would be no military action as long as the diplomatic process was ongoing. That was July 25th or 26th. As I said, all the Arabs were telling us this was a bluff. Saddam had told both us and Mubarak on the same day at essentially the same time that he wasn’t going to take military action. The Arabs were telling us not to do anything.

We were getting nervous. We went cabled Washington to ask for another presidential letter to Saddam requesting him to lower the tension level. During the course of the meeting I just

mentioned, of course, April Glaspie told Saddam what American policy had been vis-à-vis the Arab borders since the beginning of the division of the Arab region into the nation states; i.e. that the United States doesn't take a position on the merits of a particular border dispute but wants only that such disputes be resolved diplomatically or through international arbitration. That had been the U.S. position; it had been the Western position, and it had been most everybody's position since the beginning. Glaspie has often been criticized afterwards for not having given Saddam the "stop sign." The Iraqis, in the person of Tariq Aziz, would tell you, and have done so publicly, that they didn't call April Glaspie in to ask for a green, yellow or red light; they were not looking for that and that they understood perfectly what she was saying because that had been American policy. They took their decision based upon the failure of negotiations and not on the U.S. position. At the same time, we received President Bush's letter to give to Saddam which she delivered. The next day or a couple of days later, John Kelly, the assistant secretary of State for the Near East, appears before the House International Relations Committee. I think it was the whole Committee - not a subcommittee - because the session was chaired by Lee Hamilton - and it was a public session. During the course of the that session Lee Hamilton asked a question to which he obviously already knew the answer -or he could have found the answer by asking the Congressional Research Service. The question was: "Do we have a mutual defense pact with Kuwait that would obligate us to come to their defense in the event they were invaded by Iraq?" John Kelly gave the correct answer, which was: "No, we don't."

*Q: Was it the feeling that Hamilton wanted to emphasize this; that's why he asked the question?*

WILSON: I doubt that that was his intent.

*Q: It was the wrong question.*

WILSON: It was the wrong question to ask in public session, very clearly. For those who point fingers at who lost Kuwait, to me that was the defining moment because the U.S. Congress forced the U.S. Executive Branch to say that we have no legal obligation to come to the defense of Kuwait in the event of an invasion by Iraq. That was far more than anything that April Glaspie might said in her meeting with Saddam Hussein. As I have told people in the Bush I administration later, "What would you have had her say? We're going to bring the B52s over and bomb you back to the stone age if you invade Kuwait." That clearly would have exceeded her instructions if she had gone any further than she actually went.

Then Kelly testifies. His testimony goes all over the world at sort of lickety-split speed. April by this time has left Baghdad. She left the day after she met with Saddam on a long-planned leave which included home leave, medical leave for both her and her aged mother who was living with her at the time as well as consultations in Washington. This was consistent with what other diplomatic missions were doing. Most ambassadors were out of town during the months of July and August, and indeed at the time of the invasion of Kuwait almost all of them were out of town.

*Q: Was there any discussion about whether this was a good time to leave?*

WILSON: Certainly, yes. There was a lot of discussion; there was lots of back and forth between the embassy and the State Department. At the end this assessment, everybody was convinced that Saddam was bluffing and therefore April should do what she had to planned to do, which included consultations in Washington.

*Q: You were essentially an “African hand.” This was what you had been doing. Did you feel yourself trying to figure out what the Arab mind was and what they might be thinking? Did you kind of wonder what were these people thinking about, or did our Arab experts give you getting a pretty good reading?*

WILSON: First of all, the Iraqi is not like any other Arab. He is not Levantine and he is not Gulf dweller. The Turks in one of their old dictionaries used to define arrogance as in to ‘walk like a Baghdadi.’ They are very direct. They are not circumspect in the same way that Gulf Arabs are, nor are they deceptively friendly as the Levantines are. Secondly, by this time, I had already been dealing with the Iraqis for a couple years on issues ranging from the Iran-Iraq War to Arab-Israelis issues to their activities in Lebanon. We had had some considerable success in stopping the shipment of the “frogs” to downtown Beirut.

*Q: “Frogs” being...*

WILSON: Being the surface-to-surface missiles that they hoped the Lebanese would use to inflict some damage on Syria by using Beirut as the battleground. So in some respects, the Iraqis were in this odd, tacit alliance with Israel. They were both supporting a Christian faction which was hunkered down in downtown Beirut, against the various forces. Aoun, being a Mennonite Christian, was fighting against the Syrian forces and the various other Lebanese groups. They were involved in the latter phases of the Lebanese civil war. The Iraqis wanted to seize this opportunity to ship some from surface-to-surface missiles that then could be used to attack Syrian interests in Beirut. We stopped that, and by stopping that we allowed the Lebanese presidential succession to go forward. Unfortunately, the President Mowad was blown up in a car bomb during his inaugural parade.

To answer your previous question, I felt that, while understanding the Iraqis was a huge problem, it was not one where I felt disadvantaged because I hadn’t spent 20 years in the Arab world. It was one where we all were at a relative disadvantage because nobody had been down this road before.

*Q: Including the other Arabs.*

WILSON: The Iraqis had been through their war with Iran, and so the Iraqis had an advantage; they knew exactly where they were going - at least Saddam did. So I didn’t feel terribly disadvantaged in this. At the end of the day, I actually think the African experience held me in better stead than most other if, by comparison, one looked at some of my European colleagues or at some of my colleagues who had spent most of their careers in Europe. The reason is that in Africa, as in Iraq and other parts of the Middle East, relationships are largely personal. European and American relationships are largely bureaucratic and institutional. So if you’ve accustomed to managing aspects of an institutional relationship, the experience that you bring to an intensely

personal type negotiation are far different from those that would come from having worked in a series of countries where the personal relationships were really very important. I had already worked on pretty significant issues, in Central Africa - i.e. the Angolan peace process which was diplomacy at the highest level, with presidents of various countries on a regular basis. I think that that particular experience actually served me well in Iraq and more than made up for the relative lack of experience in the Arab world. Again, by the time of the Gulf War, I had spent two years in the Arab world working with one of our most highly respected Arabists - April Glaspie

*Q: One other question: Somehow or another there was talk about us having an air refueling exercise. Could you mention what that was?*

WILSON: Sure. At the time that John Kelly testified, the decision was finally made that we needed to do something to "show the flag" in the region - we needed to express our concerns in a way that went beyond the Glaspie meeting with Saddam Hussein. So the decision was made with the Bahrainians to conduct a refueling exercise. We launched into the air a couple of our tankers in the region and we flew them around the Gulf off the coast of Bahrain to refuel aircraft for a couple days. That was a widely publicized joint military exercise that we were undertaking with the Bahrainian armed forces designed really to signal that we were present in the Gulf and that we were concerned. At the same time, it was designed not to be provocative in the sense that we were not seen to be moving troops into the region in anticipation of an Iraqi move.

*Q: At this point were you talking to Chas Freeman or was there any talk, particularly with the Saudis, about problems?*

WILSON: Sure. Chas will have his own take on this because he was in Riyadh talking to the Saudis. We were pretty busy just dealing with the Iraqis, but clearly all the Arabs, all the key Arab leaders, were indicating to us through every channel available that we should do nothing provocative. That message was coming through loud and clear.

I think the lesson in that should not be lost on anybody. Fundamentally in a situation like that, you're put in a position where a non-Iraqi state would have to absorb the first blow. Somebody has to absorb the first blow before we could react. As I have said, the advice from other Arab and other states was that Saddam was bluffing; our own intelligence assessments up until about 18 hours before the actual invasion of Kuwait, were inconclusive. We saw the massing of the troops; we saw the logistical support moving south; we saw the establishment of supply lines, etc., but none of the various indicators that would lead an analyst to determine conclusively that the Iraqis were going to invade Kuwait turned positive until very shortly before the invasion - so shortly, in fact, that it was really only a matter of hours before information that caused the analysts to reach the conclusion that Iraqis were going to invade became known to policy makers like Bob Kimmit and people in the office of the undersecretary for political affairs.

Now, the night before the invasion, which would have been the night of August 1st or August 2nd, I was having dinner with an Arab who served as Saddam's principal arms purchaser in Paris. He was the one who arranged all the purchase of French arms that the Iraqis had bought including, I'm sure, the missile system used to hit a U.S. Navy ship, the USS Stark, several years earlier before during the Iran-Iraq War.

This dinner was a significant event, so I will describe it to you. It took place in the middle of the Arabian summer -it must have been 120 degrees outside -late in an afternoon -5:30 or six o'clock. When we walked into his house - which felt freezing to 45/50 degrees. It probably was warmer than that. It was probably 65% or 70%, but it was about cool as you could possibly get a house in that time of day. Our host had a fireplace in the house which had roaring fire blazing in it. There was a white baby grand piano in the corner, sheer white, and somebody was playing classical music on it. At the dinner there was just my wife and myself and our host and his wife and his four bodyguards. The dinner went from about six o'clock to when we finally got up from the table -probably about 9:30 p.m or 10 p.m o'clock. It was a classic Arab meal during which you end up eating forever and then, as soon as the meal is over, you get up and leave, if you can still walk. During the course of the evening, we discussed virtually every problem on the global scene. It was one of the those wide-ranging discussions. We touched on the Arab world, we touched on the Baath Party, we touched on alliances, we touched on Arab relations with the West, we did Arab-Israeli affairs. The only issue we didn't touch was Kuwait. At this time down in Tayib the negotiations had already broken down and the Iraqi team had returned.

*Q: Tayib being a town in...*

WILSON: In Saudi Arabia, where the negotiations had taken place. We left about and got home and went to bed. At about 2:30 a.m. the phone rings. My house was not chilled to 55 degrees, so generally I slept naked. I jump out of bed - the phone's on the other side of the room - stumble across the room, trip over my dog who was sleeping at the foot of the bed. The dog starts barking, I'm grappling for the phone. I finally picked up the phone, and listened to the voice on the other end - one of the security guards at the embassy - saying: "Sir, I have the White House on the line." I was at that time the charge' - Glaspie having left for leave. My immediate reaction was, "My God, the president of the United States is calling." I did what any patriotic American would do. I stood at attention and saluted and waited for the president, my president, to come on the phone. You can just have the image of me standing stark naked at 2:30 in the morning saluting this phone, while my dog was barking in the background, waiting for the president of the United States to come on the line; it is a picture that I will not soon forget. Then, of course, the line went dead and nobody came on. By that time I had kind of gathered my wits about me and I realized that, one, it probably wasn't really the president of the United States calling me and, two, I wasn't going to call the White House in the absence of knowing precisely who had called. I called the National Security Council staffer, Sandy Charles; she told me that the Iraqis had just invaded Kuwait and that our ambassador in Kuwait City was reporting that there was gunfire there and that they were seeing troops which, in fact, had circled the embassy. So I said, "Fine." I called Nat down in Kuwait, got him on the phone, and we had just started chatting when they cut the lines.

After that point I could not get an international line to call out. The Iraqis, who were very good at this and had done this during the Iran-Iraq War, had basically unplugged one of the most modern telecommunications systems at the time and forced all people then to go through operators to get international calls. I took a shower and got dressed, and went to the office. By about 7:30 or eight o'clock in the morning, I was over at the foreign ministry with Tariq Aziz as soon as he got

in. I had no instructions at that time; I was relying principally on what I assumed the American message in this instance would be.

*Q: Which was?*

WILSON: The message to Iraq was that, "What you have done is inconsistent with commitments that your president made to April Glaspie. It's inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations; it's inconsistent with the Arab League Charter, and it's inconsistent with the draft Iraqi Constitution, all of which said in one degree or another that "thou shall not invade thy neighbor to resolve border disputes." Tariq, who for perhaps the only time during the whole time I knew him, was less than fully eloquent; he seemed a bit confused and appeared to me to be improvising. He replied that Saddam's commitment to April Glaspie was that the Iraqis would not take military action so long as there was a negotiating process ongoing, and that, since, the negotiations had failed in Tayib, the military option was open to the Iraqis. I replied to Tariq that he knew better than I that one failed negotiating session does not a failed process make. He knew that very well because there had been in a series of failed negotiating sessions since the conclusion of the Iran-Iraq War and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 598, which was the governing resolution to bring about the cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq War. They should not have concluded from a failed session in Tayib that the process itself had failed. Then I said to him that, insofar as we now had Iraqi troops surrounding our embassy in Kuwait City and throughout Kuwait and we had the U.S. Navy, which was still patrolling the Persian Gulf guaranteeing some sort of security in the Gulf for tankers navigating those waters, that it behooved us both to insure that we did everything in our power to minimize the potential for accidents between our forces in the region. I suggested that one of the ways we could do that would be to have direct contact between our respective embassies and our respective capitals. I asked him to restore my direct line from the embassy compound to Washington. Much to surprise, in about three hours they had done it. In life one takes the minor victories when one can get them. So within three hours we had our telephones up and running again.

*Q: Were you getting any communications through the cable system or anything like that at this point or were things happening so fast?*

WILSON: Things were happening very fast - so fast that when I went to see Tariq, it was before I had received any instructions from Washington. When I went to see Tariq about eight o'clock in the morning, it would have been about midnight Washington time. When the Iraqis invaded Kuwait and I heard about it, it was about two o'clock in the morning, which would have been about six, I guess, in the evening Washington time - eight hours earlier. So very little time had passed. We were able to test our satellite phone. We had a radio telephone that allowed us to communicate, but had to go to the communications center and they were to go up to...

*Q: This was sort of brand-new technology, wasn't it?*

WILSON: Actually this was old technology. This was before the satellite phone that we see now. This was a radio phone - essentially a ham radio type operation. We also had our communications hook-up for cable traffic. This was before the age of e-mail. I was flying pretty much on my own when I went to see Tariq. I came back and reported that conversation. We then

got the telephone connection re-established tying us in on a 24-hour-a-day department's operations center, which housed an emergency task force on the Middle East crisis.

In the first hours after the invasion, the president, as one of his first decisions, issued an executive order basically stopping all commercial trade and imposing sanctions on all transactions between Iraq and the United States. In order to get a waiver from these sanctions, one had to go to the Office of Foreign Asset Control, an office that is part of the Treasury Department. That resulted for example in every time there was a shift change at AT&T - and to a certain extent I have to imagine this, because I was sitting out in Baghdad - our telephone connection with the Department of State would go down. That meant that every eight hours - the length of the shift - we would have to send off a flurry of cables asking for these telephone lines to be reinstituted. After a couple hours the lines would come back up.

*Q: This was an American company responding the presidential mandate by cutting its service off.*

WILSON: This was an American company. My sense of how this would have happened, if you want to try and visualize the process, you would have a shift change, which meant that a new person would come in to control commercial transactions; he or she would look at the clipboard and notice that the line between Iraq and Washington was operational. As he or she understood the executive order, that was prohibited and so they would then instruct that the line be cut. It took three days to sort this out. The Department of State then had to go to the Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control, to get a waiver which could be taken to AT&T which finally allowed the line to be re-established and not be cut every time there was a shift change. That was one of the little hiccups early on with which we had to deal.

The other thing - and I think that this sort of set the tone for our relationship with Washington - was that we understood from early on was that if we didn't control the action in Baghdad, Washington would control it from Washington. We did everything we could do to be proactive. For example, I went to see Tariq Aziz and I laid a lot of our concerns. After that we sent in a number of recommendations and took a number of security-related actions. We painted the windows white; we enhanced our security; we moved people into various compounds so that they weren't spread all over the city - things like that.

*Q: I remember when I was in Saudi Arabia in 1958, an Iraqi mob had almost literally torn a few innocent Americans apart. Was that sort of thing on your mind - Iraqi mobs or something...*

WILSON: We got to that point but not quite then. We were initially doing everything that we could to get everybody together in the event that we had to evacuate. We hadn't scoped out the mob scenario just yet because we didn't have time - we didn't have the luxury of sitting down and doing that, although we did that on the third day, and I'll get to that.

*Q: One other thing: When you were talking to Tariq Aziz, was there still a doubt in your mind of what the Iraqis were after?*



WILSON: Yes. In the early days there was a sense that the Iraqis were intent on punishing Kuwait and to take what they needed from Kuwait, after which we thought that they would probably withdraw. The evolution of the 19th Province strategy and the transferring of the border to the hills just north of Kuwait didn't occur until the ensuing days. We're talking about August 2nd now, and all that didn't really come to pass until August 6th.

In addition to enhancing our security posture, we did the "burn-down" - we burned down to about five minutes. We did everything we could. We had a number of Americans who were hiding in Kuwait. There was a little 13-year-old girl who had been on an airplane that had been stuck in the Kuwait City airport at the time of the invasion and was captured by the Iraqis. She was traveling alone going from father or mother to father or mother in India from San Francisco. We were trying to account for all the missing American citizens. We were trying to find her particularly because she had disappeared somewhere in the midst of all this. We were trying to locate Americans everywhere; we did a very comprehensive early report on steps that we had taken and what we intended to do, and we sent that back to Washington the first day.

*Q: I don't mean to over-interrupt, but I think in your desire to be pro-active - ahead of the game - Washington will generally agree with you. Otherwise the concern is that Washington might be telling you things to do which might not make sense.*

WILSON: That's absolute right. If you have the pen in hand and you draft what you think is the right thing to do, Washington will essentially edit from your piece of paper. They will sing from your music or they will change your music, but essentially it's your music that they're playing.

*Q: Whoever writes the agenda controls the situation.*

WILSON: That's right, and this became very clear in the first National Security Council meeting. I was told that by John Kelly, who was then the assistant secretary of State for NEA. The first National Security Council - Secretaries of State, Defense, Treasury, CIA director and a few others - meeting was chaired by President Bush himself. Kelly was there. Kelly said that in this first meeting the president was kind of brainstorming with the principals. The president was sitting up there being presidential and ruminating about what to do. He has made his line-in-the-sand argument - I guess it was 'line in the sand' or 'this will not stand,' whatever it was - and somebody leans forward - Kelly claims it was him and it probably was - and says to the president of the United States, "Mr. President, if you look at your executive summary here, you'll see that a lot of these things you're suggesting we do Joe Wilson has already done. It's right there in front of you." And that, according to Kelly, gave me enormous credibility, and gave the embassy enormous credibility in Washington as a functioning operation which could be counted on. That made us sort of insiders for all of what went on afterwards. I was told by David Welch, who is soon to be our ambassador to Egypt but was at the time on the National Security Council staff in charge of Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, that in subsequent meetings, the next three or four meetings while they were still doing the planning and thinking about next steps, every time somebody would come up with an idea, President Bush would say, "What does Joe Wilson think about this?" Now, that's a two-edged sword. In Washington nobody really cares what they think about in the field, and to be reminded by the president every time someone

comes up with an idea it has to be run it by Joe Wilson, is not something that appeals to a lot of power players in Washington.

That gets us up to the first days of the invasion. As I said, early on we actually were able to move people into a few locations. We were able to make plans for evacuation and drawdown of American citizens. We found the little 13-year-old girl and were able to get her evacuated in the first group.

*Q: How did you do that? You went to the Iraqis...*

WILSON: I went to the Iraqis and said, "You just have to give her to us," and they did. The Iraqis had closed all borders. We made our plans to evacuate people by land to Jordan; that required us give the Iraqis ten days' advance notice, which was what we normally had to do anyway to get permission to move outside of a 25-mile area around Baghdad. In the midst of all this, one of my communicators died of a brain hemorrhage. He was a TCU [Technical Communications unit]. He was a guy who was very, very popular in the community. So at a time when everybody's emotions were running very high anyway, somebody who had meant a lot to many people in the embassy died of a brain hemorrhage, and we couldn't get the body out.

We were able to get the body moved over to a storage area. It wasn't a morgue because in the Arab world you bury the dead within 24 hours and you don't embalm. They don't have the same sort of facilities that we have in our world - fundamentally it was an ice chest in some downtown establishment. I went over and checked the body. We made arrangements to keep it housed there. We got everything ready to put it in a coffin that met international standards, which is something that I've always insisted at every embassy I've gone to - i.e. that there be the necessary equipment to use when an American dies overseas, because I had spent most of my career in Third World countries and at every one of my posts somebody has died. You have to have body bags; you have to have internationally approved coffins so that you can ship the bodies home and stuff like that. We had done that, so we were prepared for this eventuality. But there were no planes flying in and out.

At the same time we also had an American who had been picked up by the Iraqis. He had also died of a heart attack. Those were our only two casualties during the whole crisis. We had these two bodies and we were able to make arrangements for them to be transported out of the country. I can't remember exactly what we did. It must have been a flight. Either we chartered a flight or there was a flight going to Jordan or something. But in the midst of all this, we had to come to grips with the community's grief. There was no English-speaking priest in Baghdad. There was an Anglican Church, and the person who ran it was sort of a lay pastor; he was a wonderful. I contacted him, and we brought him over to the embassy, and we invited everybody for a memorial service in our courtyard. We had a memorial service and the pastor struck just the right tone. We took a half hour; we got all our nationals and we got all the Americans who wanted to come, and I said a few words and then turned it over to the pastor who conducted a service. We all took a half hour to grieve our colleague who had passed away and then went back to work.

At this time we were working literally 20/22 hours a day trying to get all our plans ready and to contact everyone. Every night I was getting calls at one o'clock in the morning saying that Nat

Howell had just reported to the Department of State that Iraqi troops had amassed around the embassy compound and that they were in a formation that suggested that they were going to come over the walls and take the embassy. I would go over to the foreign ministry, flag flying on my car, go in the back door, go see Nezar Hamdun and report this to him and tell him, "Don't do it." A couple of hours later I'd get a call at home waking me up, and it would be Nezar telling me that a higher authority had just told him - that higher authority being Saddam - that I should not worry; they weren't going to invade. I would relay that back to Washington, and an hour later or so Washington would report back to me that in fact the Iraqi troops had backed off from the embassy compound. This went on every night for several nights. We were not getting any sleep.

We had all our dependents still in Baghdad, so that we were having to deal with a lot the family issues. We had people stuck Kuwait, and it was pretty hectic. Iraqi courts were rounding up American citizens and making them hostages. On the fourth of August, I guess it was, they brought up a bunch of Americans out of Kuwait - they had been captured there during the invasion; they put them in one of the hotels in Baghdad. I went over to try to see them. They wouldn't let me see any of them. I was prepared to call a hostage a hostage and I called Washington. By that time we also had a few of the press people coming in. I called Washington and talked to Bob Kimmit about it. Kimmit was very reluctant at the time to...

*Q: Kimmit being...*

WILSON: He was the undersecretary for political affairs at the time. He was reluctant - and I think that he reflected accurately the administration's position - to refer to them as hostages until the situation became clearer. I think there was a sense that, if we started referring to them as hostages, Saddam might get the idea that he ought to really take them hostage; on the other hand, the situation was still in such a state of flux that perhaps they would released at an appropriate time. The only one they did release was the young girl. Most of the rest of them were roughnecks. They were guys who worked for a Santa Fe oil company and a couple of the other oil companies who were working in the Kuwait oil fields. Then there were some Americans that they had pulled in off the streets and some that they had gotten off of airplanes.

*Q: You were in a way fortunate. August in the Persian Gulf - I speak as someone who has spent three Augusts in the Persian Gulf - is not the greatest time. People get the hell out of there.*

WILSON: That's exactly right. In fact, we had always used the number 2,000 as an estimate of how many Americans were in Kuwait; it turned out to be far fewer.

It is now about the fifth of August. We've had a lot of back and forth with Washington. The phone service had been restored. Dan Rather came into town. So did Ted Koppel and Forrest Sawyer.

*Q: You might explain who they were.*

WILSON: Forrest Sawyer was a correspondent with CBS. Ted Koppel was the host of ABC's "Nightline" and one of their key newsmen. Dan Rather at that time was the anchor for the CBS "Evening News." Forrest Sawyer was in first in, followed by Koppel, followed by Rather. When

the first one came in, we put them up in our executive suite - an office that was often empty. When we were inundated by the press corps, they all came to us and said, "We need to file our stories, and we can't file from any of the hotels because you can't get a direct line." Even then the technology was such that you could file directly from your computer through a telephone line to your home office if you could get a direct line. We were the only ones who had a direct line. So we converted our USIS Cultural Center into a press office and allowed the American press in particular but the international press also to set up shop there to file from there. We tried to set up a way to account for it, although I don't think that was ever run terribly well. It was important to us, we thought, that the story be covered fully from Iraq from the beginning. The more information that got out from Baghdad, the better off we all were, and as a consequence, I made myself available to the press on a regular basis. As I said, we housed the press initially in our executive office. After a few days, we decided that perhaps it was not so smart to have them quite that close where they could observe all of our inner workings.

The next big day in all of this was August 6<sup>th</sup>. When I arrived at the office, I was told to be at the foreign ministry at 10 o'clock or 10:30. I went with my political officer, Nancy Johnson. We went to Tariq Aziz's office and, lo and behold, were told that we would meet Saddam. As I may have mentioned earlier, Saddam never met chiefs of mission alone. He would meet them in the context of the foreign representative escorting an exalted political visitor, but he would not meet to discuss substance. He would not meet them to receive their credentials. Those chores were all delegated. So for him to have met with April Glaspie on the 25th or 26th of July and me on the sixth of August was unprecedented.

In retrospect, I conclude that the reason he gave the United States so much personal attention was because in his own calculations he did not fear not an international reaction to the Kuwait invasion, but he did fear a unilateral American reaction; he feared that the United States might react unilaterally. That was quite clear from my meeting with him that day. The meeting was attended by Nancy and myself, and Saddam, his translator, Zuveral Zubeti, Nezar Hamdun, Tariq Aziz, and a few others. We saw Mouza Houwi, who was the other under secretary for political affairs, and Ryad Al Casey, who was their chief lawyer twice and he actually may be at the United Nations. It was really the A team of the Iraqi foreign ministry - a very intelligent, bright bunch of fellows, very experienced, very tough. We walk in and Saddam's standing there and the cameras are going and he's wearing his gun. I walk up to him and we shake hands.

There were a couple things that I had learned over the years on how to deal with Saddam and I had seen some of the things come out since the invasion of Kuwait. One, it was clear to me that I was not going to be caught on camera smiling. If you look at the trailers and the clips that show of April Glaspie at the time of the invasion, they show her shaking hands with Saddam and smiling as if they were sharing a joke. That was not going to happen to me Two, in all the pictures showing Saddam greeting people, the people would be caught on camera sort of bowing to Saddam. I had noticed this when I first got there. My first meeting with Saddam, as I mentioned, was when I escorted Arlen Specter and Dick Shelby. Arlen Specter was the senior senator from Pennsylvania, and Dick Shelby was the senator from Alabama. At that time he was a Democrat. I had noticed the phenomenon of people bowing to Saddam Hussein. This was about the time that Nancy Reagan had gotten in a lot of trouble when she'd gone to England and had been caught curtsying to the Queen of England. The American press corps had reacted in

horror; after all we had fought a war 200 and some odd years ago against the monarchy to be republicans and here we were still curtsying to the Queen of England. I figured that if you can't curtsy to the Queen of England, you sure as hell shouldn't be bowing to this potentate in Iraq. I'd gone to the meeting with Shelby and Specter; afterwards I went home and turned on the TV and watched it and, of course, there we were. The opening news item was Shelby, Specter and Joe Wilson going up to shake hands with Saddam Hussein, and there's Joe Wilson bowing to Saddam Hussein. I said, "I can't quite figure that out." After a while of watching that tape, I figured that Saddam used a number of psychological tricks. For one, he broke that social space with the visitor, so that he actually got closer to you before shaking your hands; the handshake was the last of the introduction rituals. First, you stood face to face, and he stared at you unblinkingly with these very deep brown eyes; he might engage in some idle chit-chat, "How's the day?" "What's the news?" - the sort of stuff that one says when one greets somebody. Then after an appropriate amount of time - while the chit chat was being translated by the translator - he stuck out his hand, but he didn't stick his hand out at a normal level. He stuck his hand out very low, about crotch level for want of a description; so if you were standing staring at him from a distance of about 12 inches and the time came to shake hands, his hand was real low, forcing you to look down to make sure that you grabbed his hand and not another piece of his anatomy. And that's when the camera caught you bowing to him. When I saw him, on August 6th, the time came to shake hands; I was prepared and I actually did just reach out and grab. That I'm here to tell you the story will suggest to you that I did get his hand and not that other part of the anatomy.

When I came back, I told that story to Tom Foley, who then was the Speaker of the House but who, as I said earlier, had been my boss when I was a Congressional Fellow and he was Majority Whip. I'm sitting in the Speaker's office in the Capitol building, which is quite an ornate office right in the heart of the Capitol, and Tom and Heather, his wife, were sitting there. I told the story, and Tom leans forward in his chair - he's got this big overstuffed Speaker's chair - and he says to me, "You mean to tell me that you were this close to having Saddam Hussein by the short hairs and you didn't go for it, and as a consequence we had to send Norm Schwarzkopf and 500,000 of America's finest to finish the job?" He also served at the time as head of the PIFIAD - the presidential intelligence oversight board. He called me a couple days later and said, "You know, I have to tell you that I couldn't resist, even though you told me that story in the confines of our office, opening up the meeting of the president's intelligence oversight board today by telling that story. Now everybody in Washington knows. It'll be all around Washington by the time you sit down to dinner tonight."

Back to the meeting. Saddam and I sat down. He was still wearing his gun, and the cameras were still on as we're sitting there. I'll show you the picture afterwards. I still have the picture in my office - a souvenir from the time when I did serious diplomacy for a living. Saddam says, "Well, what's the news?" By this time, we're four days into the crisis. I'm angry. I haven't slept a wink. I've got people who are being held hostage in Iraq and in Kuwait. I've got an ambassador down in Kuwait who calls me every night saying he's about to be overrun. I'm not a happy camper. So I figure I'll make a little joke here. I tell Saddam, "Look, if you want to know what's new, you really ought to address that question to your foreign minister and not me, because your foreign minister has a satellite dish which allows him to get American news stations such as CNN. I've been fighting with him for two years now to try to get a satellite dish for our embassy. I can't get

one for our embassy. So if you want to know what's new, ask him. Don't ask me." Saddam laughed at that. I said it in a sort of jocular way. Saddam laughs, and I, as one who always likes to laugh at his own jokes, sat back up and started to smile to share the laugh with him. Then I remembered that the cameras were still there. I just stopped right in mid-smile and leaned back forward as stern as I could be, which was a good move because you never see me on American television smiling to Saddam Hussein. You never see April Glaspie not smiling to Saddam Hussein. If there was one mistake that was made - and of course it wasn't really a mistake because Saddam hadn't invaded Kuwait at the time, and it was normal to smile with a chief of state if you were in a meeting with him- it was to have the image of April Glaspie smiling in the American psyche. We spent almost two hours together, listening mostly to Saddam telling me the history of the demarcation of Arab borders and why the Al Sabah family was 'history' - and this was his term.

*Q: Al Sabah being...*

WILSON: Being the rulers of Kuwait. I remember distinctly this was the one time when Tariq Aziz got into the conversation. Mostly it was Saddam speaking through his translator to me and then me back to Saddam; the first 45 minutes to an hour were a Saddam monologue. At one point he said, "Whatever we decide to do with Kuwait, the one thing you need to understand is that the Al Sabah family is history." The translator had trouble translating that, and so Tariq Aziz jumped in and said, "The Al Sabah family is history." That for me was a very interesting phrase because at that time, when you said somebody is history, that was American slang. It was very popular to say that somebody is history - as in "You're history, man."

*Q: Which means you're finished.*

WILSON: Which means you're finished. One didn't hear that often in formal conversation; so for them, Tariq in particular, to have this much knowledge of not just the English language but American slang English really struck me. The crux of the Iraqi position was: "We keep Kuwait; you let us keep Kuwait; don't react, and we will become the guarantors for the Persian Gulf" - much the same role that had been attributed to the Iranians under the Shah - "and we will guarantee you a steady supply of petroleum at a reasonable price. We will not do anything against Saudi Arabia unless the Saudi rulers allow their country to be used as a platform from which efforts to destabilize my regime, the Iraqi regime, are launched." That was the crux of the deal. I had no talking points, since the meeting had been set up on such short notice. So I had nothing to give back to him. I essentially took the same line that I had used with Tariq. I mentioned the instability in world oil markets that this invasion had caused. Saddam interrupted me to digress for 20 minutes on oil prices. Then I got back to the points that I had thought of raising with him, which were the three that I had raised with Tariq Aziz: "It's inconsistent with the Arab League; it's inconsistent with your draft Constitution; and it's inconsistent with the United Nations for you to be invading a neighbor; in addition to that, there are three specific issues. One, you've got to quit looting American diplomatic properties. Two, you've got to open the border so that Americans and other foreigners can leave." The third point must have been something on human rights. When I said, "You ought to open your border so that Americans can leave consistent with the Geneva and Vienna Conventions," he said, "Are you talking about just Americans?" and I said, "Well, I'm only empowered to speak on behalf of Americans, but I

would think that more broadly you ought to open your border so that all foreigners can leave.” At that point he said, “Why? Do you know something that I don’t know about a potential American response?” I said, “Well, Mr. President, I can assure you that if I knew something about American intentions, I would not share it with you, but what I will tell you is that I intend to be here so long as there is a role for diplomats to play in resolving this peacefully.”

*Q: At this point did have any idea of what was happening, in particularly the United States but also elsewhere about a response? At a certain point I think those of us who had been in the diplomatic business realized that we just could not let this guy sit on all that oil. This is not something that really can...*

WILSON: It was not the Gambian peanut crop we’re talking about. Two things were clear to me pretty much from the very beginning: one, that we were not going to allow this to stand; and, two, that if we were going to get Iraq out, we had to do it by being very bellicose. Either we were going to have to go to war or our threats of going to war had to be very credible. That was clear to me, and I told that to President Bush. When I went to the Oval Office to meet him, the first thing I said to the president was just that. We hadn’t spoken directly during the early August days, but we’d had some telegraphic exchanges; nevertheless I felt from the very beginning that we were on the same wave length on this issue. In any case, President Bush said, “You’re absolutely right,” and then he turned and introduced me to everybody else.

In this meeting on August 6th Saddam laid out the deal. I laid out our concerns. He asked me if I knew something about U.S. intentions. I told him if I did, I wouldn’t share it with him anyway but I intended to be in Baghdad as long as there was any diplomacy to be conducted. It was a tough meeting. I gave as good as I got. About halfway through the meeting - just another little atmospheric - Saddam goes for his gun, and I’m going, “Hmmm. Was it something I said? Did I forget to brush my teeth this morning or what?” But he really was just going for his gun belt because he wanted to take it off. He said, “It is really uncomfortable with my bad back and everything, to wear this gun sitting in this seat.” So after the cameras were gone, he took off the gun and put it on the table. After the meeting’s over, we’re walking out shaking hands with everybody. Saddam, as we’re walking out, put his arm on my shoulder and said, “That was a good meeting.” I’m thinking to myself, “hmmm, if it was a good meeting for him, shit.” I think I had been plenty tough with him. I went back to the office and we did three cables. My political note taker wrote the...

*Q: This is Nancy Johnson.*

WILSON: Nancy Johnson wrote the formal memorandum of conversation. I wrote a real quick and dirty “This is the deal” cable. Then I wrote a shorter version of the memorandum of conversation basically encapsulating the main points and some of my thoughts about it. About at the time that I returned to the office, which would have been about 12:30 or one o’clock in the afternoon, Washington was about to convene another National Security Council meeting to be chaired by the President. About every 10 minutes we’re drafting this up and there was a lot to go through. At that time we didn’t have a computer screen on which you could make corrections. We had to correct the text on green cable paper with sort of inserts. It was a rudimentary communications system relative to what we have now. I got my cable off, and about every 10

minutes I'm getting a call from National Security Council saying, "Where's your cable? The president wants to convene this National Security Council meeting and we need your cables." I'm saying to them, "We're getting it out as fast as we can. If you keep calling me, you're keeping me away from doing the writing and editing." We did get them all out in time for the National Security Council meeting. I guess the president's calendar must have been such that he wanted to have this meeting on that morning because he then was going off to Colorado, or maybe he was teleconferencing the meeting or something, shortly thereafter with Maggie Thatcher. We got this all out; by this time we had instituted, to insure the secrecy of the cable traffic, a special code word encryption - code word designator. We sent these cables out marked "Secret." For all intents and purposes, the only top-secret material that you ever send out has to do with a nuclear holocaust or, nuclear weapons. Our cables were marked "Secret NODIS," which means no distribution beyond a select few. There was a further restriction on distribution by using the code word "Babylon," which was the word we used to describe the Gulf crisis - Desert Shield -at the time. So these cable went out 'Secret NODIS Babylon.'

The next day the long cable, the cable that was effectively the memorandum of conversation, showed up on the front page of the *New York Times* word for word, including some material that we might have edited out if we had had more time to send the cable. That was a sentence that should have part of a previous paragraph, but got dropped to a new paragraph, or vice versa -something like that. I noticed it in the original draft, but said, "Let it go. Let's just get this out. They will understand it in Washington." The next day when the *New York Times* carried the text of the cable, it included this editorial error that we had allowed to go out. Not only had the correspondents been briefed on the contents of the cable, but they actually had seen a copy of the "Secret NODIS Babylon" cable.

Of course, the Iraqis were furious. This happened two days after the meeting - time devoted to drafting the cables and sending them out and then time to fall into the hands of the *New York Times* and its publication. I get called from the undersecretary, Nezar Hamdun. I am also furious because I believed in the integrity of the system that says when you send it 'Secret NODIS Babylon' it's not going to find its way into the press. Nezar says to me, "Look, what sort of operation are you guys running? One, you take a confidential message from my president to your president and you put it on the front page of the *New York Times*; and, two, your president is asked whether he has received a message from my president as he's walking down a stone walkway with the prime minister of the United Kingdom." Somebody from the press had asked, "Mr. Bush, did you receive a message from Saddam Hussein?" and President Bush says, "No." So Nezar said, "You put it on the front page of the *New York Times* but you don't give it to the president of the United States. What's wrong with you guys? Okay, be that as it may, we're still waiting for the reply from the president of the United States to Saddam's message." I said, "Okay, got it. I'll get back to you." I called the Washington task force, and the guy on the other end was Skip Gnehm. I told him what Nezar has told me and I said, "Look, you guys need to understand that my credibility here right now is pretty low because you guys have managed to publish this cable." In retrospect, I suspect it was probably the secretary of State himself who gave it to the *New York Times* writer for domestic reasons, because we were beginning to beat the war drums at home. I said, "But anyway, be that as it may, how am I supposed to reply to Nezar?" Skip says, "You can tell the Iraqis, one, the president of the United States received the message and, two, if he wants to know what the American response is, he needs only to turn on



CNN.” I said, “Got it,” and went back to Nezar Hamdun and told him just that. I was in his office, which by that time was wired up to CNN; CNN was on the television set in the corner. I told him that, “The president got the message and, two, if you want to know what the U.S. response is, look at CNN.” As I said that, I turned to look at the TV monitor which was showing these big C5As taking off from American bases every 10 seconds beginning to ferry American material and equipment to the Arabian Gulf from all over. The deployment had begun. Then the program cut away from the airfields to ports where American tanks were being taken to be shipped across the ocean. This was just three days after I had met with Saddam. Three days after that, at the same time that I was meeting with Saddam, Dick Cheney was down in the Gulf meeting with the Saudis and showing them the satellite overhead pictures which indicated that the Iraqis had deployed all the way to the southern Kuwaiti border and that their logistic supply lines indicated that they could potentially hit the eastern Saudi oil fields, directly threatening Saudi economic interests.

*Q: Had you gotten any instructions from Washington up to this point saying you should tell them that if they didn't get out, war would come, or anything like that?*

WILSON: No; to this point the message was just to get out. The message was pretty clear to get out; it was a message that they had not sent to me necessarily, but one that they had given quite publicly. The drawing the line in the sand was the initial reaction. It wasn't until November 6th or November 7th that the President came out and said, “We will roll this back.” So in August-September, liberating Kuwait was not the objective.

*Q: We were talking about the time period of “Desert Shield,” which was for the protection of Saudi Arabia.*

WILSON: That's right. The line in the sand was the Saudi-Kuwait border, not the Kuwait-Iraq border.

