

**KUWAIT**

**COUNTRY READER**

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**HARRISON M. SYMMES**  
**Principal Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1953-1955)**

*Harrison M. Symmes was born in North Carolina in 1921. He graduated from the University of North Carolina with an A.B. in 1942, and completed an M.A. at George Washington University in 1948. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942 to 1946. Mr. Symmes joined the Foreign Service in 1947. In addition to Egypt, he was posted to Damascus, Kuwait, Libya, and Jordan. Mr. Symmes was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.*

*Q: There's the reverse side of the coin there. I'd like to move on now to your first post after Arabic training. You had what seems like a dream post, going to Kuwait--this is 1953 to 1955--as principal officer. How did this assignment come about and what were your responsibilities?*

SYMMES: Well, that's very strange because I remember when we were being briefed in the Foreign Service Institute by people from the Near East. One of these persons I referred to earlier who impressed me very much said, "Those of you who are not specializing in European affairs may find the easiest way to get to London or Paris or Madrid or Rome is to become a Near Eastern specialist, because there are three positions in London, two in Paris, and so on down the line for which you can qualify in your mid to more senior grades as a specialist." And I can recall that when I took Arabic that was one of the thoughts that entered my mind. "This is how I'm going to get to London." [Laughter]

On the other hand, we recognized, those of us who were interested in the Arab world, that it had some pretty despicable posts. I can recall a colleague of mine who served in both Port Said and in Aden who said he had served at both orifices of the Red Sea. [Laughter] And he didn't mean the oral orifice when he was talking about this. [Laughter] So we knew there were a certain number of unhealthful and hardship posts at which we would be asked to serve.

I had studied Arabic on my own in Egypt and made some progress. The Department found out about this, and then I was given money to spend an hour or two a day studying colloquial Arabic in Syria. I had made considerable progress in Arabic, and so when I applied to take language and area training in Washington--it was for a year's assignment-- I'd made a decision that, "Okay. We're going to do this because, I'm terribly interested in it. It has any number of challenging problems. It's a key area of the world. It's poorly understood. I think I can make a contribution of some kind. It has some stinking posts and so what we'll have to do is take those stinking posts when we're young and can face up to them and then hopefully get some good posts later on."

So after I'd finished my training, and we'd had delays in promotion because of McCarthyism and John Foster Dulles coming in and so on, I saw the opportunity to have my own post in Kuwait as a tremendous one. So we went into it with our eyes open but perhaps not open enough, and it was a terribly difficult post physically. I can go into some of the reasons if you want. First of all, my predecessor had done almost nothing to fix up the post and make it habitable. For example, when I arrived, the Consulate's accounts had not been sent in for six months. The office was just incredibly disorganized, even chaotic. I went there with my wife and two small children, one only five months old and one just over two years. We had a hell of a time with the living conditions. But we figured we'd get this behind us and then we'd be qualified for something better. Another factor was that we would be in charge. We'd be running the post. . .

*Q: What was our interest and what was the situation in Kuwait? We're talking about '53 to '55.*

SYMMES: The really productive, what you might call gusher oil wells, had just been discovered in Kuwait prior to my arriving there. The Kuwait oil concession was jointly owned by British and American interests, the American interest being Gulf Oil. And down in the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone, a group of other American oil companies had gotten a concession. The oil reserves in the Middle East had been a matter of deep contention between the British and the

American governments for decades, even before the First World War. It was with great difficulty that Gulf and other American companies had managed to obtain concessions, and this was a continuing concern to us. In other words, we watched how the British dealt with their concessions, because if they messed them up as they had done to a certain extent in Iran just before 1953, to that degree concessions all over the place would be messed up. So our concern was for the American ownership of those concessions in Kuwait, for how the British dealt with their concession, and then the larger strategic interests that I've referred to, that is the so-called Soviet march to the Persian Gulf, or the desire to come down and take over the oil fields because the Soviets knew about these oil fields, as well. That was the main strategic interest there and why we had a consulate. Our consulate when I went there in '53 was only two years old. It had been opened in '51 with great difficulty because the British did not want us to have a presence there. We were the only other country represented in Kuwait. The British had what was called a special political relationship with Kuwait. That special political relationship meant that the British government was responsible for the defense and foreign affairs of Kuwait. The political formula went on to say that Kuwait was an independent sheikhdom in special treaty relationship with the British government.

The British had let us in, but they were very unhappy about our being there. So I found, as my predecessor and subsequent people found, also, that one of the things we had to do was to secure our relationship with the British and to make sure that we didn't disturb them too much. The British personnel who staffed what was called a political agency in Kuwait and the political residency in Bahrain were mostly people who had come out of the British political service in India, the Indian civil service and political service.

*Q: India having achieved its independence a few years before.*

SYMMES: That's right. They were colored with the Raj mentality I must tell you. Some of them had also come out of the Sudan political service, but it was a colonialists' mentality. There were exceptions. There were some very fine British people that I met in the Gulf. But there was that mentality, and they tended to see us as usurpers. And also they thought we had some very bad ideas about how to treat the local people and so on.

It was a terribly interesting time in Kuwait. There was a surge of Arab nationalism because of Nasser having taken over in Egypt a few years before. At that time there were a number of Moslem Brothers who were opposed to Nasser in exile in Kuwait. But nevertheless, there were enough Syrian nationalists and Lebanese and Palestinian nationalists to prevent the Moslem Brothers from dominating political thinking in Kuwait. The result was that there was a real ferment of Arab nationalism, something we later called -- when I was in intelligence research on the Middle East in Washington in the later '50s -- radical pan-Arab nationalism. Well, this was just spreading all over the place in Kuwait and at the time, I'm sorry to say, the British were almost oblivious to it. Luckily I was able, through a number of sources, and other people were, too, to make contacts with some of these people and to report on what was happening. It was happening in Bahrain, it was happening in Kuwait, it was happening in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. Luckily there were some very forward-thinking and forward-looking people in the Arabian- American oil company who saw this and who took steps in their relationship with

Saudi Arabia to try to promote and encourage middle class, non-royal family elements so that they would have a stake in the maintenance of then existing situation of Saudi Arabia.

But there was a real ferment and we had the tendency to label, and the British would do this because they knew it appealed to our susceptibilities, to label any kind of Arab nationalist feeling, thought or action as communist. And I can't tell you how many communists were pointed to in that little sheikhdom of Kuwait. [Laughter] And I don't think there was a one there to tell you the truth.

*Q: What sort of instruction or interests were coming from Washington and the State Department at that time?*

SYMMES: At the time, very little. And this was a disappointment. The man in charge of the Arabian Peninsula desk was a Foreign Service officer born in India and I thought he was a very unenlightened person. He was terribly pro- British. He was married to a British woman and he considered my reporting, believe it or not, to be anti-British, and there was probably no more Anglophile a person than I was, basically. [Laughter] So the general view in Washington at the time was there were larger fish to fry in Egypt and they still had the Middle East Defense Organization concept, Baghdad Pact concept, that they were working on and piddling with. And not a great deal of attention was paid to this political ferment I referred to in Kuwait. We were concerned with such things as contingency plans in case the balloon went up, what we would do if

**WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS, JR.**  
**Vice Consul**  
**Kuwait City (1954-1956)**

*William A. Stoltzfus was born in Lebanon in 1924. He attended Princeton University and then entered the Naval Air Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1949 and his career included positions in Libya, Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and an ambassadorship to Kuwait. Ambassador Stoltzfus was interviewed by Lillian P Mullin in May 1994.*

*Q: The 8th of June, 1996. And we want to begin today, Ambassador, with your assignment to Kuwait as Vice Consul. Am I correct? This was your first assignment after you actually entered the Foreign Service after the examination?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes.

*Q: And oral?*

STOLTZFUS: That's right. I was an FSO by the time I went to language school and then after language school I was assigned to Kuwait. I recall that we drove from Beirut through Baghdad and down through Basrah. I was accompanied by...I think he was the DCM at our Beirut

Embassy and his name was Emerson. I can't remember his first name. He had some medical problems. He had some kind of brain tumor. I think he died later, not too long after that. But I think he was the DCM.

Then there was John Devlin who was my apartment mate when we were in language school. He was with CIA. Anyway, they just came along for the trip. It took us a couple of days. We stayed overnight at the Consulate in Basrah. A great big fellow - I've forgotten his name - was Consul there. It was just going along the telephone poles down to Muslih, which is the promontory before you drop down into Kuwait town.

It was just totally different obviously from now. We have a modern city there in Kuwait now with all the high rise hotels and everything else. But in those days, there was a mud wall around it. And you entered through a gate. And they closed those gates at night. It was a real medieval wall. It was a mud wall, so every time it rained they had the laborers come out and slap mud back up onto the wall. I recall that.

Just after we arrived they had one of the biggest rainstorms that any of them could recall. I have pictures buried somewhere in our attic of the land around Kuwait City - it is clay so the water just stayed on top. It looked as if you were in Venice. Except for a few streets that were somewhat elevated, the place looked just like a sea of water. It was the most amazing thing.

Most of the buildings at that time were adobe with grass roofs and I guess mud on the roofs as well. So whenever it rained, of course, it just rained through the roof as well. The Consul and his wife had to move out of the Consulate, which was a mud building near the sea. It was outside the wall.

One of the sheikhs, Abdullah Jaber, one of the most important members of the royal family - ruling family - had his big establishment and guards out there, and he gave us one of his little out houses for the Consulate. But after the rain the Consul, Harrison Symmes, and his wife moved out and went to some rather nice quarters, relatively speaking, that the oil company had there. Gulf and BP were the two oil companies who ran the Kuwait oil business.

I stayed in the Consulate and kept moving my cot around to avoid the water pouring in through holes in the roof. But I recall those were very interesting days. Any old person can say this, but it was a great deal more interesting in those days than it became later as far as I am concerned.

I mean, the way they lived there, the quiet way they lived and the interesting back and forth when you walked and visited people. On feast days you went and called on certain families who were "at home" that day, and you had your cup of tea or coffee or couple of sweets, and then you moved on to the next group that were at home. They still do that but now you rush around in cars. In those days you were right on the waterfront, walking between calls, and the Gulf waters just rolled in onto the beach. The Kuwaitis would sit out on these high trestles to gossip and greet passers-by...it was hot all the time, and practically no air conditioning. (We got air conditioning later.) You'd sit out on these high straw benches and chat and look at the sea. And go down and see the fishing boats and so on. It was a very enjoyable life. The physical side didn't bother me.

*Q: Why were we in Kuwait?*

STOLTZFUS: We had the only Consulate in Kuwait. The United States was the only country the British allowed to have a Consulate. I think they did that somewhat reluctantly too. The rationale for us was the Gulf Oil Company and the fact that we needed to service Americans who were there.

Kuwait was under the British...it was a protectorate of the British which meant that they were in charge of the foreign affairs and the security of the country. But they also basically ran it. The Political Agent in Kuwait was one of a number of Political Agents in the Gulf who reported to the Political Resident in Bahrain, which was the headquarters of the British presence in the Gulf. The Political Resident would visit the various Sheikdoms from time to time.

Gradually they had, under the British administration, Arabs coming along. They weren't all Kuwaitis. In fact, most of them were either Palestinians or Lebanese or other Arabs. The Kuwaitis were more the ones who had the businesses and were the merchants. And they weren't really used to working that way. That was not the sort of thing a Kuwaiti did. They were either Bedouin from the desert or they were sophisticated businessmen. Families such as the al-Ghanims, Bebehanis, al-Bahars and others were longtime pearl merchants and importers and exporters to Iraq and Saudi Arabia, to India, Zanzibar.

Kuwait was an entrepot and still is...an entrepot to a lot of goods moving around to bigger neighbors. There were Indians and others there. So it was quite a cosmopolitan group. The administration of the government was really run by foreigners, British, Arabs or Indians.

The Kuwaitis were given certain top jobs; the head of security was a Kuwaiti. They were basically under the British until independence, although prominent ruling family members began to take over the various ministries.

*Q: So the British had a sizable office there.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. They had the Agency.

*Q: Inside the walled city or outside?*

STOLTZFUS: Inside. The wall ran from water to water.

*Q: Yes.*

STOLTZFUS: The open part of course was to the sea. There were several gates and the Political Agency was inside the walls. And all of the government agencies. The only activity (except for animal grazing and hunting, of course) outside was occasionally as time went on when someone would take a piece of land and then build a house or business outside the walls and move there because the walls were no longer any kind of military protection. They were kept up because they had always had them, I guess. And it was a very picturesque situation. I always regretted their taking the wall down. They preserved the gates so that you have those symbols anyway. For example, the Jahra gate which leads toward Iraq is in the center of a traffic circle now. You

can go take a close look at it if you want to. It is near one of the big hotels. The first ring road is where the wall used to be.

The oil companies were a little bit south. They had their own oil compounds in a place called Ahmadi, which is about 20 minutes south of Kuwait City. Also at Mina Abdullah, Mina Saud and in the Neutral Zone. And that is where the oil tankers would come in. In those days to produce a barrel of oil was 10 - 12 cents a barrel. And they were producing a million and a half to two million barrels a day. They were producing a lot more oil then, if I'm not mistaken, than they are now. They had substantially bigger production then than they've ever had in later times when the oil would cost more.

But there were very few paved roads. For example, the main road out of town was just a dirt track. In the middle of town Indians and others had big general stores that you went to and you just parked your car in open unpaved areas and puddled across the sand or dirt (or mud in winter), bought your stuff and got back in the car and went home. Down the coast were beautiful, empty beaches. Now the coast is just one solid line of chalets and marinas and clubs for swimming and so on all the way to the neutral zone border with Saudi Arabia.

But in those days it was just beautiful sand beaches and you just drove down to one of them on a Friday - Friday being a day off in a Muslim country. You would pack up your kids and maybe some friends in your jeep, go on down a few miles, park in the desert and walk across the sand dunes. You could stop anywhere. The water was clear. Now of course you can hardly see the coastline for all of the big chalets and so on.

*Q: So did you have a car or a jeep?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We had a couple of cars. Well, we had our own car. But we had a Chevy for company business. And I'm sure the Consul, Harry Symmes, had his own car too.

*Q: What was your function in the Consulate?*

STOLTZFUS: We were three. Harry Symmes was the Consul, I was the Vice Consul and then we had a...Inger Voslef was her name. She was the...

*Q: Secretary-Communicator?*

STOLTZFUS: I suppose so. We had no communications except a bag or pouch. There were no telephones or anything.

*Q: No telephone?*

STOLTZFUS: We didn't have a telephone at that time.

*Q: So you couldn't send cables?*

STOLTZFUS: No, no, no. Not at that time. In fact that was...



*Q: Did you write any coded messages?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes, you could. But you had one time pads. We used one time pads for coding, which was kind of fun. You didn't want to make your message too long. Some of these messages from Washington, if you got half way through them or even after a few sentences, you realized you didn't need all that junk. But anyway they would send it. But our main job from the British point of view was to take care of Americans who required passport and the usual citizen services and got into trouble occasionally.

There was a Palestine Refugee Program as I recall where there was an elaborate way of issuing entry visas, immigrant visas for these various displaced Palestinians. Washington sent us a special person whose name escapes me now whose job was just to process those immigrant visas.

*Q: These were refugees?*

STOLTZFUS: It was a special refugee program for Palestinians. You had to check their police records at their previous places of residence. It was a very long and cumbersome process that they sent somebody to do. So we didn't have to do that. But you know, we wrote reports...we would talk to various people. Just the normal reporting. But it was very high powered. We were not supposed to be stirring up anything.

The British and the Americans with their oil royalties coming into the ruling family - of course the ruling family was happy to get all that income. Everything went very peacefully. The only thing...the Americans would once in awhile get into trouble. For example, there was a young Kuwaiti who took a shine to the teenager of an American family in Bahrain. He pretended that he really was interested in the mother. And the mother seemed to think the Kuwaiti was after her and not after the 13 year old daughter. So he didn't disabuse her of that. Eventually the two of them, the mother and child, came up to Kuwait to look for this guy. And it was clear by then his shine was to the little girl, not the lady.