*Q: What about other embassies at that point, including what would still be the Soviet embassy and obviously the British and French? Were they looking to you to find out what was happening?*

WILSON: As the situation evolved, that became the case. Our relations in the first three days of the crisis with these other embassies were not as intense as they were later. We were preoccupied with the welfare of our citizens and getting our own policy right and getting our own communications right with Washington. But as we went forward, we would have meetings. I would have meetings every evening. We had a quartet that we would meet: the Turks, either ambassador or DCM depending on who was in the country; the French chargé; the Soviet, again either ambassador or more often the DCM; and myself. We would meet, and discuss a number of different issues. I also would attend the EU meetings and would share with them what we were doing. Because of the nature of our relationship with Washington, we were much quicker than the Europeans in acting; we basically would act and start our cables to Washington with, “Assuming that this is what you would have done if you were in our place, this is what we did.”

*Q: Were you in a way doing political analysis of both sides? Obviously you were looking at Iraq to figure out what the hell they're up to, but were you listening to the Voice of America, the BBC*

*and other media trying to figure out what was going on in the United States? Were you having to sort of reach out to try to get the feel of what was going on?*

WILSON: Once we got past the first few days, after my meeting with Saddam, we saw that the troops were moving and the Iraqis by this time had essentially annexed Kuwait. They said that Kuwait was now the 19th province of Iraq. It became pretty clear that we were in for the long haul. We were preoccupied again with the welfare and whereabouts of our citizens. We were preoccupied with the evacuation of embassy employees. By this time the Iraqis were rounding up American citizens in Iraq, in Baghdad; we were one step ahead of them. We were able to get out and pull most American citizens into our diplomatic quarters. We got 150 people whom we lodged and fed in various diplomatic compounds. There were another 115/120 that were identified as human shields; they had been caught up in all of this and were unaccounted for. There were what we estimated to be a couple thousand Americans in hiding in Kuwait; our people in Kuwait were running a little operation to try to bring everybody safely into the embassy compound. So we didn't have a whole lot of time to think about much more than how we were just going to get everybody out in anticipation of a military action.

*Q: Was anybody going around the streets of Baghdad trying to get the mood of the people or anything like that?*

WILSON: Yes; we were on the streets all the time, but during the initial days as we set up our operation, we were focused on that. I was out all the time, but most of our people were hunkered down. I was going back and forth to the foreign ministry. I had everybody on the embassy side of the river, except for myself; they would be able to get into the embassy compound quickly without having to cross any bridges in the event the bridges were blocked or the bridges were blown up in an attack. The only reason I stayed on the other side of the river was because, one, my house was there but, two, more importantly, because the foreign ministry was there. In the event of a crisis somebody had to be able to go over and deal with the foreign ministry, and that was me. I had the armored car and I had the flag, and as a consequence that's what I did.

*Q: Were you getting anything from the Arab embassies?*

WILSON: Yes, but again this was after the first few days. The other thing that happened during the first few days was we had the influx of the American media, as I mentioned earlier. By this time Rather was in. Koppel had left. He had left on the desk that he knew that Rather was going to be occupying, a little note which he had written: "10:30 a.m., meeting with SH." He left that casually on the desk so that, when Rather came in, he would take a look at it and he would think that he had been scooped by Ted Koppel - that Koppel had gotten the first meeting with Saddam, which he hadn't. Koppel still remembers it whenever I talk to him, which hasn't been for several years now, but he always remembers that little joke he played on Dan Rather.

We're now, say, about the eighth or ninth of August; we held a meeting in my office. We'd set up my office, the DCM's office, as the operations center; we put the telephone there - the one that was hooked up to the operations center in Washington 24 hours a day. We had a meeting that started late in the evening, 9:30 or 10 o'clock; it went until about three o'clock in the morning. At that meeting was myself, the station chief who was the head of our CIA operation

there, the defense attaché, the political officer and the consular officer - about five or six. During the course of these several hours, we gamed out all the possible scenarios. Drawing upon our collective knowledge of Iraqi history dating back to the time of the revolution in 1958 with the drawing and quartering of several American employees of Bechtel, and the Iraqi reaction to the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, and what happened to an Iranian delegation that was in Baghdad at that time, we concluded that the chances were really very good that some of us sitting in that room then would not survive this particular crisis. Some of might, but others might not. Therefore we concluded very early on that some of us were probably going to die; that everything that we knew about the way the Iraqis reacted indicated to us that some of us probably would not survive.

*Q: I might point out that there's always been talk of the Arab mob taking violent action, but that there had really been only two instances of a real Arab mob going after people and that was in Baghdad in 1958 and the other was in 1979 in Islamabad. When our embassy was burned, we almost lost 130 people; we lost four or five. But the possibility has always been thrown out there, as again it is today, but Baghdad particularly has always stood out as being the exception.*

WILSON: We didn't fear the Arab mob because the Iraqi government controlled everything from A to Z. We feared that the Iraqi government would give instructions that the Arab mob should mobilize to take some of us out. The Iraqis had been involved in running a defense attaché off the road when they had not been pleased with some of the stories about U.S. sharing of intelligence with Iranians or because of concerns about the U.S. willingness to sell arms to the Iranians in exchange for the freeing of hostages in Lebanon.

*Q: This was the Iran-Contra operation run by Ollie North and company.*

WILSON: There was a long Iraqi history of intimidation of Americans -a long history of not respecting diplomatic immunities and of actually killing people. So we worked on that assumption; that was good because to a certain extent that allowed us to come to grips with this whole question of "are you going to die or not" early on; we became rather fatalistic about it. We basically concluded at this meeting with the question that if we were all going to die, how did we want to go down, how did we want to go out. Did we want to go out like sheep being led to slaughter, or did we want to get out being very defiant to the bitter end? We concluded that we were going to be defiant, and that set the tone of the embassy from that time on. We saw this much less as a diplomatic nicety and much more as standing up for what was right, and we comported ourselves in that way from then on.

Let me just add one thing to this. When I came out of Baghdad, I went over to CIA, to talk to a psychologist who studies foreign leaders and their character and their mental make-up. During the course of discussing Saddam Hussein with him, I asked, "What is the most effective way to deal with somebody with these sort of character defects or this mental illness?" His response was, "The only way that you can really deal with him is to stand up to him, to be defiant and to be very much antagonistic and threatening." That, in fact, is basically what our strategy had been from the very beginning. Unfortunately the Agency had not bothered to share with us their assessment of how we should deal with this leader. We were sitting in Baghdad, without the benefit of their wisdom as we developed our strategy. As it turned out, several weeks later the

Iraqis expelled a number of our employees. As I was taking them out to the airport to put them on the airplane, they walked through customs to get on one of these charter flights leaving the country. I realized that everybody who had been expelled and was leaving the country were people who had been at this meeting with me at which we had concluded that some of us were likely going to die during this crisis. Everybody except for me was getting on that damn airplane. I had not really thought much about it until then, but at that time as they were getting on the airplane, I thought to myself, "Boy, you really did draw the short straw this time."

You had asked earlier about dealing with other diplomats. It is a good time to tell you the story about Dan Rather and the Egyptian ambassador and how we planted a story that led to the release of women and children who were being held hostage from Baghdad.

In the first few days - first few weeks anyway - after the invasion of Kuwait, the elite of American news broadcasting came through Baghdad. As I mentioned earlier, the first one was Forrest Sawyer, the second one was Ted Koppel, and the third one was Dan Rather. As I said, we had been thinking through our strategy on what we were going to do. We had made the embassy about as safe as we could. We hunkered down. We were working real hard to get the human shields released. Saddam was attempting to paint a picture of himself as the benevolent "Uncle Saddam." He appeared on international TV with a 14-year-old hostage in a very eerie photo.

*Q: It was a British boy. I'll never forget that footage.*

WILSON: The footage was of Saddam standing with the boy in front of him; the young man looked absolutely petrified. Saddam pats him on the shoulder, on the head, and makes like he's just invited this guy over to spend a few weeks with him in Iraq. Of course, the kid was there against his will; the kid's mother was there against her will. It was very chilling, and I don't believe that it achieved his propaganda aim. The propaganda aim was to convince viewers that these people were not in fact hostages; that they were just being held temporarily against their will, but they were being treated very well, as guests as opposed to as hostages. We were looking for ways to counteract that. We didn't want any piece of his propaganda to go out over the airwaves without its being contradicted by truth on the ground as we saw it. So we were looking actively for ways to make the point that what he was doing was in fact not benevolent, but it was malevolent and it was really inappropriate not to mention a violation of various international conventions that governed conduct in such a situation. About this time, the Egyptian ambassador called me and invited me over for tea that afternoon; I went. He was a very good guy. The Egyptians had several millions citizens in Iraq. They were doing a lot of construction work; they basically backstopped the Iraqi industry while Iraq's boys and young men were at the front or in the guard units, either in the army or in a sort of national guard guarding the pipelines and oil facilities. The Iraqis had the Egyptians coming in to do the menial work -bricklaying, painting and building and stuff like that. I went to see the Egyptian ambassador; we were sitting there talking and he said, "You know, Saddam has just built this big statue to himself at the Arab Conquerors Square -Arab Heroes Square - and he's taken down the statue of an Arab on horseback to be replaced with a 40-foot-high statue of himself. At the same time he's done that, his people have gone around and instructed all the various business establishments in Iraq that might have the Arab Hero in their business title, or Arab Conqueror in their business title, to change their names of their businesses because there is only one Arab hero in Iraq and they were

not it. So, for example, if you were in Baghdad and you had the Arab Hero Drycleaner, somebody would knock on your door and say that you had to change the name of the business because there's only one Arab hero and they were not it. "So," the Egyptian ambassador went on, "what we ought to do is to turn this Arab Hero stuff on its head. We ought to make the point that Saddam Hussein, who is a self-styled Arab conquering hero, is really nothing more than a coward because true Arab heroes do not hide behind little children or the skirts of women." I thought that was a pretty clever idea. I went back to my office- and this was literally a couple nights before Rather was supposed to leave - as we did on most nights, to smoke cigars and talk about what had gone on during the day. My relationship with the press was such that I would give them a background briefing in the morning and usually one in the evening. They would come to brief me on their activities during the day. Rather and I were sitting around talking and I told him this story, and he said, "That's a great one. I think maybe I'll use that." I suggested that he not use it in Baghdad because, even though he was the great Dan Rather of the American airwaves, they might not appreciate the story in Iraq, and they did have a tendency to kill journalists. They had just killed this Iranian-born British journalist a couple of months earlier. So he didn't. He left the next night, and when he got to Amman, Jordan - I was told this; I didn't hear it - he used this story in one of his broadcasts; that was maybe on a Thursday or Friday night. On the next Monday or Tuesday - again I was told this; I wasn't able to pick up this information directly - Maggie Thatcher went to the floor of the House of Commons and pretty much used the same language in denouncing Saddam: "True Arab heroes do not hide behind the skirts of women and behind little children." Within about four or five days, Saddam announced that women and children would be permitted to leave Iraq, which basically opened up that floodgate, so we almost at once were able to have the hostages that we had in our custody released from the country.

*Q: That must have been a great relief. Did you think that the United States was going to attack at any point?*

WILSON: I thought from the very beginning that the United States was going to steel itself for an attack. I never doubted for a second that the president and his War Cabinet had the political will to roll back the invasion of Kuwait by military means if necessary. I felt that really from day one. That was an operating assumption in everything that I did - that I was backed by the military might of the United State. I believed that really starting with my first meeting with Tariq Aziz.

*Q: What was your impression of Iraqi military might? You know, there was a tendency in the United States to play these people as if they were 10 feet tall; they turned out to be considerably shorter pygmies as far as military prowess, but then they had just finished defeating Iran in a huge war. What was your impression of Iraqi military power?*

WILSON: First of all, they hadn't defeated Iran; they had fought Iran to a standstill. Not much territory changed hands by the time of the cease-fire. The first question to negotiate in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq War was where the border between the two countries was going to be, whether it was going to be on one of the banks of the Shatt al Arab or whether it was going to be in the middle of the Shatt al Arab. So there really wasn't a clear victor in that war. Secondly, and perhaps more to the point, we fully understood that Saddam had a large and experienced military ground force; we fully understood that he had exotic weaponry - i.e. chemical and biological

weapons -and that he had already demonstrated a will to use chemical and biological weapons in artillery shells against Iran and in gas attacks against the restive Kurdish population in the northeast of the country in the aftermath of the cease-fire. So we understood that he had a large and experienced ground force. We also understood that there were some gaping holes in Iraqi capabilities. This came out really in the invasion of Kuwait. We knew that the Iraqi military forces lacked a good logistical support base, so while the tip of the spear was experienced and bloody and it knew how to kill and how to wage war, supporting those troops once they moved forward was a challenge for the Iraqi military forces. In fact, when we went back - we did this in our review of the military capabilities - to look at the Iran-Iraq War, we noticed that every time the Iraqis would get five kilometers beyond their logistical support bases, they would get bogged down. They could never move their support bases up to where their troops were when they got too far ahead. When they got to Kuwait City, there was some evidence that they were prepared to go all the way to the eastern oil fields of Saudi Arabia around Dhahran - had they done that, it would have changed the nature of our reaction considerably. But it was clear that even by getting to the southern Kuwait border, which is as far as they got, they had outrun their logistical support capacity, so they themselves bogged down in Kuwait. Even if they had made a political decision, it's not clear whether or not they had the military capacity to go into Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Even before the invasion started or up to it or particularly in the early days of the invasion, was anybody from Washington asking you for an appraisal of the Iraqi military?*

WILSON: Sure. We had periodically done appraisals. We had a military attaché who was doing readiness and order-of-battle reports on the Iraqi military all the time. In addition to the logistical support issue, we also understood early on in the war that they lacked a lot of M&R capability - maintenance and repair - for their material. As the sanctions that we imposed and then the United Nations later imposed began to bite, we started a project to take a look at the impact of the sanctions - initially on the economy as a whole. As we refined the goals of the project, we determined that looking at the economy as a whole wasn't going to give us the information we needed; so we narrowed the target to what the sanctions were doing to the military infrastructure. For example, we would test fuels - we had some guys who knew how to do this - for the additives, because while Iraq had a lot of gasoline and refining capability, they didn't have some of the additives to make the fuel really good for their engines. They lacked the additives which meant that their engines were going to wear down requiring a higher maintenance program. We also projected tire utilization for their trucks, because they couldn't get spare tires in to replace the old ones. We went out and we looked at certain hardware, particularly trucks along the side of the road and things like that, and extrapolated from that that, while the sanctions in and of themselves would not in the short term bring down the Iraqi economy, they did have an impact in specific sectors. We said that one could reach the conclusion that the Iraqi economy was like a house of cards or one of these little stick structures, and that if you kept pulling the card or stick out, eventually it was going to collapse. We said however that that was not the right analogy, but that rather what would happen would be that the economy would just grind down. Those who were driving Cadillacs today would be driving Volkswagens tomorrow and riding donkey carts 10 years from now, but the economy itself would not collapse. On the other hand, in terms of the executing our military strategy, which is where we thought we ought to really be taking this analysis, you would be able to detect rather quickly the difficulties that would crop in the logistical support that the war machine in Kuwait

needed - i.e. getting tanks and trucks up and running and keeping them up and running. That's what we began to focus on. And I think that our analysis was accurate. I think history has shown that the economy did grind down. We basically concluded that the way to look at sanctions was not as a strategy but rather as a tactic that allowed you to weaken your enemy before you ever fired the first bullet, and that's in fact what happened.

*Q: Our generals including Colin Powell and Admiral William Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were saying at that time was to let sanctions run their course on the assumption that that would cause the Iraqis to withdraw from Kuwait.*

WILSON: It was never going to happen. It was particularly Crowe and David Jones, who went up on the Hill...

*Q: David Jones being an Air Force General.*

WILSON: He'd been the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. He'd been an Air Force General. They went up on the Hill and testified during the debate on the "Use-of-Force" resolution. Admiral Crowe's testimony was particularly troubling because he had been the chairman who had been appointed and reappointed by George Bush. For him to testify while apparently not privy to the same information that we had - which we had shared with the Agency and with relevant American authorities - and making the argument that we shouldn't use military force, was the wrong argument and sent absolutely the wrong signal to the Iraqis. The lesson for Saddam Hussein from Crowe's testimony was that the American military would not stand behind their president; that was very disconcerting for us because we were right in the throes at that time of making great progress on the release of the 115 human shields and the rest of the people that we had in hiding in Iraq as well as Americans who might have been in hiding in Kuwait. As soon as Crowe and Jones gave that testimony, all our efforts came to a stand still; it took us about a month to get things back on track and to leverage the release of these hostages, because a lot of our strategy was predicated on our assumption that in the grand scheme of things the U.S. was prepared to sacrifice the hostages in order to achieve its military aims and, that therefore, it was not in Saddam's interest to keep the hostages, because the anger, if something were to happen to the hostages, in the United States would have been such that that in and of itself might have forced the president's hand. We were telling the Iraqis, "You have to decide what you want to fight the war over. If you want to fight the war over mistreatment of some Americans who are being held hostage, that's one thing. If that's not what you want to fight the war on, then you ought to get this off the table and then we can go back to the core issues." To this day, by the way, I have not forgiven Admiral Crowe for that testimony. I talked to President Bush when the book he wrote with Brent Scowcroft was in the galley proof stage and I recounted to him just what I told you. He went back and edited his book and added a gentle barb in it about the effects of Crowe's testimony. But to this day I find it very difficult to be in the same room with Admiral Crowe.

*Q: Whom were you and, I assume, other people from the embassy talking to about the war?*

WILSON: Among the Iraqis?

*Q: Yes.*

WILSON: When Saddam was moving his troops into Kuwait, we were talking about war. In my own case, during my first conversation with Tariq Aziz on August 2nd, I said that with his troops in Kuwait City and our naval ships in the Persian Gulf, it behooved us at this tense time to avoid miscalculations. I used that to leverage 24-hour-a-day telephone contacts between the embassy compound and Washington. The embassy compound included USIA's Cultural Center. After we got through the cycle of Rather and Ted Koppel and the other heavyweights, we decided, as I mentioned earlier, that we needed to preserve the integrity of the front office and keep the press out of there except when specifically invited. So we moved the press over to the Cultural Center across the street, which was fine. It still gave them the opportunity to file directly, because it was the only place in town that could get direct connectivity with their home offices.

With respect to talking about war the rest of the time, the only person after the first evacuation, after the 11th or 12th of August, left at the embassy who was in a position to talk to the Iraqis was me. I had a political officer who would accompany me when I went to see Taziz or other high ranking officials.

But in terms of dealing with the Iraqis, I was the focal point. That became an issue when we offered our views on whether April Glaspie should return. We said that we thought that she should and that the political heat of having her come back and having this played out in the American press as the United States returns an ambassador to Iraq - the symbol of American respect for this potentate who's just invaded his neighbor - could be offset by having her come back in a convoy with all the other European ambassadors who had been out on vacation at the same time.

The Department decided not to send her back. About three weeks later, because my wife was really very emotionally upset, I argued that one of the actions that might be taken -so I could deal with this issue while at the same time maintaining a core of credibility -would be to leave Iraq to accompany Jim Baker on his trip to Jordan and then to Russia and the European capitals, which would have given me maybe four or five days away from Baghdad during which I could have managed to calm my wife down before coming back. But the Department wouldn't let me come out because they were afraid that the Iraqis wouldn't let me get back, and then there wouldn't be anybody who could talk to them. That's about as close as you can be to being indispensable. When I put my finger in the water, there was in fact a whole a left after I took my finger out.

*Q: All of us who have gone through times of crises find that, unlike the military who often leave their wives behind with a support system, we usually arrive with wives unless things really get tough and the wives are taken out with not much of a support system. This is a great strain on the wives, on the family, and on the officer. Could you talk just a touch about that.*

WILSON: In our case it was particularly difficult. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, we imposed the Presidential Executive Order which was followed by a UN embargo on trade with Iraq. That meant that everything from initially - I think I told this story - telephone communication, for which we had to get a waiver, to regularly scheduled airliners and other flights became very limited. We obtained waivers for humanitarian evacuations of the people



who were being held against their will or were stuck in Kuwait and Iraq, but otherwise we couldn't get people on airplanes. So the only way that we could get people out was to drive them across the desert, which was about a 12-hour drive, to Jordan or to drive them through Iraq to Turkey. We began organizing these evacuations literally on the second day. We went to a complete drawdown posture. We negotiated with the Department how far down we were going to get and we ended up getting down to about seven or eight in the first evacuation. The timing of the evacuation was further complicated by an Iraqi requirement that they be given a 10 days' advance notice before left an area more than 25 miles outside of Baghdad; they were pretty inflexible about that. In addition, ordinary citizens had stopped traveling, so that it was very difficult for people without diplomatic passports to leave the country. Then, of course, the Iraqis were taking these people hostage; we couldn't risk exposing our citizens to the Iraqi street for fear that they would get picked up and turned into hostages. In fact, some of the Americans that we took in and put in our diplomatic quarters - that's why we were housing them all in diplomatic quarters, because these were sacrosanct, they were inviolate - we couldn't keep there. We weren't going to force them to stay there; they would get antsy and they would go out to go do some shopping or something like that and would get picked up. We had a half a dozen guys who were staying with us who just decided they were going to go shopping or go back to the house and pick up their stuff; they got picked up and were made hostages. For our own people we managed a number of evacuations. The first one was to Jordan. The invasion was on the second and we were able to get them out on about 10th or 11th or 12th. The first group included the young girl that I had mentioned earlier that we had managed to get the Iraqis to give to us. They got all the way across to the Jordanian border, but were stopped because the coordination between the Iraqis in Baghdad and at the border was not very good.

*Q: They were stopped by the...*

WILSON: By the Iraqis. They had to turn around and come back. If you've ever run a convoy, you understand that there's sort of a mathematic formula related to how many cars in the convoy and how fast that convoy is going to move across.

*Q: I led a convoy once, and it's the damndest thing. You go fast and then slow.*

WILSON: You ultimately end up going as slow as the slowest car in the convoy. I, of course, didn't know what was happening to any of the convoys. It was only in the aftermath that I realized that I would have to be more patient about their progress; we didn't have any communication with them, so we would just worry about whether they'd made it across to Jordan. It took them 20 hours to drive to the border and back. Maybe it took them a little bit longer. They came back. Organizing the convoy involved a certain amount of deception because we did not want the Iraqi authorities to know precisely when the convoy was leaving or from where it was leaving; we didn't want to run the risk that they would pick up everybody on the way out of town. The convoy left a few hours before we said we were going to leave. It left about sunrise. They drove all day through the desert. This was in August and it was very, very hot. Some people took their animals. There were two or three people to a car. We had our Marine security detachment accompany the convoy because we had already shredded all of our documents; therefore, their mission in Baghdad had been accomplished. We sent out all of the spouses and most of the nonessential employees. As I said, they got all the way to the border, but

were not allowed to cross the border. They called me through the public telephone system. I was in constant communication with the foreign ministry. I told the people in the convoy to stay where they were. They didn't stay, but turned around and came back. On about one-third of the way back, I got word from the foreign ministry that the borders were open and that the convoy could cross into Jordan. But we couldn't get in touch with them so they drove all the way back to Baghdad. We put the people in the convoy to bed and sent them back to the broader the next day, at which time they finally got out. It was extraordinarily stressful for them, for us and for everybody involved, but we did get them out.

There was a second group that we had to evacuate - and this was a good thing frankly. There was so much stress within the families that it was impacting on our employees' ability to do their work. Among our staff there were some employees who had drawn the same conclusions as we had drawn in our meeting - namely that some of us were likely not to survive. They had concluded that they did not want to be among those who wouldn't survive. So as almost a sideline, I would have people that we considered to be essential employees, because of the roles that they had in our embassy, coming to me and saying that I had to find a way for them to leave because they were afraid they were going to die in Iraq. That was another issue that we had to deal with.

*Q: Chas Freeman talked about this when he was in Saudi Arabia at the time. He said he was surprised. There were some people who just couldn't take it. He just had to get them out because they just couldn't take it. Some of these were rather key people. He said that he was a little bit unhappy because this attitude didn't seem to affect their careers later on. He felt that they'd let their side down.*

WILSON: I take a somewhat different view of that. Everything that I did with my employees, any confidences that they may have shared with me about their personal fears and concerns and their desires to leave, stayed with me. We found other reasons for them to go. In a way, the fact that their careers weren't impacted suggests to me that either this attitude was unique - a once-in-a-lifetime deal - or else the system isn't set up in such a way that it can weed out people who are selected for leadership positions but who don't exhibit the sort of leadership qualities under fire that one would need in any particular service - whether it's ours or the military. We did have one case where a guy came to me with his wife, who was our FLO, our Family Liaison Officer; he made the case, because he wanted her to be with him, that she ought to stay. There was some grounds for that because we had a lot of hostages and people for whom she could serve as a counselor. Then two days later he came to me and told me she was pregnant and therefore she had to go. These were the little things that one deals with as management.

In time we got ourselves down to about seven in this evacuation, but we still had all these people in Kuwait. They were estimating that there were over 100 Americans in Kuwait, all stuck inside the embassy compound. In addition, there may have been some Americans who were in hiding. In fact, we estimated that there were about 2,000 Americans in Kuwait, but we could never verify that. Our focus then became to try to get these people out of Kuwait. By this time the Iraqis had annexed Kuwait and they were continually moving in a threatening fashion around the embassy compound. They were looting embassy houses around town. I would get calls saying they were going to take over the embassy tonight and that I needed to do something to stop them.

These calls would come to us via the State Department. But it had become sort of a stalemate. Nat and his staff had decided that they had adequate supplies, they were conserving their energy, they had the famous swimming pool, their water supply...

*Q: You might explain the swimming pool.*

WILSON: They had their water supply and they had the swimming pool there in the compound. When the swimming pool started getting a little dirty, they dug a well. They demonstrated how self sufficient they were; they were going to get their own water, which they did. I think they actually did find water in one of the wells they dug. About this time we started talking about what would the Iraqi reaction be if we were to draw down our diplomatic presence in Kuwait. I broached this subject with the Iraqis and got my knuckles wrapped by the Department because it was premature and they hadn't thought their way through that. Ten days later they asked me to go in and make the exact same representation I had made. Go figure. In my meeting with Tariq Aziz on this particular subject, I asked them how they would react if we were to reduce the size of our diplomatic presence in Kuwait City by bringing the nonessential diplomats and their families not just out of Kuwait, but out of the region. His response to me was that Iraq would abide by all of the relevant conventions, meaning the Vienna Convention, concerning the movement of diplomats from one country to another in times of conflict. As a consequence, I made a case that we ought to go ahead and withdraw nonessential diplomats out of Kuwait, perhaps first to Baghdad, and then prepare to move them out of the region. There were going to be about 100 people leaving, maybe about 20 from the embassy compound.

*Q: When you say nonessential diplomats, were you including other people who had taken refuge in the compound?*

WILSON: That's right, family members and...

*Q: I mean also private citizens such as oil people or financial people.*

WILSON: The oil people were somewhat different, but we were going to try to move them as well. Actually we thought that we were going to be able to get all of them out. In light of the Vienna Convention and then the Geneva Convention, if Americans were in our custody when they came to Baghdad, we thought that we would be able to get them exit visas so that they could then leave Baghdad. When Tariq said that to me that the Iraqis would abide by the conventions, I went ahead and said, "Yes, this is what I recommend." Nat Howell sent off a cable saying, "Tariq Aziz is a low-life double- crosser, and he's no doubt going to double-cross us on this. They'll get up to Baghdad and they'll get stuck in Baghdad." I sent off a cable in response to Nat's saying, "I agree fully with the distinguished ambassador's assessment of the Iraqi foreign minister. That said, however, our experience has been that the Americans in Baghdad are, by and large, safer and better taken care of than those who are stuck in the embassy compound in Kuwait. The diplomats who are already here are allowed to move around. They have access to food in the market. They don't have to worry about Iraqi troops coming over the walls every night. So in my judgment, even if Tariq does what Nat suggests he's going to do - i.e., double-cross us - it is still a net plus for these people to be in Baghdad - one country closer to freedom - than to be stuck inside the embassy compound in Kuwait." I'm told that this cable

debate went to the president of the United States, which is not unusual in a situation like this involving American citizens. Nobody wants to have their fingerprints on these decisions if they can get somebody else's fingerprint on them; so they go all the way up to the big enchilada. I'm sure the file went up to him with a little note saying, "I think that we ought to do this." The president checks the action he wants taken, and they do it. I'm told anyway that it went to the president and the president decided that he would go with the recommendation made by Joe Wilson. What does Joe Wilson think out there in Baghdad? The president approved my recommendation and we sent a guy to Kuwait to lead a convoy to Baghdad.

*Q: Who was that?*

WILSON: Charlie Sibel was his name. He was a political officer. Charlie went to Kuwait. He was an experienced Arabist; he could speak Arabic, and he helped the people in Kuwait to organize. We got everybody together, we got cars and we moved well over 100 people to Baghdad. The convoy left Kuwait about eight o'clock in the morning for about an eight-hour drive. We figured that we would see them about four o'clock in the afternoon. Once again, we lost contact with them, and we did not see them until three o'clock in the morning. When you are responsible for American lives, you tend to worry. We spent a lot of time between when we thought they should arrive, which would have been around 4:30 p.m.; we had not yet figured out that the longer the convoy, the slower it moves. We had not internalized that lesson. So when it became about four o'clock in the afternoon, we began to worry and did not stop until three o'clock in the morning when they finally showed up. For some reason, I had a clipboard with me. All day long we had been working on preparing for the evacuees. We'd gotten food because we were going to have a big barbecue. How do you feed 120 refugees? We had set up beds and mattresses. We had taken over the Marine house and made it basically a flop house for everybody. We put a lot of water there as well as beer; we put everything there to make the evacuees as comfortable as we could. As I said, the convoy arrived at about four o'clock in the morning. I went downstairs, still with the clipboard in my hand. I was walking around saying, "Welcome. This is what we're going to do." Some man who was about 6'4" and looked like an old pro-football defensive end - 6'4" and about 300 pounds - came up to me and starts berating me, asking me a lot of logistical questions. I finally said, "Take this up with the GSO," and he said, "Well, who the hell am I talking to?" I said, "Well, I'm in charge of the embassy." That didn't stop him. He was plenty pissed off after having spent 15 or 16 hours in the car. But he and I later became the best of friends. We finally got everybody bedded down at four o'clock in the morning, and we said, "This is what we're going to do. We're going to take all your passports" - we collected everybody's passports - "and we're going to get the exit visas" - the Iraqis promised us that they were going to open up their office at six o'clock in the morning - "and we'll get you back on the road. We'll get you up to Turkey. It's going to be a long night and a long day, but you're going to be out of here."

*Q: You were taking them to Turkey?*

WILSON: We were going to Turkey. This convoy we were going to run to Turkey. We had everybody set on the Turkish side. So we took the passports to the authorities, only to find that nobody was there. Then the Iraqis decided that they were not going to issue exit visas, and by about nine o'clock in the morning it was pretty clear we had been double-crossed. I went to talk

to Nezar, and the answer I got from the Iraqis was, "What the foreign minister told you was that when you closed your embassy in Kuwait, all the diplomats and members of the mission would be permitted to leave. Your embassy is not closed. The American flag is still up there. Therefore, these people will not be permitted to leave." I said, "Well, that's no excuse," and he said, "You know, Kuwait no longer exists. It is no longer a sovereign country. Therefore, these people no longer have diplomatic immunity. Therefore, the Vienna Convention does not apply to them; so they're not going to be permitted to leave. They're subject to all the same travel restrictions as everybody else right now. I then made the case that at a minimum they had an obligation under Saddam's own edicts to allow the women and children in the convoy to leave, because they had already allowed women and children to leave. There were about 60 women and children. I think the whole convoy was about 127 people -something like that. We were able to negotiate the departure of the women and children.. We sent all their passports to the Iraqi authorities and got the exit visas for them. In this group of women and children were about, I think, four kids who were 18 -just right over on the adult side of the line. They could not leave. Their mothers could leave, but these kids had to stay. That was a real trying time for the mothers. We also had a few interns, kids who had come out to do their internship in Kuwait and they had just a wonderful time. We had them manning our telephone 24 hours a day. But, you know, these were just kids - young adults.

*Q: I might interject right here that we have intern here, Danielle Kerline, who's monitoring this as an intern working for the Association.*

WILSON: We like to believe that it's a little safer in downtown Washington. Twenty-four hours after we had initially anticipated, we finally got women and children on the road. In those intervening 24 hours, while we were working full steam to get the visas, we also organized an event at the Marine house. We organized a barbecue; we had volleyball; we had beer and soft drinks, and we invited everybody from all the embassies just to relax a little bit - people from our embassy and from the U.S. embassy in Kuwait. We got people bedded down. Then we got the ones who had to leave the next morning into the convoy's cars with Charlie leading the way again. He drove them to the Turkish border, got them across, and then turned around and came back.

*Q: Was there any problem with the Kurds at that time?*

WILSON: No, there was no problem, no problems getting to the Turkish border. There was no Kurdish rebellion at the time, as least no more than usual.

*Q: The endemic Kurdish rebellion.*

WILSON: The northern provinces were pacified at that time. They were under control. We then ended up at my embassy with seven Americans who were accredited to Iraq - one consular officer, a couple of military officers, and a couple of administrative and secretarial staff - plus approximately 63 Americans who were accredited to our embassy in Kuwait. The management question became how do you integrate these people whose loyalty is to their colleagues in Kuwait City and whose experience with Iraqis consisted of being on the wrong side of Iraqi guns for three weeks. How do you integrate them to make a functioning mission? And at the same

time how do you deal with all the morale issues attendant with the experience that they'd gone through?

*Q: I assume that you're talking about concern that the people who had come out of Kuwait had no feel for the Iraqi situation and might have a certain amount of hostility towards the Iraqi and, being ironic about this, might almost screw things up.*

WILSON: There were a couple of things we were worried about. One, we figured that, if we couldn't keep them busy, they would be even more unhappy than they were. Then, we had to overcome their hostility towards the Iraqi regime. We didn't think that they would do something that would screw up our efforts, because they weren't accredited in any way, so that they could not have any official interaction with the Iraqis. What we worried about was that they would become bored and very, very demoralized, which would be counterproductive to our own efforts, to our own management. We wanted to channel the hostility. We wanted to make them productive within the embassy. Their team leader, the guy who led them to Baghdad was a guy by the name of Emil Skodon. He was the economic-commercial counselor - just as solid as the day is long. We had a number of really long talks about what to do, and we did some things that I think were really very creative. We reactivated the Marine security guard detachment, because the Kuwait Marines had come out with the convoy. One of the things that we had found is that oftentimes the morale of the Marine security guard detachment is directly reflective and impacts on, one way or another, the morale of a whole embassy staff. So we did not want these Marines, who were young and impressionable, in a less than disciplined structure; so we put some discipline in their structure almost immediately. We reactivated the battalion. We made them our Marines. We did it over their initial objections, but we did it and we did fast. Once they started taking orders, they did a good job. The other thing we did is was to make the American citizens, either in hiding or being held as hostages, our principal point of focus at the mission level below me and we organized a support system. We established a pen pal system. For every one of our hostages being held, we had one of our people responsible for communicating with them, sending them letters every week. I don't know if the letters ever got there, but it gave these people something to do. We produced a weekly news bulletin which we would try to send to the foreign ministries of the hostages which would include such things as football scores, recipes, anodyne stories that had no political implication whatsoever, so that they would at least have some sense of connectivity with us.

We developed a scavenger group, which is one of the best things we did. We sent these out to, one, get money - you could exchange money on the black market at incredibly favorable rates to us - so that they would have enough dinar to purchase supplies. With the embargo in place, we couldn't get a ready source of imported food products anymore, so we sent people out with instructions to stock the embassy in such a way that we would be able to feed 150 people for six to nine months. That meant that they would go out, find sources for frozen food and for dry food and canned food. They would go to the markets. The Iraqis were looting everything that they could in Kuwait City, which they would bring back to Baghdad. Open-air markets where they were hocking all this stuff that they had looted from Kuwait were growing up around Baghdad and other areas of Iraq. We would have a group of our "guests" go out to buy stuff. In fact, we became so well stocked in food and booze and everything else we needed that some of our people actually started going out looking for some of the stuff that might have been looted from

their houses. That kept a bunch of them occupied. The Iraqis were kind enough, to use the term loosely, not to pick up Americans who were carrying diplomatic passports even if they were not accredited to our embassy in Iraq; so our people were pretty safe looking around and shopping.

We also set up a group to plot the movement of the human shields, and this was particularly important. What happened was that, as time went by, Saddam would release hostages periodically. He released French citizens because he thought that that would cause the French to drop out of the coalition that had already been marshaled against him. When these hostages were released, they would often come to the embassy to bring us letters from American hostages. Through these letters we were able to plot about 55/56 points on the map where they were being held. Saddam did move the hostages every 10 to 14 days. We were able to plot the movement of the hostages from one place to the next. The net result was that at the end of a couple months we had a pretty good picture of the 56 places that Saddam deemed to be of sufficient strategic value to put hostages in.

*Q: Was he doing this with British, too?*

WILSON: Absolutely.

*Q: You almost have a picture of people staked out in the middle of an ammunition factory.*

WILSON: That's right. That is a pretty good image. I don't think they were actually staked out there, but it is a pretty good image. We had an international committee because the hostages came from many countries. We had the Japanese, ourselves, the Brits, Germans and the French - when they were involved. We would exchange information so that we had a pretty good picture of the hostage situation which we would give to Washington.

If you take a look at a map to pin point the first night's bombing raid of Iraq, you'll notice that we'd sent the bombers over the places that Saddam considered to be of strategic importance to him; you will find that they match up pretty nicely with our analysis of where the hostages were, thank you. Saddam, by keeping these hostages in a finite number of places and by moving them around to a finite number of places, gave us a blueprint of what he considered to be of strategic importance to him, and we used that. That was pretty useful to us. So that was another group that we had.

Then we had Americans who were being held in diplomatic quarters, as they were called. They were American citizens who had not been picked up by the Iraqis, but who had sought refuge with us, and we housed them. We put them all at the ambassador's residence. There were anywhere from 35 to 50 on any given day. We would essentially assume responsibility for their care and welfare. We had a couple of cases of people who had to take antidepressant medications for various problems, they ran out of their medication; that raised issues with people who were off their medication and therefore not terribly well adjusted; we had to deal with that. We had the usual issues of anybody in less than optimum conditions, people doing things that they probably shouldn't be doing, drinking too much too often - things like that. And we had, of course, sort of the general restiveness. We had a liaison office, and people would spend a lot of time there.

*Q: Did you have any medical or quasi-medical personnel -embassy nurse or embassy doctor or anything?*

WILSON: No permanent doctor. I don't know if we had a nurse. We had a doctor who came in at one point and then flew back out, but that was it. So that was basically the structure we had for these 60 to 67 Americans that we hosted. Then we would have these Americans who would fly in thinking that they could make a difference - some of them very notable. I made a policy of receiving them if they came to the embassy, with the exception of former Cabinet members or very distinguished Americans. When Jesse Jackson came, I went over to his hotel and sat with him for a while. When Mohammed Ali came, I invited him to the embassy, but also offered to go and see him. He declined the offer, but I sent my guy Vern, a guy who was about 300 pounds. He became Mohammed Ali's escort officer. For that assignment, Vern is eternally grateful because he got to spend a couple days with the champ. When Ramsey Clark came, I put no restrictions on his movement; that was true for all VIPs. I asked people in the compound if any cared to meet with him because he had expressed an interest in meeting with the Americans who were being held there in diplomatic quarters. They allowed that they would be happy to see him. He came, and they jeered him, which was good. He decided he did not want to meet with me; he didn't want to come to the embassy, so I did not go to see him - even though he was a former Cabinet officer -since he didn't want to meet with me.

I should note that one of the things that we tried to instill amongst the Americans who were in diplomatic quarters was the same sense of defiance that we were attempting to exude. I think we were pretty successful in doing that. I used to go out to see them frequently -once a week or something like that; I had people from my staff out there every day. One of their representatives would come to our daily staff meeting; so we had this liaison relationship with them. I made a point anytime they asked me to come out, I would go out. We also allowed them to set their own rules. They determined that they wanted to have somebody who would serve as their spokesman with the press if the press wanted any sort of feedback from them. We made some rules on where the press could film within the ambassador's residence compound, which they accepted. The spokesman that they selected was a guy who was a man of considerable experience. We did a press barrage over the Thanksgiving Day weekend when I held a news conference and then they interviewed him. They took pictures at my house. We were cooking the turkey for some of the hostages. The press asked him what he thought as a spokesman of the Americans being held in diplomatic quarters, and he said, "Well, I've had a good long life, and I speak for everybody when I say this. We would certainly like to live a lot longer, but damn it all, some things are more important than us, and it is really very important that we roll back this invasion of Kuwait. If it means that B52s have to come over Baghdad, bring them on." That was exactly the sort of reaction we wanted out of everybody. The theory was that the only way to deal with the Iraqis was to be as tough or tougher than them. Any sign of weakness would be pocketed by them and they would be looking through.

*Q: When you're talking about Ramsey Clark and Mohammed Ali, basically these have been sort of anti-establishment figures, as has Jesse Jackson to a certain extent. Did you consider them to be in a way sending the wrong message? How did you feel about that?*



WILSON: Our position at the embassy was one of studied ambivalence. We would argue that they were violating the U.S. government's prohibition on travel to Iraq, but having done that, they were still American citizens and therefore still had the right to see the senior American representative if they wanted. We were not going to deny them that. We welcomed any release of any hostages that might occur as a consequence of their visits. But we made it very clear that we thought that they were allowing themselves to be used by Saddam Hussein in his cynical game of trying to divide Americans and to deflect attention from his brutal invasion of Kuwait. We crafted this message through trial and error and finally tuned the message to about where we wanted it and it was pretty much broadly accepted as that. I mentioned earlier we had a symbiotic relationship with the press corps. Because there were only really seven of us who were accredited to Iraq and there were really only one or two who were going out to see what was going on, we depended on the press quite a bit. We wanted the press to be focused. We learned early on that the press needed to have a focus and then they would all write the story. If you give them the headline, they will write the story; so the trick was to give them the story right. Every morning I would have an intelligence briefing, including information on Iraqi troop movements in the Gulf or our own troops movements and how the situation was shaping up. As I mentioned, the staff meeting would include the liaison officer from the Americans, and during that staff meeting we would settle on the message of the day. Then the staff would leave, and I would invite the press in with the acting public affairs officer.

*Q: Who was the acting public affairs director?*

WILSON: His name was Thibault. His first name escapes me. We would then answer questions, but at the same time we would try and steer the press to the message of the day. It was typically about what Saddam was doing, what had his cynical behavior led to that day. We established a few ground rules for events that occurred day after day. For example, we would have demonstrators in front of the embassy every day. They were bussed in by the Iraqis, and they would stand in front of the embassy and chant, "Down, down, Bush. Down, down, Bush," and those kinds of sentiments. They would show up about 10:15 or 10:30; that was always a good time for me to take a coffee break and go out and smoke a cigar. My agreement with the press was that if they wanted to film the demonstrators, that was fine, and that if they would agree not to film me, then I would be happy to be out there with them and answer any questions and chat with them and have an exchange of information; that is what we would generally do.

Outside the embassy we would have these demonstrators. Behind them, because there was an alley that was closed off, were a bunch of benches where people used to sit to get their visas - when they were waiting to get their visas. I would go around behind the demonstrators and sit on these benches and talk to whoever the reporter of the day was, whether it was Jim Blystone from CNN or Dennis Trout - whoever. They would film the demonstrators and I'd be sitting back there smoking my cigar and talking to the press about what they were doing. That worked out pretty well. Then in the evening when the press would come back from their various forays - oftentimes the Iraqis would send them on a field trip somewhere to give them their side of the story. When they returned, I would go over to their filing center, and we would talk and I would give them a "not-for-attribution" quote if they wanted one or a "for-attribution" quote if it seemed to be appropriate at the time. At this time the State Department was even more nervous

than usual about too many people speaking to the press. The State Department has always wanted just the secretary and the press spokesman to speak on behalf of...

*Q: There was a very tight group around Jim Baker - Margaret Tutwiler et al.*

WILSON: That's right. Their edict to the Foreign Service had been that nobody can speak to the press without Margaret Tutwiler's personal approval. That just wasn't going to work in the Iraqi context; so we made an agreement that I could speak to the press. For all intents and purposes Margaret and Marlin and I would try and feed off each other...

*Q: Marlin being...*

WILSON: Fitzwater, the White House spokesman. That worked pretty well. One of the first things I would do every morning would be review the White House and State Department press briefings, so that I could see what Margaret and Marlin were saying. Then I would try and figure out how to make that relevant to what we were doing on the ground, and vice versa. We tried to coordinate our message to give the press corps a coherent view. That worked pretty well except for one occasion when somebody came up to ask me a question. I can't remember what the question was, but it was something like "What would happen if Saddam were to do something nefarious and execute a hostage or do something like that?" I responded off the cuff using some glib phrase - I think it was *casus belli* - a little Latin from the California surfer. A couple of hours later, I got a phone call from Washington. The voice on the other end - someone from the task force - said, "We just want you to know that Marlin Fitzwater and Margaret Tutwiler think the world of you. They think you're doing a terrific job. They just want you to know that. But we just got a call from the White House press office - just a gentle reminder that, generally speaking, the president reserves unto himself the ability and the right to declare war." I said, "Okay, got it." Other than that, we were in pretty close sync.

When Thanksgiving came, the president decided to go to the Saudi Arabia desert to have Thanksgiving supper with our soldiers there. We for a few weeks had been arguing that we ought to take advantage of the Thanksgiving holiday to do an exposé on what the embassies were doing for American citizens in difficulty. We thought we ought to do it because we were concerned that people might be losing a little bit of focus on the plight of American citizens in the Gulf. We thought it also would be good to burnish the image not just of our embassy in Iraq but of U.S. embassies in general - i.e. what an embassy does. We pitched this idea. This was the only time in the whole crisis that I actually pitched something ahead of time to Washington on a sort of public relations level. We didn't get a response. So I called up and said, "We need a response." They said, "We'll get back to you," but they didn't. So I called up again and said, "What do you think? Do you want to do this over the Thanksgiving weekend? We want to have them take pictures of us cooking our turkeys. I want to do a press conference talking about the plight of the hostages. We want to have the hostage spokesman speak to them. We wanted to be sure that our message was coordinated with any other public relations efforts to be made around the world." Finally they said, "Look, nobody wants to tell you "no," but what everybody's worried about is that, if you do this, you will step on the president's story with his meal in the desert with the troops. But the decision is yours." That's always what they say when they're going to fire you if you screw up. So I thought about it and came to two conclusions. One, it was hard for me to imagine how

our story was going to step on a story about the president of the United States being in Saudi Arabia. I thought that that was just not going to happen. Secondly, even if we did step on the story and I got fired, that was not necessarily a bad thing. So I concluded that we should go ahead and do it. It would have been good for the embassy; it would be good for the U.S. to get the story, and I don't see any particular down side to having it published. So we did it. I started out with a press conference on Thanksgiving morning. I went over to the foreign ministry with about 50 diplomatic notes related to individuals who were being held against their will, insisting on their release. I was pretty fired up; I went in to see the guy in the foreign office and I dropped all these notes on him and I berated him. As I mentioned before. Then I went to a press conference where I spoke for an hour responding to questions about why these hostages were being held against their will. The press then went to see the spokesman for the American citizens being held in diplomatic quarters, who said "bring on the B52s. " The press filmed in my kitchen and in the kitchen of these people the food being served, and they filmed people sitting around having their Thanksgiving supper. The Iraqis, perhaps anticipating what I was doing, invited a bunch of Americans to give them a Thanksgiving in a house that was literally just about a mile from mine; they had CNN over there filming that Thanksgiving dinner. I don't know what they were thinking, but CNN rushed over to my place after they had filmed the Iraqi dinner and asked for my reaction. I was standing in my door with the cameras going and I said, "It was cynical and, in fact, sadistic on the part of Saddam Hussein to do this to American citizens; having them at a place less than a mile away from here and not even permitting an American consular official to see them." That was really the icing on the cake - to make the point that this was just inhumane treatment of American citizens. It worked out great. Two days later I get a cable, addressed to Joe Wilson from President Bush. "Dear Joe, I saw you recently on CNN talking about what you thought of Saddam's despicable behavior," something like that, and it went on and said, "I could not have said it better." Then there was another paragraph, "It's relatively easy for us here in Washington to speak out, but what you guys are going out there day in and day out is truly remarkable." After that, I figured that, we won our gamble. Aside from the fact that I didn't get fired and therefore had to stay for another six weeks, we were successful in our effort.

*Q: I'd like to sort of interject here. One of the things you were doing was bypassing the spinners who think only in terms of their principals, George Bush and Jim Baker. They're not even consulting their principals particularly. They only think in one dimension. You have to almost understand the topography of the Washington scene.*

WILSON: That's exactly right. I think from our perspective, one of the reasons that we were pretty successful in this is that we did understand that syndrome and did nothing that detracted from their ownership of the Washington part of it. Everything that we did was supportive of not just them but of their efforts. There were some things that needed to be said. We needed to project an image of strength and of 'devil may care' both to our own citizens and to the Iraqis. One of the lessons that we have internalized from the Lebanese the hostages event, for example, was that the rather plaintive wailing of the individual hostage and his or her family made a largely a political story into a human interest story. When you have a human interest story, it's very difficult for some in the political world to do what needs to be done in the larger interest. Therefore, we were insistent on creating an ambiance in our mission which made the larger interests most important, far more important than our own personal situation, and we got a lot of support from everybody involved in this. It was heartfelt. First of all, we didn't have a lot of

crybabies, and secondly, in our approach to the issue, in our discussions, in our town meetings, in everything that we did, we tried to project the national interest above and beyond our own narrow personal interests.

*Q: Did you run into the problem that developed in Lebanon and in Iran when the hostages' wives, sisters and all in the United States became a power unto themselves saying "Get our people out," and turned it into a personal story. You understand what I'm talking about?*

WILSON: Yes. In fact, the wives came out a couple times on Iraqi-organized trips to see their husbands. I met with them and talked with them, and we attempted to be very sympathetic to what they were doing, but perhaps because these hostages were held only for three months as opposed to 18 months, the relatives were unable to organize themselves into a power base. The second time they came, it was to pick up their husbands. The first time they came, it was to see them. I saw them as well. We went through a litany of what we were doing for their family members, and we were doing a lot. We had this weekly broad sheet that we were sending out to them. We had this pen pal system. We had stacks and stacks of diplomatic notes. We encouraged people, if they had any sort of medical ailment, to alert us to that so that we could make the case on their behalf. We managed to spring a half a dozen hostages. Every time there was a visitor we would have some input into which hostages got released, or we found loopholes in the management of the hostage program so that we were able to go in and say, "This person doesn't fit this category of hostage. Therefore, you should release him." We had some allies within the Iraqi foreign ministry that would allow that to happen. We would get a couple out that way, and then they would close the loophole and we'd have to go and find another loophole. We had a several-pronged strategy. One was that we just papered them with diplomatic notes to get these hostages out. We would send notes like, "He suffers from hangnails. Therefore, he really needs to be home. You need to do this," -anything would do. We tried to be very positively responsive to any family concern about their loved ones. We would go ahead and act upon it. We tried to find these loopholes, where we could find them. We were able, during the evacuations of various groups, to make the case that mothers and children should not be separated; it didn't make any difference whether the mother was Kuwaiti or American. So long as the child was an American, the mother should go with him or her. We were successful in that. We were successful in getting one or two hostages out every time, and we would try to load up hostages onto every American who came out. It didn't make any difference to us. The more, the merrier. If we could get 10 out with Mohammed Ali, if they promised us 10 we'd go for 12. So we tried to be very responsive.

The other thing that we tried to do diplomatically - I made this case starting in November - was to say that Saddam should be under no illusion that by holding hostages it was going to prevent war; on the contrary. I made that case in a four-hour lunch with a Palestinian journalist, a female Palestinian journalist, who was firmly convinced that every insult ever visited upon the Palestinian people for the last 2,000 years had been the fault of the United States. She was no great friend of American policy, but she was a damn good journalist. She was well connected in North Africa and in Jordan, so I thought I would try this line on her, because it seemed to me that the frontal attack on the Iraqis was not going to necessarily be a successful attack; we had to try and come at them from another direction. I made the case directly, and I convinced her that the thesis that I was advancing was a legitimate one - i.e the thesis being that holding onto the American hostages was not an asset; it was not going to prevent the war. "Given a military action

of the size contemplated by Pentagon military planners” - and you could see with 500,000 American soldiers in the desert what we’re talking about - big Army, 7th Corps, and everything in the desert that the planners, political and military - ” they have basically determined that the United States could absorb the loss of 2,000 civilians, 150 hostages and 2,000 civilians and the 150 of us here in Baghdad. The Iraqis shouldn’t delude themselves into thinking that keeping hostages would prevent the American military from throwing them out of Kuwait. On the other hand, what they really need to take into consideration is the impact on American public opinion and on the president’s own maneuver flexibility if something happens to one of these hostages and it becomes public knowledge. Imagine, if you will, an American hostage dying either at the hands of some brutal Iraqi mob or even in a refinery fire in which he happens to be caught in just because he’s a hostage at that site. American anger might be so great at that time that the president of the United States would have no choice but to go to war to avenge the death of an American citizen being held hostage. Therefore, it seems to me, quite to the contrary of considering American hostages as assets, they ought to be viewed as liabilities. They’re not going to prevent war, but something happening to them might in fact bring the war...”

*Q: You’re back to the casus belli.*

WILSON: That’s right, but this was in private. I wouldn’t have said it in public, so it was okay. “Therefore, the Iraqis need to think about what it is they are going to war for. Are they going to war over the hostages, or are you going to war over territory which they have tried to conquer? They should not confuse the two. If in fact in their deliberations they decide that it’s over territory, which of course it is, then they ought to just get the hostages off the table. It’s just one extraneous issue that’s a complicating factor both for them and for everybody else.” I spent four hours with her at lunch going over this with a couple of hours devoted to trying to overcome her sense of angst because the Palestinians were one of the most affected communities in Kuwait. They were the ones who basically ran the Kuwait bureaucracy. To try and justify what he had done, Saddam made the case that he invaded Kuwait to liberate Palestine, and somehow he had gotten Yasser Arafat to go along with that fiction. There had been massive upheavals in the Palestinian community in Kuwait. She herself had an uncle in Kuwait who had gone a little bit off his rocker. She said she had gone to see him. She said, “It was so sad. It was like he was on LSD, because he would tell me, ‘We’re so glad they invaded Kuwait to liberate Palestine, but my God, why did they do this to me?’ looking at the wreckage of his home life and his home.” We discussed all that. I laid this hostage thesis on her and she kind of bought into it. I said, “Look, I don’t care whether you write about it or not, but I just think it’s something that you ought to be aware of. Feel free to share it if you think it’s valid.” She was on her way off to north Africa; she was to be in the north Africa scene, the riots in Algiers and Morocco and everywhere else. About 10 days later I get a cable from Chris Ross, who was our ambassador in Algiers at the time, which said, “I’ve just spent some time with the Algerian Foreign Minister Hozalen, and he laid out a thesis as to why Saddam is holding onto the hostages when they are really a liability rather than an asset.” Then he went repeating the A, B and Cs of the thesis that I had laid out. I thought “great, I’m starting to get some feedback. This is how we’re going to apply some pressure.” My point in doing this was to make the thesis as the conventional wisdom around the region. During all of this, we’re having the “use-of-force” debate in the U.S. Senate, with Bill Crowe testifying to give sanctions a chance. All our efforts to develop this thesis that the hostages are a liability got sidetracked because Saddam began to think that the president was not going to have the

military supporting him. That stopped our strategy dead in its tracks, but that's okay because our view of the hostages was becoming sort of conventional wisdom. A couple weeks after that King Hussein and Arafat both come to Baghdad. According to the Jordanian king's director of cabinet, in a meeting with our ambassador in Jordan to review a meeting the king had with Saddam, His Majesty and Arafat told Saddam that, "You ought to get rid of the hostages. It's not an asset to you. It's a liability," and went through basically the talking points that I had put out to the Palestinian journalist. About a week later the Iraqis announced that their defenses were then sufficiently strong that they no longer needed human shields and, therefore, they could go home. So it worked. I can't tell you that it was my interview that actually did it, but I can tell you that we had sufficient amount of empirical evidence to know that we could get under Saddam's skin and that we could get things done, whether it was the release of women and children or other things, by making him look bad or by just having other people talk to him in a way that we perhaps couldn't do directly. Given that diplomats are always blamed for everything that goes wrong in international relations, I'm fully prepared for our embassy and our mission to take full credit for this little activity having gone right, since we were the ones who were promoting the thesis and since ultimately all of the hostages got released. That's why nobody every talks now about the Iraqi hostages. It's because they weren't hanged. It's because they weren't paraded around blindfolded and cause the U.S. government to react instinctively; we got the thing solved in a reasonable period of time. We got everybody out safely with the exception of one guy who had a heart attack after they picked him up -before he was ever made hostage, in fact before he even knew he was a hostage.

*Q: Did he die?*

WILSON: Yes. We lost two Americans within the first three days. One who was an employee of ours - I've told that story - and the other who was a mid-50-year-old businessman who had a heart attack shortly after he was picked up.

*Q: As you got the reports, it must have been rather awesome to see what was assembling in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. You have the whole southern corps. It turned out to be probably the mightiest army in the world that geared up there. There was a debate on things we were going to use it, but were the Iraqis aware of what they'd stirred up?*

WILSON: The Iraqi fundamental miscalculation - and it was explained to me by Saddam in our meeting of August 6th - was that the United States was unwilling to spill the blood of 10,000 of its youth in the sands of Saudi Arabia, or the Arabian Desert. He thought that we didn't have the staying power for the sort of war that he contemplated. He was basing his view on a couple of things: one, his ability to have stalemated Iran for 10 years; two, his understanding of our experience in Vietnam; and three, his understanding of our experience with the Marine barracks in Beirut and the various hostages in Beirut. He failed to understand that we had in fact stayed in Vietnam for 15 years and that we had taken 50,000 casualties there. Up until early November, he had basically made a bet that if he could get the Iraq-Kuwait issue thrown into the United Nations system, then he could have 20 years in Kuwait. That bet was based upon his understanding of the way the UN works, using the historical precedent of Israel occupying Gaza and the West Bank from the 1967 war on. He envisioned some toothless UN resolutions. He had already been the recipient of two resolutions on his use of chemical weapons. Nobody

remembers them because they had no biting sanction to them. He anticipated that if he got the issue into the UN system, he could spend 20 years jockeying and negotiating, while at the same time plundering what was left of Kuwait, including pumping all its oil and moving Iraqis into Kuwait City. At the end of, say, 20 years, he could hold a referendum in which the people would choose to be part of Iraq. I think that was pretty clearly his objective vis-à-vis Kuwait. His broader objective, I think, was the same objective that is enshrined in Baath dogma, and that is one huge Arab nation. He just assumed if there would be one Arab nation, why not have one Arab leader, which then, of course, posed the threat to all the royals and sheiks in the rest of the Arabian peninsula.

What he didn't understand - even though we tried to make him understand this - was that the war that he fought with Iran was not going to be like the war he contemplated against the United States. When we made the decision in early November to move the 7th Corps to the desert and to move a lot of air assets out of Alaska, out of the NATO region, we were essentially calling his bluff. Up until that point, he had some reason to think that if he could keep this in the UN, then he probably could win. He could debate the issue for 20 years. In early November, when we brought the 7th Corps in and said that we were going to roll back the invasion, we basically called his bluff. He didn't understand two things about that. He didn't understand that, in moving the 7th Corps, we were moving a heavy mechanized army. This was not the 101st Airborne, this was not the 89th, this was not Special Ops; these were big tanks and big artillery and big armored personnel carriers. This force was for a conventional war, which was far different from trying to wrest him out of Kuwait with the 101st Airborne. The second thing, and probably more important, that he didn't understand was that we were bringing a lot of power out of the NATO theater of operations and that we were bringing a lot of air assets out of Alaska. We wouldn't empty our most strategic theater of operations of military assets unless we had convincing assurances from the Soviet Union that they would not take advantage of our relative weakness and mess around in an area of real strategic importance. Thirdly, he clearly didn't understand that in the context of the Iraq situation, we would have had to give Gorbachev the same assurances that he would have given us, since we were going to moving a huge military establishment right next to the soft underbelly of the Soviet Empire and its traditional area of influence. I think all of these Saddam views represented a terrible miscalculation on his part.

There were a couple of things that we attempted to do to insure that Saddam fully understood the consequences of his miscalculation if he did not decide to leave Kuwait voluntarily. One - this was my idea from Baghdad - we tried to get the U.S. military to put together a video of precisely how this war was going to be fought. We wanted shots of an M1 tank going up sand dunes at 45 miles an hour and as it comes to the top of the sand dune, the turret swivels 270 degrees, lobs off a shot, and kills a tank four miles over the horizon - action shots like that. We wanted to show pictures of close air support and actual the joint operation - the way that the U.S. military was going to fight this war on land, in the air, and from the sea. We wanted to make the Iraqis understand that this was not going to be a trench warfare as they had fought with Iran. We had hoped that enough Iraqi generals would see the film and that they would determine that their future was better assured if they went after Saddam than if they went after the U.S. military. An American office, Wayne Downing, loved this idea and actually made a video. He later became the general in charge of special operations and, I think, is about to be assigned to be the counterterrorism office in the White House. Wayne put together a wonderful video, but, as he

told me later, couldn't get the video distributed in a timely enough fashion to make an impact because State Department voiced some concerns that we would come across as being too bellicose if the existence of this video became widely known. The logic behind that view escapes me. We had 500,000 troops on the ground. We were about to wage war in which we anticipated taking 20,000 deaths or casualties. If you recall, we had laid in stocks of blood, we had hospital ships out there, we had the Dover Air Force base geared up to serve as a wartime mortuary. We had hospitals up and down the East Coast prepared to take on the casualties that we were anticipating. Somehow, somebody in the State Department thought that a videotape, which might persuade some senior Iraqi generals to do something other than fight the United States, was going to be too bellicose, too warlike. So we couldn't get this tape distributed until it was too late, because as we went down the road, it became pretty clear that for Saddam a military victory was less important than a political victory. He, I think, saw victory very much again in his own historical context. As an Arab, you achieve victory by just having confronted the West.

*Q: This is a little bit like Sadat.*

WILSON: Actually much more like Nasser. You reap the benefits of a tremendous political victory because you have had the audacity to confront the West; so it was a Nasser-style victory, which Sadat also employed in the 1973 war. It was pretty clear by the time we got the video out that for Saddam just having the war was in and of itself justified. Curiously that was just one of the other missteps they took. With every step along the way from November 6th until January 15th, every time Saddam had a fork in the road, an opportunity to get out and save his army, he did something stupid, which made it much easier for us then to keep the coalition together and go to war. By December, my greatest concern was that he would take a partial step which might cause everybody to stop in their tracks and require us to marshal the political will to go forward.

*Q: One of the concerns was that he would pull back from Kuwait proper and just sit on the oil fields.*

WILSON: That's right. He had drawn a new border, which was really in the hills overlooking Kuwait City. That would have given him the high ground over Kuwait City and control of the northern Kuwait oil fields - the Ramallah oil fields as they're called - and also would have given him control of Bubion and Warba, the two islands that were just in front of Emkasa, the port that he had developed at the end of the Iran-Iraq War. I think there was some concern that he would pull back to that line posing for us the conundrum of whether or not to continue to drive him all the way out of Kuwait or to accept the *de facto* line that he might have imposed on us. So when Perez de Cuellar went out there...

*Q: Who was the Secretary...*

WILSON: He was Secretary General of the United Nations at the time. When French President Francois Mitterrand started making noises that sounded like appeasement, I think we were really concerned that there might be a partial withdrawal from Iraq, which would then throw the coalition into absolute disarray. But Saddam proved us wrong. He went right down the road to war.



*Q: How did you all view the debate that went on - I guess it was in November, was it, or was it December? - in the Senate, I guess?*

WILSON: The “use-of-force” debate. We were under no illusions. Our analysis indicated very clearly that there was no incentive for Saddam to get out of Kuwait. Sanctions were not going to get him out of Kuwait. He could survive sanctions for 20 years. So from our perspective, it was not a question of sanctions working to get him out of Kuwait. It was also clear to us, though, in our more lucid moments, that it was important for us to have a full and complete understanding of what we were doing and why we were doing it. As a consequence, as inconvenient as the debate might have been, it seemed to us to be absolutely necessary. In my discussions with people - visitors and the press - there seemed to be a fair amount of pacifist energy being generated. Saddam has brought some of the professional pacifists out to Baghdad. They had marched. Saddam was trying to present himself as a man of peace and trying to present the United States as the aggressor. This was beginning to take hold, so it was important to have a more complete understanding of what it was we were doing in the area. The administration had been not terribly adept early on. Jim Baker’s comment about “it’s for oil and jobs” was probably as controversial as it was elucidating. That said, it was clear to me and to the people who were with me in Baghdad that the only way to get Saddam out of Kuwait was to do it with military force. I conveyed that in a series of telephone conversations from ground zero to Speaker of the House Tom Foley and to Al Gore, then the junior Senator from Tennessee and who voted in favor of the resolution. He was one of the Democratic Senators who voted with the president on the resolution. I called him, after he had initiated telephone contact shortly after the invasion of Kuwait on a purely personal note. He called me - the first person outside the State Department to get through to me - and asked me to stay in touch with him, which I was glad to do. I called him during the “use-of-force” debate. I didn’t realize the timing of the phone call because we didn’t get CNN; we got the wireless file. I called his office, and they said, “He’s not here. He’s on the Senate floor.” I said, “That’s fine. I’ll talk to him some other time.” They said, “No, we think he’ll want to talk to you.” So they patched the call down to the Senate cloakroom, which is the room off the Senate floor where senators come to take calls and meet people. Gore came off the Senate floor and took the call, and we spent about 20 minutes talking about the situation. We talked about sanctions and we talked about military action. I was very clear about the analysis that we had done. It turns out that it was the day of the “use-of-force debate” on the Senate floor and Senator Al Gore voted with the president on this. I like to think that we had some influence in that particular debate. I’m sure we did.

I also called Tom Foley and caught him in the midst of a discussion over the budget resolution taking place in the Speaker’s office. I said, “That’s fine. I’ll call back.” They said, “No, we think he’ll want to talk to you.” So Tom gets on the phone and we’re talking and he goes, “Mr. Ambassador,” and I said, “Mr. Speaker, it’s nice of you to promote me, but I’m not yet an ambassador.” He said, “Mr. Ambassador.” Allow the Speaker his little foibles. If he wants to make me ambassador, that’s fine with me. He said, “Mr. Ambassador,” and then in very special English slowly enunciating every syllable he says, “Mr. Ambassador, I just want you to know that the debate in Washington may have people thinking that there is division within the United States government. That is not the case. This debate is a part of American democracy, something that we cherish, but when the time comes, we will all be behind our president in this matter. Let me repeat. Mr. Ambassador,” and he said it again. It was wonderful. We were talking on an open

line. I had called him on an open line on this. In fact, as time passed, the less I used the secure line and the more I used the open line.

*Q: It's a great way of communicating to the real people in power.*

WILSON: At one point I had said to a friend of mine, "I'm looking forward to the day when I can take Saddam's white horse and ride it through the rubble of his palace," which is on former U.S. embassy grounds. Several weeks later some journalist came up and asked me if I had really boasted about riding Saddam's horse through the rubble of his palace at some point.

Both of these conversations, I think, were particularly useful and they certainly set the stage. But within Iraq, as I have said, it was the Crowe testimony that attracted attention - when I say Crowe, I single him out more than David Jones because Crowe had been a Bush appointee, so he was known internationally as having been Bush's chairman. When he broke with the president on Iraq policy, the implication was that the military was not going to support the president. Powell, I think, was far more circumspect; he voiced his objections, which were held by the military across the board, to the president, but not in public. The active military officers wanted to insure that the political leadership had fully considered the consequences of military action and had fully defined the mission before it gave the orders to the military.

*Q: I'm not sure exactly when it happened, but did you get the feeling that particularly the group around Jim Baker was focusing on April Glaspie to hang her out to dry? They were accusing April Glaspie - if only she had said the right words to Saddam Hussein, none of this would have happened. Were you getting that? And what was your reaction?*

WILSON: Very clearly. In fact, President Bush (41), when I saw him down in Houston several years ago, he asked me if I thought that April Glaspie had gotten a bum rap. I said, "Yes, she did," and he said, "Yes, I sort of thought so, too." I sat there with my mouth open thinking to myself, "She was the president's representative in Baghdad. She was a president appointee, and if he thought she had gotten a bum rap, why didn't he do something about it?" From the very beginning it was pretty clear that the goal was to scapegoat April Glaspie on the grounds that perhaps she had given Saddam a green light or a yellow light or what she had said to Saddam had been interpreted as a green light or a yellow light. There were a couple things that might have given rise to this view. Her cable of her meeting with Saddam reflected far more of what Saddam said to her than what she said to Saddam. That is normal; that is the way you report meetings. It's more important to Washington to know what the other person says than what you say, because it is assumed that you are going to be faithful in following your instructions. As I said earlier, in her case she didn't have any instructions, but U.S. policy towards intra-Arab border disputes from time immemorial has been that "we do not take a position on the validity of either side's claim, but what we do want is that these disputes be adjudicated through diplomatic negotiations or through an international legal system." That is what she had repeated to Saddam. That was the U.S. position then; it was the U.S. position before; it was the U.S. position afterwards. Even Tariq Aziz, in perhaps one of his few truthful statements, has said that Saddam was not looking for a green light, red light or yellow light; he didn't expect that from April Glaspie, and that that had not been the purpose of the meeting. I've never talked to Jim Baker about it. I've talked to Bob Kimmit about it. I think that you can make the case that at a time

when you are attempting to exercise global leadership and build an international coalition, you cannot allow yourself to be bogged down in the 'who lost Kuwait' debate. In the congressional inquiry, in the press questions as to who lost Kuwait it would have made sense not to spend all your time defending April Glaspie. Every time you say something in defense of April Glaspie, you invite the next set of questions. At the end of the day an ambassador gets paid big bucks to take some particular heat. I'm not sure that that's what happened, but if I were Jim Baker, that's the way I would explain it.

*Q: This is pure supposition, but again, knowing something about the topography of Washington, it sounded to me like the spinmeisters around Jim Baker were pushing the anti-Glaspie line, because Jim Baker was not paying much attention. They, were trying to cover for their boss, and the immediate rationale was that, the ambassador didn't handle it right.*

WILSON: That's possible. I think they all sort of deluded themselves into maybe thinking that was and then maybe came to believe it. In talking to Kimmit later - he was the undersecretary for political affairs at the time and later went on to be ambassador to Germany - he asked approximately the same question - i.e. why wasn't she tougher on Saddam? The counter-argument is what else was she going to say. Was she going to tell Saddam, "If you invade Kuwait, we're going to bring B52s over and bomb Baghdad back to the Stone Age." You can't do that. You're under no instructions to do that. It would have been going far beyond her brief to represent the interests of your government. We have to remember that her meeting with Saddam took place before the invasion. As I mentioned before, while she was with Saddam, he took a phone call from Mubarak. In that conversation with Mubarak, he told him exactly what he had told April - i.e. that he would not do anything militarily as long as there was a negotiating process ongoing and that Mubarak need not worry. We were being told by all the Arab leaders in the region, "Don't do anything because you might provoke exactly what you want to avoid. We'll take care of it." I think, if you're a country like the United States, fundamentally you have to absorb the first blow. You can't put yourself in a position where you're striking out first. You have to take the first blow. In the case of Kuwait, we didn't take the first blow; the Kuwaitis took it, but I think the point is that we could not have done much more than we did, which was fly a couple of bomber aircraft around Bahrain for a couple days before the invasion.

As I said before, the larger question seems to me - and I've discussed this with Mike Van Heusen. Mike Van Heusen was the senior staffer for Lee Hamilton when Hamilton was chairman of the whole House International Relations Committee. A couple of days after April saw Saddam, Hamilton held a public hearing with John Kelly, who was the assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, as principal witness. Hamilton asked Kelly - and I remember this vividly because it just jumped off the page and smacked me in the face when I first saw it in the wireless file - "Do we have a mutual defense pact with Kuwait?" The question really was whether an automatic response by the United States would be required by treaty in the event that Kuwait was attacked? Hamilton knew the answer to that, for crying out loud. It was his area of expertise. There's no reason for him to ask that, particularly in open session, unless he wanted a public response. Either they were really stupid in asking the question or they had reasons to which I'm not privy, but he obviously got the answer that we had to give and that was that we don't have a mutual defense pact with Kuwait. That opened up a whole different set of issues. If you're going to come to the aid of a country that's been invaded, you have to use a

different set of legal justifications to do so. So if you ever wanted to send a confusing signal to Saddam, when a senior government official tells a senior member of the U.S. Congress that we didn't have any legal requirement for the U.S. to come to the defense of Kuwait in the event that Kuwait is invaded, that was it. That was the signal that you send.

*Q: You haven't talked about the role of the Soviet embassy and Soviet supplies, because this was a Soviet-equipped army. Could you talk about your relationship with the Soviet presence in Baghdad.*

WILSON: Our relationship with the Soviets during this period was remarkably good. The Soviets had very good insights. Their ambassador and their DCM were both very experienced hands. The ambassador had been DCM there before. The DCM was a guy by the name of Kalugin whose father was the Kalugin of the KGB fame. We were pretty close to them - as close as you could be given that there was still some Cold War rivalry. We used to see quite a bit of them. They had an awful lot of Soviet technicians working in the south, which was going to be where the Iraqi troops were as they moved into Kuwait and eventually a battlefield. They were running power projects; there were a lot of technicians there and a lot of money involved. The Soviets were owed a lot of money by the Iraqis for those services. They had very real concerns about what was going to happen to their citizens in south Iraq. They had to negotiate releases from their contract so that they could bring their citizens out because the Iraqis weren't going to allow them to go. The Iraqi position was that the Soviets were contractually obligated to stay to finish the projects; they were not about to let them out of the contract. The Soviets had a set of negotiations with the Iraqis on this issue. They had their own reasons for the actions that they took throughout this period. The connections between Gorbachev and Shevardnadze on the one hand and some of the underlings on the other hand did not seem to work very well at times. In particular, Primakov who later became the Russian foreign minister and had ambition at one time, I think, to be president, seemed to play his own hand.

*Q: He was prime minister, too...*

WILSON: He was prime minister at one time. Primakov had been a close buddy of Saddam's when he was in the KGB. He had been worked in that territory. He'd known Saddam for 30 years. He got himself stuck into this situation and started coming to Baghdad clearly trying to find a middle way. Every time Primakov would come to Baghdad, we would end up having to have higher-level talks with Shevardnadze - either Baker-Shevardnadze or Baker-Gorbachev - to try to rein in Primakov. I remember one situation in particular. Primakov was in Baghdad. This must have been in November, I guess; this was his second or third visit down there. I would get read-outs on the Primakov visit because we met with the Soviets virtually every night which I would report. We had a standing meeting, the Soviets, the French, the Turks and ourselves, at either the chief of mission or deputy chief of mission level. It was open to all four. Primakov had come and had met with Saddam and had made some public statement and gone away. This public statement was far rosier than the circumstances merited, and we had reported that. Frank Wisner, who was then our ambassador to Egypt, sent in a companion report because he had met with the Soviet ambassador the following day; he used one of his classic lines. He said, "The Soviet ambassador came and briefed me about what Primakov and Saddam had discussed," and he quoted the ambassador as saying, "I was mildly encouraged by what I did not hear." Then

Frank put in parenthesis, "Thin rule indeed." It was a wonderful phrase which supplemented what we were saying. This happened right about the time that Shevardnadze was meeting with Baker in Paris, and literally within 24 hours of Primakov's statement in Baghdad, Shevardnadze and Baker basically refuted and discredited it.

*Q: Would the Soviet ambassador or DCM, when he'd report on Primakov, sort of roll their eyes and sort of say, "This is the son of a bitch from out of town," or...*

WILSON: No, they were far too disciplined to do that. They would report pretty factually about what he was saying. They would not go into a lot of editorial comment. They were most concerned that their interests be considered as we were moving forward militarily. They were concerned about whether they were going to get paid, but most importantly, I think, they were concerned about their several thousands Soviet technicians who were in the south.

*Q: Did the Soviet representatives there understand, when we started putting in the 7th Corps and all, what was going to happen?*

WILSON: Yes. I don't think they were under any illusions that a very real possibility of military action existed and that we were buttressing our diplomatic efforts with very real power and real force. I think that they and we and everybody else who was in the diplomatic business labored intensively to try to find a way by which we would have achieved our stated objectives without having to resort to a prolonged military engagement. The Soviets had a lot at stake. They had major investments in Iraq. They had a major political relationship with Saddam. They had a lot of Soviet citizens there.

From our side, we were staring the possibility of 20,000 casualties in the face. It's not an exaggeration to say that we anticipated losing 20,000 American citizens within a four- or five-month period. That was a pretty heavy burden to be contemplating. It therefore behooved all of us to insure, as we went into this, that all other options had been tested and explored and found to be wanting before we actually unleashed the military force. That was true ourselves, that was true for the French and the Turks and everybody else who was some stakes in the developments. At certain times resolution efforts became counterproductive to the broader aims of the coalition. When UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar came to Iraq, for example, on his 11th-hour mission and when Mitterrand talked about finding some other solution, that undermined to some extent what we were trying to do, but by then it was too late in the game in any case.

I mentioned that the Turks had the best intelligence network in Iraq. They had a lot of commerce going back and forth; they had a lot of citizens in Iraq; they had a lot of history with Iraq. So we spent a lot of time with the Turkish ambassador, who was a very good friend, and his DCM, who was also a very good friend. We met quite literally every night. The Turkish ambassador and I lived within a mile of each other; so he and I and then most often the Soviet ambassador or DCM and/or the French chargé, would meet to discuss the state of affairs. It was clear to the Turks and us that, while the Iraqis intellectually were concerned about U.S. military action - and I'm convinced that the reason that Saddam first met with April on the 26th of July and then me on the 6th of August, was because they wanted to blunt the possibility that we would react

unilaterally - they wanted the issue to be debated in the UN system. If there was going to be a reaction, they wanted it to be a UN reaction because they thought that a UN reaction meant protracted negotiations and toothless resolutions.

*Q: Did Perez de Cuellar seem to reflect this? Did you consider him a help or a hindrance?*

WILSON: He sent out Koki, and we thought that Koki was coming out to secure the release of all hostages, but as it turned out that his mandate was to get all UN workers out of Iraq, in which he was successful. That didn't endear him to me, although I've since made my peace with him, or he's made his peace with me, and we are fine with each other. But at the time, since the vast majority of the UN employees were Palestinians who were traveling on Arab passports and were therefore free to leave, I thought that for him to spend so much time on them and so little time on other nationals was not very helpful. Clearly he was doing it on behalf of Perez de Cuellar. When Perez de Cuellar finally did come out, it was too late. I was already on the airplane on the way out. He literally landed as we were leaving. What was being done in New York was something that Tom Pickering was working on.