So the mother theoretically tried to commit suicide. She was in the hospital in Kuwait when I got a call very late one night. I went down there. She was a bit worse for wear but not in excessively great distress because her supposed lover had jilted her. The Kuwaiti chief of police, Jassim Qitami, was there. I got to know the police very well through various exercises of that sort. Anyway, the woman went back to Bahrain and the girl stayed. The girl was very cool; these young teenagers take everything as it comes. The fact that he was chasing her didn't seem to bother her too much. She seemed quite indifferent. We took her in and she stayed with my wife and me for awhile until we shipped her back to Bahrain.

There were various events. You know, some of these citizenship problems and taking care of Americans lead you into some very interesting situations.

*Q: And you were there for two years then?*

STOLTZFUS: Two years.

Q: *And it was a fairly quiet...*

STOLTZFUS: I don't recall...the problems were mostly with Americans, not with any Arabs or others.

Q: *And you weren't affected very seriously by the events that were going on in the Israel area and Suez?*

STOLTZFUS: This was 1954 - 1956. No. We were very much outside that stream of problems further west. I was going to tell you something else about...

Q: *Date is June 8, 1997. Ambassador Stoltzfus, you want to continue with some other remembrances about Kuwait, I believe.*

STOLTZFUS: Briefly it was the kind of life in the past in which, as I said before, the entertainment was entirely seeing each other in the evening. And you were always outside because it was always so hot all the time. We would have small tennis tournaments and various diversions. The American Dutch Reform Mission there had a church and the Kuwaitis, unlike the Saudis, allowed the Christians to have our own church, which was nice.

Harry Symmes left the post after his two years. I was in charge briefly until Bill Brewer came there to take over. During that interim period I got a message saying I was transferred to Khartoum. I sent a message back saying well, that is fine. You are leaving Inger Voslef in charge if that is what your plans are. I got a very hasty reply saying, "No, no! You are not going to Khartoum. Stay right where you are." Some of the Washington procedures were not quite as smooth as I assume they are now. Maybe they are not any smoother now.

We left Kuwait in March of 1956. We went back to the States and I was assigned to Syria.

**WILLIAM D. BREWER**  
**Principal Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1955-1957)**

*Ambassador William D. Brewer was born in Connecticut in 1922. He received a B.A. degree from Williams College and an M.A. degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947. He served overseas in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Afghanistan, and in Washington, DC as desk officer for Arab Affairs and Country Director for Arabian Peninsular States. He was appointed ambassador to Mauritius in 1970 and Ambassador to Sudan in 1973. Ambassador Brewer was interviewed by Malcolm Thompson in 1988.*

Q: *Okay. Shall we move on to Kuwait? I believe your next assignment was in Kuwait?*

BREWER: Yes, that's right. I was the Principal Officer there from 1955 to 1957 and that was a particularly interesting time because right in the middle of that was the Suez crisis which had the effect of closing the Suez Canal and immediately choking off temporarily the flow of oil from Kuwait, which was at that time providing a very substantial part of the oil that moved through the Canal. We had to watch the situation particularly closely because there were those in Kuwait who were very sympathetic with Nasser and the Egyptians and who were seeking to interfere with the flow of oil on land to the loading pier. I'll never forget that at one stage all of a sudden there was this loud explosion apparently and a pipeline was blown up which, however, turned out to be the wrong line. It was not an oil pipeline but it was the line carrying gas from one of the gathering centers to the water desalination plant in Kuwait town. That meant there was a shortage of fresh water until they got the pipe repaired but no interference with the outflow of oil.

*Q: Is there anything else of significance that you'd like to comment on during your Kuwait assignment?*

BREWER: Well, I think we had very good relations with the Kuwaitis despite the difficulties at the time of Suez because number one: it was a small post and we were in close touch with the people, it was not an elaborate diplomatic post. There were only two representatives there, the British political agent, and myself. And we dealt on a relatively close basis with the leaders of the Kuwait government and this was not only valuable experience, but I think it was useful in explaining the United States' point of view on these issues to the top level of the Kuwait administration at a time when they were still relatively accessible before they became independent and established a modern government as, of course, they now have.

Another consideration which helped very much was the fact that, since we had stood up in effect to the British at the time of Suez and forced them to evacuate with the French from Suez, our standing in Kuwait relative to that of the British, was high and we did not have the same kind of criticism as I'm sure we fell under subsequently in the Arab- Israel war of 1967.

**TALCOTT W. SEELYE**  
**Consular-Economic Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1956-1960)**

*Ambassador Talcott W. Seelye born in Lebanon to American parents on March 22, 1922 and lived there until the age of 11. He joined the U.S. Army during World War II. He received a bachelor's degree from Amherst College in 1947 and joined the Foreign Service in 1948. Ambassador Seelye's career included positions in Frankfurt, Germany; Amman, Jordan; Beirut, Lebanon; Kuwait, Kuwait; Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and an ambassadorship to Tunisia. He was interviewed in 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: You left and went right to Kuwait?*

SEELYE: Yes, directly to Kuwait. We drove to Kuwait.

*Q: I have you there from 1956-60.*

SEELYE: Yes, that's right.

*Q: What were you doing there?*

SEELYE: I was assigned there first as vice consul. There were two officers there, consul and vice consul. Bill Brewer was the consul. The consulate had not been opened that long. I think we opened it in 1951, something like that. So my job was economic reporting, consular work (the only consular job I ever had in the Service), and other odds and ends including administrative tasks. I was vice consul there from March, 1956 until I went on home leave in April, 1957--for one year. Shortly before I left I got a message from Washington saying they were going to appoint me to be consul, to take Bill Brewer's place. So I went on home leave and came back to be consul in June, 1957 and was full consul there until I left in July, 1960.

*Q: What was Kuwait? Was Kuwait an independent country?*

SEELYE: No, it was not independent yet. Kuwait did not get independence until the year after I left. It was a British dependency. As you know, around the Gulf the British had political agents who ran foreign affairs and defense for these sheikhdoms, which were really nothing more than village states made important by their oil. So the British political agent had an important job and a lot of stature. In Kuwait he had been the only foreign representative until 1951, when the Gulf Oil Company (which had originally gotten the concession but was forced to share it with BP, half and half) said to the British, "Look, we need some American representation here. Our people need their passports renewed, some help with guys who get in trouble, etc." Well, the British, I understand, resisted this for some time until Herbert Hoover, Jr., who was then Deputy Under Secretary of State, weighed in heavily. The British agreed to the establishment of an American consulate. So we had the only other foreign representative there besides the British political agent.

We had very close relations with the British political agent. I used to see him at least once a week to compare notes. And then there were American and British at the Kuwait Oil Company in Ahmadi, which is 25 miles away. While I was there, unfortunately, a lot of social life revolved around Ahmadi. They often had a lot of oil visitors and we would be invited down. So we spent a lot of time going back and forth.

But Kuwait was small enough in those days that you really got to know Kuwaiti families. When we arrived there was still a mud wall around Kuwait. The consulate was located outside the mud wall on the water. Our building was an old building with thick walls made of coral rock and covered with mud. The roof was made of palm fronds and mud. Of course, when it rained in the winter you were constantly trying to plug leaks. It was a stately old-style house. We lived in one part of the house and the offices were in the other part of the house. There was just a desert track leading out to it, there was no road. The closest wall gate to the consulate was about a mile away.

So we had to go out of our way to go into town. While we regretted the tearing down of the wall, from a practical standpoint it made it a lot easier for us to get to town.

*Q: July 14, 1958, the Iraqi revolution. What happened to you all?*

SEELYE: It had some personal impact on us because we had entertained at our house a few days before a couple of American businessmen who were among those who were pulled out of a Baghdad hotel and put into a truck--where a mob grabbed them and tore them to pieces. The Kuwaitis were not that unhappy with the Iraqi revolution, strangely enough. I remember once just before that sitting in the VIP lounge at the airport waiting the return of the ruler. Whenever the ruler traveled you went out to say goodbye and then again to welcome him back. His nephew, Sheik Jabir al-Ahmad, who is now the ruler, was then head of security in Ahmadi and he was sitting next to me. I mentioned the fact that I heard there were some problems in Iraq and trusted that the monarchy wasn't in trouble. He gave me the finger-across-the-neck gesture and implied that it was time for it to go. While it is true that Kuwait was very much a microcosm of Arabism--there were many Palestinians and Egyptians living there--you still had a kind of monarchy in Kuwait. Yet, the Kuwaitis were apparently not too unhappy with what happened to the monarchy in Iraq. Of course the British were unhappy and we were unhappy. A few days later the U.S. Marines landed in Beirut. That made things a little dicey. We were concerned that there would be reverberations in Kuwait against the U.S. There was a lot of pro-Nasserism sentiment in Kuwait and ostensibly, we had moved into Lebanon to arrest the expansion of Nasserism. So the British political agent put some Kuwaiti troops around the consulate, though in retrospect that probably was not necessary.

*Q: I was down in Dhahran and kept looking out our door waiting for that mob to come along, but nothing happened.*

SEELYE: We never had mob action in Kuwait.

*Q: Going back a bit, there was the 1956 war, were you in Kuwait at the time?*

SEELYE: Yes.

*Q: This was the October 1956 war, really the Suez crisis. Did that impact on you?*

SEELYE: Yes it did and particularly on the British there, of course. It impacted favorably on me because Eisenhower had intervened and told the British they should pull back. I was really the shining light at that point. The poor British political agent was, of course, the fall guy. I will never forget, we were sitting next to each other at some kind of celebration. The Kuwaiti Minister of Education was also there. At one point a mock battle was staged showing guerrillas attacking the British at Suez. At this point the British political agent stood up and walked out. The strongly pro-U.S. sentiment didn't last too long, of course. But it was nice to enjoy the favorable light for a while.

*Q: What was your impression of the Sabah family there? Their ability to do things?*

SEELYE: I had great admiration and esteem for the then ruler, Abdullah al-Salem al-Sabah. He assured that the oil revenues were spread around. With all this money suddenly flowing in, it could have been misspent. But the ruler devised a gimmick to enable the money to be spread out. All the land belonged to the Sabah family. He would designate parcels of land that people could obtain for practically nothing. Then, of course, as the place boomed the value of that land escalated, enabling the land to be sold at tremendous profit. That was the basic way that oil revenues were spread around. Also the ruler was very enlightened in the way he created excellent schools. Money was no object in building these schools. Five big Kuwaiti firms with five British partners did all the school construction at 20 percent cost plus. Also hospitals were built with British staffs. They brought in mainly Egyptian teachers to the schools. Every Kuwaiti got a free education and free medical care. No Kuwaiti had money worries. Everything was handed to a Kuwaiti on a silver platter.

At the time we thought this was great. In retrospect, of course, it spoiled the Kuwaitis and contributed, in my view, to the Iraqi-Kuwaiti war. It wouldn't have happened if the Kuwaitis had handled things right, but that is another story.

Abdullah al-Salem al-Sabah was a man of simple tastes. He, himself, didn't take much money. He was smart enough to set Kuwait on a very positive course. Now to what extent the British had a role in influencing him, I don't know. They may have.

*Q: Were we pretty much observers there?*

SEELYE: Totally observers. Of course I got to know key Kuwaiti figures. The general manager of the oil company on the spot was an American, the overall manager came out of London. The American general manager was very, very fair, and had a good reputation. His name was L.T. Jordan.

*Q: Around this time I was in Dhahran and ARAMCO was running things. ARAMCO was for the time extremely enlightened in bringing the Saudis into the business, whereas you go over to the island of Bahrain a few miles where the British there were trying to keep the Bahrainis down. How were things being done in Kuwait?*

SEELYE: You are right, ARAMCO set a fine example. KOC, the Kuwait Oil Company, came after ARAMCO, so they were somewhat influenced by ARAMCO. However, ARAMCO was in an eastern province where there was no infrastructure and the government in Jeddah was so far away it couldn't care less. So ARAMCO felt there was a need to create hospitals and schools. KOC didn't have to do anything like that because the Kuwaiti government was doing it itself. KOC provided for Kuwaitis working for the oil company.

*Q: Were they bringing in Kuwaitis as managers?*

SEELYE: Not when I was there because there weren't any Kuwaitis qualified at that point. I remember when the first Kuwaiti came back from getting a petroleum engineering degree and was so proud of it that his card indicated that he was the first Kuwaiti to have a degree as a petroleum engineer. But he wanted to sit at his desk and pontificate rather than go out into the oil

fields and get his hands dirty. So, while I was there there were no Kuwaitis in upper management. Most were British or American.

*Q: How did the Kuwaitis look at the Shah and Iran?*

SEELYE: Kuwait has an element in its population of Iranian extraction that goes back a hundred years or more. It came down from southern Iran, which is known as Khuzestan, which was more Arab than Persian for many years. So many of these Iranians who have been in Kuwait for a hundred years are of Arab stock. Nevertheless, they are known as Iranians because they came from Iran. I sensed in Kuwait an anti-Iranian sentiment. While many of the Kuwaiti merchants of Iranian origin were successful and wealthy and seemed to be accepted, nevertheless, if you talked privately to a Kuwaiti from the old stock, he would grumble about these "ajamis." "Ajami" in Arabic means foreigner, but in Kuwait it meant Iranians. So I sensed then an anti-Iranian sentiment there which I am afraid remains.

Also, Iranians came in illegally to be used for unskilled labor. They did a lot of the dirty work. The British, who were running the show, were pro-Shah. I didn't sense among the Kuwaiti officials any resentment or antipathy against the Shah. The Kuwaiti anti-Iranian sentiment was directed at the people.

**JOAN SEELYE**  
**Spouse of Consular-Economic Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1956-1960)**

*Mrs. Seelye was born and raised in Connecticut and educated at Skidmore College. She accompanied her husband, Foreign Service Officer Talcott Seelye on his diplomatic assignments in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Tunisia and Syria. Her husband served as US Ambassador to Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria. Mrs. Seelye was interviewed by Jewell Fenzi in 2010.*

SEELYE: After that assignment where Talcott was learning Arabic we were assigned to Kuwait where we spent nearly five years -- First off, it was the Vice Consul position ( the post was a consulate, not a consulate general, and also very unique because they only reported to the department. Kuwait was at that time a British Protectorate with no other foreign representatives except the British who had control of all the states in the Gulf. It was a big oil producing country.) (The oil company was run by BP and Gulf Oil with a large American presence there because of oil. Hence the U.S. Consulate. Eventually Talcott was promoted to Consul so we moved into the consulate, a building on the sea which contained both office and Consul's residence. Our third child, our only son was born in a tiny hospital in the middle of the desert, a hospital associated with the oil company between Kuwait City where I lived and the oil company. But, I had two good midwives, an English midwife and an Indian midwife and a perfectly easy delivery. That was my third child, named for his father, a rather stuffy-sounding name which our son always disliked.

We had a long tour in Kuwait during which we had a lot of VIP visitors because it was at that point, the richest country in the world, per capita. So, it was a wonderful time, simple as the tiny Sheikhdom was, because we got to know the people. We spent a lot of time calling on the Kuwaitis. I have some memories of unusual things that happened there, like the wife of one of the sheiks whose husband had just died, and she had inherited billions of dollars. So she called me to visit saying come and have coffee or tea with me—I need advice on how I should invest two billion dollar. “I’m sorry Sheikha, but this is not the business we’re in,” I said, and at that point, we weren’t really allowed to recommend or get involved in such matters. I went home to tell Talcott what she wanted of me, and I guess he must have discreetly suggested an American bank....It was protocol for the Ruler of Kuwait to have an annual dinner, one month, at the British residence, the following month at the Consulate. It was always a nerve-racking experience because he was a very glum-looking man. He’d sit for an hour before dinner with the women, and then we would all go into the dining room. In those days, it may still be a habit, bedouin people don’t talk when they eat. So the dinner would proceed. The ruler would sit next to me, and we wouldn’t say a word. I was instructed by my husband, “Don’t forget, you don’t talk! We were always taught to make conversation—its hard not to. After dinner the Ruler would join the men in the other part of the living room. What a relief for me! Going to his palace for dinner was quite an experience too. Now Kuwait is a skyscraper city but back then it was a mud village behind a wall built to fend off the invading Saudi tribes. So we would go to his little palace for supper, and the long table would have an oil-cloth sheet on it. Actually, I figured out it would be some kind of shower curtain, and we were supposed to eat with our hands; there were no utensils. That was quite a challenge. I would watch the man next to me. So you’d take the rice, roll it into little balls, and pop it into your mouth, and sometimes it would explode on the way in. I never knew whether or not to be glad or sad not to have been offered the sheep’s eyeball.

*Q: I bet that would happen with couscous.*

SEELYE: Well, it’s exactly the same, but then we had gravy on top of it, on top of bread. The gravy would run down your arm, I don’t even know if there were napkins. It was quite an experience. I would call on other sheikhas.

For instance I had to call on the ruler’s brother’s new wife. The highest ranking British women and I went to call on this sheikha for tea in the afternoon, and she greeted us in an evening dress—very formal ball dress with a bib of diamonds and emerald which covered her chest. Actually, the dress was very décolletage, the jewels enormous with earrings so heavy she had to keep taking them off, and putting them back on. She was covered with thousands of dollars, and the poor thing (we had to laugh quietly) because she was dressed like this at four in the afternoon. But she was a charming woman anyway.

And the other thing that I mentioned, Kuwait was a village, but as we were leaving, they were planning to make it into a great city. I’m told that now it is a big city, but it’s not an attractive city. I’ve never been back. All of those little states in the Gulf profited from the mistakes that Kuwait made in rebuilding. One of the sheikhs in charge of developing the city said to me- they all spoke English very well by the way - “Tell me, what kinds of trees should we plant on the new boulevards?” So, I went to see the plans of the new city. This was going to be the main



street, and” we ordered all of these trees from France,” and I said, “That’s so disappointing. This is the main boulevard? It ought to be a boulevard of palm trees?” By then we’d been there nearly five years so were finally transferred, never seeing how the new city grew, but yes those palm trees were planted.

**JAMES A. PLACKE**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Baghdad. Iraq (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: What about, how were our relations with Kuwait at that time?*

PLACKE: An interesting question. You have picked out a lot of good questions. Kuwait had been a British protectorate as well from roughly the beginning of the 20th century, I think it was 1898 the basic agreement was signed until 1961 when the British began the process of ultimately removed themselves from the Gulf as a substantial military presence or security presence. The first state to achieve complete independence was Kuwait and essentially it had run its own affairs except for security and to some extent foreign affairs, so the British had a ceremony and Kuwait had a constitution and the Sabah family was to be the royal family, but the results there would be a parliament and so on. I remember the Iraqi tanks being loaded on flatcars to go south to liberate the lost province. So, the attitudes of Iraqis toward Kuwait that underpinned the Iraqi invasion and occupation in 1990 had been there for a long time and they’re still there. I don’t think the Iraqis have changed their mind one bit.

*Q: Well, there was a period where the Iraqis threatened Kuwait and the British landed forces. Was that?*

PLACKE: Well, that was 1961. The British declared Kuwait totally independent and responsible for its own security and so forth and Kuwait joined every international organization it could. They joined GATT. They may have been the first Arab state to join GATT because it was an international organization and they felt each of these things gave them a little bit more assurance of their continued political independence, but they too knew what Iraq attitudes were like. Baghdad declared that Kuwait had always been a province of Iraq and it had been the machinations of the British that had separated the two, that had separated this province and now was the time to reestablish rightful Iraqi control. They were loading tanks to go south and reclaim the lost province. The British turned around and sent a battalion of paratroops back which was all it took in those days at best. The Iraqis never crossed the border and the blustering

went on and nothing happened and probably its finest moment was the Arab League at that point. The British needed to hand this off to somebody. The whole Arab world environment was so anti-Western and particularly so toward the United States and Britain that it was not tenable for them to maintain that kind of military presence - politically tenable - militarily, of course, they could have done it. So, they turned the problem over to the Arab League, which formed an Arab protection force under a Sudanese commander and pulled it off [Editor's Note: The Arab League force was composed of contingents from the UAR, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Sudan and began arriving in Kuwait on 10 September 1961. British troops departed by October 1961]. Iraq and Kuwait I think about two weeks later signed a formal declaration with Iraq recognizing Kuwait's independence and so on. That was all done under the Arab League auspices. That was the best thing the organization has ever done.

**DAYTON S. MAK**  
**Charge d' Affaires**  
**Kuwait City (1961-1963)**

*Dayton S. Mak was born in South Dakota in 1917. He graduated from the University of Arizona in 1939 and served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1941 to 1945. He joined the Foreign Service in 1946 and served in various posts including Germany, Saudi Arabia, Libya, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, and Lebanon. Mr. Mak was interviewed on August 9, 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: Why don't we then move onto your next assignment? You were going to Kuwait. You were there from 1961 to '63, and it was sort of a--I might add that I've attached to this transcript a transcript that was done by you for the historian--or whatever you want to say--of our embassy in Kuwait, didn't you?*

MAK: Yes. Let's see.

*Q: Anyway, you did this tape to give for the historical record and it covers quite a bit about what you did in Kuwait, so I'm not going to go into that very much. But there are a couple of questions in there that I would like to ask. First, how did you get this assignment to Kuwait, and what was the situation at the time? We're talking about 1961.*

MAK: Well, I remember it fairly well. My friend, Hermann Eilts, was head of the Arabian Peninsula Affairs desk, and Hermann was an old friend of mine and I think he had a certain respect for me. He asked me if I'd be interested in going there, and I told him that I really wasn't very much. The Gulf just didn't appeal to me, having had one tour in Dhahran.

But he was convincing. He said, "You know, the British are going to relinquish control over Kuwait in mid-1961, shortly after you arrive there, so we'll be establishing an embassy. You'll be chargé d'affaires of that. And you know Arabic and you know a certain amount about the area,

having been involved in it for many years, and we think that perhaps that you might like it and we'd like to have you go."

I was flattered, so I thought, "Sure, why not go and be Chargé d'affaires." He said they were not planning on sending an ambassador there, so I would be in charge of the embassy. So we went. That's in answer to your question.

*Q: Well, now, several questions. One, how did you deal with the Kuwaiti government, and how did you evaluate the Kuwaiti government?*

MAK: First of all, practically every minister in the government was a member of the Sabah family.

*Q: Would you spell that?*

MAK: S-A-B-A-H. Sabah. The Emir Abdullah was a very friendly man who was really quite approachable, but he almost never was interested in discussing anything substantive. Our calls on the emir were of almost entirely ceremonial. You would go in and chat about this and that and this and that, never about anything important. He would invite you and your wives to dinners at the palace often, and he would give his time to all of you. Then he'd invite the ladies in a group without the men and chat with them for a while. Then you'd all go home very early. You'd get home about 6:00, 7:00 in the evening, and then have what some of the westernized Arabs would call the "après souper," which is in this case meant drinks after dinner.

Some of the Ministers were impressive. The foreign minister at the time was Sheik Sabah al Ahmad, while deputy Emir the "Crown Prince" was Sheik Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, brother of the emir. He was very approachable, and I would go and visit him fairly often, at least once a month. He had an office in the Foreign Office at that time and he also had an office elsewhere, but I'd visit him and discuss general problems with him either at the Foreign Office or at his home. We had very few immediate problems to discuss, though there would be general area problems on which I sought his views.

One of the big problems was what to do about Nasser and what to do about the Iraqi situation. Shortly after the Kuwaiti independence which was shortly after I had arrived, Qasim had claimed Kuwait as part of Iraq, and there was a great to-do about it. He threatened to invade, but the British forces came in quickly in accordance with their agreement. In two months the British left, and there was a problem of who was going to protect Kuwait then. A mixed Arab force was brought in and life went on. All of that was of course subject to discussion. I would discuss with the foreign minister, the deputy emir and the Defense Minister general ideas of Kuwait and its requirements for outside protection.

Another subject was how Kuwait would spend its oil revenue. They had devised an elaborate and very intelligent aid program, mainly for the benefit of other needy Arab nations. They had devised a development program, assisted by a board of reputable foreigners, including our Eugene Black, who would help them in planning what to do with their money. I discussed this occasionally in very general terms with the deputy emir.

The Foreign Office was a place where I would visit about every week to discuss anything and everything. I found them very approachable, all of them. The foreign minister, Sheik Sabah al Ahmad al Sabah is still the foreign minister. A very nice man, very approachable, and all of his staff underneath were people I could pop in on like I did in London. They were that kind of people. They had a few Palestinians working with them as assistants mainly to the foreign minister and with the deputy emir who were also very approachable and very receptive to my just walking in. So it was a very friendly arrangement.

*Q: How about competence?*

MAK: They didn't have an awful lot of things to be competent about. They were intelligent, they were educated. You know, it's really very hard to judge. I would say they had a high degree of competence, particularly at the functional level. I think many of them were more intelligent than their sheikly bosses.

*Q: Well, you know, again I'm speaking of some distance removed; I visited Kuwait once. But just watching the news and all that, it seems that here is a small desert nation, really desert nation. I mean, what is it? You put up a water tower and that's the tallest building around, at least in those days. No hills or anything else, infertile area. All of a sudden a lot of money comes in, and yet the ruling people didn't seem to become dissipated with this. There may have been dissipation, but I mean it just didn't seem to turn the place into an earthly paradise or something for a bunch of oil sheiks. Did you have that feeling that these were people who both were intelligent, but also had civic duty, or something like that?*

MAK: In general, I would say that's true. They're very religious in the first place. They observe the Koran. Now, that doesn't mean that some of them didn't drink or didn't do things they shouldn't do according to the Koran, but basically they were religious people.

Second, there's another thing about it. Kuwait had a vast amount of money at its disposal, and there were few Kuwaitis. As a matter of fact, I don't think that when I was there were more than 50 or 60,000 Kuwaitis, actually. The number was always arguable. Of these there were the "Kuwaiti Kuwaitis." Then there were "Saudi Kuwaitis" and there were "Lebanese Kuwaitis" and "Palestinian Kuwaitis" and "Iraqi Kuwaitis;" but these were all second-class citizens. But of "Kuwaiti Kuwaitis," those born in Kuwait of Kuwaiti parents, there are really not very many, and they all had family property in Kuwait. Not much maybe, because Kuwait's not very big, but they had some.

The government would buy land from them at enormous prices, and they all became millionaires. I mean, just like that they became millionaires. Those who didn't have any property were given things that would bring them money. In other words, they were beneficiaries of this immense wealth. Any foreigner who wanted to establish a business in Kuwait had to have a Kuwaiti partner, and this was worth lots and lots of money to any Kuwaiti who would lend his name to a business; and they all did it. So they all became wealthy, by one means or another. It didn't just trickle down, it rushed down, to the Kuwaitis.

That's one way the Kuwaitis handled this vast wealth. The other way was to have a comprehensive health scheme under which any Kuwaiti, or any non-Kuwaiti living in Kuwait, could have health care free throughout his entire life. Education was also free for all Kuwaitis. Now, it wasn't necessarily for non-Kuwaitis and it wasn't. There was practically free housing for any Kuwaiti--any Kuwaiti. I'm a little vague about what happens now, but in those days it was really free. Of course, this left hundreds of thousands of non-Kuwaitis without all these benefits. But they had some (including health) benefits, better than they would have in their home countries.

So that's how they spent a lot of their wealth. They also spent it on nice homes in Beirut, or in Cairo. They established a very handsome development assistant fund for the needy Arab states such as Jordan and Sudan; I believe Somalia, both Somalias, as far as I know; Egypt, as far as it needed it; and the various countries in North Africa.

*Q: The Kuwaiti government has seemed to have held together and there seems to be a certain amount of steel in it. I'm thinking for the last, almost ten years there's been some terrorists who did some bombing and killing there, and there has been intense pressure from Lebanon on the part of other terrorist organizations to get them out, and yet the Kuwaitis have held firm on keeping these people. This, of course, after the time you were there, but there does seem to be a cohesiveness, rather than just, "Well, let's not cause trouble." I mean, they seem to be able to take a stand and hold to it.*

MAK: I think the Kuwaitis have shown far more courage than I would have given them credit for. It's hard for me to know just why they have taken the risks that they have taken. I'll offer some guesses. Their leaders are Sabah, members of the Sabah family, who have been used to governing that country for quite a while. Most of them seem to have--or at least the ones in power--seem to have a real sense of responsibility toward their country.

Their present deputy emir--I guess they call him deputy emir; is an extremely capable and bright, well-meaning and tough individual. He's a black. He's the only really black member of the family. He used to be minister of defense when I was there. As far as he's pro-anything outside, he's pro-Western and pro-American.

I remember when I was there, the government had agreed to let the Russians establish an embassy. This was shortly before I left. And I went to him and I said, "Excellency, I don't understand why you're letting these people come in. You know they'll be all over the place trying to rid of people like you and get rid of people like us. How are you going to keep track of them?"

He looked at me and smiled and says, "Mr. Mak, we expect you to do that." [Laughter] Anyway, he's a charming individual. The present emir--

*Q: The emir, by the way, is the head of government.*

MAK: Yes. The emir is the head of government. The present emir was minister of finance when I was there. He knows the financial situation of Kuwait and the rest of the world backward and forward. He watches every penny. He knows exactly what he's doing. He's been trained in it, and

he's very, very smart. He's not going to be taken in by anyone. He's dealt with David Rockefeller and his ilk for years now. He can't be buffaloed, and apparently somewhere along the line, the Sabah family has come to the conclusion that if they give into blackmail or threats, that's the end of the Sabahs and the end of Kuwait. That's the only answer I can come up with.

*Q: Dayton, going back now to the time you were there, the early '60s. I'm talking about the embassy or the mission or whatever we called it. What did we call it?*

MAK: Embassy.

*Q: How did we view the Palestinians there? Because I know going back a little earlier when I was in Saudi Arabia, there was always a concern because Saudi Arabia had so many Palestinians doing things, including flying their fighter planes and running their army. In fact, they even had a separate army called the White Army, which was just to make sure that the regular Saudi Army, which was almost run by the Palestinians, didn't get out of hand. So there was concern that the Palestinians had another master other than where they were serving, at least I'm talking about our reflections in Saudi Arabia. How did you view the Palestinians who staffed so many of the professional positions there? As a threat?*

MAK: As you know, there were thousands and thousands of Palestinians living in Kuwait, and many of them had very responsible positions. They were advisors to the emir, advisors to the Foreign Office, advisors to this and that ministry, and they were very capable. Some of them were given Kuwaiti citizenship. These people were educated. Almost all of them spoke English fluently. I mean, they were certainly bilingual. They were friendly to Americans, at least to the embassy, as far as I know.

There was a vast number, along with the Egyptians, of course, as lower-level people, and a vast number in their educational system. The Kuwaitis' educational system was pretty much run at all levels by Palestinians and Egyptians. The Palestinians were always looked upon by the Kuwaitis as second- and third-class residents. Those who were citizens were second-class citizens. Those who were merely residents and workers were looked down upon.

The Kuwaitis let them know their place always. All levels of Kuwaitis, from Bedouin on up, let the Palestinians know that they were guests. Whereas, the Palestinians were given free medical treatment, they were not given free housing, and they were kept on a pretty short leash. Now, that's sort of like a pride of lions being led around by one man. I guess they knew the Palestinians had nowhere to go, and they handled it very well.

*Q: They also made sure the Palestinians weren't discontented. In other words, they were getting enough out of this so that they did not represent a discontented under-class.*

MAK: Yes. That's exactly it. They were well paid by Arab-world standards. They were not well paid by Kuwaiti standards, but they were able to send money home. If they still had people living in what is now Israel or in Jordan, they could send money home. That was a very, very important source of income to their families. Many of them were there without their families, but most of them, a lot of them, a vast majority, had families.

*Q: So you didn't see them as a fifth column of threat, particularly at that point?*

MAK: No. No, I didn't. I think that the Kuwaitis considered the Egyptians far more serious a threat than they did--that was under Nasser--than they did the Palestinians.

*Q: Were they making special efforts, and were you keeping a special eye, on the Egyptians or being concerned about the Egyptians and what they might be trying to do?*

MAK: Well, yes. We did have to do that, because they were the element that was considered to be the most disruptive in Kuwait while we were there. It was the Kuwaitis who were keeping the eye on them. We were sort of following along, too. But if there was ever something in the area that displeased Nasser, something that we had done or the British had done or one of the Western countries had done, the signal apparently would go out to his people in Kuwait and they would start roaring down the path to the American Embassy or the British Embassy. The Kuwaiti police would then have to go in and stop them.