*Q: Joe, before we move to the other topics that we want to cover, was anybody coming out or could they come out? In other words, somebody from Washington coming out and saying, "Is this guy Joe Wilson solid or is he going around the bend," or come out with instructions. Was there any personal communication from the Department or the NSC?*

WILSON: We had a phone line set up 24 hours a day from the DCM's office where the phone was located. I moved from the DCM's office into the ambassador's office during that period, so that my old office could be vacated. We had some interns basically monitoring the phones the whole time. Depending on the time and the event, we would have various flurries of activity when we would be talking to Washington on a regular basis; then there would be times when either most of Washington was asleep or nothing was happening, but we would every 15 minutes we would do a channel check. One time we were walking into our 8:30 or 9:00 o'clock staff meeting. I remember this rather vividly; it was in November - and, the task force voice came on the line and said to the person who was monitoring the phone, "The balloon is going up," and that was reported to me. So I went to the phone and said, "I'm not sure I know what you mean. What do you mean the balloon is going up?" The voice on the other end said, "Well, the Iraqis have just launched an ICBM, or a missile, and we think its trajectory is going to have it landing at Haifa or Tel Aviv." I said, "Okay," and we went to our staff meeting to discuss this latest event. A military guy came in about 10 minutes late, looked around the room, and said that he had never seen so many pale faces in his life; we were trying to figure out what to do. We obviously activated all of our security apparatus, i.e., our systems to alert people and get them places where we could have a nose count and move them quickly if we had to. Then the voice came on the phone again and said, "Whoops, false alarm." The Iraqis were apparently just testing their missiles and navigational systems; the missile landed well within Iraqi territory, so we were able to stand down. But it was one of those very interesting moments when, among other things, we were considering whether or not to go upstairs on the roof of the embassy and check the wind direction to figure out whether or not we were downwind or upwind from the nuclear sites that they had.

*Q: I was talking a couple days ago to Bill Brown, who was our ambassador in Tel Aviv at the time, about the situation. There's considerable worry about biological and chemical warfare today in Washington. He was saying that he was pretty sure that, if the Iraqis had fired one of their Scuds and if it had landed near Tel Aviv with a chemical warhead, regardless whether it had been effective, Baghdad within a half an hour would have been a nuclear waste site. He was pretty sure that the Israelis were ready to launch a nuclear weapon in retaliation.*

WILSON: There were a number of things we did to try to keep the Israelis from going down that road - one of which was to give them the Patriot batteries. Two, we sent Eagleburger to Jerusalem before Desert Storm to talk to them. Three, we neglected to share with them any of our flight patterns or coordinates, so they had no radio contact with U.S. airplanes and they would have been subjected to a U.S. attack had they flown into Iraqi airspace, if they had they done so. I think it was made very, very clear to them that this was not their war. Having said that, I think that clearly had the chemical weapons landed in downtown Tel Aviv or somewhere in Israel, I'm sure they would have felt obliged to react in some fashion. One of the things we did do is when Baker met Tariq Aziz in January 6<sup>th</sup> in Geneva, was to make very clear to Iraqi - which was couched in a letter from Bush to Saddam - that, if the Iraqis used weapons of mass destruction, then the U.S. reserved the right to use every weapon in its arsenal in retaliation. I think Baker made it quite unambiguous in that meeting that, if the Iraqis used chemical weapons against us, we would obliterate them.

*Q: Back to my original question: was it possible for somebody from the NSC, from the State Department, to come to Baghdad and sound things out?*

WILSON: We were able to move some of our people across to Jordan as non-professional couriers, which we would do periodically. Our general services officer needed a break; so we sent her to Jordan for three or four days as a non-pro courier - things like that. In terms of getting people in, the regional medical officer came one time in November or December. I guess he was non-pro couriered in, which was a good thing because there were people among the Americans we were keeping in diplomatic quarters who had not had their medication in a long time. There were certain medical things that he could take care of, and that was very helpful, I think, for all of us. That was about the only U.S. government official who actually came into Baghdad.

*Q: I'm surprised, because I would have thought there would have been somebody just to come to take a sounding to take back to Washington.*

WILSON: No. We were on the phone to them all the time. The regional medical officer who was stationed in Washington was the only one that I can recall who actually came to visit.

*Q: We want to talk about the hostages. When are we talking about, October? The children had left. Is that right?*

WILSON: Women and children under the age of 18 had left. We had different categories of people whom we were worried about. One, we had people who were in hiding in Kuwait. Two, we had people who were within the embassy compound in Kuwait, which had gotten down to just a handful of key personnel at that time. We're now talking about the November time-frame.

Three, we had Americans in hiding in diplomatic quarters in Baghdad. Those were the people who were at the ambassador's residence, anywhere between 35 and 50 at any given time. Four, we had the human shields, up to 115 at one time.

*Q: These were not just Americans?*

WILSON: These were just American human shields. There were other human shields of other nationalities. There were the French, there were Brits, there were Japanese, and I think there may have been Germans. The Americans numbered 115. Americans and the Brits were the last to be released. The Iraqis released the French first. It's pretty clear to me that they did that because they hoped to use that as an opportunity to drive a wedge between the Western countries that were forming the coalition. I made it a point after that to be very open to the French press - in French - to discuss with them how we saw things, in the hopes that the French population would not forget that just because French were no longer being held hostage, that didn't mean that there weren't other hostages. I think that was reasonably successful. The French press covered it pretty well.

Those were the categories of people that we were most concerned about. We had set up our operations in Baghdad to service the two populations to whom we had some access. One was the human shields where we worked through the foreign ministry to get them mail. We produced the a weekly newspaper, with anodyne information like football scores and things like that. That we would send out there in the hopes that they would at least have something to read. We set up a pen pal program so that every one of our 70-odd people who were working within the embassy adopted a hostage or two and would serve as a funnel of information. They would communicate with their families back in the States when they got a letter. They would communicate with them when the family sent a letter to be sent to them. And they would write once-a-week letters to them or something like that. The other group was the people that we had in our housing - anywhere from 35 to 50 people at the ambassador's residence at any one time. For these people we had to worry about their medical conditions. We had one fellow who ran out of his medicine. We worried about feeding and just taking care of them with the necessities of life. I have mentioned that we set up a "scavenger" unit as we called it, which went out and bought items on the local markets that had been pillaged from Kuwait. They would spend every day at these wholesale markets around Baghdad where these items from Kuwait were showing up.

*Q: Was there any hostility shown towards our people?*

WILSON: No, in Baghdad there was no hostility shown towards Americans. I made a point of having my flag on the car every time I went traveling around Baghdad, even if it was just to and from work. I made a point of going to do my Christmas shopping in the market. In fact, the press asked if they could come along, and they did; so it was all photographed. There was never any hostility shown towards me or any other American other than the government-organized protests in front of the embassy which would be staged every day to burn the flag and effigy, and they would shout, "Down, down, Bush," and "Down USA." I mentioned earlier that I had an arrangement with some of the media, the television cameras in particular, that if they would not take any pictures of me, I would come out. It usually happened about coffee break time, about 10:30 in the morning, and it was be a good opportunity to just continue having a discussion with



some of the media, and it gave me a chance to take a cigar break. I would generally come out and I sit on the bench behind the protestors and talk to the press while the protests were going on in front of me, and smoke my cigar and just to take a half hour to watch what was going on. That worked pretty well. They never violated that confidence.

*Q: How did the release of the hostages come about?*

WILSON: We saw that Saddam was going to use them as bait to lure Americans to come to Iraq in an attempt to, I guess, really portray Kuwait as the aggrieved party rather than the United States and to encourage them to violate the Executive Order and the UN which had imposed sanctions on travel to Baghdad. It was to a certain extent successful. We had a lot of visitors come through; the most notable two being Mohamed Ali and Ramsey Clark, former attorney general in the Johnson Administration. We made a practice of providing the Iraqis with medical documentation for any hostage whose family was able to provide it to us. Then we established criteria because the Iraqis would often ask us who should be released and who shouldn't be released. We, of course, always said everybody should be released, but in the absence of releasing everybody, "If you're going to release three or four people," we would name some based on a number of objective criteria including health and age, state of mind, family status, etc., that we had established and we would forward those names accordingly. But at the same time, we seized on the fact that they seemed to take medical status in consideration when deciding which people were to be released. We encouraged families to send us any sort of information on whatever malady their loved ones might have suffered from infancy on; we would incorporate that into diplomatic notes and send the information to the Iraqis. We would get letters saying, "My husband once suffered from a hangnail," and then we would send a diplomatic note saying, "So-and-so once suffered from a hangnail. Therefore, he is obviously medically unfit to be kept as a human shield, and you should release him." We inundated the Iraqi foreign ministry with these diplomatic notes. We also tried to shame them at every opportunity. Let me go back to when they still were holding women and children. I think I told this story. We made the point that true Iraqi heroes did not hide behind the skirts of women and children. We did something similar when hundreds of thousands of Indian and Pakistani and South Asian workers in Kuwait were being herded into refugee camps and there was a cholera outbreak. While they were in the refugee camps, Saddam was trying to position himself as a champion of the Third World and a champion of the non-aligned movement and a champion of Islam. I went on CNN and said that this was balderdash, given that you've that there were these tens of thousands of citizens from Third World countries and from non-aligned movement countries, many thousands of whom were Muslim being held in refugee camps where they were suffering from cholera. I said that one could see the epidemics that were beginning to rage in these refugee camps since Saddam, their champion, was doing nothing to allow them to leave. About three or four days later, he announced that they could all leave. We had some almost immediate feedback with these attacks on him; the confrontations with him were having some effect, so we did that as well.

In the "use-of-force" debate, David Jones, who had been an Air Force general and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and then Bill Crowe, who had been a Navy admiral, and also had been Chairman, testified. Crowe's was particularly important because he had been a Chairman under George Bush. Crowe said, "Give sanctions a chance; don't use force," We knew, because we had

been doing a lot of studies on the effects of sanctions, that sanctions were not going to do it; they might be part of a broader strategy but they of themselves were not the strategy. But the fact that a recently departed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff had testified in a way that was counter to his president's policy was perceived by the Iraqis as a demonstration that the military would not be with George Bush if he decided to launch his counterattack. As a consequence, everything that we were doing towards getting the hostages released dried up overnight. We were no longer solicited for our views on who should be the next ones to go. We were never solicited for our views on who should stay because we always refused to answer, but on who should go, what our priority was, who might be the four or five that we would think were probably the neediest and who should leave with the next American visitor. I must say that I have never really forgiven either of those gentlemen but in particular Admiral Crowe for having said what he did say. I thought that it was not well thought out. He didn't have access to the information that he needed to allow him to draw the conclusions he drew in front of the U.S. Senate committee; the signal that he sent to the Iraqis was unmistakable and it was very much an anathema to what we were trying to achieve. That was a setback. Notwithstanding that, we were successful in getting everybody out of there. In fact, if you go back and you take a look at the history, of the several thousand Americans who were at risk during that period, we lost just two, one of whom was a U.S. government employee. He was one of our communicators who died of a cerebral hemorrhage the first or second night of the invasion. The other was an American who was swept up in the invasion, and while he was in custody in the first couple days he had a heart attack and died. Everybody else made it out and back to their loved ones by Christmas.

*Q: What about all these people who were hiding in Baghdad and maybe elsewhere, but particularly in Kuwait? They weren't on anybody's list. Obviously you didn't want to let anybody know where they were, but at a certain point you have to say, "Oh yes, and we have 2,000 people in Kuwait who'd like to get out too." How did that work?*

WILSON; The Iraqis knew that there were a number of people hiding in Kuwait. They didn't know how many, and we weren't going to tell them. We had an interesting experience where the German ambassador - we were not the only ones who had citizens in hiding; other Europeans had citizens in hiding as well - at one point called the Japanese ambassador, the French chargé, the British ambassador and me to invite us over to his office. He told us "I've just negotiated a deal with the Iraqis on behalf of all of us," although nobody had empowered him to negotiate on our behalf. The deal was as follows: The Iraqis had committed to the German ambassador that they would permit all of our nationals in hiding in Kuwait safe passage out of Kuwait City. That sounded really nice. I raised my hand and said, "That sounds very nice, but is this safe passage all the way out of Iraq or is it just out of Kuwait?." We'd had this experience already with the Iraqis double-crossing us on people coming from our compound in Kuwait. He said, "It's from Kuwait. They will organize it, they will provide the safe passage, they will take care that nothing happens to them, and when they get to Baghdad, they'll be human shields. But clearly their fate as human shields will be better than what they're going through in hiding as fugitives in Kuwait." I said, "Well, thanks very much. I have to tell you in all candor that I really am not sure that my government would support anything like that, however humanitarian it may seem on the face of it, just because I don't think that we're going to support anything that puts more of our citizens under Saddam's thumb." I went back and I wrote the cable to Washington. Of course, I was far more candid in my cable to Washington than I was to the German. I said that this didn't

make a lot of sense to me, that, however well intentioned it might be. The idea of having more people as human shields didn't seem to be something that we would want to support - the U.S. government would not want to go on record as suggesting to American citizens that they come out of hiding to be made hostages. The Department agreed with me. The next day they sent Ambassador General Vernon Walters to see the German foreign minister, who at that time was Genscher, to read him the riot act about presuming to be acting on our behalf particularly on what was really a cockamamie idea. So we didn't obviously participate. We ran a number of charter flights in and out of Kuwait. Every time that we thought that we had enough eligible people to justify a flight, we would run a flight to and from Kuwait.

*Q: Was it a the medical type?*

WILSON: It was a flight designed to move people out who were eligible. There were still American women in Kuwait; we had Americans who were of dual parentage and therefore had dual citizenship. In those cases we insisted that they were Kuwaiti. So we offered a number of Americans the opportunity to come to the Kuwait airport and get on an aircraft flying out of the area. I think we flew something in the order of 11 or 12 flights. Typically if we had a group in Iraq that was ready, then we would bring the aircraft to Baghdad, fill it up and send it on its way. Typically there were never had enough Americans on these flights, so we would invite people of other nationalities to get aboard a first-come/first-served basis. If you took a look at the manifests, we had Libyans, we had Filipino maids, we had Palestinians -we had all sorts of nationalities on these flights out of there and very few Americans. If I were to go back and calculate how many Americans actually got out from August 2nd on, I think the number from Kuwait would number far less than 2,000, but I think all Americans, certainly all Americans who wanted to leave and could leave, got out.

*Q: Did you have American girls who married Arab students in the United States, went to their husband's home, had children, and then all of a sudden found out that, one, they didn't like it there - and this is in normal conditions - and, two, that the kids weren't allowed to leave. That's a perennial consular problem, but in your case that must have...*

WILSON: We had two categories -I'll leave Kuwait aside when I talk about this. We can talk about Kuwait later. Within Iraq we had two categories. We had a few of these kids who had been born of Iraqi fathers and American mothers in the States and the Iraqi father, after splitting with the American mother, had somehow gotten his hands on the kids and brought them back to Iraq. There was nothing we could do about that even though I used to spend hours working on such problems. I actually met the father of a couple of these kids. We made innumerable representations on behalf of these kids who were American citizens, but in Iraqi law, were the sons and daughters of Iraqi citizens and, therefore, they were Iraqis and unable to leave Iraq. We did everything we could to facilitate contact between the mother and the father to assure the mother that her kids were okay and to try to facilitate some rapprochement which would allow the mother to see the children periodically. That was one category, which at no level could we bridge the gap. The other category was the one you mentioned - typically American women who had married Iraqis, mostly in the '40s or the '50s when the first wave of Iraqis had come to the United States to go to school. These were people of late middle age who had spent most of the last 40 years in Iraq, including the whole period of the Gulf War, without ever having the

opportunity to leave because there were restrictions on Iraqi travel outside the country during that period. They had basically decided their own fate by that time. They saw themselves as the wives of Iraqis. None of them approached me about leaving. Their whole relationship with the American embassy was one of just staying in touch with America and their American roots, but for all intents and purposes they all saw themselves as Iraqis. In another category, we had a fellow who was in hiding in Baghdad. He would pop up from time to time. He was an employee of an American firm. He did not stay at the embassy compound because he had a girlfriend, and he opted to marry the girl and stay in Baghdad; he didn't want to leave. These were the only ones that I'm aware of. Those were the categories and those were really the cases that we could not help them to get out.

In Kuwait, we did manage to run a couple of flights filled with women and children who had the dual-national citizenship. The dual-national case occurred usually in two ways. One was the children of an American male and a Kuwaiti female; they were Americans, and that was pretty easily resolved; they were able to leave. Then the second one were the offspring of American mothers and Kuwaiti fathers. The initial decision was that they were to be considered Kuwaitis through their father and, therefore, the mothers would be permitted to leave without her the children because all Kuwaitis had become Iraqis and therefore were subject to the travel restrictions imposed on Iraqis. A number of such cases had gotten on the airplane in Kuwait and showed up in Baghdad for processing. We had a processing center there. The Iraqis had a processing center, so people would fly from Kuwait to Iraq, be processed, get back on the airplane and fly to Europe. In this case - I was always at the airport when they came through - the Iraqis were saying, "We're not going to let these people leave." I went into the head of the Immigration office and I told him that I was furious at what they were doing. I had my biggest cigar in my mouth and I had my face really right up in his face - just far enough away from his face so that I could smoke my cigar. Every time I was getting in his face, I was blowing cigar smoke in his face as well. I made it very clear to him that we were not going to put up with the idea of separating mothers and children. I got Nezar Hamdun on the phone, and he laid out the rationale that I have just mentioned. My rejoinder was that not just Iraqi custom but even under the Islamic faith, one would not separate a mother from her young children. As a consequence it seemed to me that he could use that as the rationale for letting these children leave with their mothers. I said that in any event we were just not going to permit this to happen if we could possibly stop it. I told Nezar, "Look, this is the way you get out of the problem. These are children of American mothers. While technically they're Kuwaiti children, the general principle of not separating mothers from their children should be overriding in this case." I added, "And if you don't, I just want you to know that your president made the decision to allow women and children to leave Iraq because he thought he was going to gain propaganda points through this decision. He thought that the world would see him in a kinder, gentler fashion. Now, right outside this door are television crews from CBS, ABC, NBC and CNN, and if I don't have satisfactory resolution of this problem within 30 minutes, when it is the time that the plane is supposed to take off, and if these people are not on that plane, then I will have no choice but to go out there and report to the world's media that the instructions of Saddam Hussein to allow women and children to leave were not carried out by his underlings out here at the airport or in the foreign ministry. The decision is yours." Twenty-eight minutes later he called me back and said, "They can all go. Put the Immigration official on the phone." The Immigration official got on the phone, said, "Yes, Sir," and they moved all the women and children onto the airplane and

they got out. After that, I went out; the press was all there and they asked me about it, and I was able to report that in fact there had been a successful departure of all these women and children.

*Q: You had entered a new phase of diplomacy in a way. This is where it really hit the world, and that was particularly true for CNN but also for other television networks. The media became a very important tool of diplomacy. It could be used for you or against you. It was a watershed.*

WILSON: It was particularly interesting in Iraq because the embassy had the only technical means for the reporters to file their reports without having to the Morse code telegraph system or some other outdated system. Fax machines were outlawed. They could communicate through an Iraqi operator and be connected, but whatever they were going to report would be listened to. They would have to then dictate the report, or they could come down to the embassy and the compound across the street which we occupied. Those were useless offices anyway, being occupied by USIS; so we had turned them into a press filing center. Our PAO had set it up in a way to provide everybody their own desk and their own telephone lines, all of which were connected to Washington; they were direct-dial capable. We were the only place in Baghdad that had direct-dial capability. The reporters would come in the afternoon and file their stories. Even in those days, one could take his or hers little laptop computer and hook it up through the modem that one could file the stories electronically. They could do it very, very quickly. It put the reporters in an interesting position. They wanted to file their stories, but they also didn't want to be perceived as being too close to the American embassy. We made no specific demands on them at all. What we did do was to hold a morning press briefing which was on background. Before that press briefing, we would hold our staff meeting in part to determine what the message of the day would be. We would determine what it was we hoped the press would cover in Baghdad from our perspective. So during the course of the press backgrounder, we would try to invite their attention to issues that were of great concern to us, and typically we would get some stories written about it. The press loved the opportunity to take pictures of me getting into the car; so we would give them those opportunities. Did I tell you the story about Thanksgiving?

*Q: I think so.*

WILSON: The one time that we actually worked with the White House and the State Department was over Thanksgiving. The arrangement I had...

*Q: Bush was going...*

WILSON: Yes, Bush was going to be in the desert, so I already told that story. But basically any opportunity to have an interaction that advanced our agenda - and our agenda was to be very confrontation to Saddam - we used and particularly with CNN because it was...

*Q: You were mentioning direct line connections, but how was CNN dealing at that time with their television signals?*

WILSON: They had satellite hook up, so they were able to bring their equipment in. I can't remember what size it was at that time. I don't know if they needed a rooftop to put it on.

*Q: Did you find the Iraqis getting restive with all this press coverage, or did they seem to think it was a good thing?*

WILSON: The Iraqi on the street would never see it, because all dissemination of information was restricted; there were no satellite dishes allowed in Iraqi and, of course, the press was subject to enormous censorship. The only people that really saw foreign media coverage were the Iraqi elite, basically Saddam and his information ministry, which was charged with monitoring the coverage, and his foreign ministry for much the same reason, and perhaps parts of his inner circle. The number of people who actually saw the coverage was very small. The importance of the people who saw it was tremendous. I could tell who was watching it by who was pissed off at me on any given day, because I used every opportunity to go on and make really derogatory comments about Saddam. I was even called over to the foreign ministry one time and chastised for my aggressive and assertive behavior, to which I rejoined that when one had 117 of his citizens being held hostage, they could damn well expect that we're going to be assertive and aggressive on their behalf.

*Q: Why didn't they kick you out?*

WILSON: I don't know. I think they thought if they kicked me out, they wouldn't have anybody else to talk to. They kicked everybody else out. They kicked out our military attaché, our station chief, and our consular officer.

*Q: You mentioned interns. Who were the interns?*

WILSON: These were kids who had come over to spend their summer to work in the embassy. We had a couple who had just arrived and we had a bunch from Kuwait. I think we had four altogether, kids who were either in their senior year or in the first year of graduate school. They came to Baghdad and they were terrific. They just went with the flow. For them, this was just a great experience. They manned the telephones. They did that 24 hours a day. They worked on six-hour shifts. I would spend a lot of time with them, because they were in my old office. We took the approach to be just as open as we could be with everybody in our community. We had nothing to hide. There were maybe some things we wouldn't discuss openly with people, but most everything was open to discussion. I tried to make myself very accessible to anybody. So I spent a lot of time with these kids, and it was great.

*Q: Was there any sort of distress on the part of the State Department of having interns there: parents saying "Come home, get them out of harm's way" and that sort of thing?*

WILSON: Oh, yes, absolutely - lots of distress. But we fostered an atmosphere of defiance within our embassy. We took a look at some of the other models of people in hostage-like situations; the ones that we had looked at were not terribly appealing in our own thinking to how we wanted to approach this issue. We did not want to be seen as whining about why isn't our government doing more for us. So we attempted to create an atmosphere of real defiance. The British ambassador one time accused me of acting like a cowboy sitting on my stoop with my shotgun across my knee waiting for the bad guys to come over the horizon. He meant that in the

way only a British could mean it, which is really somewhat critical. I took it, and my staff took it, as a supreme compliment.

*Q: What were the British and French and German embassies doing? Were they taking different courses?*

WILSON: A lot of them were constrained by their commitments to the EU. In the EU system, there's a requirement to achieve consensus. So even though we had somewhat different ways of getting to the common objective, we all were pretty much on the same page. It was very clear that the country that was going to lead in this particular situation was the United States. We were the ones who were being paid to be the most belligerent. If there was somebody who was going to find a meeting of the minds that would accommodate both the U.S. position, as characterized by our president, and the Iraqi position, which was characterized by their presence in Kuwait City, it would have to be a third party. We were not going to be the ones who were going to be making any concessions whatsoever. We understood early on that in Saddam's world a concession would be pocketed, and viewed as a sign of weakness, and that the Iraqis would then move on to seek the next concession. We were not going to give them the satisfaction of any concessions whatsoever. The French were pretty good on the ground. In fact, the French chargé who was there when I was there is now back there as the head of their interest section - now ten years later. We had very similar views on where this situation was going and how it was going. I said that we had nightly meetings - the French, the Soviets, ourselves, and the Turks, during which we would discuss the events of the day and how we thought that we might get from here to there. The Brits were invited to a lot of these meetings as well. The British ambassador found us insufferable, but that's not surprising. He found us particularly insufferable because we offered sanctuary to all our nationals, and as a consequence he was pretty much obliged to do so the same because, after all, if the Americans could do it, why couldn't the British? So he offered his nationals sanctuary on their embassy property in tents, and then they had to call us for things like washing machines and dishwashers and televisions and some of the luxuries that they needed really to take care of a population that size. They didn't like that very much at all. We, of course, loved it.

*Q: He was more of the old school?*

WILSON: Yes, I'd say so. I don't know how he would have done it differently and ultimately where they would have come down, but we were clearly the more strident. I think that he was actually out of step with his own government in a lot of these issues. But because we were doing things for our citizens, some of these other countries felt compelled to do similar things for theirs.

*Q: The hostages had left by when?*

WILSON: Early December, shortly after Thanksgiving.

*Q: Our embassy in Kuwait: I think you mentioned it before, but when did that move to Baghdad?*

WILSON: The first part of the embassy moved in late August - 110 to 120 staffers probably moved in late August; and the rest of them moved about the time that the hostages were released. I think there was some linkage between their leaving and the hostages leaving - in fact, I know there was. They were permitted to stand down; we withdrew our diplomatic representation from Kuwait - we temporarily left Kuwait, left the flag flying but took out all our personnel. After the hostages had been released, the rationale was that, since there were no longer any American citizens in Kuwait who wanted to leave or needed any embassy or consular services, there was therefore no longer any reason to keep our staff there under the circumstances; so they left. This was in the early December time frame, sometime between the 3rd and the 10th or 11th.

*Q: What about the Iraqi and Kuwaiti foreign service nationals who worked in our embassies both in Kuwait and in Baghdad? Were they taken care of?*

WILSON: Yes. I don't know about Kuwait, because we never went there and never provided any administrative support to them. In the case of Baghdad, they all stayed with us, even though many of them were being advised by their families that they ought to leave for their own safety. Some may have been harassed by their neighbors; they were all as uncertain or even more uncertain of their future than we were; they were under as great or greater stress than we were, and yet they stayed with us. My driver, who was an Egyptian, to whom I had said early on that if he felt more comfortable leaving, he should do so taking into account his own personal considerations, but he didn't do it. He was under tremendous stress. He was a very nervous guy anyway.

*Q: Was there any way one could compensate them for this loyalty, then or later on?*

WILSON: I don't think there was any way of adequately compensating them. I think we made some efforts to get them some legal status in the United States. But I don't know where all that went.

*Q: How about your consular section? Were there any Iraqi students or others trying to get visas?*

WILSON: No, because the Iraqis themselves had imposed travel restrictions; so Iraqis could not get out. They couldn't get passports.

*Q: I would have thought this would have cause a lot of heartburn within the Iraqi elite community.*

WILSON: Except they were accustomed to this kind of treatment. Those who could, did get out and those couldn't had already spent the previous 10 years stuck in Iraq during the Gulf War. Our contact with the Iraqi elite was very limited. We knew a few people who managed some of the establishments around town and a few professors at the university, but we tried to avoid our best friends during these times of stress because they would been watched as closely or more closely than anybody, and their contacts with Americans would put them at some risk.

*Q: When we get into December, the hostages are gone...*



WILSON: I should mention that a number of hostages got themselves out. We had a number of hostages - they were not actually hostages but housed in different quarters - who took it upon themselves to make a break for it. We counseled them not to do it; it was dangerous, but they were committed to doing so. Since we had no legal means of keeping them against their will, all we could do was counsel them not to proceed, but then we provided as much support as we could, including maps, compasses and such. A number of these people - maybe as many as three or four different groups over a period of three weeks - left in the middle of the night and drove as far towards the Jordanian border as they could - usually within a couple of miles of the border. I don't know how they got through the checkpoints, but they did. They drove all the way to near the Jordanian border, walked a couple miles in the desert, turned towards the Jordanian border at some point, and then crossed the rest of desert into Jordan, where they would be met by American authorities on the other side. Although we didn't run these operations, we provided logistic support to those who determined that they were going to do so whether we liked it or not, and we didn't like it.

*Q: I guess by December you'd sort of cleared the decks, hadn't you?*

WILSON: Yes. By mid-December, we were looking at Christmas. There were about five of us left in the embassy plus all the journalists we had there -CNN and everybody was still there. All the hostages were gone. We had a general services officer, a communicator, a secretary, and myself - that was probably it, four of us, I guess, maybe five. Maybe we had a fifth one.

*Q: We had made the decision to fight; that was well apparent. What were you getting from the Iraqi side, just monitoring whatever you could? Did they understand what was happening by this time?*

WILSON: A couple things happened. One, the president had indicated a willingness to go the extra mile, which, curiously enough, was perceived by the Iraqis as a concession and as a sign of weakness. Therefore they attempted to negotiate the offer to go the extra mile. The initial offer was 'we'll send Jim Baker to Baghdad and you can have Tariq Aziz come to Washington and we will have these two meetings just to make sure that every avenue for a diplomatic solution has been explored before we actually have to go to war.' The Iraqis said, "Nah, that's a unilateral proposal. It wasn't proposed after any discussions with us. It wasn't agreed upon. We don't agree with it." But we finally settled on a meeting in Geneva. But during the month of December, in fact for several months prior to that, I had been arguing that we needed to produce a tape. I may have told you this story.

*Q: You told a story about the military...*

WILSON: And Wayne Downing, and we were producing it. We felt that it was really very important that the Iraqi military high command understand that this war was not going to be prosecuted the way the Iran-Iraq War was, and the way to do that was to give them a good show of the various weapon systems that we were prepared to bring to bear on them. That was distributed in December, although I don't know how good the distribution was, but by that time I think it was too late anyway. I think ultimately, if you had looked at the situation as a poker

game, Saddam had his bluff called in November when the president moved the 7th Corps to the Saudi desert. Even though his bluff had been called, he kept raising the stakes. So by the time the middle of December rolled around, everybody was pretty fatalistic about what's would happen. The Iraqi street was pretty fatalistic.

We believed that everything diplomatic ought to be done that could be done. We had this exchange of historical references: War is a failure of diplomacy versus war is just diplomacy by another means, and which camp did you fall into? I had said that, from my perspective as a diplomat in the field, we would continue to pursue diplomatic ends thinking that war resulted from a failure of diplomacy. Eagleburger had come out and said war really was an extension of diplomacy and politics by another name. So we had the debate on where we were going to end up and ended up in Geneva in January. At the same time we're trying to come up with ways that would allow us to achieve our objectives without having to run the risk of the 20,000 casualties that we were being foreseen. Remember, that at the time all the East Coast hospitals were bringing in extra supplies of blood and extra beds. We had the Dover Air Force base, which is the national military mortuary, being set up to handle all these casualties. We're looking at a big war. We have 500,000 troops. The Pentagon and the political powers were predicting 20,000 or 30,000 casualties in an engagement of this size. We had the 7th Corps, which is the corps that was instrumental in winning the Second World War in Europe, in the desert, etc. So we said, "Look, at this stage, it strikes us that Saddam has already seen his move as a political victory even if he suffers a military defeat. We don't think he's going to back down, but if there is a way for him to back out and save face and if we decide that it's in our interest to have him back out and save face, then we ought to consider a number of things." For one, we said, "Quit demonizing him. Quit calling him the second coming of Adolph Hitler, because you make it just way too personal when you do that; two, even though this is not clearly an invasion of Kuwait to liberate Palestine, we need to find an occasion to rededicate ourselves to the Palestinian question and Arab/Israeli issues, in the aftermath of this side show that Saddam created; three, one of the great incentives we can hold out to him is that if he withdraws voluntarily from Kuwait - i.e. isn't driven out of Kuwait - he essentially keeps his army intact. We proposed these tactics, and lo and behold, Jim Baker went on "Meet the Press" a couple days later and used them all. Saddam didn't pick up on any of them, not surprisingly since he just really hadn't understood or hadn't wanted to see the situation in the same way that we saw it. To this day I'm convinced that he saw this engagement probably very much as Nasser and later Sadat saw the engagements with the Israelis in the wars of 1967 and 1971; that is to say that a military defeat could become a political victory because an Arab had shown enough mettle to stand up to the West. So even if he hadn't defeated us, he would have gained stature in the eyes of the Arab people because he had shown the courage to stand up to West I think ultimately that was Saddam's view.

*Q: You were pretty well occupied with your current challenges, but was there any thinking by you or by other diplomatic colleagues from other embassies asking, "What if Saddam suffers a real military defeat, a real collapse of his army, whither Iraq, looking towards another type of government or looking for its successes?"*

WILSON: No, that was not what we were doing in Baghdad at the time. We had not looked at a scenario for the collapse of the Iraqi regime or an alternatives solution to Saddam's rule. If in retrospect, you look at the situation and ask the question of why didn't we go all the way to

Baghdad at the time, then that question really rises or as it's been phrased more commonly, "Why did you let Saddam stay in place?" The answer really is that the coalition was blessed by the UN Security Council. It was the first time that the Security Council had sanctioned this type of military engagement since the Korean War. It was important in the context of the vision of future wars to have an international legal basis and sanctions and support and a war being fought by a coalition under the auspices of the UN Security Council. It was really important that the first time out of the chute since the Korean War to abide by the Security Council resolutions. Therefore it was important to expel Iraqis from Kuwait, but not route follow them all the way up to Baghdad and to throw Saddam out. The coalition's actions were going to be limited to the expulsion of the Iraqis from Kuwait.

I think people who looked at Desert Storm will tell you that a lot of Saddam's Republican Guard, his core forces, had left Kuwait before the invasion took place, so that he had actually managed to save a good part really elite forces. We didn't go into Iraq because it would have violated the UN Security Council resolution. It was also pretty clear that our Arab allies in this confrontation, while understanding the rationale for getting Saddam out of Kuwait, foresaw a worst nightmare and that was - and probably always will be - a Western power acting to overthrow an Arab government just because it didn't like it, thereby inflicting severe humiliation on the Arab world. Had we gone further than the Kuwait-Iraqi border, we could have easily stimulated disaffection among our Arab allies almost immediately, whether they were the Saudis - probably not the Saudis - but certainly the Egyptians and the Syrians. Thirdly, had we gone into Baghdad, one of two things would have happened. Either you would have had a continuation of the pictures we had been taken during the first couple days after we got into Kuwait City - U.S. troops riding along the "road of death" - pictures of a lot of dead Iraqis and a lot of carnage brought by our air attacks and our artillery attacks. You either would have had those sorts of pictures being published running the risk of public opinion changing rather dramatically or, the closer the coalition forces got to Baghdad, the more the world might have seen the Iraqis defending their homeland. Their defense would have been much more spirited than it had been in defense of their occupation of Kuwait causing a much high numbers of casualties on our side for something that was clearly not one of our objectives at the time we launched our military actions. Finally once we got to Baghdad, we wouldn't have found Saddam and we would have been stuck with administering a really fractious society - none of whom probably wanted you to be there. It would have been a real mess. I think we've proven that we're much better at winning wars than we are at occupying foreign lands. Fifthly, which is one that comes up as much in hindsight as it ever did at the time we gamed this out, had we gotten rid of Saddam and had we completely destroyed his military, we would have created had a vacuum and an opportunity for Iranian mischief making. As the Iraqis would tell you, the Iranians have been trying to redraw the border between Iran and the Arab world for 150 years. So I think in retrospect you can make the argument that it was not in our interest to have an Iraq so weakened that it fell prey to an Iranian assault, which could have happened.

*Q: How did the play end? Everything was in place - our hostages are gone, the southern corps is ready...*

WILSON: And we're sitting there on Christmas eve still trying to negotiate whether we're going to have one meeting or two between Baker and Aziz, where it would be, and who it's going to be between.

I sent off one last bit of advice to the president and the secretary of state. This was right before Christmas. It was no brilliant insight on my part, but one of my informal political advisors, which is to say the media - in this case it was an American journalist for the London Sunday Times - came to see me. Marie Colvin is her name. She was probably one of the best writers on the Middle East. She had spent years in and around the Palestinian camps in Lebanon and has been involved in every major Middle East crisis for 25 years. This is part of our relationship with the press. We'd send them out; we'd give them our message and then when they would come back to the USIS building to file their stories. I would wander over to the filing center in the late afternoon just to sit around and chat with the press and glean from them what they had learned during the day. The press, which is very good at asking questions, is also very open about what it found. They were always seeking some feedback, some validation of what they were about to write. Anytime they could get an additional quote, they would add it to their story.

When I think of all the things we did, mastering the art of dealing with the press was one of our better efforts. In any case, Marie came to see me and said, "You know, I've got to tell you that in Baghdad, out there on the street, and with Iraqi authorities, they think that you guys are bluffing." I said, "How can they think that? We've got 500,000 soldiers in the desert, and we've got Norm Schwarzkopf out there, Stormin' Norman." She said, "Well, it's because every time the president of the United States and the secretary of state open their mouths, they talk about bringing war to Saddam and Iraq, but they think you're bluffing. If you really want them to take you seriously, they ought to just shut up. You don't need to say this anymore." I thought about it and I concluded that her advice sounded like a good idea. It was true. The war drums were beating so loud that one just had to wonder whether they were so loud because we didn't intend to do anything and just hoped that by beating the drums we would get the Iraqis to leave Kuwait. Saddam had his theory that the United States was temperamentally incapable of spilling the blood of 10,000 soldiers in the Arabian Desert - a direct quote to me - or had the staying power to remain in the desert for the time that it would take to end such a war. So I wrote a cable to the president and the secretary saying, "If you want Saddam to take us seriously, shut up" - a little bit more elegant than that, but that was the basic message. This friend of mine, Larry Drawl, who was in the Secretariat at the time, he's the one who actually...

*Q: State Department Secretary?*

WILSON: State Department Secretariat. He actually picked up the cable and hand carried it to the secretary of state. He was the senior watch officer running the Secretariat. He said that he read the cable on the way down to the secretary's office and thought that I'd gone off my rocker, because one did not address cables like these to the president of the United States or the secretary of state. He said that he took my message to the secretary; three days later he opened his newspapers and was struck that in the American press at that time there was nothing, no quote, from the president of the United States or the secretary of state or any other Executive Branch official on what we were going to do to Iraq. He said that "Then I realized that you were a genius." By that time, unfortunately everybody else - every pundit, every retired military officer,

anybody who could find a microphone, every member of Congress -was rushing to the microphones to fill the void. So the silence from the policy makers was lost on most people, and if it was lost on most people, it was probably lost on Saddam. But I think it was still an effective tactic and one that I still sometimes advise governments, if they're going to war, to quit beating the war drums.

We spent this very quiet Christmas in Baghdad waiting for the other shoe to drop, waiting for either Baker to come or Tariq to go or the meeting to take place in Geneva, which was what ultimately happened. The negotiations there went on very late into December.

*Q: What is the problem of exchange of visits?*

WILSON: The problem was that the meeting was something that had been foisted upon the Iraqis. They had been told to have it rather than ask for it. They wanted an opportunity to negotiate even that. In fact, when Bush made his statement "I want to go the extra mile," my reaction and the reaction of some people out of Baghdad was that the Iraqis were going to read that as "the bazaar is open" - the negotiations have now opened. They didn't see a meeting as one last chance to explain to them precisely what was going to happen - before it happened. They saw it really as the first step in a negotiated departure, which from their perspective would take as long as it has taken the Israelis to leave Gaza and the West Bank except that Kuwait was a much more lucrative piece of real estate.

It was clear to me that the Iraqis were going to move towards a referendum, after they had populated Kuwait with Iraqis which would decide the outcome. We got through Christmas and New Year's. On New Year's there was a party at, I think, the French chargé's house. He had this New Year's Eve party. I wasn't going to go because I felt that it was absolutely inappropriate on the eve of a major military conflict for me to be out partying in downtown Baghdad in any way whatsoever. But somebody prevailed upon me. It was actually the correspondent from the *New York Times*. I said, "I will go only because it's just a way of showing respect to those who were hosting it. I don't want to be seen to be boycotting this affair, but I'll go only if you promise that my attendance there is strictly off the record." In her book on the Gulf War, it's the first or second paragraph of the introduction or chapter one in which she said that the American chargé danced the night away. I went, I spent about 20 minutes, then I left; yet it still showed up in the book. That is something that has always irked me, but nonetheless, there it is.