The Kuwaitis did not trust the Egyptians at all, or Nasser or his intentions. And after the "border invasion" of Kuwait by the Iraqis, as I mentioned earlier, the Kuwaitis wanted to set up some sort of an Arab force to replace the British to help protect Kuwait. The Kuwaitis were really more suspicious of two people, the Saudis and the Egyptians. They were not sure that the Saudis did not want to come in and gobble them up with their oil, which is strange because they're practically brothers. But there was definitely that feeling that Saudi intentions were not entirely honorable. And they knew darn well that Egypt's were not honorable. They did not want the Egyptians to send forces to help protect Kuwait.

*Q: Didn't want to invite the wolf into the sheep pen.*

MAK: Yes. That's a good simile. That's true. So that whole thing sort of blew over, and I left and I sort of lost track of what happened.

*Q: Well, one last question on this and I'll refer anybody to your enclosed other transcript. But how about dealing with the British? Having pulled out, were they the paramount group there? Did you have the feeling you were taking over, and were they being sort of dog-in-the-mangerish about the now increased importance of the United States in the Gulf, as far as you saw it?*

MAK: Well, the British had a very good, very strong embassy in Kuwait when I was there and a very good, likable, friendly ambassador. And they really tried very hard not to be dog-in-the-mangerish, but it's very difficult to give up a place like Kuwait where they had sort of been the raj. They had their chosen people in the government, and they had a great deal of goodwill in Kuwait and the entire area, but they really did like to make it quite clear that they were the bosses there and not we.

I don't want to say that they were obnoxious about it, because we got along very well with them, socially and in every way, and in a way I think they knew that they had a problem of getting out of their obligations gracefully. You know, leaving the area gracefully. They knew that there was

no choice but for us to take over. We had already started in the Gulf. And that was a bitter pill, but they knew that it was one they had to swallow because the orders came from London that, they had to cut down on their expenditures, which would certainly reduce their privileges in the area. So it was a period of transition for the British, definite transition, that was hard for them to take, and they did it gracefully.

*Q: Well, as you were running our embassy there, did you work with the American officers to sort of explain and make sure that we weren't too rambunctious or something and to be aware of the British feelings on this thing?*

MAK: You speak about the American officers, we only had a handful.

*Q: Okay. Well, I mean the three of you.*

MAK: There were four of us, I think.

*Q: Was this a subject of some conversation and concern?*

MAK: No. It was not a matter of concern. We were all socially friendly with the British Embassy. They had a much larger embassy, of course, than we did, and they had various people seconded to various agencies or other ministers and so forth, but not as many as you'd think, as a matter of fact. But, no, there was not the slightest bit of problem on that score.

**NICHOLAS SHAPIRO LAKAS**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1962-1964)**

*Mr. Lakas was born and raised in New York City and educated at George Washington University and the University of Wisconsin. Entering the Foreign Service in 1948 he became a specialist in Foreign Commercial and Economic Affairs and served in Washington with both the Departments of State and Commerce, Mr. Lakas had assignments in Egypt, Ireland, Scotland, Kuwait, Libya and South Korea. Mr. Lakas was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.*

*Q: Yes. So, where did you want to go, or what did you want to do?*

LAKAS: I went to Kuwait, but I didn't choose it, I was sent.

*Q: You were in Kuwait from?*

LAKAS: 1961 to 1964.

*Q: What was Kuwait like at that time?*



LAKAS: That's a good question. At the moment we were going to enter Kuwait, Iraq had threatened to invade Kuwait. They began by cutting off oil supplies. Kuwait depended entirely on Iraqi water. It was portable water at that time. So, Kuwait, along with that, had declared its independence from the British, but the British were still very evident. When we got there, the embassy was a small consulate general with the usual fans on the ceiling, no air conditioning. They had a couple of apartment buildings for the staff. It was a very small staff. This was on the beach. The focus at that time for me was to report on the oil production, and what was going on in the field of oil industry in Kuwait. That later expanded to an annual report or more of the economic development of Kuwait, socially as well. Once we were recognized as an embassy, we had a chargé d'affaires.

*Q: Who was that?*

LAKAS: Dayton Mak.

*Q: Dayton Mak. I know Dayton very well.*

LAKAS: The ambassador for both regions, for both countries, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, was Pete Hart. But, we remained under a chargé for sometime, until Rex Cottam came down. They built a smaller embassy building. We moved over into it. They left the consulate standing on the same property. Of course, the Kuwait government was willing to give us any kind of property for us to build on. The Russians were above us, and the British were below us. Some of the nice things were we had access to the beach. We were swimming during the afternoon. There was a reasonable degree of social life between Kuwaitis and us. Here, the Kuwaiti women were available to our American women, unlike Libya, where they were put in a back room.

*Q: Or Saudi Arabia.*

LAKAS: The heat was enormous. We got along very well with Dayton. He did a great job. When he left they appointed Cottam as the ambassador; the first one. I was designated as the economics affairs officer. I wrote a report without knowing he was going to be the ambassador. It was a very comprehensive report on not only the economic development for the past year or two, but the impact on its society of Kuwait. I also pointed out that more and more every year outsiders were being brought in from the Arab countries, or from India, or from Pakistan, to handle the work of the government. A large number of Palestinians were in place. So, by 1964, it was time for me to go. From there, I was sent to the Department of Commerce as a guest officer to train with Commerce, who was beginning to awake to the realities of the need for them to have their own Foreign Service. They thought maybe somebody like me would be an ideal person.

*Q: I would like to go back to Kuwait for a little while. When you arrived there, how did the Iraqi threat to Kuwait play out?*

LAKAS: The British paraded some forces in the Persian Gulf. They were still very strong.

*Q: They brought an aircraft carrier into it.*

LAKAS: It was deemed by the Iraqi government that it would not be of any use for them to make any more noises. The threat was always muted, but it was there, until the Kuwaitis were able to build their own desalinization plants, and not rely on Iraq for drinking water.

*Q: I was an economics officer in Dhahran from 1958 to 1960. Well, I did consul work the first year and economic work the second year. The contrast between how Aramco was dealing with its Arab work force... They were Arabizing Aramco. As long as the oil kept going, they were training and all, but yet you could see the contrast between that and the Iranian Petroleum Company, and in Qatar, the Qatar Petroleum Company, where the British looked with disdain on Americans as giving away the show, and they wanted to keep control on it. What was happening in Kuwait at that time?*

LAKAS: The Kuwait oil company was just beginning to look at what Aramco was doing. The American part of the Kuwait oil company was attempting to persuade their partners to go along with what Aramco was doing, because they saw this as inevitable, especially if they were educated here in America. They would come back to their jobs, having an empathy for American way of doing things, and the American presence. By that time, there was thinking going on in Washington that the British were failing, and perhaps it would be best for us to replace them.

*Q: Well, we established residence in Bahrain. This was a couple of aircraft carrier tenders. They were seaplane tenders. But, still, we had a token for us there. Was it your impression that you were getting to the British way of running things, which is essentially to keep tight control, and this wasn't going to work?*

LAKAS: Right. The executives of Kuwait Oil Company, Edmond Oil, and Getty, would come to our office and talk with us. They felt that was the way to go. The Japanese were just beginning to come in at that moment with offshore drilling. But, that was the feeling among Americans. Educate our staff and give them a chance to move on, however, retain control where control should be retained. The deal with OPEC hadn't made an appearance.

*Q: But, as Americans, we didn't see the end of civilization if the Kuwaitis took over the oil companies. Our feeling in Saudi Arabia was that this was a natural development with the British. I mean, did you run across... [This is tape three, side one, with Nick Lakas.]*

LAKAS: Yes, they felt that. Typical America, we were rushing up the wrong street. Also, they had in their mind suspicion that this was one of several ways we were going about replacing them at the center of power.

*Q: So, I imagine there was a certain amount of resentment, which would come out.*

LAKAS: It wasn't open for renewal there.

*Q: How did you find talking to the Al Kharafi family? Who was the ruling family in Kuwait?*

LAKAS: I can't remember.

*Q: How did you find relations with the movers of Kuwait and the family there?*

LAKAS: Very good. On the surface, very hospitable. We had easy entry into the ministries, to raise complaints or to exercise some business requirements. I have to add though they were very careful about making sure that they played a very balanced game among all powers, specifically the British and the Americans. At that time, they didn't know exactly where this thing was going to lead. They didn't want to be on the losing end of it. We had great rapport. They attended our receptions. They had access to our beach. They would bring the families down to the beach we had. We didn't see the sheik very often. The ambassador probably did, not often, but he probably saw him. Then, we began to see a little more change when they decided to recognize and permit the Soviet Union to open up an embassy. It was then that Khan became very nervous about the presence of the Russians. I asked for a marine squad to be sent to the embassy. The State Department couldn't understand why we needed a marine contingent in such a small area. To show them that we needed it, we put the entire male staff on overnight duty. Each one had to serve time guarding the embassy safe.

We had an alarm system that was so sensitive that if a mouse let off air, we would hear it in our bedrooms. We would rush down to see who had penetrated the embassy safe. It meant that we were sleepless. It meant that we were irritable. It meant we weren't very happy with him. He felt that by doing this, he would force the State Department to do what he wanted them to do. They didn't.

*Q: It's interesting because we had a full marine guard detachment of about six marines in Dhahran. We had an airbase there. It really wasn't that necessary.*

LAKAS: Well, we felt secretly that he wanted all the trappings that went with an embassy.

*Q: Well, a marine guard does have a certain amount of panache.*

LAKAS: So, they finally gave up on that. We had a man called... I forget his name. He came in as DCM. He tried to enforce the ambassador's will, but we were so goddamned tired by that time, we didn't care. We refused invitations to come back for a second term. They were not happy about that either. Anyway, I left.

*Q: Okay, so we'll pick this up. You left when?*

LAKAS: 1964.

**WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS, JR.**  
**Charge d' Affaires**  
**Kuwait City (1963)**

*William A. Stoltzfus was born in Lebanon in 1924. He attended Princeton University and then entered the Naval Air Corps. He entered the Foreign Service*

*in 1949 and his career included positions in Libya, Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and an ambassadorship to Kuwait. Ambassador Stoltzfus was interviewed by Lillian P Mullin in May 1994.*

STOLTZFUS: Another opportunity came up in 1963 between the departure of the Ambassador to Kuwait and the arrival of his successor, Howard Cottam. I was sent to Kuwait for about five months during the summer of 1963 to cover the Embassy between Ambassadors. While still in Kuwait as Chargé I was asked by Cottam if I would stay on as DCM but I had an opportunity to go to the War College, so I replied that while his offer was very flattering, I believed I shouldn't pass up going to the War College.

*Q: But you did go out to Kuwait, you were saying?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Kuwait in those days was still the "old" Kuwait: mud city wall, unpaved streets, few modern amenities. The Foreign Minister, Sabah al Ahmad was a member of the ruling family, as were the Ministers of Public security and Public works. Foreign Affairs and Defense were still in the hands of the British. But it was very simple days. There were the usual tensions with Iraq sniffing around but it was still very much a time when the Kuwaitis were transferring from British rule to their own independence. So it wasn't the kind of high pressure place it is now with all of the damaging things that have happened to it since. I was, as I said, just covering between Ambassadors.

**CHARLES O. CECIL**  
**Rotation Officer**  
**Kuwait (1966-1968)**

*Ambassador Cecil was born in Kentucky into a US military family and was raised at several military bases in the US and abroad. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He entered the Foreign Service in 1966. A trained Arabic Language speaker, the Ambassador served abroad in Kuwait, Dar es Salaam, Beirut, Jeddah, Bamako, Muscat, Tunis and Abidjan. He was US Ambassador to Niger from 1996 to 1999. He also had several assignments at the State Department in Washington, DC. Ambassador Cecil was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.*

*Q: You went to Kuwait and were there from when to when?*

CECIL: Two years, from July of '66 to July of '68.

*Q: How far did you come along in Arabic at SAIS?*

CECIL: Learned almost nothing. The two year course at SAIS was taught by an Egyptian professor, Wilson Bishai, very academically oriented. He loved to do arcane academic research, and he was not really a language teacher, but I think when you look at the whole field of

language teaching methodology, it was not very well advanced in the early '60s. We focused largely on reading, and we used the textbook by the authority at the time named Thatcher. *Thatcher's Arabic Grammar*. It was classical Arabic. There was virtually nothing of a modern nature to the course. Only toward the end of the second year did he begin to use newspapers to find reading materials that we could try to read and discuss. I'm afraid I didn't learn very much out of that. When I got to Kuwait, I took full advantage of the post-language program. That meant that I had maybe a couple of hours a week of opportunity with an instructor. I studied. I tried to improve. Again, I wanted to speak it, and I wanted to read it. At the end of that assignment when I came back to Washington, I did go to FSI for testing, and they gave me an S2 and maybe an R-1+. That's what I came away with, basically working on my own and later as we go through this, you'll see I went to FSI Beirut and took the real course there.

*Q: You were in Kuwait for two years,...*

CECIL: Sixty-six to sixty-eight.

*Q: What was the situation in Kuwait at that time?*

CECIL: Unless you were interested in the Middle East, of course, most Americans didn't know where Kuwait was or what it was. Internally, I guess you would say it was outwardly stable. But there were and have been for a long time certain internal tensions, social and political, within Kuwaiti society. There's a cleavage between the Shiite and the Sunni. The Sunnis are the rulers. Looking back, I wish I had known more about that before I had arrived, and I wish I had been a more astute observer and a better student while I was there. But I was aware to some degree, anyway, that the Sunnis looked down on the Shias and didn't fully trust them, didn't think they were genuine Kuwaitis. Since a large number of the Shias had family ties to Iran that was true. I don't think it manifested itself outwardly to the degree that a foreigner would easily observe it. I did know that they went to different mosques. They didn't go to the same mosque. That sort of thing. That's the kind of superficial observation I was making. It was a wonderful first assignment. In those days it was a rotational assignment where I went through the different sections of the embassy. I maybe wasn't totally happy with the way the time was divided, but that was OK, and that was basically beyond my control, so I tried to be a good sport and do what they wanted me to do. When I arrived, I spent my first four weeks in the consular section because there was a gap between the outgoing and the incoming consular officers. That position was used for cover for one of the other agency people in those days. I filled the gap for four weeks, then the admin officer was due his home leave, so for six weeks I was admin officer, basically, so they could get a signature on documents that an American had to sign. Then I had a very interesting six months as political officer. There was no regular political officer there. The chief of station had the title, but he was doing his own work and wasn't engaged, really, in the kind of reporting that the State Department was doing. Then I was assigned to the economic-commercial section where there was an officer on his, I think he was on his third tour, Jim Placke, a very fine supervisor. I learned a lot from him. That's where the real work load was, in the commercial section. I was initially told that I would work there for six months, and then they asked me to stay on there for another six months, and finally an additional three months, again, just because the workload demanded it. Jim was very heavily into oil reporting and financial reporting, and he didn't have time to handle the day-to-day commercial work. I had 15 months as

commercial officer by the time my tour was over, but even so, during that time, after hours and evenings my real love was political reporting, and I developed a pretty wide circle of Kuwaiti friends and contacts. Mid-way through my tour occurred the June '67 Arab-Israeli war, and one of the results of that was that April Glaspie was transferred to Kuwait from Amman where she had been on her first assignment. April and I had been at SAIS together, so we knew each other, and we shared a lot of the same interests. If anything, that gave renewed impetus to pursuing some of the political and social questions that we were interested in. We... I can't speak for her, but I certainly had a very satisfying introduction to the Foreign Service. I was looking the other night when I knew I was coming to see you, I happened to have my little pocket calendar from 1968. I have a lot of them. I don't have them all between then and now, but I have a shoebox I've put them in over the years. I flipped back to the phone list in the back of that pocket calendar and found I had 58 Kuwaiti phone numbers there that were mostly my age and maybe a little bit senior to me in some cases. Those were all good working contacts, professional contacts, and social contacts. I spent a lot of time in Kuwaiti circles. I will admit that a lot of those Kuwaitis were U. S. educated, but that was one of the focuses of our interests. The embassy wanted me to cultivate the younger generation and find out what they were thinking, and I had a great time doing it.