During the first week of January we basically just waited. On January 6th the meeting between Baker and Aziz took place. Jim Baker told me afterwards that at the meeting he had four agenda points. One of them was securing Iraqi permission for the withdrawal of American diplomatic representation and American diplomats when and if the United States made that decision. He said that four times he raised that with Tariq Aziz and four times Tariq said, "I have to refer that to higher authorities" -higher authorities being Saddam. Of the other issues that were on the table, the only other one that I remember offhand - I know that letter has been published since - was telling Saddam that, if they use weapons of mass destruction, all U.S. military options would be available for use. I think that was really important. If you ever want to raise a possibility to insure that ultimately a government, even a government like Saddam, was going to make rational decisions, that was one. The only way that they had of possibly stemming the tide

against 500,000 American soldiers on the ground in the desert would have been to use exotic weapon; the fact that they didn't do that, I think, is indicative of their concern that they would be obliterated had they done so. When we talk about national missile defense and things like that, the presumption that we make is that government like North Korea might actually be tempted into using those kinds of weapons. Our position makes the risks quite clear.

They had the meeting on the sixth. We heard nothing. On the ninth I got a phone call from Nezar Hamdun, the undersecretary at the ministry of foreign affairs. He had formerly been head of the Interest Section in Washington and then later was the Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations. He said higher authorities have confirmed that, "Should you decide to withdraw your diplomatic representation, you can do so. We pose no objections." I phoned Washington, and Washington replied, "Well, that's fine. Why don't you get on an airplane?" There were will airplanes going back and forth to Amman - or drive to Amman, one or the other. Get on an airplane to Amman and get on a commercial flight out of Jordan." This is the 10th of January when we were talking. I said, "Well, that's very thoughtful of you." We had run several these charter flights to Europe taking everybody and their uncle and their dogs and maids and everybody else, but for they were going to have us fly to Amman, Jordan, and then wait around for a commercial flight. I made the rather flip comment, "I suppose we'll be flying economy class, but do you think we can at least get the 20 extra pounds of air freight for international flights?" The rejoinder was, "I think that can be arranged." After stewing about that conversation for about five minutes, I called back to a somewhat higher level in the State Department with a suggestion. I said, "It doesn't make any sense because the Jordanians have already said that if and when hostilities break out, they're going to close the airport. There are already 300 Americans at the Amman International Airport looking for flights to get on. After all that we've been through, I don't think that you want the four or five of us to be in that position at a time when the airport is closed in Amman, Jordan. Therefore, I have a better idea." My idea was to charter an Iraqi 747, because when we ran our charter flights, because of the nature of the sanctions and the Iraqi counteractions to the sanctions, the Iraqis only allowed Iraqi charter flights to take off. So I suggested we charter the one Iraqi Boeing 747...

*Q: Which is the largest American airplane in a commercial repertory.*

WILSON: That's right. It was in the Iraqi air inventory. I said, "We'll charter that. We'll fly to Amman, Jordan, and we'll pick up the 300-odd Americans who are stuck in Amman, and we will fly everybody to Germany - all the Americans who are stranded in Amman." They came back and said, "Well, we take your point, but we don't think that we want to charter this flight to go to Amman, Jordan, and pick up everybody; so why don't you just charter a smaller aircraft, the 727, and fly yourself and all the Americans still in Iraq to Germany." So we did that. We chartered the 727; we reserved seats for ourselves and four or five others, and then we cast about for any other Americans who might still be in Iraq and who might want to leave, including this one American who by then had married an Iraqi woman. He decided he wasn't going to go; he was going to stay with her. We ended up taking two American journalists with us. One was Jim Blystone from CNN who had been behind the lines when Saigon fell and didn't feel the need to do it a second time. He left with us to be followed in Baghdad by Peter Arnett, I never met Peter Arnett in Baghdad. He arrived literally as we were leaving, so I never met him until after the war. The second press passenger was a journalist from the *Boston Globe*; he also had been stuck behind

the lines when Saigon fell. The rest of the American journalists who were there, including Marie Colvin, and the CNN team, which by this time was John Hollaman and Verna Shonin and Peter and their producers, had decided to stay. Robert Weiner and the others decided they were going to stay. Then we offered seats to other diplomats on a first-come/first-served basis. Curiously the Brits, feckless allies in this, had decided to decamp two days previously; they had departed under the guise of darkness, and sent me a note saying, "By the time you get this, we will be across the border. So long, sucker." So they had made that decision. It was very ironic because at one point there were discussions underway about extracting us clandestinely. The Brits had come up with an elaborate scenario which would have had us driving out east towards Iran, leaving Iraq through the Iranian border. They were going to fly some helicopters in and pick us up in the middle of the night and fly us off to safety. I said, "Absolutely not."

*Q: You'd thought a bit about the Iranian attempt to get hostages out?*

WILSON: I was certainly familiar with that. But that was not the reason. The reason was that I felt that we had been the glue that had held everything together in Baghdad. Since we were still in Baghdad, all other diplomatic mission were still there. It was quite clear that they were going to leave if and when we decided to leave, and they were going to stay so long as we stayed. It was important in everything that we did that there be others than the Americans involved; it was useful to us to have them there. It was useful because you always wanted an intermediary, somebody who was going to soften the blow, somebody who was going to try and find a third way, somebody who was going to report back to the Iraqis that, 'gee, it's really a stupid idea for you to keep these hostages because the Americans are coming whether you want them or not,' which is what Primakov told them. Even though he tried to manipulate the situation to his advantage, his last message to them was, "The Americans are going to come whether we want them or not. We're not going to stop them, and you're not going to stop them." We needed third parties; it was important then not to abandon the other diplomats as we left in the darkness - these people and their governments who had been part of this drama. That is what I basically told Operations Center and they who put this plan together still remember. They've since forgiven me for it, but they still remember that this "jerk" was sitting in Baghdad saying, "The only way that I'm going to do this is if I'm given a direct order from the president of the United States. When I say 'direct,' I want him to call me on the telephone and tell me that that's what he wants me to do." They didn't do it, so my position was upheld obviously. We went out. We took the flag with us and flew out on the 12th. We took most of the other diplomats. The French stayed and left by automobile the next day. The Turks stayed a little bit longer. I can't remember when or if they left. I think they stayed until after the war broke out. Some of the others stayed; the Algerians stayed and a few others stayed. Most of the rest, certainly all the Western diplomats, we took with us and we flew to Germany.

We spent the night in Germany. One of my fondest memories of arriving in Germany, in Frankfurt, was of one of my longtime colleagues in African Affairs, Harry Geizl, meeting us and carrying my suitcase. He a very interesting character, and if you didn't believe that, he would tell you; a man full of enthusiasm and very competent. That moment was carried by CNN. We then flew back to Washington on the 13th on a regular PanAm flight, and on the 14th, which was Monday, I went to the office. I went to the office only because I didn't know what else to do with myself. I had to deal with jet lag and culture shock, but perhaps even more dramatic was the fact

that the whole drama had played out suddenly and there's nothing more I could do; it's such a letdown. I still couldn't sleep. We had existed on maybe three or four hours of sleep per night. I would stay up until the 2:30 in the morning when the news coverage was over - BBC broadcasted from 2:00 to 2:30 coverage using their leading Middle East experts. I would be up at 6:30 and be in the embassy to get the last briefings from Washington before I started my day. I would read the press clippings from the previous day, which would have been our night, and then I would be ready to go. I would go home shortly after lunch and take about a two- hour nap; so I ended up sleeping at most four hours at night and then maybe an hour or two in the afternoon, and this went on seven days a week for six months. It got to the point at which we were always trying to get an angle on these guys. It became really an obsession with us on how to get these Americans out of Iraq - how to save them, how to keep them from a terrible fate. Even at night I would sleep for an hour or so and then I would get up and do something I had never done in my life: I would pace. I had marble floors, and I would pace back and forth, back and forth for hours on end. There came a time when I had no idea where else to go with all of this. This was in early November and I was feeling pretty poorly. I had the flu or something; I got Kissinger's book on how he saved the world for the American way off the shelf, and I read up on his meetings in the 1970s with Sadat while enmeshed in the Arab-Israeli conflict as our national security advisor. I remember he said that he went to see Sadat and found Sadat a most impressive individual, a man of considerable integrity and a man who had assured him that nothing untoward would come of the tension between Egypt and Israel. He left feeling that peace was in the offing. This was three weeks before the Egyptian army crossed the Sinai only to get their butts kicked. So I figured if the Middle East had defeated old "Hank" Kissinger, "Super Hank," what the hell, I could be excused for not having a real quick, successful solution either.

The day after I got back - I got back on the 14th - I went to the office - again really because I just didn't know what else to do with myself. I couldn't sleep; I was just really sort of strung out. I got a call to be over at the White House at one o'clock or something like that. I went over in a State car with John Kelly, the assistant secretary for Middle Eastern affairs, and one or two other people. We get there and were ushered into the Roosevelt Room, which is the room outside the Oval Office. We were met by Chief of Protocol Joseph Verner Reed, who had been David Rockefeller's executive assistant for a number of years, was appointed to be our ambassador to Morocco. After that he became the chief of protocol and then went to the United Nations in a management job - something like that. I think that was his career track. Reed took me to meet the President. It's not often one would see the chief of protocol doing something like this. Anyway, the time comes and the door opens and there's the president of the United States. I went up and shook hands with him, and I said to him - we'd never really talked, we had a couple of exchanges of cables but we hadn't really talked - "We never talked during this past six months, but I have to tell you that I felt from the very beginning we were on the same wave length," which was true. I felt from the very beginning that this was a very serious situation that we would confront militarily, and he did as well. He said, "You're absolutely right." Then he turned into the Oval Office. Behind him was basically the War Cabinet - the vice president, the secretary of state, the national security Advisor, the head of the CIA, John Sununu...

*Q: Secretary of Defense?*



WILSON: The secretary of defense was not there. He was the only secretary that wasn't there. The head of the FBI was there, and there were three or four others. I didn't hear what the president said to participants but John Kelly told me later that he had turned to them and he said, "Gentlemen, let me introduce you to a true American hero." I shook hands all around, not knowing what he'd said about me. He could have said, "Let me introduce you to this asshole that we had out there in Baghdad." Kelly came up to me afterwards and said, "That's not what he said about you. He said something else." I'll show you the picture afterwards; I think I've got a picture, maybe not. In the Oval Office the desk is here, the windows are there, there is a sofa over here and chairs on either side of the fireplace, then another sofa. I'm sitting on the sofa next to Jim Baker; the president is sitting here, and on the other side there were all the other people; right by the desk is sitting Brent Scowcroft. The press comes in and the president says, "Don't say anything to them;" so I didn't say anything; I just smiled. They took a bunch of pictures. Then the door was closed and we started talking; I started talking. I'm answering questions from the high level officials and talking about the Iraq situation as I saw it. I'm running literally on sheer adrenalin; I'm not conscious in any way; I have no nerves and I'm not feeling uptight; I'm not feeling nervous being with these people. I'm just there - another day at the office. About halfway through, I looked around the room; there was a lull, somebody else was talking. I looked around and across, sitting next to the president's desk, is Brent Scowcroft. He has his legal-size pad, and he's writing down everything I'm saying. It was my first conscious thought since I had awakened that morning. I looked across and I thought to myself: "Who would have ever thought that this California ex-hippie surfer would someday be sitting in the Oval Office briefing the president of the United States and his War Cabinet on matters of military import, and that the note taker would be the national security advisor?" When I came to this realization, I got nervous and tongue-tied. But by this time the meeting was almost over. The meeting ended and I walk out. The president's personal aide, I guess, comes up to me and says, "The president wants to know if you would like to come over to the residence and meet Mrs. Bush. She'd like to meet you." I said, "Sure." I thought to myself: "I've got nothing else on my schedule." So we walked over to the residence. We actually walked out in front of the residence, the diplomatic entrance. Mrs. Bush was in a wheelchair at the time; they brought her out. I didn't know what to say to her, but I remembered that when she was in the Arabian Desert, some soldier carrying his gun had come up to her and said he wanted a hug. She said, "Well, I've never hugged a gun before." So I walked up to her and I said, "I read what you said in *Time Magazine* when you hugged that soldier, and I just wanted to assure you, "I'm not carrying a gun but I could sure use a hug too." She said "absolutely." At that time she had broken leg from a sledding accident. So she was in the wheelchair with her leg propped up. She reaches up and grabs me and she gives me a great big hug. To be hugged by Barbara Bush is really something. It's something not to be missed if you ever have the chance. She's great at that, and she's a great lady. As she's hugging me - it's a January day, it's a bright January day - suddenly there's this shadow coming across. I looked around, I was still in her grasp, and I looked around and it's the president. He has walked out of the Oval Office to join us, only to catch me in an embrace with his wife. He understood that there was nothing else there. We stood there, just the three of us, and Millie, and the photographer always followed the president.

*Q: Millie being the dog?*

WILSON: Millie being the dog.

*Q: A cocker spaniel?*

WILSON: A cocker spaniel. We talked for about another 15 minutes. The president asked me questions about what it was like in the streets of Baghdad he was interested in some human interest stories. Then he said, "I've got to go take a phone call." We walked back across the rose garden. I have a picture that I'll show you before you go, something that I keep in my office. This was literally 36 hours before Desert Storm kicked off.

*Q: I'd like to ask you about how you were or weren't used by the Department of State during the Desert Storm period.*

WILSON: By the time I got out of Baghdad I was pretty much a spent force. I was physically exhausted and I was mentally exhausted. Seeing the president and then 36 hours later watching CNN as the bombs began to drop on Baghdad was all very, very - I don't want to say 'stressful' because we're sort of beyond stress - it was very discombobulating. Frankly, for the first couple weeks after I returned all I wanted to do was sleep and get out of town. I found life in Washington to be so far different from life in Baghdad, particularly having come back after having been on television a lot. I would get on elevators and people would stare at me not knowing whether they should say hello to me. Some people on the sidewalks would stop me and talk to me about Baghdad. That was kind of fun, but it was difficult to go back to being a private citizen. I actually turned down requests to go on the Larry King and the Leslie Stahl programs. She was doing some interview program at that time, but I just felt that I had done my bit and wanted to go back to being anonymous. I actually left and went away to the Caribbean for a couple weeks and came back refreshed and rejuvenated, tanned and rested. I went back to the Department, and Ron Newman, who is now our ambassador in Bahrain, was then the director of the office of Northern Gulf Affairs - Iran and Iraq - asked me if I'd be willing to help out, which I did. I on the desk and dealt with those issues that come up during the time of war. Now admittedly there wasn't a hell of a lot. We discussed some post-war stuff but not a lot. Most of the work on the desk was worrying about various groups which some interest or another and which wanted their views to be heard, or about people who had offsprings in Iraq who had been taken by, most often, by the father back to Iraq and thereby separated from the mother. I did some bomb damage assessment, VDA, in the bowels of the Pentagon. Every time the Iraqis would show a damaged sacred site, Baghdad Museum or a mosque or something, I would go to the Pentagon to work with staff there looking at pictures to try to figure out where these bombs had hit and where the sites were that the Iraqis had refused let us get in. We had one bomb that skipped off an intended site and actually hit, I think, the Algerian embassy. There was a bit of work to be done on that. But by this time most of the action had shifted from the State Department to the Pentagon; so there wasn't a whole hell of a lot for us to do. I spent several weeks doing that and then transitioned off into my next life, which was in the Senior Seminar in June.

*Q: This was sort of a critical point, and we're not getting good answers. Was anybody that you were aware of looking at peace?*

WILSON: No. I think everybody who kind of thought about this period ten years later has agreed that during the prosecution of the war, nobody had taken a good look at what we were going to do after the end of the war. I've talked to everybody from Richard Haas to Brent Scowcroft and most people in between since then about this issue. In fact, we hadn't really figured out what talking points we were going to send Norm Schwarzkopf into the tent with.

*Q: When you say 'into the tent', what do you mean?*

WILSON: At the end of the ground campaign, the 100 hours when the Iraqis essentially sued for peace, which...

*Q: This would be the negotiation. He was the point man for that.*

WILSON: Yes. Schwarzkopf, who was in command of the troops, is the one who with his generals went off to meet with Iraqis on the Iraqi-Kuwait border after we had driven them out of Kuwait - to discuss and negotiate the terms of the cease-fire.

*Q: Sometimes at the lower ranks you at least get people talking about 'well, what are we going to do?'*

WILSON: Not that I was aware of. Curiously, the office that I was assigned to was a pretty small office; there weren't a lot of people around there. As I said, most of the action had shifted over to the Pentagon; so if there was any thinking going on about post-war, nobody was calling me to ask me what I thought about post-war Iraq.

*Q: Nobody asked whether Saddam Hussein could survive?*

WILSON: Nobody asked me. We did talk a bit about whether Saddam Hussein was suicidal or not. That was always a question in everybody's mind as we were looking at how far we might have to go and how hard we might have to prosecute the military action. April Glaspie was back in Washington at this time. We used to discuss at some length with people in the Department, and with people at CIA what we thought was Saddam's driving force. I think we concluded, and I think we were correct in this, that ultimately Saddam might not have feared death, but that Saddam was the ultimate survivor and Saddam was very much in the mode of - was it Louis XIV who uttered - "*L'état, c'est moi* [French: I am the state]."

*Q: Or "Après moi..."*

WILSON: "*Après moi, le déluge*," but it was really more "*L'état, c'est moi*." Saddam was prepared to kill as many Iraqis as necessary because as long as he survived, he was the embodiment of the state of Iraq; he was Iraq. He was more than willing to sacrifice literally tens of thousands of his fellow citizens in his really fruitless enterprise. As long as he survived, then the state of Iraq and the glory of Iraq survived in his somewhat twisted mind. We concluded that, while he didn't physically fear or worry about dying, ultimately he saw himself embodied as the spirit of the state and of the Iraqi nation and as a consequence his survival was of some interest to him.

*Q: David Mack, who was in NEA during this time, said that he attended a major meeting -CIA, Pentagon and all -during which somebody raised the question “Well, what if Saddam Hussein survives this?” and it was met with universal laughter.*

WILSON: I was not in that meeting.

*Q: But it was the mindset. This was the problem.*

WILSON: I think that’s right. I think it’s very clear that the administration at the end of the war assumed that all that was needed, as President Bush said, was for the Iraqis to take matters in their own hands. That led to the uprisings by the Shiite and by the Kurds which Saddam was able to put down because he had superior military assets and was able to fly his helicopters against them. I think very clearly that it was the assumption of everybody involved at the decision-making levels that Saddam would not survive this massive military defeat. I think Bush has actually written this in the book he wrote with Scowcroft. Clearly they did not anticipate Saddam’s ability to hang on in the face of such a major military defeat and the subsequent humiliation of having sanctions imposed and having the no-fly zones, etc.

**NANCY E. JOHNSON**  
**Political Officer**  
**Baghdad (1989-1990)**

*Ms. Johnson was born in Washington, DC and was raised in Germany and the Washington, DC area. She was educated at Oberlin College and attended several colleges and Universities in the United Kingdom. After returning to the U.S. Ms. Johnson joined the State Department as a contract employee and later joined the Foreign Service, serving as Political Officer in Colombo, London, Algiers and Baghdad. Her Washington assignments were primarily in the Near East, South Asia bureau. Ms. Johnson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.*

*Q: Then you are off to Baghdad?*

JOHNSON: I went to Baghdad in August of ’89.

*Q: What was your job?*

JOHNSON: I was the political officer. Ultimately, I got a deputy but that was much later.

*Q: Okay, let’s talk about the situation when you got there in ’89 in Baghdad.*

JOHNSON: The Iran-Iraq War was just over. It had been over for about a year. We never had cozy relations with the regime. It was a police state. Saddam took the best of Stalin and Hitler’s systems and refined them. The DCM’s secretary lived across the street from me in a duplex

house. (This is the example I give to people about the kind of regime it was.) The other half of the house was occupied by the man who owned both houses. There was a fence in the garden gate so Donna, her name was Donna Richard, could go a visit the neighbors without the watchers on the street being aware of it. At one stage, a member of the landlord's family disappeared. Some time later the family got to pay \$100 to get the body back. When Donna went over, the discussion was whether the landlord should call on the close relatives of the deceased to express condolences. Now, this is not a question that would come up in any other Arab country. It was something that you do as part of a family. It is not a question. But in the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, you wanted to keep your head down. If you stuck your head up it got lopped off. It was much better just not to be noticed and quietly get on with your life. The landlord and his wife decided to go and pay their respects. I don't know whether there were any repercussions or not. My house was bugged I am sure. The phone was bugged. I lived down the street from "Chemical Ali," one of Saddam's relatives. There were always guys sitting in front of that house with guns watching the street. My parents came and visited me for a month and used to take a walk in the morning. Every day, they would say "Good morning" to those guards and wave. Eventually the guys would wave back.

One of my other favorite stories about what it was like to be in Baghdad is the following. My phone was downstairs. I was in bed one night and the phone rang. I went down to answer it and there was nobody on the line but I could hear a kind of sound in the background. I hung up the phone and went back upstairs. Fifteen minutes later it rang again. I went down and said, "Hello." Still nothing, but I could hear this background hum. I hung up and went back upstairs. Fifteen minutes later the phone rang again. And I came down. This time I picked up the phone, but I didn't say anything. Eventually, I heard someone say in Arabic, "Well, she picked up the phone," and someone said, "Put it down. Put it down." Also, "Oops." Plunk. And they didn't call back again.

A young English diplomat had taken his SUV out into the desert. You had to have permission to go anywhere outside of Baghdad. He had gone out without permission. He came down one morning and found that all the pictures on the walls had been quietly taken off, while he slept, and put along the wall on the ground. So the mukhabarat had been in to say, "Don't do that again. We can get you."

Often, I would go to a reception and, driving home, be followed by a Passat with a couple of guys in it. I'm sure they were from the Iraqi security services. I felt very safe actually.

*Q: I was going to say at a certain level this is . . .*

JOHNSON: Except, if they didn't like you, they tried to run you off the road. Before I got there, they ran a communicator off the road and he was injured. I think it was a fine line one was walking. I lived in a very nice house, a duplex with German Embassy people on the other side. I know the house was bugged for certain.

*Q: Well, did you have much contact with the \_\_\_\_\_?*

JOHNSON: No. No. Occasionally, with people in a shop. When my parents came I hired an Embassy driver and we took my car and we went to Ashura and then up into Mosul to Nineveh. At Ashura we stopped to look at the wonderful ruins. The antiquities in Iraq are amazing. We stopped and had eaten our lunch and were sitting there relaxing. A group of young women and kids came walking by and we got into conversation. It turns out they were cousins and every Friday the whole family got together. They said there were a hundred of them. They invited us to come and have lunch with them, which was really nice. It was so generous and genuine. I knew, and my folks (Dad having been in the Foreign Service) knew also, that if we had accepted the family would have been in huge . . . [End of Tape 2, side A]

*Q: Go ahead, you were saying?*

JOHNSON: We knew that dropping in on the family would have been a really interesting experience for us, but it would have been terrible for them because the intelligence people would have been right on them and some of the family probably would have gone to jail or lost their lives. There would have been some action as a result of it, so we didn't accept. We didn't get to know many Iraqis personally. We had the people we dealt with in our various ministries. And, occasionally a shop keeper you'd exchange pleasantries with. But nothing more than that.

*Q: As a political officer, how did you operate?*

JOHNSON: We had Iraqis who worked in the Embassy who would come and talk about things they were seeing and doing. I had a very experienced Iraqi working for me as Political FSN who had an awful lot of contacts. He had been in the military and then in business so he had a lot of contacts. Over time they proved to be very good.

*Q: How did he operate?*

JOHNSON: Oh, he just sort of drifted out. He was known. They knew he worked for the Embassy. He had a lot of friends who would stop by and see him at his house and no one was paying attention to that. There were people in other embassies who were very good about sharing. April Glaspie was the ambassador and April once said to me, "The Egyptians are wonderful colleagues." In the spring of 1990 at the time of the Arab League Summit in Baghdad, one of our--I won't get anybody into trouble--one of our Arab colleagues stopped by Joe Wilson's house every night with the latest papers which he shared with us.

*Q: During your time in Baghdad, who was the ambassador and the DCM?*

JOHNSON: April Glaspie was the ambassador. Joseph C. Wilson was the DCM. Admin was a man called Jim Van Laningham. I was POL. Econ was Daniel Vernon. Jim Ritchie was the DATT and the USIS head was Jim Callaghan. Both Jims were friends of April's. They had worked with April before. I think she picked Joe Wilson because he was a fine admin officer and her biggest problem in Iraq was admin. She knew that before she went to post. I should explain. The U.S. government owned a wonderful embassy with extensive grounds right on the bend of the river which was taken over in 1967 by the Government of Iraq. It became the presidential

palace. In my day, the Embassy was in an old house several miles from where our old embassy was. Occasionally, we'd ask the Iraqis to give it back to us.

*Q: What was the spirit of the embassy? You were under lots of restrictions and all that.*

JOHNSON: It's hard to define. I think it was typical of an embassy in a place with those kinds of restrictions. Some people would go to various embassies to have their Marine Corps nights, i.e. the parties. Some people would do that circuit. Those of us who were in the diplomatic circuit would go to our nightly receptions and that sort of thing. I think I was generally out five nights a week. Morale was pretty good. I found that it was pretty lonely from my point of view. In Sri Lanka I had had a colleague who, though younger than I, had the same status. She and I could compare notes. She had been in the service longer than I and was somebody I felt comfortable talking with. In Baghdad I didn't have anybody I could talk with and I missed that. I was still new enough to the service. This was only my second post. There were things I would like to have bounced off someone, which I couldn't do.

*Q: How was April Glaspie as ambassador?*

JOHNSON: April was wonderful. April was amazing because she was such an intelligent woman and very kind. One of the stories I tell about her, and I hope she doesn't mind, took place right before the 1990 Arab League Summit. She had been allowed to go to Oman. For a long time the Brits wouldn't let her go there. The man who had been the British ambassador in Baghdad had gone on to Oman to be ambassador there and invited her to come and spend a long weekend, three or four days. My assignment was to write the background paper for the Arab League Summit meeting. While she was gone I worked away on the cable and left it on her desk the day she came back. About an hour later I got a call and went into her office. We went through this cable and she changed a lot. And so, feeling kind of sorry for myself, on my way out I said, "Well, at least there is one paragraph that's still mine." She said, "Sit down." Now, remember, this is her first day back in the office when she had plenty to do. She then told me the following story.

It was told to her by her mentor who was Hermann Eilts. I don't have all the details, but it seems Eilts was the Iraq desk officer and did the Baghdad Pact as well. He was on an airplane with John Foster Dulles going to a Baghdad Pact meeting in Europe. Dulles had said, "Young man, write me a speech." Dulles was at the front of the airplane and Eilts at the back. During the long the flight-- in those days it was eighteen hours to Europe—Eilts had worked on this speech and wrote it out very carefully so Dulles could read his handwriting. They get to wherever they were going and Dulles gave the speech. It was not the speech that Eilts wrote for him. Afterwards, Eilts was standing there feeling really down and a hand came down on his shoulder. It was Dulles who said, "Young man, I want to thank you for the speech." And Eilts replied, "But you didn't use it." To which Dulles replied, "Yes, but you gave me all the ideas I needed." The point of the story was that although April had worked with the words of the cable that went out, all the ideas, the shape of it and the thrust of it, were mine. What I really appreciated was that she had taken that much trouble, the five minutes or whatever it took, because she didn't want me to go away feeling too depressed about my work. It was really nice of her. She was for years, for

women in the Service, a model of how you conduct yourself, how you prepare yourself. She was a model.

There were moments in Baghdad when she was positively brilliant. For example, the Department ordered us to give a demarche to somebody on Libyan terrorism and the dangers that caused. I went along as April's note taker. She had arranged to have a meeting with the head of the U.N. branch of the Foreign Ministry. We went into his office. It seems that she and he had been together in Cairo. He started talking about how much he admired Eilts. April said, "You know, the whole time that we were in Cairo, Eilts was under threat of death from the Libyans." And he was right there in the palm of her hand. She had picked the one man in the Iraqi government who would listen to and understand a demarche on Libyan terrorism. When we went out, I asked her if she had done that on purpose and she said, "Yes." So she knew what she was doing and how to do it. She had excellent Arabic and knew all kinds of people.

*Q: You mention the Arab League and that you had it back in Washington too. In the eighties, what did the Arab League amount to?*

JOHNSON: Not much. But we needed to follow it because there our friends and enemies in the Arab world would come out with statements. And, of course, we would try to get the statement to be less hostile to us than it might have been. They made pronouncements on all sorts of things. Of course they had the Arab boycott against companies that did business with Israel that we tried to undo and had been working at undoing for years. They had some power within the Middle East. Arabs are most comfortable with consensus. Their traditions are to develop a consensus and then stick with it. A big argument and a winner take all kind of situation is not their style. The Arab League was a way to give people cover for doing things.

*Q: Was this a time to get all sorts of soundings of these people and what they are up to?*

JOHNSON: Yes. Before it began, our colleagues in all the other Arab countries were out asking questions and posing hypothetical situations and trying to find out what their contacts' countries planned to do or not. When the meeting is in your country, you want to know exactly what's happening. This is why it was so valuable that one of our Arab colleagues would come to Joe every night and give him the papers from the day's meeting. We knew where the discussions were going and what the pronouncements were going to be. Joe would come in in the morning with the papers. He would have much preferred if the guy had come to my house, but he lived near Joe and it was much easier for him to stop by Joe's house. And Joe got to write the cable.

*Q: What was the relationship between Joe Wilson, who was essentially an African hand, and administrative officer April Glaspie who was Middle Eastern expert par excellence?*

JOHNSON: That's a hard one to answer because I didn't see it. I think it was comfortable. I don't know how often she talked with him about policy issues when I wasn't there. It must have been fairly often because he is very astute and Joe and very good on his feet. When she was gone, he was the Charge. He needed to be up on all the issues and he was, because he is a smart guy and has really good political instincts.



*Q: Was there much in the way of contact with, you know, the official contacts? How did you find this?*

JOHNSON: There were a lot of them. We were very fortunate in a way because Nizar Hamdoon had served as Iraqi ambassador in the United States and liked the United States. I can remember Joe telling me that the year before I got to Baghdad, he had had a Halloween party and Nizar and his wife came as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. They had bought these cowboy outfits while they were in this country. Nizar was a person we . .

*Q: He was Prime Minister?*

JOHNSON: No, he was the number three or number four in the Foreign Ministry. He was a very useful person to have as a contact because we could go to Nizar and talk turkey with him in ways we might not have been able to do with people a couple of ranks higher up or who lacked his experience of Washington. One of my stories about Baghdad that I've never told April, and I don't know why, is about a Foreign Ministry dinner we attended with some American visitors. I was sitting with a senior member of the Foreign Minister. He turned to me and said, "Miss Nancy, why did they send us a woman ambassador?" I don't think of myself as particularly quick on my feet, but I said immediately, "They didn't send you a woman. They sent you the best that they had, the best Arabist, the most experienced person in the region, the very best they had." He looked at me and he said, "Oh. I'll tell them that." One of the myths people have about women operating in the Middle East is that because women are or seem to be second class citizens, they can't be effective. I think that my conversation reveals something quite other and that is because women are not threatening, people will say things to them that are much more revealing than to a man who is a competitor. Women can be extremely effective.

*Q: I've also talked to women officers. One of the things too is that they could go to the K\_\_\_\_\_ Hareem or whatever it is and this is of course where the real news is anyway because this puts you right in the middle of the information network. This ability to go backwards and forwards. In the diplomatic world, male or female or what, you are an American representative which means that you carry an awful lot of clout. People appreciate it, accept that.*

JOHNSON: Yes. It was interesting because that man would never have asked a man, one of my male colleagues, that question. My answer, I thought, was really quite a good one. I am rather proud of that. There were all sorts of difficulties in Baghdad. Every room in the Foreign Ministry was bugged including the waiting area. You could see microphones hanging from the ceiling. If somebody in the Foreign Ministry wanted to say something to you off the cuff, they'd say it to you when you were in the hall.

There are things I remember. For example, there was a man behind the reception desk at the Foreign Ministry. You would enter and say, "I'm here to see so and so," and he would call them up and then you would sit and wait until someone came to fetch you. I called him 'Smiley' because he was a very dour fellow. One day I was sitting there and he said, "Miss Nancy, how old are you?" And I said, "Why do you ask?" He said, "Well, we've decided that you are 35," which was very funny because I was then 47 or 48. He couldn't believe it. I was amused that they didn't have anything better to do in the Foreign Ministry than to talk about my age. Then

there was one time I went in to meet with a woman I had never met before. I didn't know how good her English was so I prepped myself to do my demarche in Arabic. Her English was about as good as my Arabic. We did it in English and I said to her, "I came prepared to do this Arabic." She said, "Fine. Do it." I then did it in Arabic amid gales of laughter. Whenever I made a mistake, she'd say, "lah," which means "no" and then give me the correct word. Iraqis were not without humor.

*Q: From all accounts, the Iraqis are very intelligent people. The tragedy is its divisions and its leadership.*

JOHNSON: And the divisions are profound, city, country. One of the things we never got into as foreigners is the whole issue of tribes. Everybody in the Middle East knows to which tribe they belong. And we don't. It is subtle and there are all kinds of antagonisms and loyalties we don't know anything about. I think it would take a lifetime. I guess Phebe Marr would come closer to knowing about that than anybody else.

*Q: What was your impression in Iraq? Iraq had just won a war, but nothing really had happened, nothing had changed except that you had maybe one or two million men killed.*

JOHNSON: It would be a classic Pyrrhic victory. Everyone was touched by the war. If Iraq's population was 18 million when it began, it was 17 million afterwards. They had gained nothing. Of course, you could never get a sense of how anyone felt about it because no one would say. Iraqis kept their heads down. They wouldn't comment on anything to a foreigner like me because if it got back to the intelligence people they were in trouble. It was in many ways a very closed society. Although people were, as the girls in Ashura were, very friendly and interested. My folks and I toured a monastery north of Mosul. My mother and I came out and found a group of young people, a school group of college kids. They were awfully cute kids and started to talk to us in English. One of them turned to my mother and said, "This is the father." Just at that point, my Dad was stepping out the door and my mother pointed to him and said, "That's the father. I am the mother." They all laughed and then spent half an hour playing games with the English language with us. It turns out they were Kurds and many had relatives in Detroit. All wanted to go to Detroit. They didn't think much of Saddam. But, that was just a very rare occasion.

*Q: I have interviewed Beth Jones who was there before you, I think. And she said during the war how she got a little from some of the Iraqi officials who were just shocked at some of the attacks they were getting of the Kuwaitis. I mean, kids going into battle without a weapon but with a piece of paper which would make them invulnerable. They just had not realized what a buzz saw they were getting into.*

JOHNSON: We didn't have anything like that. The Defense Attaché may have been getting bits and pieces of the aftermath from his colleagues, but it was very difficult for us to break into anything. The myth that we were buddy buddy with the Iraqi regime is a huge myth, because we weren't. I think it was difficult for whatever intelligence swapping we were doing quite officially. Even that I think was difficult. For the rest of us, it was hard. You see, there weren't for example opposition political parties that I could go and talk with. The regime often seemed to be hostile to us, but on one occasion it wasn't. The US Government had declared a First

Secretary at the Iraqi Mission to the UN persona non grata. We three First Secretaries in Baghdad sat around that afternoon speculating about which of us would be PNGed in return. In fact, the Iraqis PNGed the newest member of the Embassy, a young man who had just arrived because, April was told, they figured he hadn't had time to become really useful.

*Q: Were you getting any feel for the Kurdish, Sunni, Shia, Arab, Persian divisions within Iraq?*

JOHNSON: The Kurds were always something separate. The Shia/Sunni division was less clear in those days. But the Kurds, one knew about Halabja, where Saddam and co. dropped chemical weapons on the Kurds. There were stories about the Kurds being carried south and killed. There were settlements. April sent me on a five day trip up into the north when I first arrived and we went past settlements of Kurds who had been moved out of places like Kirkuk when Arabs had been moved in. What we see now is a kind of ethnic cleansing in reverse. Saddam made an effort to Arabize the oil industry. Now the Kurds want their towns back. You got a sense that the Kurds were somewhat separate. In 1967, when we were essentially thrown out of Middle East, it was the Kurds who closed up our Embassy in Baghdad, packed up peoples' houses and brought their household effects out through Iran. They looked after the Embassy property for years and years before the Americans went back.

*Q: What were picking up about Saddam Hussein and his coterie?*

JOHNSON: Not a lot of particular details. They were a pretty nasty group. I was at a place once where the sons turned up and they were lording it over people. People were afraid, you could see. A 'frisson' went through the audience when they arrived. This was an arts show outside in the summer at someplace, I can't remember where. But a tension was created by the presence of these two guys and all these men in black who were their bodyguards. There were the stories of Saddam. You could see occasionally the motorcade zipping along and if there was a light blue Mercedes, it was the Saddam entourage. There were palaces here, there, and everywhere. People didn't talk about it much. You knew it was a fascist regime. There were stories and the famous pictures of Saddam ordering people out of a meeting to be eliminated.

*Q: I have seen that.*

JOHNSON: Yes. But, being there you didn't see him that often except on television every night. Television news always began with 15 minutes of what the leader did that day.

*Q: As political officer, what were you reporting?*

JOHNSON: I was reporting what was being carried in the newspaper, what rumors we heard, what was coming out of our meetings with government officials, with people like the representative of the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) told us and so on. The ICRC was dealing with prisoners of war on both sides of the Iran/Iraq War and played a key role in trying to get prisoner swaps. The local representative was a very nice fellow who got to see a bit of the world we didn't see. We occasionally talked with him. We talked with other people who had excellent contacts in ways that we didn't. I mean we discovered during the crisis that there were quite a lot of American citizens. April and her mother tried something that was very

interesting. They had a tea or morning coffee about once every six weeks or maybe it was once a month for American women who were married to Iraqis. Some of them turned out to be old friends who had married Iraqis in the '50s for example and hadn't had contact with each other in years. I went to one of the teas and it was really interesting. The women talked about what it was like to live in Iraqi society. One of them was very interesting about what it was like when she first came and how it had changed over the years. I asked her specifically about whether the country was becoming more religious and how it affected her children and that sort of thing. She said it was becoming more conservative. Her teenage son was often scandalized when she went out without covering her arms. The teas were a clever idea because they were something the women could do as Americans without putting their families in any danger. None of the husbands ever came into the residence. It was just the wives. There were other people in similar circumstances such as the Japanese. There were quite a number of Japanese women married to Iraqis. There were lots and lots of Philippina women who worked as housemaids for various senior Iraqis. If they had had any Arabic, they would have been wonderful sources, but they didn't. And we talked with our fellow diplomats who would glean bits and pieces of information. The diplomats were always sharing because you wanted to make sure all your bits fit together. I remember in particular my Japanese counterpart would come to me because he had information but he didn't know how to put it into any context that made sense. He would come and pick my brain about it.

*Q: Did you get any feel about the interest or lack thereof about the State Department and what was going on in Iraq?*

JOHNSON: It wasn't until the crisis. I had the sense that people were reading our stuff, that there was a continuing, maybe not deep interest, but a continuing interest in what was happening in Iraq and a realization that this was an interesting place. Something could blow there. And then as the crisis developed, it was very interesting. It was late July of 1990. Saddam moved 120,000 troops south. Nobody knew what he had in mind. The Defense Attaché said, "Look, you don't move 120,000 troops to the desert when it is 120 degrees. You are not going to leave them sitting there. They are going to move." But, nobody knew for sure.

Defense Attaches would get permission to drive to Kuwait. Everybody shared information. The British Defense Attaché was driving home from Kuwait and saw all the soldiers and equipment moving south. He confirmed it was moving south. That was the way we knew these things. And then all of sudden, of course, they crossed the border.

*Q: Let's talk about that.*

JOHNSON: Oh, before that, it was traditional that the ambassadors went away in August.

*Q: Damn good idea.*

JOHNSON: Damn good given the climate, given that nothing ever happens in August. Saddam had called in most of the ambassadors one by one in the last week of July. It was the famous conversation that April had with him that I didn't go along to because you never knew it was going to be Saddam. We thought the meeting was going to be with someone in the Foreign

Ministry. She went along without a note taker and she was there with Saddam for several hours. Knowing she had been called to the Foreign Ministry, she called Washington before hand, I remember this, and asked for anything from NEA. Was there anything they wanted her to say? Assistant Secretary Kelly had given testimony on the Hill a couple of days before. We had Kelly's remarks and the general press briefing. But Jim Baker was off dealing with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Very definitely it was a one crisis at a time kind of Administration. There were running jokes about people who were in favor, I mean, Baker and his coterie didn't trust the building. Therefore, they didn't use the building. I think they got caught when the crisis really blew in 1990 because they were concentrating on something else. But, back to Iraq. I seem to recall that Saddam had called in ambassadors one by one and said, "My desires are peaceful. Please go home and tell your people that I want peace" or something to that effect. The ambassadors all took off. The only one who was not allowed to come back was April. The Department made the decision as our way of showing displeasure. Everybody else got back. The Brits came back. The Russians came back. Until they did, it was the Charges' crisis. For a while it was tricky for the ambassadors to get back because there weren't any airplanes flying. The Iraqis closed the borders to air traffic. The ambassadors wriggled back in coming overland from Jordan after August second. Poor April, they made it look as if she was the only one out of the country at the time of the crisis. She wasn't. They were all gone.

*Q: Prior to the crisis, were you getting anything from Saudi Arabia or Jordan? Were they a presence?*

JOHNSON: Yes. We knew that Saddam was getting desperate for money, but we couldn't figure out why. He was putting pressure on the Kuwaitis. He was putting pressure on the Saudis. There was the famous story about a Kuwaiti who came up to negotiate and ended up being a virtual prisoner at some point. Saddam was not hiding this. He was talking. He gave speeches talking about getting something back. He made it clear that he was unhappy with Kuwait. He was also wary of us. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, of course the Soviet Union had been a great supporter of Iraq, we were the only super power. We had this big fleet in the Gulf, didn't we? He wasn't sure where we were going to go and, of course, they hadn't had lovely relations with us for many years. We were not close friends.

*Q: With this troop movement and all, was the embassy on alert? What was the feeling that you were getting?*

JOHNSON: Well, we were always on alert. It was that kind of place. We didn't know what they had in mind. Our best estimate was that they would go into Kuwait and come out again. When they actually moved, that wasn't a huge surprise. I used to leave my house to get to the Embassy about 6:30 in the morning. I went in early to read the cable traffic and do all sorts of things. I will never forget, it was about 6:15 in the morning, I was just about to go out the door and Joe Wilson rang and he said, "They crossed the border." I'm told I replied, "Oh shit," which was probably just as good a reply as any. I went into the office. Then, for the next three weeks, we were in real crisis mode.

*Q: What were you doing?*

JOHNSON: One group of people were shredding like mad. We were told the first day to get down to a 25 minute burn, then to a 10 minute burn, then to no burn. One of the things I noted in this little diary I started to keep was that the background noise for the first couple of weeks was the shredders going. There was one on the second floor. There had been one on the third floor but the Marines brought it down so there were two shredders going. The Defense Attaché had four big safes full of stuff. Unfortunately we shredded April's lifetime notes on the Palestinians that could have been made into a book. It was very liberating not to have any files. The cable traffic would come in, you'd read it and then you'd shred it. We were busy cleaning out the embassy and tracking down American citizens. A lot of American citizens turned up whom we didn't know were in Iraq. They came into the Consular section to register, to make their presence known. There were an awful lot of them. One of the serious questions was whether to shred the passports of people who had left their passports at the Embassy for safe keeping. The Consular folks decided to shred because if the Iraqis came over the walls to take us—and we had the example of '79 ten years earlier in Iran—it would have been dangerous for those people, so we got rid of everything. People were hacking away destroying communications gear and other sensitive material up in one of the attic rooms, material I never saw. One of the ironies is what do you do with the shredded pulp? They had bags and bags of it. They took it around into the back part of the garden, emptied the bags out and ended up with a mountain of shredded paper. Had we added flour, when it next rained, I guess we would have created one of the world's greatest piles of papier-mache.

When the Iraqis went into Kuwait, ultimately our embassy in Kuwait was closed and the American staff came north. So did other people who were captured by the Iraqis in Kuwait. I remember there was one man, an oil worker, who had been up in a derrick early in the morning as the Iraqi planes and helicopters, at his eye level, came by. He could wave to the Iraqi pilots. People became prisoners and were put in various hotels in Baghdad. Tracking what was happening to the Americans who were brought up from Kuwait was something we did. The Embassy was mostly doing consular work. I was getting material here and there and was writing at least one and sometimes two sit reps every day based on whatever information I could get. People who worked in the embassy provided information from their contacts with their family and friends. We also made our own observations of what was going on. Early on, it was very clear the Iraqis were looting Kuwait because the streets of Baghdad were filled with cars with Kuwaiti license plates within two days of the invasion. We were following events as best we could, listening to the Iraqi radio and TV, to our staff. Our colleagues in Kuwait were letting us know about as much as they could. I guess by then we were getting better intelligence from various sources than we had before August 2. Have you talked to Barbara Bodine?

*Q: No. I am in communication with her and I will.*

JOHNSON: She had been in Baghdad and had promised her family she would not go back to Iraq. Early in August, while talking to her father, she said, "They came to me." It was a very tense time. When they closed the borders we didn't know whether we could, whether we'd ever . . . I kept jokingly saying, "I always wanted to be a hostage so I could stop smoking and lose weight at the same time." That seemed to be a very real possibility. The guys talked about getting vans and four wheeled drive vehicles in case we had to make a run for the border, but the border was six hours away. We weren't going to make a run anywhere. We were trying to make

arrangements to get people out. After a while, we got permission for the first convoy, to send out family members, pets, and a couple of college kids who were summer interns. I remember we got the permissions and sent the convoy off to the border which was a six or seven hour drive away. They were stopped there and sent back. The tension in the embassy was palpable because the guys were so worried. A couple of days later, screaming and yelling at the Foreign Ministry and with the help of Nizar, we finally got permission for the convoy to leave the country. They were allowed to leave. When they crossed the border, everybody relaxed because their families were out of danger. It didn't matter that they were still in danger. Their families were out of danger. The first tranche of people who left were the families. Then it was decided to reduce the Embassy further. Since the major purpose of the Embassy was then consular, the Marines and a bunch of us left. I was told to go. I was not at all happy about that decision. I talked with Joe about it and I wrote in my little diary that the reasons he gave to me were sexist. "We want all the women out of here" kind of thing. That really wasn't an adequate reason. Looking back on it, I'm glad I went. It would have been a very difficult time to be there, given the personalities.

We were the base for all the American reporters who came in. I thought Dan Rather was a very nice fellow. Ted Koppel and others used the Embassy and they picked our brains.

*Q: This is a peculiar thing. Here are all these reporters who are allowed to go in . . .*

JOHNSON: We weren't allowed out without permission. The reporters came and talked with people and did their reports. We tried to do our jobs as best we could. The hours became impossible because we were doing 15 hour, 16 hour days, 17 hour days at least. If you got as much rest as four or five hours sleep you were lucky. A lot of things happened at night. Mel Ang, who was my number two, had done the Tiananmen Square evacuation. Iraq was his first political assignment, but he was soon back doing consular work. He went out to all the hotels keeping track of all the Americans there and getting messages from them to pass home, such as from husband x to the family saying, "I'm okay. I'm here. Don't worry," and that kind of thing. I can remember coming up with toothbrushes and deodorant and razors for these people. Eventually a bunch of them ended up at the ambassador's residence which the Bechtel people organized into a university. They had lectures in the mornings and the afternoons. People lectured about their hobbies and their interests. They passed the time and slept in shifts because there wasn't enough room for everyone to sleep at once. There was a pool. We would take them food from various places. Some of them would come out in the day and go shopping, but of course they did not have a lot to do while they were there. After a couple of weeks, some of the people were moved around the country to places that Saddam wanted to have hostages in so that we would not attack them. That was scary for people.

*Q: What was the feeling of the American and western reaction to this?*

JOHNSON: I think we were all waiting for firmness. I need to talk a little bit about the cable that April wrote about her meeting with Saddam, the famous cable. A lot of people forget that ambassadors cannot declare war. If she had said, "If you cross that border into Kuwait the full force and might of the United States will be down upon you," that's a declaration of war. When I was at the Army War College, I told people that and they were surprised. It never occurred to them. The most that a diplomat can say is, "If you cross that border, my national interests will be

affected.” We didn’t have a defense treaty with Kuwait. They never wanted one with us. We had no grounds for threatening Saddam. Any criticism of April for that was a mistake. It’s funny, I haven’t read April’s cable since it left Baghdad but I remember reading it at the time. It was about seven o’clock in the evening. There was something about it that bothered me. I couldn’t put my finger on what it was. Because I couldn’t put my finger on what it was, I couldn’t go to April’s office and say, “There is something about this that bothers me.” I mean it was too late. It had to go to Washington. Washington was waiting for it. I feel bad about it to this day. I think more than anything else it was the tone of it. It seemed a little too sycophantic, a little too pro-Saddam. It gave people the wrong idea about where the Embassy was or where we stood in relation to Iraq. It had not become more Iraqi than the Iraqis, as sometimes happens. There were limits to what April could say to give Saddam a warning that we might act. But then, of course, we didn’t know that we would act and it wasn’t until Maggie Thatcher came . . . No, first early on, George Bush had said, “This will not stand.” I thought that was a good sign. We were all for that. I remember sitting in Joe’s office one afternoon. He wasn’t there. One of the problems was getting enough sleep. Every afternoon the Charges and DCMs would meet and share information. Often Joe would go home for lunch and not be in the Embassy in the afternoon. We were sitting in his office reading the Vienna Convention on diplomatic usage and roaring with laughter because we were just thinking, “Will they honor it?” In fact, they did. For those assigned to Baghdad, they honored it. For those assigned to Kuwait, they didn’t because they said, “It’s a 19th province and they’re not diplomats accredited to us.”

*Q: Joe Wilson had a meeting with Saddam.*

JOHNSON: Yes, I took the notes for that.

*Q: How did that go?*

JOHNSON: We were called to the Foreign Ministry and then taken to the Presidency where we waited an hour. Then we were taken back to the Foreign Ministry where we met Saddam. We had this two hour meeting with Saddam. I’ll never forget. It was not exactly cordial, but it was an interesting meeting. I was writing like mad. I remember Nizar saying to the translator, “Slow down. Nancy can’t write that fast.” We received all these assurances from Saddam, empty words and we knew that. We had the meeting, we went back to the Embassy, I did the verbatim cable, Joe called Washington with a verbal report and then did a quick, high points cable. What I should add is that on Day One (August 2) the phone lines were cut. We went into the Foreign Ministry, Joe and I, and he said, “Look Nizar, with your army in Kuwait and my fleet in the Gulf, we need a direct line to Washington, don’t you agree?” Nizar agreed. By the time we got back to the Embassy the phone lines were restored. We had a line to a task force in Washington. If you needed to get the task force’s attention, you’d be screaming into the phone trying to get somebody to respond. Eventually, after a day of this, we set up a system whereby somebody monitored the phone. Somebody in Washington came to the phone every 15 minutes or so. I wrote in my little diary, I’d forgotten of course it was time to be bidding on jobs for the next year. I remember calling in and saying, “I need to talk to a Foreign Service Officer from NEA.” The person they put on the line for me to talk with was April. I had a chat with her about the jobs I should bid on. It turned out to be very helpful. She was back in Washington. It was very



frustrating for her. I think it would have been very different if she had been in Baghdad running the show. It would have been very different.

*Q: What was your impression of Joe Wilson at this time?*

JOHNSON: Joe was a very competent guy. I think that he was sensitive to not being a Middle East person and sensitive to being new to April. She would come down to my office to bum a cigarette and talk NEA shop with me. He would, within a minute, be there. For a while I thought it was just me, but he did it with everyone. I think that Joe wasn't as comfortable with all of us as April was because he didn't know us NEA people. But he was very able. And, as I say, he was quick on his feet. He knew his stuff. He comes from a long line of politicians apparently. I used to think he should be in politics. He was a good person to have there. He had been a surfer in his youth, I think, and he was a laid back guy which is also good to have in a crisis.

*Q: What was the atmosphere outside? Were you surrounded by Iraqi security types?*

JOHNSON: Life went on pretty much as usual. The Iraqi security people continued to follow us. I can remember one night the RSO came tearing into the embassy all excited, all panicky about a demonstration that was going on. It was some kind of air raid drill. All the Young Pioneers and other Baath Party groups were out in the streets in their uniforms, like cub scouts and such. We had a couple of demonstrations in front of the embassy, very peaceful, very well organized. They came and presented their petitions and then went on. Things were not that different. You could go and do your shopping. In the three weeks or so that I was there, I can remember I went to the German Embassy for something. It wasn't awfully far from our Embassy. The car wasn't there when I came out to go back because the streets had been blocked because of the demonstrations in front of our Embassy. So I walked back to our Embassy in front of the demonstrators, saying "Hi" to the kids. It was pretty peaceful. Nothing was happening.

*Q: You left when?*

JOHNSON: It was the third week in August. I've forgotten the exact date. In fairness, we were all exhausted. I can remember we started off at least once before. We were going to fly. As soon as Iraqi Airlines started to fly again, we were going to fly. Then they wouldn't let us fly on an airplane so we had to go by road. So I guess I left on August 20th, arrived in Amman Monday, August 21st. We had our meeting. We left in the middle of the night and had this incredible trip. Let's see [reading from journal, in italics], *Word came of travel permission 13:30 Monday, August 20th. My car is on the list so gave keys to Abbas for them to check it over. I'll have two passengers. I pack up, clean kitchen and do laundry. Slept from 8 to 11 p.m. then up and at 12:30 go back to the embassy where we all mill around for an hour. Joe gives us a pep talk and we set off at 2:15 a.m. on August 22nd and we arrive in Amman at 10 p.m. that same day on August 22nd.* We had been up for hours and hours.

It is interesting because the embassy was going all day and all night because there was somebody monitoring the phone. Somebody had the bright idea to bring in food. We would have a picnic, grilling things on a barbecue outside Joe's office on a balcony. People were wandering around in their scruffy clothes. I had a dress and stockings in the office and when it was time to go to the

Foreign Ministry, I'd get torted up and go. August 3rd, Friday, *Shredding continues apace. We destroy all of the POL files, great feeling of freedom.*

I remember I marked down the cables. *We get a call to come to the MFA at noon on August 6th. I go with Joe to the Presidency. We sit around for an hour. Sa'dun Hammudi wanders up and down the hall. We meet him on the steps of the Presidency as we leave to go back to the Foreign Ministry. Here we meet Saddam, presidency people. Two hour meeting. We return to embassy at 4:00 p.m.. Joe calls in results. I type notes on computer. Joe does a quick cable. I do verbatim cable. TV shows us meeting Saddam. Get home early, 3:00 a.m. -ish. I don't know what to do with these wonderful little notes.*

*Q: Well it gives a feel for that. We will pick this up the next time. You have notes and I'd like you to read that into the tape and then we'll go on . . .*

*This is the 25th of January 2008. Nancy when we were cut off last time. We were going to go back to the notes you were taking. So I'll leave it to you to explain what you were doing and all.*

JOHNSON: Okay. On August 2, 1990 I was Political Chief. Joe Wilson was the Charge. The Ambassador was on leave. All the ambassadors were on leave." (I think I explained that.) [reading from journal in italics] 06:20. *Joe calls, says I'd better get in ASAP. Iraqi troops have invaded Kuwait. The day spent organizing crisis management. We begin shredding. Command center set up in Joe's office. John DeCarlo (who was the Region Security Officer) says we have orders to get to one half hour burn and, at the end of the day, down to a ten minute burn, so we just get rid of the files! Ardith (Ambassador Glaspie's secretary) came back to work after her three months of leave and pitched right in. Cables I wrote were: Baghdad 4411 on the border closing at 10 a.m. and "Baghdad 4413 and 4440 Iraqis being told to leave Baghdad and an evacuation trial run. Consular was busy contacting American citizens (Baghdad 4421). The GOI (Government of Iraq) moving temporary resident foreigners to five star hotels.*

*Friday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>. Shredding continues apace. We destroy all of POL files--great feeling of freedom. The noise of shredders is background for all events. Marines do it. They bring a shredder from upstairs to the second deck so two are going at once. Joe Wilson is in and out, meetings with Nizar Hamdoun and with the diplomatic corps. Melvin Ang (my deputy) and I decide to do split shifts. I do 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. He does 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. This soon breaks down as Joe has us doing things at the same time. American citizens begin to come out of the woodwork to register. Consular Officers get in touch with all those who are registered. I go with Joe to the MFA at midnight for a demarche on missing American citizens Baghdad 4469.*

*August 4, Saturday. Somewhere in here we set up fifteen minute phone checks on the open STU III line to Washington. American citizen businessmen and people up from Kuwait held in Rashid Hotel are of great concern. We institute nightly meeting with businessmen in the Embassy. Consular officers visit hotels nightly, give and take messages, get more names of people who are there. The GOI is trying to jam VOA and the BBC. Cables for that day were Baghdad 4469 and 4483.*

*August 5, Sunday. I did sitreps (Baghdad 4495) in the morning and in the afternoon (4522). Mel meets with missing Amcits up from Kuwait at the Rashid. The memorial service for Frank Lisi. (I forgot somewhere in this to put that he was a communicator who dropped dead. He had a heart attack. We had a memorial service for him in the middle of all this.) Philip Coggin comes over (I think he was from the Canadian Embassy, but I can't remember) and Mel and I give him information on GOI grain imports.*

*August 6, Monday. In normal early time. We get a call for Joe to come to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at noon. I go with. First to the Presidency. We sit around for an hour. Sa'dun Hammudi wanders up and down the hall. (He was a senior official in the Foreign Ministry.) We meet him on the steps of the Presidency as we leave to go back to the MFA. There we meet Saddam Hussein, Tariq Aziz and Nizar Hamdoon, various Presidency people for a two hour meeting. We return to the embassy 4:00 p.m. Joe calls in results. I type my notes on the computer. Joe does a quick quote cable. We do verbatim cable. TV shows us meeting Saddam. Get home early, 3:00 a.m.-ish. Baghdad 4528 and 4545. More rumors about who can leave and what borders are open--false.*

*Tuesday, August 7. 06:30 go in. General meeting. Joe announces who will be going on second tranche. I am included without consultation. Beard Joe for explanation, get sexist one. Do sit rep (Baghdad 4577). Go home early to begin to pack. Hard to decide what to put in air freight especially not knowing if permission has been granted. Dither making piles. Circa 9:30 call Embassy get Joe who says no permission, so I go to bed. I get involved trying to get access to an eleven year old girl, Penny Nabokov, at the Melia Hotel. The MFA are all very sympathetic and helpful. Penny was on a BA flight that stopped to refuel in Kuwait on August 2nd and was unaccompanied. Mother is in India. Father in USA. Alf (Cooley, a retired consular officer helping out for the summer) goes over to see her and has lunch with her. Later she is moved to the Rashid and then sprung to overnight with Angs. Dependents and nonessentials gathered at the Embassy this morning sent home as there was no permission for them to leave. Did a cable with Mel on Americans from Kuwait now at the Rashid (Baghdad 4592). Embassy's air conditioning frozen.*

*August 8, Wednesday. Slowish day, deflated feeling that all 29 aren't going tomorrow. Baghdad 4600: air freight stuff distributed to all homes. Jim Ritchie's (the Defense Attache) car messed with so now all park inside bollards, later inside the compound. 8:00 p.m. Saddam Hussein's message on Victory Day. Also Baghdad 4608.*

*August 9, Thursday, Week 2. 06:07 convoy sets off for Jordan, continuation of shredding. Baghdad 4635 and 4664. Afternoon, Bob Love, John DeCarlo and Lee Hess paint second deck windows white (to give us privacy so no one in surroundings buildings can look in. It is weird to be in a room with white windows so you can get light but you can't see out.) Lilli Van Laningham calls from border. They had been stopped. Won't be allowed through. (Lilli was the wife of the Admin Counselor, Jim Van Laningham.) After four hours they head back. Joe is not in the office. They call from Rutba. 9:00 a.m. Joe makes demarche to Nizar Hamdoon, both exhausted. Nizar says the convoy can go and take Penny with them. I called my folks in the morning. Penny in office helping Mitsy Eustis (wife of one of the communicators). Mel gets bright idea to put her to work in the Consular section. Penny and Bob Sage shred bio files. New*

*Government of Kuwait asks to join Iraq. GOI says all foreign embassies in Kuwait must close doors by August 24<sup>th</sup>.*

*August 10, Friday. In at 6:30. Rose on phone, exhausted. Learn more about incident last night. J.C. explodes at (I can't remember person whose initials are here) unwarranted. Real anger at Joe's wife for the way she behaved. (I have no recollection of this at all.)*

*Slow day. Charlie and Col Ritchie sleep most of it, in and out of the office. Mary DeCarlo organizes a picnic in the ambassador's office, grill on balcony outside Joe's office. Most go home early to catch up on sleep. Long talk with Howard. (I can't remember who Howard is.) 6:00 p.m. home, talk with Sages across the back wall, they loan me camera so I can photograph all my stuff. Realized I have to bid on '92 LDP so call into the task force and asked to speak with an FSO and get the Ambo who will help. It was really nice to talk with her. She says tape of Joe and me with Saddam played on British television. Called Cramers in the morning. Penny Nabokov is here now, since yesterday. She's staying with the Angs. They've put her to work in Consular session. She'll go with the convoy tomorrow. Saddam Hussein's wild speech read, followed by mosque calls, equally inflammatory. I went to bed. It feels like Gotterdammerung.*

*August 11, Saturday. 03:30. Convoy sets out again after Saddam Hussein's speech. I get into office at 06:30, talk with Rose and Charlie and take over as phone monitor from Rose. Baghdad 4680, 4685.*

*Began this book today, so am having a bit of trouble reconstructing the early phases of this operation. We are all operating on too little sleep or sleep that is broken up. It's better now but the first few days were killers. Steve Thibalt (of USIS) has taken over press report. 11:45 good meeting of all with Joe in the chair. 12:30 p.m. Joe going home to rest. Orders to let him know anything from Amman so he can call the Department. He says, 'It's my deal.' All other information has to be passed immediately. 2:00 p.m. Waiting to hear news of our convoy, very quiet in Embassy. Jim Van Laningham and Steve Thibeault have set up T.V. in Mel's office. Some Marines now watching. 15:00. Just got word they passed the Iraqi border! 17:30. Had champagne to celebrate crossing. Great relief among guys whose wives were on the convoy. Head home after the 18:00 business man's meeting began, made a cake, bed.*

*August 12, Sunday. Baghdad 4690, 4707. 05:00. Eight hours sleep--wonderful. Found I'd left the oven on all night and had forgotten to cover the cake which I iced. Wear sloppy clothes to office where I have two dresses, shoes, tights if I need to go anywhere. We are all doing that. 06:30 Office. We have lost secure line, indeed any line to D.C.. International operators try to get us one. Did the sitrep after interesting talk with Adnan Saadi (the Political Section's FSN) on his conversations over the weekend. Disturbing. 11:30 Joe tells me we are off to the MFA for a noon meeting with Nizar Hamdoun et al. I come back and do the cables, then edit a piece on Saddam Hussein's appeal for austerity, then read traffic and prepare next sitrep. Saddam Hussein will give another speech tonight--an initiative! Tired despite the eight hours, something to do with tension. Joe will show "Lawrence of Arabia" tonight. Ironically, the only picture in the Wang room is of Cyrus Vance. (Vance was the Secretary of State at the time of the Iran hostage crisis and I think resigned after the botched rescue attempt. Here we were in a situation where American diplomats could again be hostages.) Seidel read Vienna Convention, amid laughter.*

*6:30 p.m. Waiting for Saddam's next speech. Great initiative. Ten minutes long. Scare of demonstration turns out to be RSO misreading some kind of drill. We do short cable on Saddam Hussein's three-point plan, then home in convoy with Bob Love and Bob Sage. Until midnight packed air freight, second suitcase.*

*Monday, August 13. Got up late, left \$50 for Cora (the maid I shared with the Commercial Officer.) Typed up my air freight inventories. Bob Love will pick it up today. 9:00 staff meeting. Looks like it will be a quiet day, so I'll take it easy, maybe go home. 12:00. Finished sitrep. We had a demonstration with about fifty, chanting and presenting a petition. 12:30. Talked to Georgia DeBell (in the Department) about GOI statement on travel. CNN implying that people can go via Saudi Arabia -- not true. Will call 'Ijam in half an hour to clarify and tell Georgia. She says Brad and Debbie are fine. (They were fellow FSOs, in Yemen at the time.) 1:45 p.m. Col. Ritchie okays sitrep (Baghdad 4725) as no Joe or Jim Van Laningham around. Joe comes in. I talk to 'Ijam and that plus dip note becomes cable. 4:30 Call folks, Ma sounds near tears. At least they know I might be coming out. Ardith also noticed abolition of chain of command and my going as female. 'If Haywood were here,' she said, 'he'd never go.' I tell her to raise it in D.C. 18:30. Got the second sit rep in (Baghdad 4750). 19:10. Waiting for the Secretary of State to call. Joe at his usual EC plus meeting, me to talk with the Secretary. 20:30. Still no Secretary and chances are he won't make it. James Tansley stopped by and we had a natter. (Tansley was a British diplomat.) 21:00. Joe calls in, going to the MFA at 10:00. Alf comes and reads messages from Rashid people home—very touching. (These were messages from American citizens who were held at the Hotel Rashid.) 22:00. We lost the line to D.C. and at that moment the Secretary came by, so I'm off to bed.*

*Tuesday, August 14. 13:00. Busy morning. Called on Swiss for very interesting conversation duly reported. No news yet on whether we'll be allowed to go. 4:30 p.m. Steve Thibeault rushes in with news that Iraqi Airways is flying tomorrow, rushes out and books 19 seats. Charlie S, Rose, Bob Love and I natter a while and I come home about 7 p.m. Do my laundry. Have a chat with Bob Sage over the wall and get a case of Pepsi he bought me at the coop. Spend evening writing checks to close out the accounts. (I was the president and nominal treasurer of the Embassy employees' food coop. I had to return to people what they had put in, their original investments, which I did. I brought the check book out and after everyone was paid, we left the money in an account in the Department to be used to start up another coop when we returned to Baghdad.) 10:30 p.m. Jim Van Laningham calls, to say be in the Embassy at 06:30 a.m., with suitcase, passport, etc. We're going by air, maybe. I pack cases, putting papers in my carry-on. Will wear a dress in case we go all the way home. Alarms set for 4:30 a.m. Ted Koppel's in town.*

*Wednesday, August 15. 04:30. Rise, pack, put stuff in the car, leave note and money for Cora and drive into work, to discover that Ardith was given permission to stay. Makes me feel more and more as if it's a problem between Joe and me. 08:00 Jim Van Laningham and Steve go to Iraqi Air. They refuse to sell tickets to us. 10:00 a.m. Joe and I go to Wikri (at the Foreign Ministry) where we get a dip note on Kuwaiti assets and learn his view that we're here as long as there is a threat to Baghdad. Back to do lots of cables (Baghdad 4817) 16:00. Got cables done, read a pile of traffic. Looked at job lists—not much in '92 except DCM Sanaa and Muscat! Joe asks Mel and me to do demarche on sick kids after 7 so I read background. Ted Koppel and crew are here now. They came in last night on an Iraqi Air flight, spent five hours in the Defense*

*Attaché's office on the phone. Geez. 1800. Koppel went off to interview Tariq Aziz for a live broadcast. We provided a link between the TV studio here and London with Mary diCarlo talking to Simon in ABC London and Lee to 'Terry'. It was a hoot. Off at 9:15 with Mel to make a demarche on two sick American citizens. Picked up one suitcase and came home and unpacked a bit. Very tired. People were disappointed we didn't get out. I am satisfied to stay. I have work to do, but some don't and are getting restless. Mel said he will always remember my 7 a.m. August 2 call, 'You'd better come in. We have a bit of a problem,' he says I said. Probably did."*

*Thursday, August 16th, Week Three. Someone was trying to jam BBC. Back to sloppy clothes for office. We should have Dan Rather today. 16:00. Busy day. Did sitrep (Baghdad 4844). Got involved in a consular problem when Robin rang to say they have been barred access to hotel detainees. Alf goes off to Rashid and says same thing for him. I tell Robin, and try to get MFA explanation. None until tonight. Dan Rather was here. Took him five hours to get out of the airport, so Steve T explained why: Diane Sawyer cutting didn't go down well. (Diane Sawyer had interviewed Saddam and had truncated the interview, and the Iraqis were really annoyed.) Lilli Van Laningham manning the phones in D.C. Nice to hear her. They are going to put our mail into NEA/EX. Joe will host a hamburger and beer bash for businessmen at the Residence tonight. I am going to Pappenfuss at 8, except not now. Saddam Hussein is delivering verbal letters to Britain on TV, and I need to cover that. 21:00 Saddam Hussein's speech had English subtitles so our effort was wasted! Joe came in. No luck with Nizar Hamdoon, still no 'new rules' for diplomats. Our Rashid group (of American citizens) has been moved--we don't know where yet. 22:30. Home at 10 p.m. Didn't go to Pappenfuss. Very tired. Will sleep until I wake up. Lee says my Collin Street order arrived. Will tell the task force to let my folks or Dwight pick up my mail.*

*Friday, August 17. 06:40. Woke up after a good sleep, but still not enough. Will go in by 8 a.m. 08:00 Odd sort of day, very groggy. We had the 9 a.m. meeting without Joe, Jim Van Laningham in the chair. Was working on the sitrep, when Joe said he wanted some political reporting on UNIMOG, so I went to see the Canadians who had nothing, tried and failed to get the Political Advisor (day off), dashed over to the MFA to deliver a note, did sitrep (Baghdad 4906), ready to go home—after calling the folks and asking them to cancel Phillip Morris—when Joe called, wanting Mel to go with him and me to stay here and try to get him an appointment with 'Ijam. Then I'll go home. I am worried about Ma. This is awfully hard on her. Thank God, Peggy is okay but they took the works. Hope all it was was fibroids. 7:00 p.m. Trying to get 'Ijam's office. 8:00 p.m. 'Ijam's office—not at MFA, then call and find out Joe and MFA have been in direct touch. Watching TV news, Dan Rather comes in, a very pleasant, interesting guy. Steve T and I talk with him for an hour or so. Joe comes in, no joy from 'Ijam. I come home and cook a meal. Watched Chinese TV series dubbed in English with Arabic subtitles. It's about a bunch of just men 1000 years ago who become outlaws and set out to overthrow tyrants, arguing the idea that good men plus the people can overthrow tyrants! And no one in the GOI has noticed. Followed by two foreign series 'Petrocell' and 'Flying Doctors' from Australia.*

*August 18, Saturday. 06:00 BBC new carries Sali Mahdi Salah's announcement that foreigners will be put at key installations and bases to ensure the safety of the places. So far no dips as the GOI has plenty of other cannon fodder. 15:30. My morning was spent sorting out the GOI's policy, reporting to DC, talking with two Bechtel guys who are told the policy will affect them.*

*(Baghdad 4919) Talked with the Ambo and told her about the Cy Vance picture and Chinese TV show. Nice to have her there for us and do I wish she were here! It gets quiet this time of day between shifts in D.C., MFA at home resting and eating, so I read cable traffic. Joe just got a call to call Hamdoon. Mary diCarlo is pregnant and wants special permission to leave. Don't know whether Joe will even ask. Hamdoon said dips could fly out by Iraqi Air to Amman. Steve T is off to make 19 reservations. Returns with news Iraqi Air won't accept our reservations! Jim Van Laningham also putting in request by land for next Tuesday. Upshot, we requested travel Tuesday. Called Hilary Ames and Ren and Bowen. Eileen has an answering machine, so I left a message. (All friends in England.) Came home at 7:30 p.m., cooked, made a cake. Watched news—report on AIDS among US GI's in Saudi Arabia.*

*August 19, Sunday. Baghdad 4932 and 4953. 7:00. Woke up an hour ago, listened to BBC news and then got up. Now listening again and will go in at about 7:30. Wally (Eustis, a communicator) isn't there until 8 so nothing to read. 13:00. There was activity last night. At 11:30, it was decided to move American citizens from major hotels to the Residence so the consular officers worked hard. (To preempt the GOI from using them as human shields.) Today, some are gathering food from the empty houses to bring to a central commissary. When people leave (!), stuff from our houses will be sold too. Jim R organized the Bechtel guys at the residence. On travel, JVL bought tickets for the 22<sup>nd</sup> just as Iraqi Air manager said no tickets to American diplomats. We should get travel permission tomorrow and if so will leave in the early hours of the 21<sup>st</sup>. We shall see. Meanwhile, quiet reigns. Just learned Jordan has closed the border. Not feeling good so went home at 5, made ice cream, dinner, bed after TV new—two announcements—at 9:30. Did laundry too.*

*Monday, August 20th. Baghdad 4987 and 4995. 06:00 woke, listened to BBC news. 09:00 meeting. Mitzi complained about not being told we're going early the 21<sup>st</sup>. We don't know yet, so no point in worrying. Went over to the German Embassy to draft talkers for a German/French/British/US demarche to Aziz. As I was going, saw busses of young pioneers gathering by Iraqi Meets. Traffic jammed. On the way home, James Tansley couldn't get through, so I walked home through the kids waiting to demonstrate. They did at 11:00. 13:30. Word comes that we have travel permission—road, via Jordan. My car is on the list so gave keys to Abbas (motorpool FSN) for them to check it over. I'll have two Marines as passengers. Bob Sage takes me home and I pack, clean up kitchen, do laundry, sleep from 8 to 11 p.m. The up and at 12:30 with Bob to Embassy where we mill around for an hour. Joe gives us a pep talk and we set off at 2:15 a.m., August 21st.*

*August 21st, Tuesday. See cable describing our journey. Arrived Amman. Ambassador met us and there was Janet Sanderson (who had brought a bottle of Scotch!) Had an hour to get cleaned up for briefing. Out tomorrow a.m. to London then D.C. Janet and I went out to dinner at Chinese restaurant, I using per diem to pay. Nice meal, lovely to see her. Back to hotel by 10. Called folks who were thrilled we were out. Began drafting cable. Then slept.*

*August 22nd, Wednesday. 06:30. Rose, showered, had breakfast in the room writing the cable. 07:30 Alf stopped by, hauled my luggage to the checkpoint. I wrote cable, read by Sage, diCarlo, others. RSO took it to POL for transmission today. Paid hotel bills, sat around.*

*10:00. Press photographed us getting on bus at the airport. That too will be on TV. Taken to the airport, wait in one room and do group photos under portrait of King Hussein. To another room and find three Iraqi generals sitting there. Eventually time to go. The five to Istanbul with animals and then home via Frankfurt or Paris to NYC, then DC. We 13 directly to London. They've sent us business class all the way! Nice. Flight pleasant. I sat with Bob Sage and we talked. Movie was *Coupe de Ville*. Good. We were met by AmEmbassy London people, brought to the hotel. Happily we are not a news story here. I got on the blower and called Dee, Kay Clark, Fanny, Eil (not home, left message). All so pleased I'm here. Got Eil at the office, she came to hotel and we had dinner. Bed by midnight, watching awful film on TV and ITN evening news.*

*August 23rd, Thursday. 05:00 Woke wide awake and got up. At 9 I'm going to be picked up and taken to the Embassy. Am worried about getting my luggage to the airport. 07:30 breakfast with Bob Love and Bob Sage. They promised to take my suitcases to the airport. 9:00 a.m. Car came, drove to Embassy through warm sunshine. Met with Desiree, Ross Rodgers, Bruce Burton and Charge, telling our tale and answering questions. Noonish off to the airport, met up with the gang and my luggage at PanAm. Checked in. Embassy got us into Clipper Club. On the plane, Fran wanted me to pick six to be upgraded. I let her do it. Sat with the Bobs. And that's where the diary ends.*

*Q: Couple questions. During the time you were \_\_\_\_\_ was there pretty much the feeling that . . . was going to do something? I mean, did that dawn on you or how did that come?*

JOHNSON: No, there wasn't. We were hoping that something would be said. George Bush said something like, "This will not stand." But then there was nothing until Margaret Thatcher apparently came and stiffened him up. So we didn't know what our government was going to do.

*Q: When it came time to split up, to have the chief political officer go out, did you feel this was a personality clash between you and Joe Wilson or was this because you are a woman or . . . ?*

JOHNSON: I think there were lots of different elements in it. Joe and I never had a clash in that sense. Early on in the crisis, I wrote a cable trying to explain why Saddam did what he did and how he misread the situation. Joe would not let me send it. I was only allowed to do sitreps. From his point of view, it was his show. It was very ironic that some three or four months later, the Agency did a report about why Saddam misjudged the situation. All the points that I made in the cable that was never sent were in the report. It wasn't the substance of it that was wrong. I don't know why but he didn't want it to go.

*Q: Do you recall what your basic analysis was and why Saddam did it?*

JOHNSON: He had misread our intentions. I don't remember all of it and that's too bad. I should have kept a copy of it. He had such a limited experience of the outside world. One of the things that I don't think he understood was that what he did in the invasion of Kuwait would be a real threat to the international order in large part. That, if it were allowed to stand, then every small country with a big neighbor was in danger. I don't think he ever understood that that was going to be a factor in it when it all came down in the end. He was also very worried about us and our



fleet. I think he assumed that because we didn't have a defense agreement with Kuwait, we would not come to Kuwait's defense.

*Q: Of course, one of things I am still angry about . . . junior officer there . . . Iraq War. She had very poor contact with the Foreign Ministry. . . . People are afraid to tell Saddam things. So he was very badly informed about the world out there because if they told him the wrong thing he would lash out at them or kill them. This is one of the problems if you have sort of absolute dictator . . .*

JOHNSON: We had fairly good relations with the Foreign Ministry, I think because Nizar Hamdoon had been ambassador here and had really loved his time here. So we had access. We were never turned down. I remember going to the Foreign Ministry and making a demarche and then we stepped into the hall and they would tell me things there because the room was bugged. If they wanted to say anything off the record, they would tell you outside the bugged room. People were always very gracious. It was not a happy place.

*Q: The non embassy people, the Americans civilians, this would have been all sorts of attitudes . . . Did you get involved?*

JOHNSON: Because I had never done consular work, I was not involved in that. I think they were alarmed. And, also alarmed, were American citizens who hadn't bothered to register, who had been living in Iraq for years. I think I told you, one of the sad things was shredding the passports of Americans who didn't want to have the passports around their houses. We shredded everything, just in case they came over the wall, there wouldn't be anything for them. The shredders were going full tilt, on and on. That produced bags and bags of rubbish. There was a space behind an outbuilding and a fence and that is where they took the shredded stuff and dumped it. It created a real mound.

*Q: Was there concern that this time . . . were you burning the . . . ?*

JOHNSON: Shredding, not burning. The shredding was very, very fine. You couldn't put things together from that unless, well, it would be impossible. We all had far too much stuff in our files. The Defense Attaché's Office had three or four five-drawer safes full. That was several days' worth of shredding. One sadness was destroying April's lifetime of notes on the Palestinians. I think she was thinking of writing a book some day. They just shredded all that. In fact, we probably could have kept her notes, but we didn't know. We didn't know if we would be going out. We didn't know if we would become hostages. It was very tense.