*Q: What was the role of the Palestinians at that point, from your perspective in Kuwait?*

CECIL: I would say that I looked at them as the technocrats that kept the place running. Kuwaitis had a reputation for not wanting to work very hard, for wanting to hire somebody to do their job, and they turned first to other Arabs and, depending on the kind of work, of course, cast the net wider beyond that. I didn't know too many Palestinians. To me, it wasn't my reason for being there. Maybe I should have had a broader concept of my work, but I thought my work was to get to know Kuwait and Kuwaitis, so I didn't make a special effort to seek out Palestinians.

*Q: The Kuwaitis had the reputation and probably still do of being the most disliked by their Arab neighbors, arrogant and relying on other people to do their work for them.*

CECIL: Arrogant is the word that is most frequently cited, especially by the lower Gulf Arabs.

*Q: I served from '58 to '60 in Dhahran.*

CECIL: I think the farther down the Gulf you went, the more likely they were to regard the Kuwaitis as arrogant and overbearing. I think the Kuwaitis did look down on the Gulf Arabs to some degree. I guess I didn't focus much on that. The leadership in the embassy was certainly ideal for a new officer. Howard Cottam was our ambassador.

*Q: What was his background?*

CECIL: Well, I don't know how much of it I remember now. He was a career officer. He had taken an interest in Kuwait and the Gulf. He was our first resident ambassador. Prior to Cottam, the ambassador in Baghdad had covered Kuwait as well. Howard Cottam was a consummate public relations man. I don't mean that in any bad sense; it was in the very best sense. He was very adept at getting full benefit in terms of what today we call public diplomacy. I don't think

we used the term too much back then. He was very adept at making sure that every opportunity to get favorable attention to U. S. positions, attitudes, actions, activities, programs, whatever, he was out there to get it. The Kuwaitis recognized his genuine interest in Kuwait, and they responded very warmly to him. He had a staff meeting every morning at 7:15. We worked six days a week at that post. We worked the Arab Muslim work week from Saturday through Thursday. We worked from 7:00 in the morning straight through until 2:00. No lunch break. The only exception being that on Sunday we quit at noon. Seven to twelve. If you add all that up, six days a week, Sundays seven to twelve, you come up with 40 hours per week. There was a law back then—I don't know if it still exists—that required extra pay for Sunday work. That was the embassy's gesture to Washington to try to minimize the Sunday work. We got off at noon. We had these staff meetings at 7:15. John Gatch was the DCM, Jim Placke the econ commercial officer, Sam Wyman the consul, Bob Carlson I believe it was, the Political Officer, and Frank Berry the admin officer, and then the second year April was there as an additional junior officer. Those staff meetings were run very efficiently, just like clockwork. They rarely—I think I could say never—lasted more than half an hour and very often were only 15- or 20-minute affairs. Everybody went around the circle. The ambassador said what was on his mind. He or the DCM made sure we knew what we were expected to do for the day. One of the benefits was that everybody knew what everybody was doing because that was the whole embassy. We'd sit there in the ambassador's office in a little circle, so we all knew what we were doing, and if we stumbled across anything of some relevance to somebody else, you'd just go tell him what I've learned or what you need to know. The whole embassy hummed along like clockwork. It was a great, great assignment with Cottam as our example, and such good officers as Jim Placke there as well. John Gatch was fine, too. He was a very fatherly figure and I think maybe tried to moderate some of our more enthusiastic reporting interests.

*Q: What was going on? Was there anything going on? You had an absolute monarchy, or a sheikdom, or what?*

CECIL: The Emir of Kuwait is what they call the ruler. What was going on? The Kuwaiti government was expanding its own ability to deal with international issues at the time. I remember the day that I discovered that in the Emir's staff they were creating an office of four young Kuwaitis to advise the Emir on U. S. related issues. I remember the ambassador's reaction to that. He said, "That's a wonderful discovery! Now our job is to get every piece of favorable information we can in front of those four young men to facilitate their work, to make it easier, so that they can advise the Emir in ways that will serve our interests." He wasn't suggesting in any way that we could buy those Kuwaitis or subvert them, but here is a wonderful opportunity, we know this little group exists. Now we're going to feed them everything we can that will help us. Trying to learn more about how the government functioned was the way I saw my job, and I know April saw her job that way, too. The big crisis, of course, was the June 5 War of '67 and the uncertainty...

*Q: This was the Six Day War.*

CECIL: Yes. There was uncertainty for a few hours over whether Kuwait was going to join the other Arab countries that were breaking relations with us. We thought we might all be out of there within a few days. The ambassador went to see the Emir, and the Emir assured him. He

said, “No. Just have your tea and relax. We have no intention of breaking relations.” It no doubt introduced a new difficulty into our relations because the Kuwaitis had to be even more careful than they had been before not to be seen by their Arab neighbors as being too subservient to our interests. That, I think, maybe... I feel it didn’t affect me that much, but I’m sure it gave the ambassador and the DCM a lot more to think about. Probably did make their work more difficult in some ways. I was trying to learn as much as I could about how Kuwaiti society functioned and what the desires and motivations of the young generation were. There was an active Arab Nationalist Movement in Kuwait, very critical—even hostile—to U. S. interests. The leader of that movement was a Doctor Ahmed al-Khatib. He was a practicing medical doctor but a very active politician and was a member of the National Assembly. I’m not sure how he managed to get elected to that position, and I might be wrong about that. Nevertheless, he was a very vocal critic of the United States, and the press often would note things that Dr. Khatib said. Nobody in the embassy knew him, or if the station chief did, he wasn’t admitting it and didn’t talk about it. I had a number of sore throats during that assignment. Eventually, towards the end of my tour, it resulted in a tonsillectomy, and the sore throats ended. But I wanted to meet Dr. Khatib, so I waited until I had a bad sore throat, and I went to his office as a patient. He accepted me just like any other patient in the waiting room, looked at my throat, prescribed something, probably told me to go gargle hot salt water and I don’t know what, and that was the way I met him. I took advantage of that to ask him a few non-medical questions and arranged another appointment to come back in a week and have him check me again. It resulted in his inviting me to his home for lunch one day, just the two of us. I remember that was the first time I ever ate rice by balling it up in my hand and dipping it in tomato sauce. He said, “This is where I live. It doesn’t look like a Socialist house.” It was quite a fancy house. He was not a poor man! I think he meant by that, we shouldn’t think that he was trying to spread the wealth evenly among all the citizenry. He was quite happy with his comforts. I got to know him a bit, not with real depth, but I looked for those kinds of opportunities and just tried to learn everything I could about the society and how it worked.

There was an interesting event in Kuwaiti history that I spent some time on as a side issue, I guess more almost as a hobby. Kuwait was the first place on the Arabian peninsula that there was an elected representative body. In 1938 the ruler allowed elections from a small number of the electorate, which was only about 150 people. They elected a 12-member representative council. He was encouraged to do this by the British who were, of course, the people overseeing that part of the Gulf in those days. The 12-member council started asking difficult questions like, “Where is the money going?” “We’d like to see a budget.” “We don’t think all of these monopolies that you’re giving to certain members of the community are justified.” Six months later, the ruler dissolved this assembly, and the British backed him then, too. So they backed the establishment in July of ’38, and they backed the dissolution in December of ’38. It was a fascinating period of Kuwaiti history. Every Kuwaiti in 1968 and 67 and 66, every Kuwaiti knew where every other Kuwaiti family had stood on that issue. They were reluctant to talk about it. It was an example of a social division in the society that was still very sensitive. But I did a lot of research on it, and at one point I thought I might go back to school and do a Ph.D. dissertation on it, but I never did. After a lot of searching I acquired copies of Hussein Khazal’s “Tarikh al-Kuwait as-Siyasi” (The Political History of Kuwait), a three-volume account, banned in Kuwait at that time, plus a little booklet titled “Nusf ‘Am li Hukm Niabi fil Kuwait” (“Half a Year of Representative Government in Kuwait”), written by Khalid Adsani, the secretary to the elected council. In fact I



got two sets of Khazal's books, and donated one set to the Middle East Institute library.

*Q: I take it women weren't in the political process at all outside of mothers who told their sons what to do.*

CECIL: They didn't vote, of course. They didn't hold office. But Kuwaiti women were certainly far more liberated and far more active professionally than Saudi women, for instance. But yes, there were limitations on their role. An interesting thing, going back to April Glaspie: April tried to get Arabic language training at FSI after her Kuwaiti assignment, and she was denied that opportunity and sent to Stockholm. I remember Howard Cottam writing a telegram to the Department, and I may not have the locations quite right, but he said in essence, "Sending April Glaspie to Stockholm is like sending Santa Claus to Riyadh." But the Department's attitude was that a woman Foreign Service Officer couldn't function effectively in the Arab world and so there was no point in giving them Arabic language training. She certainly proved even without the training that that wasn't true, and the access that she enjoyed in Kuwait was really incredible. I found this to be true in general throughout my... I had five assignments in the Arab world eventually. I found that most Arab men were fascinated by professional Western women and would love to talk to them and have them to their office, and if they could see them socially, they might try that, too. She could get an appointment with anyone at any time almost without exception. She had better luck getting doors open than the rest of us did, so it's just an interesting comment on women's roles. Foreign women, certainly, had easy access, and there were professional Kuwaiti women worth talking to who had opinions even though they didn't hold public office.

*Q: I was a commercial officer in Dhahran at one point, and I found this fascinating because it gets you out, doing trade complaints and all that. Again, outside of the oil revenues, Kuwait was a trading place. This was a business, so in a way you were right in the heart of the activity. How did you find this when you were doing the commercial work?*

CECIL: A lot of the work involved paper submissions back to Washington. I suppose there were a few trade complaints. I don't remember any in particular that stand out. We did lots of evaluations. I forget the form and the term that was used at the time, but we did lots of evaluations of local companies so that American countries would be able to buy a little background information on them.

We also reported trade opportunities if the government or the private sector was going to be inviting tenders. But the company reports I'm referring to were reports on the reliability and the financial stability of a company or an enterprise. We did a lot of that. I did meet a certain number of Kuwaiti businessmen, but I guess I would say that part of the work didn't excite me so much. I was more interested in the younger element of Kuwaiti society and more interested in some of the political issues. Certainly, though, there was a merchant community which had a lot of influence on the government. In fact, there were some families that said, "Well, we hired the Sabahs to run the country so that we can concentrate on business." The Sabahs didn't share that point of view. Nevertheless, we heard that more than once. I probably knew more about the business community back then than I have retained over the years.

*Q: What about during that time, Iraq. I don't know whether Kassim was alive or dead, but what was Iraq doing in those days?*

CECIL: The coup in Iraq took place during my tour. I'm not quite sure when that was. We regarded the Iraqi influence in Kuwait as a threat, of course, hostile to Kuwaiti interests and Kuwaiti independence. We were very used to hearing Iraqis claiming Kuwait as their territory. I didn't have any real contact with Iraqis myself. I suppose the ambassador must have been at least in occasional contact with his Iraqi counterparts, but I don't remember Iraqi diplomats crossing my path. When the War took place—the June '67 war—and Iraq broke relations with the United States, that, I guess, further estranged us, even if there was an Iraqi diplomatic community in Kuwait, they would certainly have had little contact with us after that. Personally, it impacted me just in kind of a minor way. I had planned a three-week trip by car through Iran. I was going to drive across the little 40-mile strip there of Southern Iraq where the Shat al-Arab comes out to the gulf, and I was going to spend three weeks going around Iran in my car. That was to be sometime in July or August, I forget which, but when the Iraqis broke relations with us, they wouldn't give me a visa to drive the forty miles across southern Iraq. I, unfortunately, never set foot in Iraq during my tour, never had gone up to Basra because it didn't seem in and of itself to be very attractive, so I don't have a lot of insights into the Iraqi role at the time. I know that later as I went down the Gulf, went to Saudi Arabia and then later served in Oman, we were always very suspicious of Iraqi activities down in the Gulf.

*Q: What about Iran in that time? That must have been sort of the 800 lb. gorilla to the north or wasn't it? Northeast?*

CECIL: I think that's probably the origin of the mistrust for the Shiite Kuwaiti community. The Sunnis were not convinced, I think, that the Shiites were fully loyal to Kuwait even though... I would say most of them were Arabs, but as I think back, the Kuwaitis often called them the Persians. A lot, of course, you recognized by their names. They have origins on the other side of the Gulf. Some of them were very prominent in the merchant community. My landlord, for instance, Muhammad Qabazard, was a Kuwaiti Shia. Originally his family had come from Iran. I think all of the countries on that side of the Gulf obviously dealt with Iran with great care, didn't want to provoke Iran. The question about Bahrain was very sensitive. The Iranian claim to Bahrain. There were, of course, other incidents later when they seized the islands of Abu Dhabi, Abu Musa, and the Tunbs. As you said, kind of like a gorilla in the room. They were careful not to offend the Iranians.

*Q: There weren't any great threats or anything like that at that time?*

CECIL: Not that I'm aware of. No.

*Q: Were Iranian diplomats active, or were you aware of them?*

CECIL: I wasn't. I didn't have any contact and no memories of Iranian diplomatic activity. I kind of wish I could go back and re-do that assignment knowing everything I learned later.

*Q: I think of all those things. As I do these things, I keep replaying my career as I talk to people,*

*thinking, “Oh, my God. Why didn’t I do this or that?”*

CECIL: There were certain formative experiences in Kuwait that I think helped me a lot later on through my years. It was a wonderful introduction to the Service. I began to learn something about representational skills. The DCM allowed me to hire his cook whenever I needed him, provided the DCM didn’t need him, so I would hire the cook and entertain the young Kuwaitis at my house in the evening with simple meals. One of my responsibilities was labor reporting. As commercial officer, they gave me the labor portfolio as well because it involves some reporting, and they knew I liked that. We had a regional labor officer. I guess he was stationed in Beirut. I’m not positive; I think so. His name was John Conlon. He ended his career as ambassador to Fiji if I recall correctly. But anyway, John Conlon would come a couple of times a year. I remember him teaching me the usefulness, the utility, of finding the official down in the bowels of the ministry who is in charge of certain functions. He took me on one of his visits. We went into the Ministry of Labor, and we found the Kuwaiti official responsible for work permits. We were so far from the leadership of that ministry; they must have been on the eighth or tenth floor, and we were down around the third floor, somewhere inside the building. John found the guy whose job it was to issue the certificates or the certifications asserting that this skill was needed in Kuwait so that a foreigner could get a visa and a work permit. I remember that meeting with John Conlon just peppering this guy with questions, and he was quite free with his information. John said, “How many Egyptians? How many Jordanians? How many Palestinians? For what period of time? How do renewals work? What kinds of jobs?” and all those kinds of statistical and technical details. The Kuwaiti was totally unguarded and quite willing. He was kind of flattered to have two American diplomats calling on him. First time, I imagine, any diplomat had called on him. I don’t remember now how we found him. I supposed John probably told me in advance, “Get the name of who it is that does this,” and I guess I did the spade work. We went there, and I really came away from that impressed by this example of investigative reporting. The fact that I remember it today shows me how useful it can be to dig down inside, below the leadership of a ministry and find the person who’s actually doing the work.

*Q: In any bureaucracy, the people at the top really don’t know the game as well as the people down below.*

CECIL: Right. This is a good time to relate an incident that comes to mind that reveals a bit of the Foreign Service culture of the time. Over the Christmas holiday in 1967 I went to Egypt on vacation. My luggage didn’t make it with me, and it was several days before it caught up with me. The airline had kept telling me “tomorrow, tomorrow” so I roughed it, went without shaving, and by the time I got my luggage I had a reasonable growth of beard. I decided to clean it up, keep it neat, and by the time I returned to Kuwait at the end of two weeks I had what I thought was a good-looking, well-trimmed beard. On the first morning back in the embassy the DCM and I were walking toward each other in the hallway. John Gatch looked up, seemed startled, and blurted out “Shave that beard!”, but didn’t stop to talk other than to congratulate me on a safe return. Before the day was over he came to my office. Speaking in a fatherly, confiding tone, he said he had had a brief talk with the ambassador, and he and the ambassador both thought I really should shave my beard. He told me that beards were not common in the Foreign Service, or words to that effect. Basically, I was intimidated. When I went home that day I shaved it. I didn’t want to get off to a bad start in the Foreign Service. I rationalized to myself that it was an

accidental thing anyway, springing from my lost luggage, and that I didn't attach much importance to it. In retrospect I marvel at that inward-looking, conservative attitude Gatch and Cottam expressed. About three years later, during my second year in Zanzibar, I decided to grow a beard again. No one said anything. I kept it about twelve years, through my assignments in Beirut, Jeddah, Washington, and Bamako, shaving it before going to Muscat. The Saudis told me—unknown to me when I adopted the style—that the Prophet had said that shaving the mustache (i.e., not having one), but cultivating the beard was a sign of a conservative Muslim. By the summer of 1983 the beard had begun to turn gray. I decided I didn't need to look any older than I already was, so I shaved it and never grew another one. I don't think having a beard for twelve years slowed down my progression through the Service, but of course I never worked again for Cottam or Gatch.