*Q: How about with the Foreign Service nationals? The Iraqis who were working for us? They were indispensable in the operation. How did you find them?*

JOHNSON: They were terrific. They were all hard working. And Abbas, the man I mentioned, in 1967 he and fellow Kurds had personally driven all Americans' belongings out of Iraq into Iran for delivery to them at home at the time we were kicked out of the Middle East essentially after the June War of '67. He undertook to do that and then kept an eye on the Embassy property over the years. So we received real loyalty from people. The man who worked for me was retired

from the military. He had a travel business. After the invasion, on the Friday, he came in slightly inebriated. He had been out drinking with his general buddies and came to say that the military was safe. I can't remember what I put in that cable except that I described it as 'disturbing' so it must have been a real eye opener into what the Iraqi military was planning and thinking. In the crisis, he was wonderful. He would go out and get information. He knew that he had to report what we were asking about. He was tailed. He probably had relations with the mukhabarat, he had to have. One of the problems we have in these kinds of countries is that everybody who worked for us had to report to somebody.

*Q: There were a large group of foreign nationals . . .*

JOHNSON: And, remember, not just the ones in Iraq. We had all the ones coming up from Kuwait. The people who came up in the first few days were oil workers. I'll never forget the story of one of them who had been up an oil rig early on the morning of August 2<sup>nd</sup>. He heard this noise and looked up to see Iraqi helicopters coming at eye height. We had a bunch of these oil people and electrical engineers, and then we got people from our Embassy in Kuwait. The Iraqis declared Kuwait to be the nineteenth province. They said to our people in Kuwait, the government of Kuwait doesn't exist anymore as a separate entity, therefore your diplomatic immunity doesn't apply and we don't recognize you as diplomats. We were all deeply concerned about what would happen to our colleagues from Embassy Kuwait. The people who came up from Kuwait were stuck in Iraq until everybody left in January 1991.

*Q: You came back to Washington?*

JOHNSON: Yes, I was only here for three or four days. April had arranged for me to do a TDY (temporary duty) in Bahrain because Bahrain was short handed and it was central to what was happening. I got on a plane and went off to Bahrain.

*Q: Today is the first of February 2008. Nancy, you unearthed some letters from your archives covering both Baghdad and Algeria. And, if you want to add those to the record, go ahead.*

JOHNSON: This is a cable I wrote when we got to Amman, having left Baghdad on August 21, 1990. Joe Wilson asked me to do a report about our trip. This is three weeks into the crisis. [Reading] . . .

*To the border.*

*3. Immediately upon leaving the Embassy at 0200 August 21st, we were tailed by white Passat containing two men. At the Fallujah interchange 50 kilometers outside Baghdad, we encountered our first checkpoint, organized by the men in the Passat. The policemen and plainclothesmen were nervous and not quite sure what they were doing or wanted from us. After checking all papers and passports and holding us up for 35 minutes, we were allowed to proceed. We wondered if the men in the Passat were Dick Russell's tails. In all our contacts with GOI officials during the day, DIA presence in the convoy elicited special attention and concern. (That is not/not a complaint—later convoys should be prepared for the problem.)*

4. The second checkpoint, at Ramadi interchange, 130 kilometers from Baghdad, was manned by soldiers and uniformed men and took 45 minutes. They insisted that people in vehicles match travel permissions, so we shifted people around. When the checkers could find no other reason to hold us so they let us proceed.

5. At both checkpoints, loaded cars with Kuwaiti plates, Iraq licensed cars, and buses clearly heading for the border were turned back. Only Iraqi oil tankers, trucks with Jordanian licenses and the convoy were allowed to proceed. For that reason, from 0430 when we left Ramadi until dawn, there was no traffic on the road and we proceeded without further problems to the border, stopping just after dawn to refuel. The road was superb—brand new six-lane highway all the way. However, the stretch from Ramadi to near Rutba does not/not have lane lines. For tired drivers, mesmerized by tail lights of the cars in front, this was the most difficult 150 kilometers of the trip. It was hard to tell where the road ended and the desert began as we hurtled through the darkness, seemingly eight vehicles alone in the world.

#### En route

6. Once daylight came, there was light traffic on the road. Buses, oil tankers (full) and empty Jordanian trucks were heading toward the border. The reverse was the case on the Baghdad-bound side. Alf Cooley reckons we saw one truck/tanker/bus every one minute. (Cooley adds: Since half of the eastbound were empty oil tankers this would be one import truck per four minutes past a fixed/fixed point.) A 6-CD (Saudi Arabia) Mercedes passed us. We did not/not see it at the border.

#### At the border (four and a half hours)

7. No words could adequately describe the mass of cars and humanity at the border which we reached at 09:15. Thousands of people, hundreds of cars, in addition to buses, trucks and oil tankers. Hordes of mostly Egyptians were milling around outside the border post area and inside of it. We estimate 10,000 people. The whole area was an open sewer. Pityou [an Embassy FSN] put us in the correct lane (left hand) and we moved into the customs area. He and Bob Sage went off to deal with officials and the convoy had to move on. On the advice of Lee Hess and Chris Gould, who had both crossed the border in the past, we moved to an area to the right of the customs post. (This is past the first set of customs houses, to the left through a wire fence, immediately right thereafter.) For the next three hours we sat in our cars, shaded by the roof of the customs area, surrounded by good-natured Egyptians. Our scouting parties found Sage and Pityou sometime later. [We put in all this detail to help anyone who came in a later convoy.]

8. Sage meanwhile searched for someone in authority willing to stamp our passports. Everywhere he went he was followed by Egyptians. He found a senior immigration officer by illegally entering the PTT office by the back door. The man agreed to deal with us but only after a two-hour wait (nothing unusual). Once passports were stamped, getting clearance on the cars was merely a question of pushing to the head of a long line and being persistent. We filled up the vans with gas at this point. RSO returned IDs to Pityou. We did not need them any more.

9. Leaving Pityou, we then proceeded to the final barrier and, it turned out, the final problem. The uniformed officials would not let us pass without gate passes, which we did not know we had to get as we entered the customs complex. Nor did anyone at the gate give us one. Bob Sage then convinced one of the uniformed guards that we needed his help. He drove Bob (in his own car) to the Chief of Customs' Office. That officer agreed it was silly to send all seven cars back to the gate. Instead, he sent a subordinate with Bob and our helper to the convoy, then parked in the sun watching tankers and trucks cross the border and Iraqi guards chase fleeing Egyptians and beat them. The subordinate did the final paperwork and we were off at 13:45. One passport was also not stamped—an oversight—necessitating a return trip to Immigration.

10. The trip across no man's land was easy. We were met as we came to the Jordanian customs post by AmEmbassy Amman staff, and were we glad to see them! Everything thereafter went smoothly. It is a long ride to Amman. We got to our hotel by 19:00 our time, were met by Ambassador Harrison and staff and have been treated well ever since.

11. Bob Sage did a marvelous job dealing with officials. John DiCarlo was an excellent wagon master. Everyone did what he or she had to do, without complaint or comment or creating an incident that would affect us all. It was a real team effort. Finally, God speed to all we left behind.

12. Recommendations:

1. Match people and cars to MFA permissions from the beginning. Bigger vehicles should carry more people than small ones. There should be one man for every three women, if nothing else to watch cars.

2. Jerry cans of fuel are a must as it is impossible to get to the gas station at the border

3. An American with good Arabic and an understanding of Arab officialdom will be required. Pityou was not, repeat not, permitted access to the senior (necessary) officials.

4. And, finally, if possible, fly. (End of reading)

So that was the last of Baghdad. I did read my letters to my parents about London. I spent time dealing with the Iraqi opposition.

*Q: What were they?*

JOHNSON: This was the period when we helped create the Iraqi National Congress. I got fat having lunch with Ahmed Chalabi. The opposition was mostly handled by another branch of the United States Government. But I had official dealings with all the people and it was fascinating. They ranged from Sharif Ali who actually looks like the first king and is his great nephew, on through to the communists. Frank Ricciardone, who had been watching Iraq from Jordan, and had to come out, spent a few months in London working with the INC and helping to put it together. They always struck me as a group of mostly chiefs and no Indians. Iraqis don't have a

tradition of being subordinate. So it was very hard for people to compromise, to put together an organization that would work.

*Q: How serious were they really? At least, from your perspective?*

JOHNSON: I think it was a very serious effort to organize the opposition so that everybody would be working in the right direction in case something happened. The fact that Saddam survived astonished everybody. Nobody knew how weak or how strong he would be, so having an organized opposition could be useful. I think the INC over time developed an army.

*Q: Yes.*

JOHNSON: I mean they were busy doing propaganda and all kinds of things in Iraq. So it was a serious effort.

*Q: What was your impression of Chalabi?*

JOHNSON: Smooth operator. Very smooth operator. I think he knew how to manipulate us and he did.

*Q: Still is.*

JOHNSON: Still is. Knows how. Had big friends in the Defense Department. I saw the Iraq opposition. I chatted with them. I wrote reports about what they were saying. But it wasn't the nuts and bolts of the outfit that I was involved with.

**MORTON I. ABRAMOWITZ**  
**Ambassador**  
**Turkey (1989-1991)**

*Ambassador Abramowitz was born in New Jersey and educated at Stanford and Harvard Universities. He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 after service in the US Army. A specialist in East Asian and Political/Military Affairs, the Ambassador held a number of senior positions in the Department of State and Department of Defense. He served as Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research and as US Ambassador to Thailand (1978-1981) and Turkey (1989-1991). He also served in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vienna. Ambassador Abramowitz was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2007.*

ABRAMOWITZ: During my second year in Ankara, that situation changed totally. That was due to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Secretary Baker's frequent visits to Turkey. Baker was all business; he would arrive, talk to the president and a few other Turkish leaders and then leave. He did that on three of the four occasions he visited Ankara. Before his last visit, I went to see the president to tell him that Baker would like to come again to see him. Ozal said that was fine

with him, but that Baker had to stay long enough to have dinner with him. So Baker did have dinner with the president and enjoyed it. You never know what problems will confront you as an ambassador! In any case, the second year of my tour was much easier in terms of Washington support.

*Q: In discussing Turkey with other officers who served there, one gets the feeling that our relationships with Turkey were filled with day-to-day problems, one after another, thereby minimizing the opportunity to build an overall framework for the relations between the two countries. Did you have that feeling?*

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ABRAMOWITZ: The major source of tension during my first year was the Armenian genocide resolution. I became deeply involved in this problem in 1990. It was a long difficult issue; loaded with enormous emotions on both sides. I didn't think that the Turks have really yet come to grips with their past. While I had some sympathy for the resolution, I was opposed to it being introduced in the Senate. The Senate was not a proper forum for making decisions about Turkish history, one which was strongly disputed by the Turkish government. But even more importantly for American interests, I also had strategic concerns. By early 1990, it was clear to me that we would likely be going to war against Iraq. We would need Turkish assistance and support to mount an attack to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. We did not want to imperil that.

I returned to Washington and spent two or three weeks primarily going from senator to senator, lobbying against the resolution. I must have seen some 60 senators. I did this because the Bush administration was reluctant to becoming publicly involved in the debate; they did not want their fingerprints on any debate about the resolution for domestic political reasons. While opposed to the resolution, the administration was reluctant to be seen taking any highly public actions which might alienate the Armenian-American community. That left the lobbying burden mostly to me.

Senator Robert Byrd played the key role. He mobilized Senate opposition to the resolution. There was a remarkable – and poorly covered – debate that lasted for two days on the genocide resolution. Two of the Senate's leading figures opposed each other on the floor for several hours daily. Bob Dole supported the resolution; Bob Byrd opposed it. The two days were filled with eloquence, which received very little media attention. I thought it was a remarkable event. You don't often see two Titans of the Senate debating an important issue on the floor in a great personal contest. The final vote was very close with Byrd's side winning by a narrow margin.

I had talked to President Ozal at length about the resolution. He was annoyed with it all. It got in his way to do other things with the U.S. He did not like the resolution but simply wanted it out of the way. But he could not publicly take the position of pass the damn thing and let's move on, as he once said to me, his bureaucracy and public vehemently denied any Turkish participation in a genocide. Nevertheless, the conclusion of Senate debate took the issue off the agenda; it came up annually but not in a major way until late in this decade.

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ABRAMOWITZ: When Saddam invaded Kuwait in August, President Ozal supported us immediately, but not the bulk of Turks. They were opposed and did not want to get involved. I cannot say that his support would not have been given regardless of the outcome of the Senate action on the genocide resolution. But Ozal hated Saddam Hussein, and resented the Iraqis controlling oil prices; their hold on prices would have increased substantially had they been able to keep Kuwait and control that country's oil production. Turkey had taken a major economic blow in the late 1970's when the Middle East oil producers reduced their output; indeed, it went into a deep recession. Ozal was very sensitive to Iraqi behavior. He fully supported all that Turkey could do to help us, that was important to our war effort. But we dodged a bullet by the defeat of the genocide resolution.

Dealings with top leaders was very important. James Baker, much to his credit, did something that Colin Powell as Secretary had never done in the run up to the Iraq war in 2003. Powell never visited Turkey. Baker came four times in eight months. That was very important. The presence of Ozal made the biggest difference; he was very much pro-American, hated Saddam Hussein – he was on the same wave length with us.

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ABRAMOWITZ: In late June, 1990, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney visited Ankara. Tensions on the Kuwait-Iraq border were already rising. Shortly before the SecDef's arrival, the U.S. and Greece announced that they had concluded a defense agreement. I knew nothing about it; I didn't even know that negotiations were taking place. As you can well understand, I was not a happy camper; I was mad as hell. I learned subsequently that I had been intentionally left out of the loop by our country director because he was concerned that we might object to some of provision or other and might try to sabotage his efforts to reach an agreement. In fact, it was not a bad agreement and I think his concerns were unwarranted. It did include some rhetorical language which could have been misinterpreted. That might have been changed. The Turks, however, became incensed by some of the language in the agreement. So when Cheney arrived, he became a target for the Turks who surprisingly ranted to him.

The normally very hospitable Turks treated Cheney almost as if he were a leper. Very few senior people came to the reception the embassy gave for him. I had a conversation with him about the whole business and told him that what he had gone through was "a tempest in a tea-pot". The agreement posed no threat to Turkey. I asked him to go back to talk to the President and try to convince him to call Ozal to calm things down and dispel any misconceptions that we had just signed on to an anti-Turkish agreement. Cheney did that. Bush made that call and asked Ozal whether he wanted the White House to issue a statement clarifying the agreement and assuring the world that it was not in any way harmful to Turkey. Ozal liked that idea and Bush did make the statement. That calmed the waters in Turkey. Perhaps even more important, this episode established a very close relationship between Bush and Ozal which paid major dividends to us during the Gulf War. I believe that Bush probably consulted with Ozal by phone more often than with any other leader except John Major before the war and during the war period. There were fifty or sixty calls in that 12 month period. Fortunately, Nick Burns at the NSC would brief me after each call, which allowed me to make suggestions for the next call. This president to president exchange became a very valuable tool. So an episode which had such a disastrous

beginning ended up in a very positive manner. The law of unintended consequences at work again.

The Turks used the Cheney visit as a means to express their anger and frustration. Not only were the Turks concerned by some of the wording in the Greek-U.S. agreement, but they also resented not having been informed beforehand on a matter they considered to be of vital interest. They might have valid reasons for their displeasure at the Secretary, but I think they also vastly inflated the matter.

*Q: The use of Turkish facilities for our military presence in the Middle East plays a major role in our relationships with Turkey. Did they cause you any special challenges?*

ABRAMOWITZ: There were always problems with the bases. They were mostly small problems: e.g., the need to remove certain individuals from Turkey for transgressions, the use of bases for special activities, etc. They arose continually and took a lot of our time to resolve.

The major issue arose with the Gulf War and the use of Turkish bases to fight that war. I mentioned that President Ozal hated Saddam and viewed him as a real threat to Turkey's stability. So we had an ally in spirit even before we sought Turkish assistance. At our request, Ozal moved very quickly to shut down the pipeline that carried oil from Iraq to the Mediterranean, even though it was an income earner for the Turks.

Our requests to Turkey included: 1) using their bases for military strikes, 2) moving Turkish troops to the Iraq border as a potential threat to Iraq thereby forcing Saddam to keep Iraq troops on this border rather than moving them south to fight us, and 3) sending some troops to Saudi Arabia to be part of the anti-Saddam coalition. At this time the Turkish military were not on good terms with Ozal because they were unhappy with how he managed national security concerns, which to them was in a free-wheeling manner. By and large, they did not support that war against Iraq.

In any case, Ozal approved our requests for the use of the bases although he delayed all decisions until we actually initiated military actions against the Iraqis. He was not interested in our expanded use of the bases unless actual hostilities broke out; he did not want to have made an unnecessary decision which would have left him politically exposed. Ozal had the implementing legislation immediately approved after we had started bombing; it was done in one day. He called me that day and asked: "Are you satisfied now?"

We had no problem getting the Turks to send troops to the border. On the other hand, the Turkish military refused to send any forces to Saudi Arabia. I don't think I ever fully understood their rationale other than they did not want a direct participation. Ozal was not in a position to really push his military since he already had a somewhat tense relationship with them and didn't want to take on another fight. The Turkish chief of staff at around this time did something which was quite unusual. Instead of leading a coup – as well might have happened in earlier times – he resigned in protest against Ozal's policies and management although he did not publicly put it that way.



We of course were primarily interested in the expanded use of the bases, and were able to use them as needed throughout the war.

**MICHAEL H. NEWLIN**  
**Retired Annuitant, Bureau of Political/Military Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1991)**

*Ambassador Newlin was born in North Carolina and was raised there and in the Panama canal zone. After graduating from Harvard he joined the Foreign Service in 1952 and was posted to Frankfurt, Oslo, Paris, Kinshasa and Jerusalem, where served as Consul General. During his distinguished career, Ambassador Newlin served in several high level positions dealing with the United Nations and its agencies and NATO. He served as Ambassador to Algeria from 1981 to 1985 and as US representative to the United Nations Agencies in Vienna, 1988-1991. Ambassador Newlin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.*

*Q: Well tell me though, let's talk about you were there when Saddam Hussein and Iraq invaded Kuwait. How did that affect what you all were doing?*

NEWLIN: Right. It affected the UN greatly. The basic Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force was to oust Saddam from Kuwait. It did not envisage the invasion of Iraq or the ouster of Saddam. As part of the cease fire, Iraq agreed the UN would find and destroy all weapons of mass destruction. A special UN commission on Iraq sanctions, UNSCOM, was set up and was to report to the security council rather than to Boutros Gali, the secretary general. Though not spelled out, it was generally understood the IAEA would play a role since it had inspected the Iraqi nuclear reactor under the NPT. UNSCOM was headed by Rolf Ekeus, a Swedish diplomat. The IAEA was headed by Hans Blix, another Swede. The question between these two Swedish diplomats, both of whom had sizable egos, what was the pecking order.

*Q: This was between New York and Vienna.*

NEWLIN: Blix in Vienna and Ekeus in New York. I got drawn into this. I tried to say well we can work this out, have joint teams. The nuclear experts from here can go, and then Ekeus had recruited some nuclear experts of his own as well. I said, "This has to be a joint operation and we have to work together." That is the way it did in fact work. But then to our great surprise the Iraqis, once this system got started, admitted that they had secretly produced some plutonium from their reactor. So that was a tip off that they did have nuclear weapons ambition. They admitted that to the IAEA. I reported that immediately. Then later on Gallucci, from UNSCOM, and Kay, from the IAEA, inspected a building that they went to in Baghdad on short notice, kicked the door down and went in. They found documents in there that indicated there was a program for nuclear weapons. Gallucci and Kay were out at what was supposed to be a place where tanks and other conventional things were. It was all behind a high fence. They were denied entrance although they were supposed to under the terms of the agreement to have the right to go anywhere they wanted to go. So they climbed up on a high structure and looked in.

They could see that the Iraqis were feverishly loading something on trucks, large pieces of things on trucks. They started out the gate with them. The UN people followed them until the Iraqis fired over their heads and made them stop. It turned out these were great huge magnets called calutrons which we had used to develop our first weapon. So that was something. We then found out later that they had a pilot centrifuge as well which was much more efficient. Outside Baghdad was a large new facility where the research was going on and also where I think the centrifuge project was going. Blix said, "Well we don't have to destroy everything, we can just clean it out." The Iraqis said they wanted to turn the building into a school and a library. I took the position that the whole thing had to be destroyed, so they did blow it up.

*Q: How did you get along with Blix?*

NEWLIN: I got along with Blix all right. One thing, I had to do was I had to try to get as many capable Americans on his staff whenever a vacancy would come up. Sometimes I succeeded and sometimes I didn't. He wasn't going to be pushed around. But I thought he was a very capable person. I think he was very badly used by the administration later on in the run up to the Iraq invasion. The UN brought him out of retirement and put him in charge of a beefed up inspection operation. Of course they couldn't find any weapons of mass destruction because Saddam had secretly destroyed them.

*Q: Well is there anything else we should cover?*

NEWLIN: I think we have covered all the main things during my career as a Foreign Service officer. I reached the age of 65 in May of '91, so I had to formally retire from the foreign service at that time, but I could stay in Vienna until September until my tour was up. I left then in September of '91.

*Q: Then after retirement just briefly what have you been up to?*

NEWLIN: Well I would like if I could crave your indulgence, I would like to explain what I did afterwards because that was for me perhaps the most important part of my career with the State Department. I was rehired as a rehired annuitant. I came back to the Department and I worked in the bureau of political military affairs. I got involved in the Nunn Lugar program to control nuclear material in the former states of the Soviet Union that had nuclear weapons and facilities on their territories. There is a considerable tale to that. I also wound up in New York as Ekeus' deputy, my Swedish friend. I had so much trouble with, little did I know that one day I would be his deputy in New York. Then I also became an acting deputy assistant secretary of state in PM dealing with arms sales, so I had a whole new career after that.

*Q: Let's talk about the UN. How did you find Ekeus and what were you doing?*

NEWLIN: Well I found Ekeus to be very competent and skilled. He was marvelous in his ability to be autonomous in this major UN undertaking. Secretary General Boutros Ghali thought that Ekeus ought to report to him. Ekeus said no, I report to the Security Council that appointed me. Since the presidency of the security council rotated monthly, he had no permanent superior. So we had Russians on our staff. We had various nationalities. This is where my experience in

Vienna with the IAEA came in handy because I knew the whole cast of characters. I knew David Kay and the others and their specialties. So one of my contributions was to get the U.S. to release imagery from our satellites so that Russian experts from Moscow could show us where they modified the scuds so they could reach all the way to Tel Aviv. Where those factories were. At first Washington said, no, Russians were not allowed to see such detailed satellite images. Finally we broke through that barrier.

*Q: So most of your work with Ekeus was essentially dealing with disarmament of Iraq.*

NEWLIN: That's right. That was our mission. And as I say we had a huge program going to destroy the munitions with mustard gas and nerve gas.

*Q: That had to be a very tricky thing.*

NEWLIN: A tricky thing. You had to have experts that knew what they were doing on that. We were destroying our own excess chemical weapons out on Johnston Island. That was a big deal. You had to transport it and the environmentalists were up in arms. But we would get all of this and were going along lickety-split in Iraq. And as I say we found out about all of their nuclear things. When Ekeus was on leave in Sweden I was in charge of the whole operation in New York, including scheduling the inspections.

*Q: All right, we will do that. Today is 10 January 2007. Mike, put me back in the picture now. We are talking about you are going up to the UN. When did you go up there?*

NEWLIN: I went up to the UN in I think it was February of '92. I had, I think I had mentioned to you earlier when I first came back as a rehired annuitant, they asked me what I wanted to do when I was assigned to PM. I said, Well, with my UN background, if Gallucci ever wants to come back to Washington I would be interested in doing something like that. Since I had been of course ambassador to the IAEA, and I had a background in nuclear matters. Or, I said, "I would be interested in doing anything that would deal with the problems that we have in the nuclear sector with the former Soviet Union." Dick Clarke said, "Gallucci has got to come back here, so would you go up?" I was delighted to say yes.

*Q: Ok, so we will move into the...*

NEWLIN: The UN where I was there for about nine months. UNSCOM is the abbreviation for the UN Special Commission on Iraq sanctions. After Desert Storm and the various things that were imposed by the Security Council on Iraq, was a system of UN inspections to root out the weapons of mass destruction and destroy those that were found. The UN special commission was established as a sub body under the Security Council It was headed by a Swedish diplomat Rolf Ekeus, who was a very competent diplomat. Bob Gallucci had been his deputy. I became the deputy executive chairman under Ekeus with the rank of assistance secretary general. And the senior U.S. person in UNSCOM. Our job was to cover all of the weapons of mass destruction that had been accumulated over the years by Saddam. The particular focus of course, was on the nuclear side. At that time we had discovered and were destroying vast quantities of nerve gas, serum, and mustard gas in addition to going after the nuclear materials. The Iraqis were charged

under the instructions from the UN to come clean and report everything that they had done in the nuclear field. This, they dragged their feet on and said that all that they had was a nuclear reactor which they claimed was for generation of power which had been bombed by the Israelis earlier. It was a French reactor. Even though that had damaged the reactor, the highly enriched fuel was still there. So the first order of business was to get that particular fuel and get that turned over to the IAEA. Then to get the fuel rods out of the reactor and send those off to Russia. Then we began trying to find out just what they had been up to. It turned out that not only were they planning to use calutrons, which were great big magnets which we had used as one of the things to produce our first nuclear weapon, but they also had a program that was fairly far advanced, with centrifuges made of maraging steel. Also they had gone into producing a form of lithium which you need to trigger a nuclear device. All of this had been discovered by previous inspections led by Gallucci from New York and also the famous David Kay from the IAEA in Vienna. The inspections were supposed to be a joint operation between UNSCOM in New York and IAEA in Vienna.

My experience in the time that I was there was that our intelligence on Iraq was just terrible. Remember we had no real penetration through all of the intelligence agencies that we had, really what they had or what they were up to in this area. One example was, and of course you had CIA, DIA, NSA and who knows what else, having all of the analysts, and they weren't coming up with anything. So we kept getting false leads. There was one large building out from Baghdad. It looked like sort of a palace with two reflecting pools out in front of it. We got word that this was no doubt a subterranean nuclear facility. These were cooling pools from reactors and that kind of thing. So we got the people lined up and the inspectors went out. It was a surprise operation.. We didn't tell the Iraqi government where we were going that day. Then once we got outside of Baghdad we went there. Then the big altercation arose would they be allowed in eventually? We were allowed in. It was just one of the many palaces that Saddam had built. It was completely empty inside. There was nothing to it.

Then another one was an agent said that there was a place down near the river which was producing nuclear material. So we went down there. It turned out that it just wasn't true at all. On the other hand, the Russians of course, had provided a lot of military equipment over the years to Iraq including scud missiles. So the Russians were very helpful to us by telling us first of all how many scuds they had delivered, where they were being modified by the Iraqis and so forth. So that part went very well.

*Q: Well did you feel that speaking of how the Russians were there, was concern of leakage of expertise or information from the former Soviet Union to Iraq at that time?*

NEWLIN: Well I wouldn't be surprised if the Russians had not been involved in some of the technical aspects of modifying the scuds beyond the range that they would normally have. If you recall, during Desert Storm, Iraq launched several scuds towards Israel. Of course one of them did manage to hit Tel Aviv. Several of them broke up in flight. The modification was not technically very good. We deployed the Patriot anti-missile system to Israel but I have the impression it did not hit any Iraqi scuds.

*Q: What about at the time, I mean the Soviet Union had just broken up, so you had its component parts particularly Kazakhstan and Ukraine and Belarus. Was there concern at the UN about leakage from these particular areas?*

NEWLIN: Yes. There certainly was. But that was being dealt with outside the Iraq sanctions operations because as I say, the Russians were on board with the sanctions and with helping us do whatever needed to be done to deal with the weapons of mass destruction. We also suspected that there was a biological component. We asked them about anthrax and other biological elements. They said, "Oh yes we have small amounts of anthrax for veterinarian purposes." But that is all. It wasn't until two sons in law of Saddam Hussein defected, at the time they defected and went with their families to Jordan. They were debriefed there. They filled us in that there was quite a significant anthrax program. We were able as a result of that to root that out. But Tariq Aziz was the designated person by Saddam to come to New York and Brief the Security Council as to what they were doing. But we had to constantly threaten them that unless they did do what we wanted to do under the Security Council resolutions, we would have to report their non compliance with the Security Council. They were very much trying to show that they were cooperating albeit reluctantly, the idea being that they wanted to get the sanctions lifted which among other things restricted oil exports.

*Q: What was sort of the attitude particularly at the top of the UN? What was the feeling from your Swedish head of your section plus your own feeling and people around you about what were the Iraqis up to? Do you think that they, was there even the opportunity give the state of inspection and what you saw for them really to develop a nuclear program?*

NEWLIN: Oh yes. They were if desert Storm had not come along, they would, it would have taken awhile. Of course it is no, you can produce fissile material, but then weaponization of that is another big step. They did have the calutrons already in operation when Desert Storm started. They stopped that and dismantled them. Gallucci and David Kay found out about those when they were moving them around. Later on we found out that they had set up centrifuges, and they were ready to start on the centrifuges. That is a much more efficient way to produce fissile material. We had no idea that they were doing this at all, that they had been able to do this. It shows you the difficulty that people have now trying to deal with the Iranian program because you can hide these things relatively easily. One of the main things that happened that I was involved in was once we had discovered the sites where the nuclear activity was going on, they had to be destroyed. The Iraqis tried to persuade the IAEA to take out and destroy the nuclear part, but leave the buildings because we would like to turn those into schools. So I took the position that anything that was related to the nuclear program had to be completely destroyed. That is what we finally did with UNSCOM and the IAEA.

*Q: How did you find, I would have thought the Israelis would have had quite an intelligence operation in there. Did they or not?*

NEWLIN: I have the impression that Israel, like everyone else, did not have a significant intelligence operation in Iraq. Somehow Israel discovered Iraq building an enormous cannon in a hillside in western Iraq that could reach Israel. They discovered the European in charge of the project and assassinated him in Belgium. The Israelis did tell us about the German firm's

intention to sell maraging steel for centrifuges but I suppose that came from their operations in Germany, not in Iraq.

*Q: What was your impression at this point of the operation of the UN?*

NEWLIN: Well, UNSCOM was a unique body with well defined objectives set up under unique circumstances. I have already mentioned that Ekeus took the position that he reported only to the security council, a 15 member body whose presidency rotated. UNSCOM's reports were well received. It also enjoyed administrative autonomy because Iraq paid for it. Prior to the invasion, Hans Blix was charged with conducting a beefed up inspection operation. When he reported that he had not found any nuclear weapons Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were not pleased and a report was leaked that Wolfowitz had asked the CIA for a report on Blix. After the invasion the Pentagon mounted a massive search which also came up empty handed. Then David Kay was charged to assemble another large inspection body. David reported to Congress that Iraq had no nuclear weapons. It would be interesting to know how much these operations cost.

*Q: Did you have to work when we were dealing with this, I would think it was a touchy time. I mean here a very proud Soviet Union dissolves. I know at the top we made quite an effort not to get into what was known as triumphalism. You know we won the cold war and all of that. With your delegation and all did you have to work so you weren't the victors dictating to the defeated?*

NEWLIN: We were very aware of the unsettled situation and we were very circumspect. The cast of relevant officials was constantly changing. I was also then asked to go to Moscow to discuss rules of the road concerning arms sales. At that time Jim Collins was the Chargé. He welcomed our delegation to come and do this. I saw the deputy foreign minister. I saw the deputy head of the national security council, and their joint chiefs of staff and the minister of munitions and others. The Russians were very interested. They said that they would like to have an agreement as to what they would sell and what we would sell. In communist times all of the political decisions were made by the Politburo as to what would be sold, they would sell to Egypt; they would sell to Iraq; I guess they would also sell to Castro. Maybe they would give to Castro. But then they would give munitions to people like the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and other places that were self styled freedom fighters. I explained to them that now we have a chance to sell arms in such a way that it would not create bilateral problems but that we could not agree to any sort of divvying up of spheres. We would have to compete on the basis of our product. We were glad to tell them whom we sold to and whom we didn't and to collaborate with them. They finally accepted that. So that was a fascinating time to be there. You had to feel sorry for them because there were times that people that were civil servants weren't getting paid. People were working in factories and weren't getting paid. It was very difficult. We were able to set up an international arms registry in the UN whereby major arms makers would report their sales. This was a major breakthrough on transparency.

**GREG THIELMANN**

**Chief, Office of Analysis for Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs, INR**

## Washington, DC (1998-2002)

*Mr. Thielmann was born and raised in Iowa and was educated at Grinnell College and Princeton University. A specialist in Political-Military Affairs, he held a number of positions dealing with such matters as Strategic Proliferation, Arms Control and Missile Programs. He also served abroad at several posts in the capacity of Political Officer and Consular Officer. His last position was Chief, Office of Analysis for Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs in State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Mr. Thielmann was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.*

*Q: Well, during the 1999 review, did Iraq come across your radar?*

THIELMANN: It certainly did come across our radar, and even the majority view conceded that Iraq was not the first level problem. I mean North Korea and Iran were both considered more serious problems than Iraq on the missile side of it because Iraq was under extraordinary constraints. There was international agreement that was fairly consistently abided by to deny Iraq components and resources that were available to some of the other potential missile powers. The United States had also demonstrated a willingness to attack the facilities in Iraq as they did in Desert Fox in 1998 that were clear violations of what Iraq was allowed to do. Iraq for example was under a restriction against developing any missile with a range greater than 150 kilometers. The general missile technology control regime restraints were 300 kilometers. So that's one of the many examples that Iraq was under even tighter controls than other countries, and that there were controls that were being enforced. So for all of those reasons we at that point were all in agreement that Iraq was less of an imminent danger than either Iran or North Korea.

*Q: Well, then was it, 2002 you left INR?*

THIELMANN: Yes. I handed over the leadership of the office on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002, and so that really ended my period of directing the analysis on things like Iraqi WMD. But it didn't quite end my knowledge about what was happening because after taking a vacation, I went through the transition course. I spent much of September then back in the office trying to clean out my safe and making sure that all those various items that I'd been involved with were properly handed over to someone else. So I was still in contact with and talking to the various other people in the office, which has some relevance then as the Iraq WMD intelligence war justification accelerated right after I left my office. I mean it was August when Vice President Cheney made his VFW speech on the need for regime change and the dangerous urgent threats that were occurring in Iraq.

*Q: This was Veterans of Foreign War.*

THIELMANN: That's right.

*Q: To that group.*

THIELMANN: End of August, while I was still in the transition course, but it happened very quickly after that. End of August, Cheney's speech, early September British dossier now known as the Dodge dossier. Then it was the President's announcement to the UN General Assembly in late September that we had intercepted aluminum tubes that were being used in the nuclear weapons program. It was in September that Condi Rice started mentioning mushroom clouds on the horizon, and we couldn't let them be the smoking gun. Then there was the National Intelligence Estimate released in October 1<sup>st</sup> and somewhat misrepresenting the line experts in assessing the threats. Things started happening very quickly after that. Partly as a result of the U.S. military threats, the Iraqis let the inspectors return in November of 2002. They were quickly denigrated by senior U.S. leadership as being ineffective. The Iraqis did their not very convincing report on what they had been doing. Then in December of that year in a State Department white paper the issue of uranium from Africa was mentioned. That's a whole mystery in and of itself since this white paper would've had to have been cleared by INR. Even though I was out of the office then, it became obvious later that this statement about why the Iraqis did not mention that they were attempting to get uranium from Africa, was not mentioned by the Iraqi voluminous report. An intelligence matter coming from the State Department was not cleared by the State Department's bureau. So a very odd thing. But since I'm already beyond when I was in the State Department, I should probably maybe go back to what happened while I was there.

*Q: What about with 9/11, this is 2001? Did that have an impact on INR? Did it have a shocking effect or--?*

THIELMANN: I think it clearly had a shocking effect. Everyone has their 9/11 stories, but I'll just move through quickly what was happening in our office on that day. There was one television in the office director's office, and one of my colleagues told me that they had heard that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center. It may have come for the operations center, but because of that news we had the television on. Several of the analysts were sort of gathered around wondering what had happened. I think almost all of us assumed it was a small plane that had crashed into the building. Because many of us were watching at the time, we saw the second plane hit. I think it was almost automatic. As soon as that happened, everyone assumed this was deliberate that it was something very suspicious or something that would actually involve us as a national security matter and not just be a matter of idle speculation or something that happened in another realm of activity. Shortly after that, we learned that the State Department was being evacuated, and it seemed to happen very quickly. I'm not quite sure how many minutes elapsed, but at that point we really didn't have much of an evacuation plan, and we of course tried to get our classified material in the safes as quickly as possible. That was something which later on we were actually directed from above not to be too punctilious about -- that life was more important than documents in this case. If we got an evacuation order, everyone should get as soon as they could and merely lock the vault and the lock on our outer office door and not worry about every safe and every piece of paper in the office. But on the occasion of 9/11 we were all being careful as we always were to make sure everything was locked up. So everyone was rushing around doing that. I remember my wife called just as all this was happening since she had heard about this and wanted to know what was happening on our end. Whoever it was that answered the phone said that we were all evacuating and that I couldn't talk



now. Shortly after that the radio reported that a bomb had gone off outside the State Department entrance.

*Q: A car bomb, yes.*

THIELMANN: A car bomb or some sort of bomb. Of course this greatly alarmed my wife, this sequence of events. It was very annoying to me after the fact because I was making my way very slowly to her thinking that there was not reason for me to rush to the subways. It would be oversubscribed, nor to get in long lines at pay phones to try to reach her. She was of course imagining me dead while I was making my slow way back to her. What had happened? It seems after the fact that it was one of the F16s creating a sonic boom as they were overflying Washington providing air cover.

*Q: I heard another version. I happened to be just getting off the shuttle bus from FSI (Foreign Service Institute) when all of a sudden I saw all these guards come running out of the State Department, out of the entrance there just as I came down and developing the cordon. I was going off to interview somebody somewhere else, and so I walked on, and all of a sudden I heard sirens. I happened to have a radio with earphones and I was listening and they said a car bomb had gone off. I thought "my God." I just was there and I didn't know that. But I'm told that they didn't have any plan to say what happened, and the closest thing they had was to say a car bomb went off. It would mobilize people to the proper extent.*

THIELMANN: So that was actually told people officially.

*Q: Yes. I mean, well whatever it was, their plan for dealing with the car bomb mobilized the State Department security people. It was closest thing they could come up with. They didn't have something about an airplane being crashed into you or something like that.*

THIELMANN: Well, whatever it was, it further created confusion and anxiety, but what we did in our office was -- I mean I was with several people -- but our instructions were basically to go home and call in to try to find out what further instructions were. The interesting thing in terms of our office, we were to my knowledge the first office in kind of a military way to develop a contingency plan so that we had a place where we would reassemble a safe distance from the State Department, count noses and decide on further action. We were the first office in INR to really develop this, and I think it kind of became a model for the rest of the bureau subsequently so we wouldn't be caught with no plan as we were in this case. But on that particularly day everyone left at that point in the morning and did report the next day. But one of the things in my memory was how slowly the State Department reacted in terms of protecting the building from what we thought at the time could be some sort of car bomb or truck bomb follow up. At least in my memory virtually every other federal agency put up concrete barriers and, in the case of the military agencies, had guards with submachine guns before the State Department did. I think this was on a Monday and for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, it was basically business as usual in terms of State Department security around the building. One of my analysts, who had actually grown up in Lebanon, was sufficiently alarmed by the laxity that he said he wasn't going to come in until the State Department took the threat seriously. He wasn't going to return, which I didn't try to talk him out of. I did use him in my conversations with diplomatic security

to try to get them to do something. I noticed then it was on the next Saturday that they finally moved some security barriers in and removed us from being the most tempting target by virtue of having the lightest security of any federal agency in Washington.

*Q: What about your thinking? Within INR was the thought turned immediately towards Osama bin Laden or was it turned towards Iraq or Iran or what?*

THIELMANN: I think it was turned very quickly toward Osama bin Laden. I don't remember now how quickly INR had reached the conclusion that it was bin Laden, but I think -- and this wasn't my office's determination to make -- but I think our terrorism experts fairly quickly settled on Al-Qaeda as being the most likely explanation. The main way that our office got energized on this issue was related to the attack on Afghanistan because our office had to or felt obligated to do an analyses of what the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan would likely have in the way of weapons of mass destruction technology or expertise. It was in this connection that we worked closely with the narcotics, crime and terrorism office in INR to pool our efforts to find out what the terrorist experts had to tell us about Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda and their access to things. Then we had to tell them what we knew about the extent to which they would be likely to have or to have gained access to the kind of expertise or weapons that they would need in order to have a real chemical or biological or nuclear weapons capability against first and foremost U.S. troops just going into Afghanistan.

It was because of my exposure at that point to the evidence that I could after retiring then say publicly that the connection the administration was explicitly and often implicitly making between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein was not a reflection of what the intelligence community was saying at the time because I was very much aware of that in light of our own office's reporting analysis of the likelihood of Al-Qaeda or the Taliban gaining access. Obviously one of the first places you would think was well one of his neighbors that had a lot of people in the country who knew how to make chemical weapons or biological weapons and who had had a very active nuclear weapons program. So he was one of the first likely suspects lined up intellectually speaking. It was then that I learned that actually Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein were mortal threats, that Saddam's secular regime was exactly the kind of regime that Osama bin Laden wanted to replace, that Saddam as a somewhat paranoid dictator and all dictators need to be somewhat paranoid in order to thrive and that supplying one of his mortal enemies with this kind of material was one of the last things he would be likely to do. So that was certainly our assumptions at the time and important to our own assessment that Al-Qaeda was not likely to have the kind of biological and chemical weapons that U.S. troops would have to seriously worry about. On the nuclear side it quickly became obvious from the evidence that Al-Qaeda just did not have the expertise. It was obvious before gaining any evidence that terrorists groups like this are not well positioned to pursue nuclear weapons developments. They would have actually to get a weapon in hand in order to be able to use it. Their understanding of nuclear weapons proved to be pretty rudimentary.

**DEAN RUST**  
**Director, Nuclear Proliferation Bureau**

## Washington, DC (1999-2005)

*Mr. Rust was born and raised in Ohio, and was educated at Bowling Green University and Ohio State University. In 1970 he joined the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in Washington, D.C. and worked with that Agency until his retirement in 2005. An expert in nuclear and conventional disarmament issues, Mr. Rust was a major participant in the US government's international treaty negotiations during five Presidential Administrations. Mr. Rust was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.*

*Q: After 9/11, there was much made of Iraq's programs of weapons of mass destruction. Where did you nuclear people who were experts dealing with it come out? I mean the administration claimed Iraq was developing nuclear weapons.*

RUST: Prior to 9/11 and then between 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, in NPT fora we would describe the events that led to the discovery of Saddam's nuclear weapons program in the early 90s, note that Iraq was found to be in violation of the NPT, but that sanctions and inspections had pretty much removed whatever technology and material had been acquired for that purpose. That said, it became clear in the late 90s early 2000 that he was trying to reconstitute his nuclear weapons program, which means we started to see some evidence of procurement that one would undertake if one were to reconstitute a nuclear weapons program. Now, as I am fond of telling people, you can dismantle a car with 20,000 parts and dispose of all those parts. If you decide to build another car, you will begin the process of procuring the parts with the goal of reassembly. While "reconstitution" was probably a fair description, it doesn't mean a thing unless you know where in the process you are; and what your chances are for getting a new high performance engine, i.e. the nuclear material in the case of a nuclear weapons. to say reconstituted unless you can say relatively where that means. I wasn't a careful student of the Iraqi intelligence, but it seemed that some procurement was ongoing, but there was little evidence that they were very far along.

That said, Iraq had never satisfactorily answered all the IAEA's questions in regard to its nuclear program dating from 1991 and thus the U.S. was loathe to conclude that Iraq's nuclear file, so called, was clean. There had been a decade of inspections in Iraq, and while most of the previous nuclear program seemed to have been dealt with, these residual questions kept the U.S. from giving Saddam a green light. In NPT fora, we continued to cite Iraqi NPT violations and its failure to fully satisfy the IAEA and the Security Council. In contrast, both France and Russia were prepared to declare the nuclear program as in compliance but U.S. and UK opposition prevented a consensus on the Security Council for that conclusion.

Well as everybody knows there was a last surge of nuclear inspections by the IAEA before the war. The IAEA didn't find anything serious, although the Iraqis still weren't able to answer all the IAEA's questions. After the invasion, we began to get a lot of criticism in NPT and IAEA fora that we were not willing to put our trust in these treaties and multilateral institutions. There's no question that the Iraqi invasion undermined the U.S. leadership role in the NPT. Many states were simply not prepared to work constructively with us in these fora, as we were perceived as having abandoned international solutions at least in this case. This perception along with the

view that the United States was not fulfilling its nuclear disarmament-related obligations under the NPT severely weakened our hand. While many NPT parties granted our point about Iran and North Korean NPT violations, we had little influence to persuade them of the need to take these threats seriously. We had not only "dissed" the NPT and IAEA by invading Iraq, but we were ignoring their concerns about nuclear disarmament. Under the circumstances, many non-nuclear states, particularly from the NAM, would not give us the time of day in NPT and IAEA fora.

*Q: Well did you find yourself disheartened?*

RUST: Of course. But I also don't want to exaggerate the situation. Myself and my colleagues had a lot of interaction with officials at our level and were able to advance an understanding of Administration policy in the areas of compliance and enforcement of the NPT. And we developed good ideas and ways of implementing the Treaty that would strengthen the Treaty against violators or potential violators. The Administration deserves credit for heightening international focus on these matters, and getting a good dialogue going particular with our allies and the other nuclear weapon states. One of my legacies to the NPT over the last three or four years, by the time I left in 2005, was the introduction of a number of policies dealing with NPT implementation that I believed were very supportive of Administration goals. If NPT parties (including the U.S.) ever find it possible within the NPT review process to sit down and constructively work through these issues, they actually might make some progress.

But with Bolton in charge we were on a short leash and had virtually no flexibility; we had little room for compromise on U.S. priorities and of course it was impermissible to grant any credence to other countries concerns about U.S. nuclear policies. Internally, we floated many ideas on nuclear disarmament -- most with little more than of symbolic reinforcement of U.S. obligations and Bolton (and DOD of course) wanted nothing to do with them. And underlying a lot of this was Bolton's desire to put a "stake in the heart" of the consensus outcome of the 2000 NPT review Conference. He seemed viscerally opposed to this outcome primarily because of the compromises made by the Clinton Administration on nuclear disarmament issues. Of course, the 2000 outcome had become the holy grail for the NAM; to their thinking, it had set out a path to nuclear disarmament. My view was that we should be up front about Bush Adm. nuclear policies and how they affected the 2000 outcome in general, but to offer a constructive alternative. We didn't want U.S. nuclear policies to become the issue; it was important for the U.S. to keep "on message" with regard to violations by Iran and North Korea. But typically, Bolton kept insisting on publicly discrediting the entire nuclear disarmament outcome from the 2000 Conference, effectively undermining our ability to maximize support for U.S. approaches on nuclear nonproliferation.

**CLAUDIA E. ANYASO**  
**Joint Chiefs of Staff, East Africa political/military planning**  
**Washington, DC (2000-2002)**

*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.*

*Q: You did it from when to when?*

ANYASO: I did it from 2000 to 2002 so I was in the Pentagon when the terrorists attacked. We were in a skiff; I guess is what you would call it it was a classified area over there. You didn't have to lock your papers and things up because the whole thing was like a safe. There were six of us in this very small I guess it was about the size of this room, this is a big room, and of course we had a TV monitor in there so we could keep up with what was going on; no sound but just the pictures. So the Navy guy looked up and saw that something was going on in New York and there were planes going into the Trade Center and it looked like people jumping out of windows; we said no, this could not be happening. Somebody opened the door and was coming in and we heard a siren going off, blue lights were flashing and they've all been trained to evacuate when these things happen. So we evacuated the building, we had not felt a thing but when we got out of our office we could smell smoke. Since it was the Joint Chiefs of Staff that part is on the VIP part of the building, the river side part of the building. The plane had attacked the Pentagon on the other side where the Navy was and the Marines had their offices. Then we could see smoke and we evacuated across the street and we could see smoke, we eventually came back to the parking lot and more smoke; we could even smell the fuel from the plane. People were calm, people said on the Hill later on that they could hear the explosion; we heard nothing and we felt nothing, we were right there.

So how to get home they were stopping the metro, I lived in Washington. Most of the people who work there live in Virginia so they were going to Virginia. I caught a ride with a defense contractor who was going into the District. He dropped me off on the green line over near Howard University those trains were still working so I could take the green line to the red line and go home. I came out in Silver Spring, our colleagues who worked for NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency, they were all stranded because they took the commuter train, the MARC train to Maryland and they had stopped all trains. So there were all these people milling around; nobody knew what was happening. I walked from the station to my home in Shepard Park in Washington; I was just glad to be home, glad to be alive. I had my key, I opened the door and went in and there was my husband and he was crying. I said, "What's wrong?" He said, "There had been all these attacks, you were in the Pentagon, we hadn't heard (because we couldn't call) from you I have four children, they had all been calling their father to find out about mom." It was a devastating kind of feeling so, of course, I went to the TV and turned it on so I could watch the coverage; to this day I remember being very, very angry because al Qaeda had been showing these al Jazeera films of what's his name?

*Q: Osama bin Laden.*

ANYASO: Osama bin Laden was sending this message and I thought how could we have that on American TV after what's happened; don't they realize that they are just giving him a platform

to get his message out. I think it was CNN who had connected with them somehow and they were running this but to this day I am very angry about that.

*Q: All right things started to pick up about going into Iraq. Were you getting any feeling from your place in the Pentagon about why Iraq? I mean Iraq it didn't seem to have a connection to the...well it didn't have a connection.*

ANYASO: Well you know the military is always twenty years ahead of everybody in their planning so CENTCOM was working on these ops plans, operational plans, for everywhere in the world and they had one for Iraq. I believe that the secretary at the time, Secretary Rumsfeld was very interested in Iraq and talking to CENTCOM and talking to the joint chiefs about Iraq and the planning went on. Right after the attacks on the Pentagon, in Pennsylvania and in New York the Pentagon decided they should do something and, of course, there was that strike they made in Afghanistan; so we knew about the planning for that. John Abizaid was, as a matter of fact, in charge of our section and at the time he was a big player in that; he went all the way up to higher office but it was his suggestion that if we are going in that they also drop a lot of food packages and other things so that it just wasn't a military strike. They dropped leaflets, of course, to warn people to tell people but they also dropped food packages and other things for people when they did that.

It may have seemed unconnected to most people but the military had never forgotten the first Gulf War; they have that kind of institutional memory and it had never been completed.

*Q: Yes.*

ANYASO: So I think that was a part of their institutional culture. The other thing as far as the Air Force was concerned was that from the time of that Gulf War which was in the '90s, '91 or whatever until 2001 or '02 they had these fly-overs, that had been going on for ten or fifteen years. They were wearing out their fleet with all that flying, it was draining and they were not happy about that and they weren't happy about Saddam Hussein, they were not happy about him. In fact, I believe there were posters of him like a bulls eye poster so as far as the Pentagon was concerned there was a connection and when this terrorism attack happened they felt there was a connection.

*Q: Did Somalia which was in a state of chaos and al Qaeda was messing around there a little bit did you find they were taking a harder look at Somalia?*

ANYASO: Yes, they were taking a harder look at Somalia because there were camps in the southern part of the country of Somalia where people were being trained in terrorism. So they were taking a big, big look and they also felt that if they were successful in attacking Afghanistan and getting the terrorist al Qaeda out where would they go? They felt that they would probably come to Somalia so one of the things I was helping with was a MIO, not a NEO but a MIO, which was a military interdiction zone. Instead of going into the country and doing anything which of course, the State Department was not happy about and would not want them to do, you set up a corridor and you stop people from getting in with ships. So that is what I

started the initial work on that and it went up in terms of the Pentagon. In fact, they did actually employ that to keep terrorists from going into Somalia.

*Q: Were we feeling that the Muslims in Nigeria were identifying with the forces that we were opposed to al Qaeda and others in Iraq and all?*

ANYASO: Because of the religion and they felt a fellowship with their Muslim brothers there was always the possibility that they could be recruited especially the young men by al Qaeda. There was some activity, not a lot, but there was some activity, which indicated that some people were involved. I believe in one of the arrests I think it was in Islamabad they picked up some al Qaeda people and one was a Nigerian so there was always that possibility and so we were very careful. We also closed our consulate in Lagos at one point because of a threat situation so yes, there was that. There was a lot of disinformation out there; there would be stories about Abu Ghraib...

*Q: This is the scandal about how the Iraqi prisoners were mistreated by our military prison keepers.*

ANYASO: Exactly. There was Abu Ghraib, there was the Danish cartoons which a lot of Muslims did not like; they thought it offended Mohammad. Whenever there was anything like that the temperature in Northern Nigeria would just go up so we would have to work very hard making demarches explaining, especially for us in the PD part of the embassy. I would go over and talk to the editor of the newspaper, the Daily Trust newspaper, which was, I think it was funded by the Iranians or Saudis but anyway I would go over with my talking points and explain to them how we saw the situation. Then there was a rumor that in Iraq some of our military people had flushed the Koran down the toilet; that's always a good one. So you go over and lay out the facts as you see them and I think we had a good relationship with them but I couldn't say that they were good supporters of the United States but at least they listened. You could calm things down and actually they would publish some of the materials that I would give them. For example on the Koran story I had some materials that had been prepared in Washington that they had sent out to all the posts and they published it on the front page. So I couldn't have asked for more.

**DOUGLAS R. KEENE**  
**State Department: Press Office**  
**Washington, DC (2000-2002)**

*Mr. Keene was born and raised in Massachusetts and graduated from Colby College. He joined the Foreign Service in 1967, serving first in Viet Nam and subsequently at Middle East posts including Jerusalem, Karachi, Cairo, as well as Amman and Muscat, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. His Washington assignments also concerned primarily Middle Eastern matters, including the Arab-Israel problem. Mr. Keene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.*

*Q: Well then you retired in 2002. What was the feeling that you came away with at that time about the rationale and how we were presenting going to war with Iraq?*

KEENE: Very negative. It just seemed to me at the time, as it does now, that they in the leadership there—the President, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Feith, Wolfowitz, all of that crew, had just decided that they were going to go to war, and the facts weren't going to get in the way.

*Q: Was this reflected by others?*

KEENE: Yes, it was fairly widespread. And it was not going to work out very well; they didn't seem to understand the potential for civil war, the Kurds, the Shias, the Sunnis, and that they were told and just chose to ignore it.

*Q: You had been a Near Eastern hand and seen this...what was your impression of Iraq at the time, and you might say, the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld-Wolfowitz crowd—I guess Rice was in there too--were presenting, we'd go in and be met with flags and all...what were you hearing from your fellow officers and that you felt yourself from what you'd observed?*

KEENE: I was thinking that it was totally unnecessary, that Iraq was not a threat, that it could easily be contained, as it had been, for many long years; that it would be destabilizing to the Middle East, and that we were going to have a lot harder time. I think a lot of people knew that.

**ALPHONSE F. LA PORTA**  
**Political Advisor to Commander of NATO Forces in Southern Region**  
**Naples, Italy (2000-2003)**

*Ambassador La Porta was born and raised in New York and educated at Georgetown and New York Universities. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1965. During his career the ambassador had several assignments in Washington in the personnel and administrative field. His foreign assignments include Indonesia, Malaysia, Turkey, New Zealand, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission, and Naples, Italy. In 1997 he was named Ambassador to Mongolia, where he served until 2000. Ambassador La Porta was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.*

LA PORTA: They allowed NATO and U.S. forces to use Albania for training exercises en route to Iraq and Afghanistan.

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They did begin to get a little of that message, especially as the Iraq conflict was warming up. The Greeks found ways to distinguish themselves from the Turks over develop the “second front” in Northern Iraq and moving supplies and forces through Turkish territory. The Greeks decided to



play ball and put a lot of the command and control arguments behind them. They allowed NATO forces to do some training in Greek waters and to use the bases in Crete for counter terrorism operations and for maritime interdiction. We were able to make very good use of those training opportunities.

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The recent Turkish problems that we had vis-à-vis Iraq truly constitute a blunder in U.S. diplomacy. I've said that many people whom I tend to admire, like Paul Wolfowitz and Marc Grossman who were the two people in the United States government most conversant with Turkish affairs, botched it so badly in the run-up to the Iraq conflict. Although those individuals jointly and individually made virtually monthly visits to Ankara to try to get Turkey to come around to some kind of agreement on using Southern Turkey as a conduit for troops as well as supplies and other things into the North and also to put some limits on the potential bad behavior of the Kurds. This would have been in Ankara's interest but we failed to secure that agreement. On the basis of my contacts in Ankara, both on the U.S. and Turkish sides, Washington simply didn't understand what the Turks required in terms of assurances, more than assurances, guarantees that they were going to benefit from the situation in the post-conflict environment.

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I don't think that the specificity and degree of understanding or knowledge on the part of our top people was adequate, based on looking at correspondence, records of meetings and reports from Washington as well as reporting from the field in that pre-Iraq conflict period.

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The expectation was there could have been an adventure by some Iraqi armed forces or the use of weapons of mass destruction of some sort against, if not Turkish territory, against the Kurds in the North.

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The European abuses were abominable. Yet many of the things that are beginning to come to light and many of the things have not yet come to light have been known for years. For example, the French support of the Iraqi military, bribing everybody in sight in Baghdad, and being party to Saddam Hussein's scams over the years. We never blew the whistle on them. This is so characteristic of the way we've inadequately dealt with bad people like Saddam Hussein or terrorist threats. We have covered up and we've lurched from incident to incident. We've not dealt with the underlying issues. We knew that Iraq was learning nuclear technology for decades and never did anything about it.

Eventually you pay for inaction or turning a blind eye for political or whatever other kinds of reasons or just simply sometimes because a job is too hard. Now, and this may be an ultra realist point of view, when it comes to terrorism one of the messages that we have pretty much unsuccessfully tried to send in the United Nations and NATO that it's time that this kind of

neglectful behavior has to stop. The international community has to do things together, not separately, while Washington is currently talking unilaterally. You have to do things together to begin to deal with the aspects of the problem, whether it's law enforcement, intelligence, coordination or development of multilateral and other kinds of institutions. I firmly believe that we have not made use of NATO to fulfill legitimate U.S. interests in these areas. The current attitude within the administration is well, we're not going to deal with NATO because it's too hard or because we'll just get into a current unsatisfactory fight with the French. This is the wrong attitude. I think you have to go in and find ways of doing even if that means finding a new consensus on a new decision making procedure or simply not allowing the French to stand in our way.

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For example, our command in Naples was responsible for conducting Operation Active Endeavor in the Eastern Mediterranean. Active Endeavor was a counter terrorist maritime interdiction force that tracked civilian shipping for nefarious activity. It also was a means of deploying a defensive task force in the Eastern Mediterranean to anchor that strategic region while U.S. and coalition forces were in Afghanistan and later in Iraq.

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*Q: Okay, well, what about how did the attack on the United States by Al Qaeda and all the subsequent move to Afghanistan affect what you were up to?*

LA PORTA: From the U.S. Naval Forces in Europe standpoint we were a supporting command, therefore it was our job to get the forces through the Strait of Gibraltar or through airfields in our region and get them to where they needed to be, whether in Central Asia or elsewhere. We did not have a command and control responsibility, so our job as a supporting command was to monitor those activities and be an "enabler" in order to get those forces to CENTCOM. In the NATO context we kept what the British would call a "watching brief" on developments in Afghanistan because to the extent there were problems that engaged NATO forces. There were air forces that went through Northern Europe or NATO AWACS involved were coming out of Holland. Operation Active Endeavor was a defensive response to counter terrorism and NATO was a full-fledged operator in the maritime area.

We did some planning in the POLAD office. We were asked by Admiral Johnson to figure out that, if NATO did take a role in Afghanistan, what might that be? How might that be constructed? What kind of command and control arrangements would be appropriate and how Southern region interests would be affected. I had an officer on my staff who quickly got very smart about Afghanistan and Iraq; he was also the officer who handled our Greek and Turk problems. During the post 9/11 period we had to become a lot more expert on terrorism and WMD; my British officer became the WMD guy and he had to know a lot more about chemical warfare and other things. One of the things that we did from the POLAD office was to sponsor small meetings within the command like seminars. We brought down a British WMD expert from London to talk about chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare. We did half-day seminar to

educate our senior commanders on the issues, terminology, etc. We had another program on counter terrorism and we had a seminar for the command on the rule of law.

One other thing that I was very pleased with was that we linked up with CSIS here in Washington, DC – the Center for Strategic and International Studies that is headed by Dr. John Hamry. John Hamry was deputy secretary of defense during the Clinton administration and was a good friend of Admiral Johnson's. We worked with Simon Serfaty of CSIS to run a two-day conference in Naples for military commanders from Central Asia, the Caucasus, Eastern Europe, people from NATO and our usual Southern region allies on challenges to this Southern region from transnational threats.

**EDWARD KLOTH**  
**Deputy Chief, Economic Section**  
**Baghdad (2006-2007)**

*Mr. Kloth was born in North Carolina and raised in New York. After service in the Peace Corps and private business, he worked with the Department of Defense, later joining the State Department. In his career with State, Mr. Kloth served several tours in Japan and Korea, In Washington assignments he dealt with East Asian, Political/military, Economic and Environment matters. He also spent two years on Capitol Hill as Department of State Pearson Fellow. After retirement, Mr. Kloth continued as advisor to the Department on variety of matters and served a tour in Iraq as Economic Officer. Mr. Kloth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2008.*

*Q: How did the war in Afghanistan hit you all in what you were up to?*

KLOTH: In our shop some of our folks became part of the new team. I continued going around to economic seminars around town. I realized there was growing concern in the U.S. development community, international NGOs as well as among governments in the third world that U.S. aid for Afghanistan meant less assistance for others. The web is terrific for research. I could sample NGO, government and media websites all over the world. Pre-Internet I would probably have sent out a blizzard of cables seeking information, but I could web-surf around the globe from my desk. I wrote a paper alerting the assistant secretary of the need to address that concern. I don't know exactly where that fit into the thinking, but the Administration developed the Millennium Challenge Account, not only more money but also a new approach to get countries involved in needed reforms to qualify for more aid and ensure the aid had bigger impact.

In the run up to the assault on Iraq, EB put together an interagency group to prepare an economic plan to deal with post-Saddam Iraq. Our office was involved with supporting that effort too.

*Q: But also was this part of a process? The State Department went through a great deal of planning for a post Saddam thing which was completely dismissed, I mean, I'm not sure if the*

*term is right, but it seems to be right, by the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and his courtiers and Vice President Cheney which frankly lead to I'm not sure the State Department plan was the plan but certainly the thing was a disaster and it was a disaster because of poor planning.*

KLOTH: Right. Our section was not involved as a unit, so I don't have an insider's knowledge of what happened or didn't happen in prior planning. EB certainly put good people on the issues. We certainly know now that our top national leadership ignored advice they didn't want to hear from a wide variety of people, apparently including the Secretary of State. Once the war started, EB, like everyone else, worked hard for success.

*Q: To just touch on this as we are leading up to your involvement in Iraq personally as a Foreign Service officer looking at this, and I realize this, sort of on the personal side how did you and maybe some of your colleagues feel about the connection between Iraq and the terrorism attack?*

KLOTH: I had plenty to do and wasn't pouring over the intel on that issue, so could only note the debate in the media and wonder about the Administration argument on the Al-Qaeda connection. On WMD, I thought that Saddam had or was trying to get nukes, chemical and bio weapons. I had people from my PM office who had gone to Iraq with the UN teams in the 1990s. They had seen his programs and the lengths he had gone to conceal them. Remember we only caught up with his bio-weapon program because his son-in-law defected. I will confess I did not question what I thought was the intel communities' evaluation that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction.

I could see the President was in an awful position. If weapons of mass destruction from Iraq were used in the U.S. or in Europe, then how would the president justify inaction. That said, I thought invading Iraq ill advised. I think Secretary Powell told the President that you break it, you bought it. I thought he could have continued: breaking it is a hell of a lot easier than fixing it. I couldn't imagine the American public would accept a steady stream of casualties for long either. I have always been leery of U.S. boots on the ground in as volatile area as the Middle East.

*Q: You went from this policy area to where?*

KLOTH: Then I went up to the Hill for a year to work as a Pearson Fellow.

Before we leave the policy office, I'd like to discuss my work with U.S. consumer groups. U.S. consumer groups felt that they had insufficient voice in U.S. foreign economic policy, although the European Bureau set up a U.S.-European consumer dialogue to parallel a U.S.-European business dialogue. The role of U.S. consumer groups, like that of other NGOs, will continue to grow in international policy, I think. The issue for consumer groups is that they have no easy place to plug in at State or most other agencies. EB's focus is business issues. A fundamental problem for our leadership was, as with all NGOs, who do they represent? How do you know how much weight to give the views of this organization or that, or even coalitions we helped but together such as the groups involved in the US-EU Consumer Dialogue?

*Q: You know the role of NGOs, consumer groups, and all. It's always...*

KLOTH: Consumer groups tend, understandably, to be focused on domestic agencies and the domestic political process. In the 1990s, they began to understand the impact of international economic policy on their issues. But they seem to have been slower in reaching out to State in the way business and unions had been for many decades. Basically we operate on the doctor theory. If you are sick, you call me. If I don't hear from you, I assume you're OK. Businesses call quick when they have a problem in a foreign country, so do human rights or environment NGOs.

*Q: Okay, so we will pick this up next time on your Pearson year; that is 2004.*

KLOTH: That is from 2003 to 2004. I worked as foreign policy advisor to New Hampshire Senator John Sununu, member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chair of its Foreign Operations Subcommittee. I'd gone to college in NH, and my mother lived there since I was in high school, so I knew something of the state which is why I think he signed me on. The Pearson program folks at State had urged me to find a slot with a Republican. A number of Democratic Senators took Pearson fellows year after year. I think their chiefs of staff saw the benefit and reached out to State's legislative office to keep them coming, but we didn't have much representation on the Republican side. I know Sununu's office brought on successor FSOs after I was there. But Sununu lost his seat in 2008.

Sununu was first elected in 2002, so I was the foreign policy guy in the office. I set up hearings for the Subcommittee and followed a host of issues, including Homeland Security issues because I had a security clearance others didn't. Sununu was the only Senator of Arab-American heritage, so I was exposed to the Middle East as never before. It was a great experience. We really should get more FSOs up there. A Senate staffer and former FSO once told me that FSOs know more about foreign legislatures than their own!

I was then Director of EB's Transportation Policy Office from 2004-2006. We handled air security, safety, environment problems, and maritime commercial and security issues, working closely with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and States' counterterrorism office. The issues were sensitive, so I'd prefer not to go into detail. The challenge was to develop internationally acceptable systems to deal with these problems, in the context of U.S. legislation which often required that our agencies act in ways that other countries considered intrusive. Our job was getting everyone focused on outcomes and developing mutually advantageous plans. DHS' biggest problem was juggling U.S. legislative requirements against foreign countries' own politics, laws and regulations

Following that, I volunteered to go to Iraq. I thought our invasion ill advised, but we had to find solutions to the mess.

I arrived in Baghdad in the summer of July 2006. I was deputy in the economic section. When I arrived, we were swapping out everybody at the end of their one-year tours. Continuity was an issue. I had been attending Iraq related meetings in the Department since January when I got the assignment which helped.

We had no FSNs to provide perspective either. It took me almost a year to hire an FSN in Baghdad because of the difficulty of background checks and finding someone willing to work for us. If found out, FSNs got killed. I found a terrific person in the end.

At any rate, I arrived in early July which gave me a few days overlap with my predecessor and over a month overlap with the out-going Minister Counselor, whose successor's schedule meant he arrived in August. That was important, and I got a pretty good idea of what the section had been doing and needed to do.

Not long after my arrival, the military command started a major effort to secure Baghdad. In many guerrilla wars, the guerrillas own the mountains and rural areas. In Iraq, the key struggle was for control of Baghdad. The fight in Anbar province was important too, but if a government cannot control its capital, it has had it. The effort in mid-2006 failed in Baghdad. The idea was to clear and hold a limited number of areas and then expand. The bad guys simply kept going in the rest of the city and then figured out how to get back into the areas we had "cleared."

A major part of my job was the section's principal liaison, meaning the one who went to a lot of meetings, with the military. I managed the day-in, day-out side of the section too, liaison with the Iraqi parliament, where I really missed not having the language, and personnel, plus, of course, backing up my very busy boss when he had to be two places at once. The Iraq leave package and out of town or country meetings meant that I was acting chief of section for almost three months, including for the critical time in December 2006, when the economic policy to support the surge was decided with the Iraqis. In the economic section our focus was on policy and the legal framework in Iraq. The Iraq Reconstruction and Management Office (IRMO) and USAID had the program money.

A key U.S. political and economic goal was to get the Iraqi government to pass a new Oil Law. My boss and our energy section - and the ambassador and DCM - spent a lot of time with top Iraqi, including and Kurdish, officials trying to hammer out a mutually acceptable new Oil Law. I also was involved in meetings on this subject in my boss' absence. The law was very contentious because of the politics between Baghdad and the Kurds in particular, although, given the importance of oil revenues to Iraq's economy, there were a lot of other players too. Our section also worked closely with the Iraqis to put together the International Compact with Iraq in which the Iraqi government and the donor nations agreed to economic reform in Iraq.

The economic section did not run projects per se. AID and IRMO, the Iraq Reconstruction and Management Organization, had the project funds. In general, people worked closely together. With emails and phone calls and digital video conferences at levels right up to the President and Prime Minister communication within the embassy and to Washington as well as with our military was continuous. Now and again I certainly wished we still had the old cable system that slowed things down. I remember at one point the Front Office told us to stop responding to email requests from DC because we were so busy. If you get a cable, we respond. If you get an email, send it to the FO staff, and it's on their head that you ignored it.

We got along pretty well with our military colleagues. The chief issue seemed to be that some had difficulty understanding, even in the States - look at our Katrina relief efforts - still not done, political processes move at their own pace. As far as economic issues went the fundamental issue was that you weren't going to have the kind of economic growth and development Iraq and Iraqis needed without security – end of story. Compared to a lot of countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq had a lot of advantages: capital from oil, although that was a curse too, since some Iraqis' vision of the future was just living off oil revenues. Iraq had human capital, in spite of a high illiteracy rate through the Diaspora community throughout the Gulf, Europe and the U.S. with many people highly educated and well versed in modern business. While the number of Iraqis who fled the violence was not small, I was always impressed by how many stayed. But who was going to invest very much in even a small shop, if you might be blown up or kidnapped for money or shot. All of us wished that change could come faster. Americans and Iraqis were getting killed. But I certainly cannot think of any country that has developed new and effective political and economic institutions overnight.

What is often lost sight of is that the so-called surge of 2007 was not successful because we simply brought in more U.S. troops, but because we had the right strategy. U.S. and Iraqi troops moved into Baghdad and set up camp, so they could protect people, their homes, schools and businesses. "Civilian" economic and political programs are fine but without security, they fail. Further, if there is security, locals start working to build their own businesses and political process. Assistance programs are a plus, but the local folks are the key.

The ambassador certainly and the country team worked very closely with the command. Ambassador Khalilzad and General Casey were making key decisions in 2006. The ambassador worked very hard on the political side trying to get the Sunni and Shia, and the various factions within those two groups, to work with each other in the central government. We also had provincial reconstruction teams, which I believe had started about April, 2006. A couple of friends of mine popped up as provincial reconstruction team leaders, and they would come into Baghdad periodically and gave me a chance to get some outside the capital insights. It was very difficult to move not for us outside of the Green Zone but for these PRTs to get out to "their" areas - to move outside of their particular compounds because of security. But I tried to expand my range of vision by talking with as many people, including the few FSNs in various other sections, as I could and with PRT folks from outside. I also met myself with parliamentarians and ministry officials. Was it the preferred way to do things, of course not. Was it better than not being in country at all? Certainly.

*Q: What were PRTs supposed to be doing?*

KLOTH: Well, the PRTs were to be in a sense the embassies' representatives in the provinces. They were to work with the provincial governments and with the embassy to help the Iraqi government build working relationships. That meant relationships that worked between the central government and the provincial governments. The provincial governments were being given new responsibilities they never under Saddam's top down, centrally controlled system. For example, the ministries had branch offices in the provinces. The line of chain of command was from the provincial department of education office to the central government's Ministry of

Education. It was not through the provincial government as such under Saddam. The new system gave provincial governments authority, resources and responsibilities they never had before.

The PRTs were to try and help the Iraqis develop democratic political institutions and processes and new relationships with the central government. Budget issues were key. Everything from how do you set up a provincial budget to what documents do you need to send to the Finance Ministry to get funds released when you need them. Lack of security meant driving to Baghdad to do some networking might get you killed. That was a serious problem and made it hard to build new personal relationships or simply talk over a proposal for a new bridge.

*Q: Obviously the “surge” action on our part and with the Iraqi troops was a key breakthrough in strategy, but was this also instigating it or was there movement...at a certain point guerilla stuff doesn’t work or this sort of thing when the populace says screw this. Had they reached the screwing point or something?*

KLOTH: Anbar Province was dominated by Sunnis who now found themselves out of power with a Shia dominated central government. Democracy meant that would continue, because Shias have a demographic majority in Iraq. Even in Sunni areas, boycotting the elections left Sunnis with governments skewed against them or against majority groups. Anbar was a hotbed for Al-Qaeda and for Sunni resistance to the new government and to U.S. forces. Things began to change in the fall of 2006 because the mid-level sheiks decided that the Al Qaeda operators in Anbar were not working in the Sunnis' best interest. Sunnis also realized that boycotting the earlier elections had been a mistake and that the Baghdad Shia-majority government wasn't going to go away in spite of the car bombs.

If I could pause too, I talked about the military preparations for the surge. So what is the embassy doing and what was the civilian role in all of this? In the summer when I arrived, there were a number of goals that had been identified on the civilian side, overall it was to encourage and push the Iraqi's to start operating as political actors with each other in a democratic manner. But the Iraqi body politic had a lot of internal tensions.

There was deep animosity among many toward those who supported the Baath Party, people who worked for Saddam in the old government. There was tension between Sunni and Shia and within those groups. There was resentment against returnees by people who stayed and suffered under Saddam, including many in the bureaucracy who felt they had done their jobs to make things better rather than “just run away.” And now the exiles came back and became ministers. For many Iraqis and Iraqi bureaucrats, that didn't seem right. This happens in many countries when a country is liberated or, if a colony, becomes independent. Returnees and many others think that those who were in government jobs were helping keep Saddam and his thugs in power by making the lights go on or the schools run.

*Q: I watched this in Germany in the early '50s.*

KLOTH: Exactly. By '06, there was a lot of resentment toward Americans too. We were still trying to tell Iraqis how to run their country, apparently oblivious to the mess “the U.S. had created,” as one Iraqi put it to me. By '06, of course, “the Americans” had been running Iraq as



far as most Iraqis were concerned for three years. The water didn't work; they couldn't go outside their house without taking their life in their hands; there was little electricity, and here we were still lecturing them on how to do things right.

I remember one American, a retired FSO who had been an ambassador, who entered right after the invasion, said when he arrived at a ministry, four of the director generals greeted him with a plan for revamping the ministry. He left soon after, but returned as part of our "civilian surge." After doing his introductory rounds, he told a group of us that he was struck most to discover that three years before, Iraqis were full of ideas for change, but now the people he had just met seemed so passive. "What happened here? What happened to that enthusiasm? I was told to come out and give the Iraqis a push to do this and that. Well, the Iraqi's didn't need to be pushed when I talked in three years ago but now I see this passivity? What have we done to them?"

Well, that's a good question without a simple answer, I'm sure. By '06 Iraqis had to be wondering how long is this present government going to last? How long are these Americans going to be here? It was clear by my arrival that there was a time limit, and it would be shorter rather than longer. What's coming next? Another thought in peoples' minds was: these Americans are always telling me how smart they are. Fine, let them do it. I'll do what I'm told to do, but I'm not coming forward with anything new. Finally, if you're a responsible Iraqi official and good custodian of Iraq's money and you know Americans will pay for something if you sit on your hands, what's the right thing for you to do? Let them do it and pay for it, of course.

I think we underestimate these kinds of political and psychological and economic disincentives that we create in all our hurry to "get results now." Results in some cases I bet we couldn't get out of our system – and I'm thinking of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast how many years is it since Katrina? Our haste is understandable. Our soldiers are dying, but we often seem to be short of humility and realism.

So much more than once I heard first or second hand comments not just from former Iraqi government people but from Iraqi businessmen, educators, others: Why don't you just let us do this? We know how to rebuild a country; we did it after the Iran-Iraq war. So that was very frustrating. The basic problem was that the Iraqi political, social and economic dynamics were going to work themselves out one way or another but on their own timeline. The surge established the security, and Iraqis started to work again.

What was the U.S. civilian component going to do to support the surge. First, we would keep working with the Iraqi government to help them make it work. There were a couple of key political issues such as provincial elections and resolution of the problems of ethnic tensions in Kirkuk. Then there was on the economic side they need for a revised oil law, as much a political symbol as a needed reform to encourage foreign oil firms to invest. That's something that our section worked on very hard. We created new provincial reconstruction teams and imbedded them with our military units to provide our military colleagues with people who had expertise in things like politics, economics, reconstruction and assistance.

The White House wanted the Iraqi government to put spend its money in a surge of civilian projects, new housing, that sort of thing. The Iraqis, had a quarter of their budget marked for

investment in capital projects, about \$10 billion. They pledged to get those projects going. The Iraqis told us that long-term projects would give Iraqis the confidence and the resources they needed to get things moving. One official said: short-term projects get short term results, not lasting results.

We did throw in some extra funding, as I recall, from U.S. government programs, and did reorient some of the U.S. government programs to be more directly available for things that the PRTs on the ground could identify as an immediate need. But the bottom line was that if this new military strategy could not bring security, none of the civilian programs - American or Iraqi - would get off the ground.

*Q: When you left in the summer of '07, what did you think? Wither Iraq?*

KLOTH: I thought that finally we had a security plan that was making progress, that intellectually was the right one. In the end we had to keep people safe. The insurgents understand that because the car bombs or roadside bombs or attacks on markets or mosques have one simple message: We can kill you and neither the government nor the Americans can protect you or your children, so we're going to take over.

I was amazed at how many Iraqis just kept going, in spite of the violence. They maybe walked their kids to school when before the kids went on their own, but then Dad or Mom came to work or opened their shops. But the insurgents were trying to find the tipping point with bombs and guns.

*Q: Well, it's the thing I too noticed when I was in Vietnam that we tended to work a six-day week. I mean things had settled down and long hours and holidays. We didn't shut down the consular section we'd have going, but our local employees left first. I thought about this and thought, hell, why are we doing this, and then I realized they'd been doing this war more than twenty years, and we were doing it 18 months at a time, our war was 18 months and their war was twenty years. Of course, they were pacing themselves.*

KLOTH: Right, that's their life. When you read about war as long periods of boredom and then seconds of terror, in the end most of my time is get up, eat breakfast, check my emails, whatever it is you do as your regular routine, and it's just schlepping around and then suddenly you hear the thuds of a rocket attack. There were a number of rockets that hit the embassy when I was there, a number close to my office. That wakes you up. Another point in thinking about troop casualties' going up is that to the extent that bad guys under pressure are going to punch back. When our troops are more aggressive, casualties will go up.

But day in and day out you don't think about those, you do your job. I guess that was your Vietnam experience. But we had a lot more protection than Iraqis. When I was briefing my new FSN on the duck and cover procedures, I was trying not to be alarming. But my new employee reminded me: "Mr. Kloth, it's all right. Don't forget where I live. I know about these. But I appreciate your telling me what we do inside the embassy."

*End of reader*