*Q: Did the British have a special role in Kuwait? Were we working closely with the British? How did this work at the time?*

CECIL: They certainly did. They had the historic role of being mentor, if you will, the guardian of the Emirates all down the Gulf. I'm not sure if it's fair to say their position was favored over ours, but I think probably it was just because of the history of the relationship. I had good relations with people at my age, my generation, in the British embassy, both their regular Foreign Service officers and one of their intelligence officers as well. We shared similar interests in getting to know young Kuwaitis better. I had excellent relations at my age level. I never had contact with the British ambassador or head of Chancery, but I know our DCM and our ambassador did all the time.

*Q: At this point, you weren't married?*

CECIL: No. That's a point we need to touch on. I met my wife in Kuwait. She came in September of '67 to teach in the American International School of Kuwait. She had graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in education, and she wanted to find some interesting overseas experience. She and her best friend were both looking for overseas teaching jobs. Someone in the career counseling office at the University of Iowa said, "Well, the superintendent of the American International School in Kuwait is an alumnus of the University of Iowa, so why don't you apply there?" They were also applying to the DOD school system for other opportunities. My wife told me that from DOD they got back form letters saying, "We've got your application. We'll review it. We'll be in touch." From Kuwait, they both got telegrams saying, "Kuwait wants you. Letter follows." With that kind of reaction, they both accepted jobs at the school. It was a small community; that is, the expatriate community. It didn't take me long to meet the new teachers that came in. As I say, that was September. As I approached the end of my assignment in July of the following year—July '68—we had to make a decision on what was going to happen to this relationship. We decided to get married. We were married in Kuwait in May of '68 in the Holy Family Cathedral in downtown Kuwait. That's how I met my wife. She's from Iowa from a farming family, and I'm sure most of her family were in that group of Americans who said, "Where? Where are you going? Where is that place?" Her mother came all the way from Iowa for the wedding, and we had a lot of Kuwaiti friends at the wedding as well. That's just a very special benefit from that assignment that I never would have expected I was going to leave with when I went there in '66.

*Q: Today is the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2006. Chuck, you said you had something you wanted to talk about Kuwait.*

CECIL: I just realized that last time I don't believe that during our talk we touched on the point of alcohol and Kuwait, which was an issue for the diplomatic community there. The Kuwaitis had a nice, moderate, intermediate policy, I call it. Unlike the Saudis, they didn't ban alcohol totally. The Kuwaitis allowed the diplomatic corps to import alcohol. It was only the residents—the Kuwaitis and the Foreign Nationals—that were prohibited from buying or consuming alcohol. Obviously, this meant that the diplomatic corps was an object of great attention for non-diplomatic reasons, on the part of both the Kuwaiti community and the foreign community. We were always being hit up for bottles of scotch or gin or whatever. They would take anything, for that matter. Ambassador Cottam was very, very clear and, I guess you could say, rigid, though I don't think he ever had to apply the policy that he stated. He said that if he ever found any member of his staff selling or even giving away alcohol to non-diplomats that he would have them transferred out of Kuwait. I took that very seriously. After all, it was my first assignment, so I believed him. I didn't want to test it certainly. During the whole two years for me and, I'm sure, for many others, maybe everyone on the embassy staff, this was always an issue, and it always tested personal relationships and friendships because it was very difficult to say no to people that you developed close working relationships with, or personal relationships. I remember very clearly one evening about 6:00 in the evening a Kuwaiti came to my door. I lived in a little townhouse just down the road from the embassy off the embassy compound. This was a Kuwaiti I had gotten to know, and my fiancée at the time had gotten to know him because both he and my fiancée were graduates of the University of Iowa. He was a good friend, and he came to the door at six one evening alone and said, "Chuck, can you give me some scotch?" It was really awkward for me. It's very difficult to say no to an Arab because they find it very difficult to say no to you if you ask for something. If you want something and they really can't or don't want to do it, rather than say no, they'll just put a slow man on the job, and it may be hoped that the request will die with time. I had to tell him, "No, it's something I really wish I could do. I wish I could help you, but I would be sent home if I was ever caught doing that," and I couldn't do it. As far as I know, it didn't disrupt the friendship. We continued to be friends throughout the rest of my time there. In fact, he came to our wedding which was near the end of the tour, and when I came back to Kuwait some years later on a visit, he had me to his home for dinner. So I guess he probably wasn't expecting it, but he tried, and it put me in an awkward position.

*Q: Do they have the equivalent that they had during my time in Saudi Arabia when I was in Dhahran where the people in Aramco made something called sidiki juice?*

CECIL: The term was used there. The Americans and foreign expatriates in the Kuwait oil company or some of the other oil companies in business community, some did make it, I'm sure of it. In fact, I probably drank it on occasion. Terrible stuff! Not the sort of stuff you'd want to drink, so I didn't certainly consume much of that. Yes, it was made, and it was talked about. But there was a thriving black market in genuine stuff, and it was always said that some very prominent Kuwaitis were, in fact, managing the black market and getting rich off it. In another case, because my fiancée and I decided to get married there in the Catholic Church I had a series of weekly meetings with the priest at the cathedral. As I mentioned earlier, although I had been

baptized a Catholic, I had been raised a Methodist, and I needed to renew my understanding and familiarity with Catholic teaching. The priest was actually the bishop of Kuwait, a Spanish Basque priest about 60 years old or so, a rather rotund fellow. He gave me a little private session every week for two or three months, I guess, as we were moving toward the wedding. At one point he said to me, "Can you bring me some alcohol?" I said, "Well, I really am not supposed to, but in your case, I'll check with my ambassador and see if he would not object." I guess the ambassador thought well... I don't know what he thought, really. I guess he thought a priest can keep a secret, and it is, after all, the bishop, so he posed no objection. (Later I learned that the ambassador was supplying him with wine for the Mass, which I didn't know at the time.) I went back the next week and took him two of my best bottles of red wine, Chateauneuf du Pape. When he opened the little carrying bag that I had them in, he looked at them. He was obviously disappointed. He looked at me and he said, "Do you have any scotch?" After checking again with the ambassador, the following week I brought him one bottle of scotch. That was the only time I ever stepped over that line. I don't know what the situation is today in Kuwait, but certainly it was an ever-present element in our social relationships there. Because I was cultivating the younger crowd, many of whom had been educated in the States, they naturally were very westernized and very liberal in their tastes. But they were also most of them fairly well-to-do, so they got their alcohol through channels I know nothing about. Anyway, I thought that was worth mentioning.

**JAMES A. PLACKE**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1966-1969)**

*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.*

PLACKE: When I came home with that news my wife was really dejected. Kuwait which is this obscure place that we had hardly ever heard of in those days and at the top of the Persian Gulf and a very inhospitable climate and all that. It was probably our most fun assignment actually.

*Q: So, you were in Kuwait from when to when?*

PLACKE: We got there in June I think of '66 and left in March of '69.

*Q: Was it an embassy at that time?*

PLACKE: Yes, Howard Cottam was Ambassador. Howard was there for six or seven years. Six years I believe. Howard was the first American Ambassador and he had been there for maybe

three years [Editor's Note: Cottam arrived at post in October 1963] or so at the time I arrived. A very, very fine man and I learned a lot from him.

*Q: What was his background?*

PLACKE: He was not, he came into the Foreign Service in the Wriston program in the mid '50s from an AID development background and brought some of that approach to things with him, which was appropriate for Kuwait at the time because Kuwait was still a fairly, well I wouldn't say primitive. They had only recently come into serious oil wealth and were figuring out how to spend it and how do you use it to improve their standard of living and sort of general welfare. It produced a very peculiar state that nobody is entirely happy with. The government, not intentionally, but just in the nature of the way they handle things has ended up essentially owning everything. I saw some statistics recently where it's more than 90%, I think it's 96% of the Kuwaiti work force is employed by the government and of course only Kuwaitis work in the government above a certain level. There's over employment in the government. People don't have anything to do. A lot of people barely come into work at all and when they do it's chatting with their friends, reading the paper, having coffee, not a whole lot gets done because there really isn't much to do. In fact if the government would cut probably 10% of its present size it would be much more efficient and would operate better. So, they have developed the ultimate welfare state.

*Q: Well, at the time you were there, how was it?*

PLACKE: It was just getting started in going in that direction, there was a strong merchant orientation in the community because that had been the orientation historically. Kuwait was established in the mid 18th century by the losers of their tribal war in central Arabia. There were two main tribes with about 18 families that were the real, original Kuwaitis and they had written into law privileges for themselves. Even to this day it's only they that have to vote. You have to show them that you or your ancestors were in Kuwait as of I think 1923 or something like that in order to be able to vote. Of course, it's only males who vote. There was a movement in the Kuwait parliament last year to give women the vote, but it failed, eventually it will pass. Kuwaiti women are very independent, quite different from some other parts of the world.

*Q: What was your job?*

PLACKE: I was the economic officer. There was only one and we broadened it to two while I was there. The junior officer was then the commercial officer. A very active economic and commercial scene. Commercial activity is the focus not only of business of course, but really over a lot of what the government did and a lot of social activity and it was just the glue that held society together. In working daily with Kuwaiti merchants, with government officials in the economic related ministries, Kuwait is a very small place and it was possible to really get a grip on it, really understand what was going on and who was doing what to whom and why and it was a fascinating tour.

*Q: How did the oil companies that were there, were they foreign-owned at that time?*

PLACKE: Oh yes. This was still the old concession system collapsed, we'll get to that because I was sort of a witness to that in Libya, but it came in the old concession system ended in the early 1970s.

*Q: Well, but while you were there in Kuwait, how did the sort of the concessionaires work with the Kuwaiti government and all that?*

PLACKE: Well, in my earlier comments about sort of a British colonist attitude and the Iraq petroleum company that I observed in Baghdad, Kuwait oil company which was the concessionaire for the entire area of Kuwait was owned by jointly, 50/50 by BP and Gulf. Gulf, of course, was subsequently bought by Chevron, but at that time it was one of the seven sisters. So, it was a large integrated international oil company. It had gotten its concession in the 1930s. Oil was discovered just before the Second World War. The first exports were in 1946 immediately after the war and it had grown relatively rapidly, but not as rapidly as Aramco or the consortium in Iran. But it was producing a lot of income for a very small population.

The colonialist attitudes that I have mentioned with regard to Iraq were very much in evidence in Kuwait as well. In fact, a good Kuwaiti friend who is still a friend to this day, is one of the most prominent attorneys in Kuwait told me the story once of his father who had been a Kuwait Oil Company employee in the 1950s and '60s and he worked at Ahmadi which was a town which was the oil company headquarters which was about 30 miles from Kuwait and worked there during the week and come back on the weekends. He would come in on Thursday and go back on Friday night. One Thursday he didn't come home and by Friday his family was really very concerned and so my friend went to Ahmadi and made some inquiries and was told that, "Oh, there was an accident and he was killed." He said, "Well, where is his body?" "Oh, he's been buried." Just like that. We were in an office that was a quite new office tower in Kuwait behind which is an old cemetery and he pointed out the window. He said, "You know, he's buried out there somewhere, but I don't know where." This has some relevance today because Kuwait like most of the other countries that nationalized their industries in the early '70s including Saudi Arabia, realized that foreign technology and capital could do a lot for them. So, they're in the process of doing some of that or creating openings for foreign oil company investments to come back into the country and this is occurring in Kuwait at least the Kuwaitis, some Kuwaitis want to. Because of these kinds of memories and this I think is an example, it's not very popular and in fact has become a point of great political controversy. I was in Kuwait in April, this is now July and in part to make an assessment of how this was going and I've come to the conclusion it's not going to happen, not this time around.

*Q: Not opening up to...*

PLACKE: No, they're just not politically ready for it. They find the idea of having foreign oil companies present again, just abhorrent.

*Q: Well, now was there, talk about, I'm trying to keep you back into the '66 to '68 period, did the example of Aramco which figured as long as we get the oil and we can get trained people and we don't care what they are, I mean, there wasn't any of this white man's burden type of nonsense.*



PLACKE: Well, because I visited Aramco from Kuwait, Phil Griffin was at the consulate in Dhahran and covered Aramco, did the oil reporting for Saudi Arabia and also covered the rest of the Gulf. There was a petroleum officer as well in Tehran and the three of us got acquainted with each other and we visited each other's areas and it was very educational, an extremely good use of government money. I saw enough of Aramco then in the late '60s and then of course when I was DCM in Saudi Arabia in the '80s nearly 20 years later, saw a lot more first hand. And Aramco continued very much in that vein. Aramco had an intensive development program for its Saudi employees long before the government was leaning on them to do anything like that because they simply sought new interest. Not in Kuwait, it was we know best and we will tell you what to do and you just do what you're told and don't even try to think about it. Very paternalistic, very imperious, if not imperial attitude.

*Q: Well, did you find sort of the oil people sort of almost bypass the Kuwaiti government?*

PLACKE: Well, they couldn't because you know in the end it was their country.

*Q: At that time.*

PLACKE: So, they, there was a sort of an inevitable tension between the big foreign oil concessionaire, the Kuwait Oil Company and the Ministry of Finance and Oil which was always trying to find ways along with the rest of OPEC [Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries] to get the greater degree of the wealth, the biggest slice of the pie. OPEC by the way was created in September of 1960 while I was in Baghdad and I witnessed that event. It was kind of a non-event and remained pretty much of paper organization until the '73 Arab-Israel War and the oil embargo that followed. So, the framework for dispute between the oil company in Kuwait and the Kuwait government was a whole series of ideas that were coming out of OPEC about how to increase the government's share of oil revenue. Nationally that was a subject of ongoing tension between the government and the oil company. It was not just Kuwait, it was Saudi Arabia, Iran, everywhere else, Iraq.

*Q: Well, did you find, how about a social life? Were you able to get out and use your Arabic and get into the social media?*

PLACKE: Oh, yes. Not so much because of Arabic, in fact almost the other way around. I got to Kuwait at a time when the first wave of young Kuwaiti educated Kuwaitis had come back from Western universities. Many of them from the UK, some from the United States and any of them who had been educated in the West were anxious to maintain and establish Western connections, maintain a kind of Western contact. So, they welcomed these associations, which was very beneficial to me because these contacts were sort of at the assistant secretary level.

*Q: These are the people who know what's happening.*

PLACKE: That's right. As we know, it's they who are kind of at the point of the government, so this was great for me and I knew all of the people that I needed to know and all of the government ministries were dealing with economic and commercial issues and these were people who welcomed my being there. We did a lot of entertaining at home.

*Q: Did Kuwaiti women come, too?*

PLACKE: Oh, yes, very definitely. The wives sought this as well. In fact, to give you an idea of the state of Kuwait's development was. I did the first balance of payments to report on Kuwait's national balance of payments because the rest of them didn't know how to do it. There was a UN sponsored economic development institute in Kuwait that was sort of a talking shop more than anything else and it was done under their auspices and they published it. I was given credit in the book, James Placke, Second Secretary, American Embassy who produced this analysis of Kuwait's balance of payments.

*Q: Did you see the potential for real problems in that so much of the work force, I know you stress the word work, was Palestinian, because this did make people nervous. I know in Saudi Arabia, the Palestinians were always considered to have their own agenda. Was this a concern?*

PLACKE: There was of course the lip service given throughout the Arab world to Pan-Arabism and to great pause which was to recapture the territory lost to Israel, but the reality was there was a lot of tension I think throughout the Arab world. I witnessed it in Lebanon and again in Kuwait and, as you suggest Saudi Arabia, between the Palestinians who were there to earn their livings, but had this political agenda and the national interest of the host country and almost without exception the two did not coincide. Again it's interesting the contrast, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Palestinians were a foreign Arab group in Kuwait and they were the ones who basically ran the country. They were the next echelon down in the ministries; they were the commercial manager for virtually every major enterprise in the country. They ran the airline; they ran the power and water system; they ran the school system; they ran the newspapers. So, you got a very strong Palestinian line politically in all of the news media. They really had taken over the country without anybody kind of noticing it except the Kuwaitis did notice. Then in the, many years when Iraq occupied Kuwait all this came to the surface and the Palestinians resented not being able to obtain equal or at least almost equal treatment with the Kuwaitis not to obtain Kuwaiti nationality and when you reached a certain age there was mandatory retirement including the private sector and then you had to leave. You may have lived and you may have even been born in Kuwait, but you had to leave. There were resentments and a lot of tension in that relationship. When I was there in '67, the Arab Israel War of '67...

*Q: The June War.*

PLACKE: The June War, the Six Day War, I remember the truckloads of Palestinians being marshaled in central square in downtown Kuwait to go off and participate in the liberation of the homeland when the war was already over, but the media didn't have the courage to tell anybody that the war was over. If you could listen to the BBC or VOA - most people listened to BBC - then you were aware of what was going on, but just in the local media, the triumph was on the verge of happening.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about how the Embassy reacted during the Six-Day War?*

PLACKE: Well, one small bit of history that I presume is unclassified by now. The Embassy

along with many other posts in the region was ordered to evacuate. Howard Cottam, the Ambassador realized what the consequences would be, it would be devastating, not just for the U.S.-Kuwait relationship which I think was his first concern, but for the consequences for the country because if the American Embassy pulled out, much of the rest of the American community would pull out and if the American's were leaving, other foreigners particularly other westerners would leave. And the oil company would shut down, power and water plants would shut down for lack of natural gas. And the country within weeks would become uninhabitable in the way that it had developed. This is not an overstatement. It was really a very serious situation. Which Washington didn't have the time or patience to want to listen to, and probably didn't care very much. So the Ambassador went to the Emir, had a private meeting with the Emir. The Emir did not speak English to any extent and Howard didn't speak Arabic but they did manage to communicate to the extent that the Emir said "I give you my personal assurance that you will have our full protection" and on that basis Howard was able to go back to the Department and make a case along these lines for not leaving, and that he had the direct personal assurance of the Emir that the Embassy and all its personnel would be protected. And they were. And indeed there wasn't anything untoward, never marches on the embassy and to whatever extent there may have been some agitation in that direction, the government was effective in cutting [it off].

*Q: You know in the Arab world reports were circulated that American planes had knocked out the Egyptian air force, I mean the defeat had been so devastating that the Arab world had to blame somebody and of course the United States was the prime candidate. Did that affect the Kuwaitis or were they wiser – able to see through this sort of thing?*

PLACKE: It varied. I think the ones we dealt with regularly who were worldly and understood what was going on and had access to relatively objective information didn't buy those kind of wild tales. But it did change relationships in example; we had been scheduled to go on home leave in early June. But that date came right in the middle of the six day war so of course we were not able to go on time. And we actually left Kuwait about a week later, and left through Tehran which was only the available air route at that point and this was Pan Am out of Tehran. I guess we took Kuwait Airways to Tehran. In any event, there were a lot of people at the airport waiting to depart because everyone who can gets out of Kuwait for as much of the summer as possible because the temperatures are 120 and there's just not a lot of activity. A good Kuwaiti friend who was about my age at the time had been dating an American school teacher who was also out at the airport to depart and he was out there to see her off. We got to chatting a little bit and he was kind of cool and he was wearing his thobe and kafia, which normally he had not. Usually he wore just Western attire, but everybody became very Arab and nationalistic in the wake of the '67 War, and at one point he said, "Well, what are you going to do?" I said, "Well, we're going back on home leave. We'll be gone for six weeks or so and we'll be back in the beginning of September and I'll come back to work." He said, "Well, you won't have much to do will you?" This is someone that I knew well, who was American educated and dating an American girl, but very resentful of what had happened. While they didn't accept the wild tales, they did regard the United States has having a large share of the responsibility for the great Arab defeat. As you said a moment ago, they weren't able to accept the notion that the Arabs collectively were no match for Israel. That was just not a thought that they could abide at that point. That's changed of course a great deal since, but they had to blame somebody and indeed much of the blame was on the United States. When I did get back to the post after being away for

the summer in September or in the beginning of the fall in Kuwait as with a lot of other places around the world, including the United States it's sort of the beginning of the new business year and everybody comes back and you pick up your contacts and embark on whatever it is you're going to concentrate on for the coming period and that was very much the way people approached things there. By the time we got back in September, tempers had cooled, a lot of this had eased, but it was never quite the same. There was a difference.

*Q: What about American businesses. I was economic/commercial officer in Dhahran. Again, about five years before you were there, but my experience was that at that time American businesses showed very little interest in developing the Gulf while it was a tremendous source of money eventually, but at that time, they would come in usually on a Friday, land in you know, have a Friday to work and then be off or something of this nature and there was a home office was for the whole area was usually covered either in Brussels or Geneva or maybe Beirut...*

PLACKE: In London....

*Q: In London. What were you finding?*

PLACKE: I wouldn't disagree with that characterization. I think Kuwait was kind of discovered during the time that I was there and the Ambassador Howard Cottam had a lot to do with that. He was Kuwait's best PR man and he would encourage American businessmen to come. He would always spend time with them. He would often have them to the residence. Kuwait had gone dry, that is it had banned alcohol early in '66 just a few months before I got there, so American business travelers often welcomed a gin and tonic or whatever and the Ambassador was quite generous in his hospitality to encourage people. He really felt that there was a much greater set of opportunities between Kuwait and the United States than were being developed or exploited and did attract a lot of American business. We had an architectural firm that set up an office there and did very well over the years. The big American companies, General Electric, the oil service companies of course were very active, but they were concentrating exclusively on KOC [Kuwait Oil Company] and the oil sector. There weren't as many American businessmen as might have been the case, but the ones that I dealt with by and large were not amateurs. They'd been around the region for a while and while they were always based somewhere else, usually somewhere in Europe, they did have a good understanding and could see the developing opportunities. Kuwait was becoming on a per capita basis an enormously wealthy place and the government's task was to spend the money and they had a lot of it to spend and more coming in by the day. Saudi Arabia at that time relatively had much less per capita income, so there were more opportunities in a way in this little principality at the top of the Persian Gulf. I found American businesses, the ones that were out there, were pretty knowledgeable and pretty dedicated to their task, but not very many in residence unless they were tied into the oil sector.

*Q: What about the Embassy as a guide to students. The United States has got this horrendous, this large educational system, higher educational system and it's kind of hard for somebody going to the United States, a foreigner to figure out what school to go to. You know, I remember, we had a lot of people applying to go something like the Tulsa School of Aeronautics or something like that you know, I mean it was sort of maybe a flake organization which was really designed to pick up foreign money. I mean, did you find yourself sort of acting as advisor?*

PLACKE: Not personally. Sometimes a business contact or social contact would raise this kind of question. I would just direct them to USIA. That was one of the things that USIA did and I think they did a good job. In fact it was done largely by a Palestinian local employee who was American educated and very knowledgeable and I think very responsible. The picture you paint is one that I'm certainly familiar with and I would concur in it. I think those who approached the Embassy either informally or came into the USIA office, I think they were able to get the sort of guidance that they needed. The ensuing decades the American educated Arabs that I've run into very often would have gone to places where you would not have expected to find them. The University of Rochester in upstate New York. If you could get talking about these things, you'd say, "Well, why did you pick that?" "Well, I picked it because there weren't going to be that many other Arabs there and I wanted to get into an American environment. I wanted to get that whole perspective."

*Q: A good, solid calculation on their part.*

PLACKE: Right. Or often because of the technical excellence or the academic excellence of the school, but you'll find them at the Universities of Wisconsin, places that have very cold winters, but nonetheless that's where they are.

*Q: You know, getting good technical training, or good training in the United States and coming back to a paternalistic government without a lot of room to maneuver in, it's a small place, there must have been considerable frustrations.*

PLACKE: Well, to know the game is to figure out do you dip into the government's coffers. The lawyer friend that I referred to earlier, every time I see him he has a new tale about something egregious that the government has done, some crazy regulation and often in the legal profession and he spends a lot of his time just arguing with the government sometimes for himself, sometimes on behalf of clients. His client base is large foreign companies. He represents most of them that are active in Kuwait. The other friend, that I mentioned [earlier] this comment that he made as we were departing after the '67 War, I still see him and we actually there is something of a business relationship between Cambridge Energy and him because of some activities that he is involved in. My lawyer friend and a group of his business associates established something called the Independent Petroleum Company and that's where they made quite a lot of money in developing niche markets, buying oil products wherever and distributing them in West Africa and parts of South Asia. They set up facilities for storage and blending of petroleum products and lubricants throughout the Arabian Peninsula and they're essentially doing what they know how to do very well which is trade.

*Q: Back to the old...*

PLACKE: Back to their traditions. You know, Exxon is not going to fool around with this or Shell, but for a group of private investors who have roots in the region and who have some knowledge of the industry, they can do very nicely and indeed they have. My other friend does a lot of his companies, does a lot of contracting for the Kuwait government, so the Kuwait government needs these kinds of channels because the money comes into them. Their problem is

to get it back out into the society and they've devised various ways of doing this, so there is money to be made.

*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.

*Q: Well, did you get any feel while you were there from '66 to '68 about the Kuwaitis, were they still looking to the British or were they beginning to look to the United States?*

PLACKE: No, they took a very different approach, they looked to themselves and within limits that was probably the right approach. They were a small essentially politically and militarily weak state in an Arab environment where Pan-Arabism was the ideology of the day to which they subscribe vociferously to try to identify with the larger Arab world and they used two things. They used international politics and money to try to cement their independence. Politically they joined every organization that would have them. They joined the GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade] for example. I'm not even sure they knew what the GATT was, but they joined it. They joined every conceivable international organization to legitimize their independent identity. They used their financial resources to give as many of the other influential states in the region a stake in their continued independence and welfare. The amounts of loans of course with no expectation that they would ever be repaid went to Egypt particularly, to Syria, to Jordan. Egypt and Syria especially, who were the then leaders of the Arab world and who were on the outs with Iraq some to Iraq as well, but Iraq only had its own oil wealth and wasn't so much looking for financial resources. They internationalized themselves in a way that was unique, but they adopted to their circumstances and it worked. It worked for a long time, worked until the invasion of 1990.

*Q: Did you get any feel for how the Kuwaitis were perceived by other Arabs? I've been told the*

*Kuwaitis are not the most beloved over there.*

PLACKE: Well, in Egypt, some months after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, sometime in the fall of 1990, I was there and occasionally you would see - the slogan among Kuwaitis was "Free Kuwait" - and somebody was turning out T-shirts in Egypt saying "Kuwait free Egypt." No they were not liked. They had a reputation for arrogance and superiority that is very widely held throughout the Arab world and this roughly one year in Diaspora that they experienced, I think, has confirmed those views in many parts of the Arab world.

*Q: Well, while you were there, were you seeing this, I mean, sort of other Arab contacts you had, were sort of?*

PLACKE: The other Arabs, in their dealings with Kuwait, were interested in getting their hands into the till as deeply as they could and as I indicated that was a part of Kuwait's strategy for maintaining its identity. So, they were in a sense a willing accomplice. You didn't get that kind of reflection. Kuwait was just not, didn't have enough visibility on anybody's screen in those days to be a subject of much comment or discussion. It was just this very wealthy little place in the Gulf that produces a lot of oil and was regarded as extremely backward long after that ceased to be the case. The Egyptians had their own kinds of arrogance about these things and attitudes of superiority.

*Q: Did sort of American military support ever come up while you were there?*

PLACKE: There was nothing of that sort at all. We didn't even get approval for ship visits. We applied a couple of times. There had been ship visits in the early '60s, but after '67 there were no more visits. So, there was no military relationship of any sort and we didn't even have military attachés.

*Q: Did the Middle East Force admiral come by from time to time?*

PLACKE: No, he was not, well, prior to '67 maybe once a year or so, but not after '67.

*Q: Well, then you left in '69?*

PLACKE: Left in summer '69.

**WILLIAM D. WOLLE**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kuwait City (1968-1970)**

*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: You served in Kuwait from 1968-70 as DCM. Who was the ambassador?*

WOLLE: Good question. For the first eight or ten months, it was Howard Cottam, whom I had known in Washington and earlier in Saudi Arabia. Then there was a period of four or five months during which I was in charge, before the arrival of John Walsh as Ambassador. That was a real contrast.

*Q: Could you talk about both of those?*

WOLLE: My view was at the time and remains that Howard Cottam was an extremely effective ambassador in Kuwait. It was his first mission in charge...his retirement from government followed that. He was highly interested and motivated in going to Kuwait. He sort of fell in love with this small country that was developing almost like magic. He right away apparently saw that one of the best things that he could get he, himself, and his staff to concentrate on was, of all things, biographic work. He was tremendous at coming to know the Kuwaiti families and how they were interrelated, and who did what, and who relied on whom.

I can remember that at nearly every staff meeting a good part of it was to encourage more formal biographical reporting. Neither before nor after was I ever at an Embassy where that was given its due. But he was enthusiastic about it...and about everything.

He was close to the American companies that were represented there. His door was always open. He was a hard worker. I felt that he really did a marvelous job in Kuwait. He also would go on the speaking circuit back in this country whenever he was back on leave, etc. and try to portray this image of a very small, but in its own way a very dynamic country. He was a superb ambassador for Kuwait's interests as well as our own, I thought.

It was a real change though when John Walsh arrived at his first ambassadorial post. He came after several years experience at the upper level of Department 7th Floor administration. I had known him somewhat but not at all well during my years in the 1960s in the Department. He seemed to come with some chips on his shoulder. He was a very proud person and very selfish person. He delighted in keeping visitors waiting. I really couldn't understand it. If I had been an ombudsman at the time I would have had some things to write.

For example, he had been there a couple of weeks and was invited to go down to the Kuwait Oil Company facilities at Ahmadi, a forty-five minute drive to the south, to be their guest for the day...briefings, tour of the oil facilities, luncheon, etc. He deliberately left an hour after he should have and kept them waiting, frankly to show who he was--I am the American Ambassador and you can wait on me, if you want to see me.

The same thing would happen often when visitors would come to the Embassy even for scheduled appointments. I many times would try to keep them pacified. His secretary and I,



together, would try. But he just hadn't come up yet from the residence, which was a short walk, about half a block.

I found Western diplomats whom I knew well drawing me aside with questions: What is the matter with your new ambassador? He doesn't seem to treat you or anybody else from the Embassy with the respect he ought to. Things like that.

I think one of his chips was that he was not an Arabist and he had it in for Arabists. He didn't want to be bothered with go-betweens. If there was a language problem, well, he would get around it one way or another.

So, for me, there was such a contrast between the enthusiasm and effectiveness of Ambassador Cottam and suddenly what, at least to me, appeared to be the prideful and selfish approach of Ambassador Walsh. Now, I guess one can say, "Well, I guess the two of you didn't hit it off." Right.

Anyway, I didn't want to stay in that situation any longer than I had to so after he had been there six or eight months I took advantage of the opportunity of home leave ...the three year tour with home leave in the middle...and went back to Washington. Through NEA contacts I tried to make sure that I could get an onward assignment the summer of 1970 instead of waiting until mid-71.

Some of this, perhaps, could have been excused if one could point to some real accomplishments that Ambassador Walsh made in Kuwait, and maybe there were some that I was blind to, but nobody has come forward to tell me about them as yet.

*Q: What was your impression of the royal family and their effectiveness? What was the family's name?*

WOLLE: The Sabah family.

*Q: Yes, the Sabah family.*

WOLLE: It seems that early in the history of Kuwait, a couple of centuries ago, the Sabah family was told that they could govern the place provided they left the commerce, trade and business to the other key families. So the Sabah family agreed and still continues to rule under this unwritten compact. The other families in Kuwait, many of whom have much more highly educated individuals, support the government and go along with it as long as it doesn't step on their commercial interests.

I met very few of the Sabah family who really impressed me as intellectual or efficient individuals in terms of their ability to govern. Some exceptions, but by and large not outstanding. A couple of the key roles, at least in my time, were usually in the hands of non-Sabah family members.

*Q: What about concerns about the Palestinian and Egyptian workers there? We are talking about this 1968-70 period. Was there concern about how they might sort of turn on Kuwait and turn it into another volatile place.*

WOLLE: The Kuwaitis, of course, are notorious for not giving citizenship privileges, free education and free this and free that to very many of the foreigners, be they Palestinian or whatever, no matter how many years they have been in the country. Right now in 1992 the Kuwaitis are evicting a lot of the Palestinians, just more or less on principle, feeling that because the PLO took the view it did during the 1991 Gulf War we don't want these people around, although a good many of them probably are more Kuwaiti than the Kuwaitis when it came to resisting Iraqi aggression.

In the years 1968-70, some of the Palestinians were certainly in key positions in government. They were frequent adversaries in conversation about Israel at cocktail parties, but I think they really spent as much time bemoaning the fact that the Kuwaitis were not good enough to them as they did talking about Arab-Israel problems.

The Kuwaitis were rapidly becoming a minority in their own country so they were and remain very cautious about spreading the wealth, privileges and vote. But even in those early years the Kuwaiti Parliament was in existence and was having debates. They were pretty tame. One or two journalists got out of line every now and then and occasionally had their hand slapped, though it was a somewhat freer press than in most of the Arab countries. There was, of course, in the back of the mind concern even then about what Iraq might try again to do one day as it had in 1962.

There was a Soviet Embassy in Kuwait during that period. I think it was the first Arab country in which I had served where there was a Soviet mission, but it didn't seem to be overly aggressive or active. I would say that the most dynamic embassy in Kuwait in those years was the French. They had come in in a big way, not only in Kuwait but on down the Gulf trying to establish commercial relationships and get some contracts. They were notable for their activity. The British Embassy was the largest and most influential in terms of Kuwaiti internal and foreign affairs.

*Q: Were there any major issues?*

WOLLE: Between our governments there really were not. The Emir paid a State Visit to the US that first winter, 1968-69. Ambassador Cottam went back to the States for that. There was no focus of attention in Washington on relations with Kuwait.

Locally, the place was jumping: every few months one oil company or another would dedicate a new facility, a new desalination plant, a new refinery. A lot of economic development and but many bilateral concerns really.

**GEORGE QUINCEY LUMSDEN**  
**Economic Officer**

## **Kuwait City (1969-1972)**

### **State Department; Desk Officer, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE Washington, DC (1972-1974)**

*Born and raised in New Jersey, Ambassador Lumsden was educated at Princeton and Georgetown Universities. After service in the US Navy, Mr. Lumsden joined the Foreign Service. Following assignments in Izmir and Bonn, he was assigned to Amman and Beirut, where he undertook Arabic Language Studies. Subsequent foreign assignments include Kuwait, Paris and The United Arab Emirates, where he served as Ambassador. In Washington, Mr. Lumsden held positions concerning the Arabian Gulf States. After retiring, he pursued petroleum and energy matters in the private sector. Ambassador Lumsden was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.*

*Q: Kuwait, 1969. What was the situation when you arrived in Kuwait?*

LUMSDEN: Well, the situation, of course, was good. The Kuwaitis were rolling in money. The Kuwaiti character has often been described by other Arabs as "The Kuwaitis are really the Jews of the Gulf." There is a great deal of similarity in the self-confidence. Of course, Kuwait is a small place. There aren't that many of them. They are always ready to have an opinion on everybody else's faults. They rest assured in the confidence that they were rich. They all knew Sophie Tucker's famous comment - that's where I first heard it, in Kuwait - that "I've been rich and I've been poor. Rich is better." Of course, Kuwaitis were dirt poor before the oil came. What was most striking - and I was very glad that I was the economic officer there because I think it was probably the most important substantive job in the embassy - was that as this tour went by, it became more and more apparent that the U.S. and its western allies and Japan were increasing enormously their dependence on the oil coming out of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Iran at the time. In the U.S., President Nixon had removed the quota system on oil imports. Our imports shot way, way out, almost tripled. Kuwait was at that time producing well over three million barrels a day. Saudi Arabia was producing seven or eight. And through the jubilant egotism of the Kuwaitis, it was becoming quite apparent that, "You know, this is our commodity. We're going to eventually take this over." It was more than Yamani and his participation talks in Beirut. I met Yamani again. In December 1969, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reached agreement on the dividing of the neutral zone and the equal access to the oil underneath. It was partitioned with undivided interest in the oil underneath. It's interesting that the two countries let their petroleum ministers negotiate this border agreement rather than the foreign ministers. I saw Yamani again a number of times in very informal, relaxing situations, parties at friends (This negotiation took about three or four weeks.) in which I talked to him about his participation letters. He said, "You know, all that's changing. It's going to go a lot farther than participation." We started to write despatches, I from Kuwait, Francois Dickman from Saudi Arabia, John Washburn from Tehran, saying, "Look, Washington, something is happening here. Here is what all these oil companies say that the host governments are telling them about their desires for nationalization. Here is what the oil companies are getting demands for production. This is headed in a direction that could cause a big problem." Our despatches were being fed back to Washington where James Akins was reading them. Quite interesting. Several of those despatches. We were still writing

despatches back then.

*Q: You had a chance to expand. Telegrams were designed for quick events.*

LUMSDEN: That's right. The whole smear: "The Embassy of the United States, presents its compliments to the Secretary of State and has the honor to report that everything is all fouled up." On a humorous note, my next assignment was as the desk officer for the Gulf states (This would have been the end of 1972, beginning of 1973), when Akins' article was coming out, the arguments about conservation were all starting, and the Secretary of State had become more and more concerned about this. I noticed that in the files of NEA/ARP (Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs in the Department) many of these despatches were not in our files anymore. There was a note there saying that you had to check with the Executive Secretariat for access. So, I called up and they said, "Well, are you cleared to see these?" I said, "I don't know, but I wrote them." Frankly, you had to get special permission to see them. Before the actual Arab oil embargo, it was becoming quite clear now at last that, whoops, maybe something is getting out of hand here - and indeed it did. But I guess I'm getting ahead of myself. We're back in Kuwait still.

*Q: It was an embassy. Who was the ambassador and how was the embassy set up?*

LUMSDEN: I spent quite a bit of time in Kuwait. Actually, three ambassadors came and went while I was there. Howard Cottam was there when I made my first trip to Kuwait. He left just as I arrived in the summer of 1969. I didn't get much chance to serve under him, but he was a wonderful, avuncular gentleman who was very popular with the Kuwaitis, who was the right type of person for Kuwait at the time of its affluence and did not put huge political pressure on anything, very, very well liked, distinguished, and I think did an excellent job there. I believe he retired after Kuwait. There was quite a hiatus there until the next-

*Q: Who was in charge?*

LUMSDEN: The DCM at that time...

*Q: It wasn't Dayton Mak, was it?*

LUMSDEN: No. Dayton was the DCM in Beirut when I was there.

*Q: Who became ambassador?*

LUMSDEN: John Patrick Walsh became ambassador. He had been director of the Executive Secretariat, was not a Middle Eastern hand - far from it. He was actually politically very much connected with Lyndon Johnson and the Democratic Party, came out of Chicago, was very close to the Daley machine there. He was a nice man. He was a widower, had recently lost his wife. He had a difficult time adjusting to Kuwait. The pressure of being director of the Executive Secretariat at the height of the Vietnam crisis and then being transported to Kuwait, having lost your wife, having had your son very severely wounded and crippled in Vietnam - a policy that you yourself had been supporting - and then going into what at that time was pretty much of a vacuum as far as what was big and hot in the Department of State. You could sort of see the

fellow's molecular structure starting to float apart. He was unhappy in Kuwait and had a number of difficulties. Eventually, Murphy and others came out to question us on the problem there. Then we had a vice presidential visit from Spiro Agnew. Following the Vice President's visit to Kuwait, the ambassador was transferred. Then there was another hiatus. Talk about old-line Arabists. Agnew went from Kuwait to Jeddah and Saudi Arabia. We had to move him to Riyadh. He played tennis with a man named Bill Stoltzfus. That's a nice guy. Send him up there. He was one of the old-line Arabists.

*Q: He came from a missionary background.*

LUMSDEN: Yes. Of course, Bill worked out well with his Arabic and everything there. It was just like an old shoe. But the main importance during my tour in Kuwait was the business of oil dependency growth on one hand and the surge towards the nationalization of the oil companies on the other.

*Q: Can you talk about how you, at your level, and also at the embassy level dealt with what was the Kuwait government at that time?*

LUMSDEN: At that time, I as economic officer had very good access. The foreign office itself didn't have that much clout. I wasn't interested in the foreign office. Let the political officer go to the foreign office. I was interested in the Ministry of Finance, Oil, and the manager of Kuwait's money directly for the emir, who was a Palestinian, a very nice guy. At that time, you would go to the office of a fellow who was running - and this is 1969/1970 dollars - \$20-30 billion in various markets. He had an office about 10 feet by 10 feet. He had an air conditioner in there, but the fan was somewhat eccentric. He kept trying to get it fixed and it would click, click, click. He would turn the damn thing off and say "let's sweat." Here was a man with colossal influence in international financial markets in this tiny little office. This was Kuwait in the late '60s. The attitudes of the people at the Petroleum Ministry, particularly those who had been educated in the United States or Europe, was hell-bent towards nationalization of the petroleum industry. Gulf Oil had difficulty appreciating this. They thought that the friendship they had built up over the years in Kuwait would withstand this, but not so, not when it came to 1973, the year after I left. I was desk officer then. But it was quite clear that they were feeling their oats on this issue. Darn it, they were going to do something about it.

*Q: The Saudis had a fairly extensive program of sending their young men to Texas, Colorado, universities there, our first-rate petroleum places. What about the Kuwaitis? Were they doing the same?*

LUMSDEN: Yes, they were at the Rice Institute in Texas. A couple of them got into Ivy League schools, too. They were definitely doing it. Subsequently - here I jump again, but it's that red thread that goes through - this philosophy of sending young people to U.S. and European universities so that they could get the type of education necessary to come back and run oil companies had of course a negative aspect. These people would get so educated that they would come back and start running oil companies and be extremely dissatisfied with the medieval system they found around them. There was the reaction of, "Well, if we're going to keep having trouble with these technocrats, we'd better cut back on the number of them that we send overseas

and we'd better start having them educated here at home." So during the late '80s and '90s, there was a noticeable shift in the balance there. Many more of the young people (I'm talking almost exclusively men. The women stayed at home and were smarter and got better educations at home than the men.) that stayed got more Islamified than they would have otherwise and they, too, started to be disgruntled with the government for not being Islamic enough. The technocrats came back and said, "You're too conservative" and the ones who stayed home and were indoctrinated by these religious scholars said, "You're too liberal." The whole pressure system started to grow up. I don't know how they're going to solve this. They're starting to try to set up U.S. and European style curriculums in universities at home. Whether or not this is going to work or not, I don't know. But they've got feelers out to Ohio State, American University here, and others to try to do this.

*Q: But at that time, how were decisions made on the economic side?*

LUMSDEN: On the economic side, it probably was speedier and more effective than a political type decision. In Kuwait, if on financial policy, if Khalid Abu Sahud, the Palestinian financial advisor to the Emir, and Abdul Rahman Al Atiqi, the oil minister, came to the ruler with the suggestion that something should be done, it would be done. The ruler did not then resort to the tribal consensus business that goes on on other decisions. In other words, he looks around the room and he wants to see everybody smiling. If he sees anybody frowning, then you don't do that. But on money and oil, things got more quickly decided. Al Atiqi was very, very prone to the nationalization bit and the conservation of what the Shah was calling "this noble resource," which is too good to be burned up just making electricity and things like that. That sort of attitude is what I don't think the oil companies were appreciating enough. They were astounded when they got shut off the next year. People they thought were their friends weren't.

*Q: What was your impression of the Gulf Oil and other representatives of western and Japanese oil companies in Kuwait?*

LUMSDEN: They had a good old well-established relationship with the countries which they... I'll tell you a little story to illustrate this. We arrived in Kuwait in August of 1969. You can imagine what the Gulf was like in August. It was really hot.

*Q: I spent two and a half years in Dhahran, so August was not my favorite month.*

LUMSDEN: I guess it was the second Friday that we were there that people in the oil company found out we had just arrived. It was the doldrums of the summer and they asked us to come down on Friday for lunch, Friday being the Muslim Sabbath, at the Gazelle Club. A "gazelle" is a small deer-type animal. We drove down to the Min El Ahmadi, where this club was. That is the port where they load most of the oil being shipped out of Kuwait. The temperature was about 115 degrees. The humidity was about 75% or so. There was a sandstorm blowing with enough humidity in the air that you would get these little spitballs of sand flying through the air. We got to the club and, of course, the air conditioning had busted at the club. So, they had had to crack open the windows to get some air into the place. I got in there and started talking with a couple of Kuwaitis and introduced myself. They said, "Oh, good. You just arrived. What are you doing here in Kuwait?" I said, "I've just come in. I'm head of the Economic Section at the American

embassy.” They looked at me rather strangely and said, “American? Are you American?” I sort of didn’t catch what their drift was. I said, “Yes, I am an American.” They said, “You don’t talk like an American.” I said, “If I don’t talk like an American, who do you think talks like an American?” He looked around the room, pointed out on the balcony. There was a fellow about 6’6” out there in boots and jeans, a good ole’ boy, telling his Kuwaiti friend, “This is mighty fine weather you all are having here.” He said, “He talks like an American.” So, this camaraderie of good ole’ boys who like hunting and guns and things and go on a first name basis right away, unlike the imperial Brits. They had a very, very good rapport with the Kuwaitis. It was this rapport that misled Gulf Oil into thinking that they had it made in Kuwait, that they’d never be thrown out, because they weren’t the British colonialists. But they were.

*Q: On your reporting, basically, were you reporting on attitudes or unrest of the workers or what have you? What were you concerned with during this 1969-1972 period?*

LUMSDEN: There was no worker unrest. That wouldn’t be tolerated. They had a couple of supposed radicals who were allowed to write articles against Israel in the paper. Every once in a while, they would say things about the exploiting capitalist oil company which fit in with the overall plan, but there was no true worker unrest. Most of the real workers weren’t Kuwaitis anyway. In the bureaucracy, they were Palestinians and in the grunt jobs in the field, they were mostly Asian subcontinentals from Pakistan, India, and places like that. No, what the reporting mostly focused on was the dynamic between the companies and the host government and what the companies were doing on the one hand to meet these extraordinary demands being placed upon them for production, at the same time as fending off the host government, saying, “Boy, you know, you’re taking our national patrimony here. You’re stimulating us to move against you.” That was the crux of it.

*Q: When one always talks about oil, it’s as though oil is a thing unto itself, when in a way, oil in the world often is money. You’re talking about where this guy with a malfunctioning air conditioning is going to put his \$20 billion. This often is more almost a treasury or a New York or London type thing. Were you reporting on this or was this where Kuwait was investing its money?*

LUMSDEN: We would report what we would find out about Kuwait buying a 21% stake in Reuters News Agency and things like that. Of course, what we didn’t have was the view of what the Kuwait investment company’s office in London was doing, how they were playing. All we knew was that there were sums and that certain types of investments were being made. How they were being handled, we didn’t get probably as deep into that as our London embassy could, but we did note things that they picked up on and could find out further what the meaning of it was. It’s interesting to note, oil and money, yes. One of Atiki, the oil minister’s, famous quotes - and I think that Dan Yergin even has this in his book, The Prize, - was, “Why should we be producing all of this oil in exchange for paper currency from the West which is not guaranteed?” Remember, Nixon took us off the \$35 per ounce gold in 1971. That was the reaction to that. Again, the increasing production played into the hands of those who would nationalize so that this great resource could be saved for future generations. The fact of the matter is, the age of hydrocarbons probably will come to an end within the next 30-40 years and these governments are going to be left with an awful lot of merchandise still on the shelf. But that is leaping way

ahead.

*Q: When I was in Dhahran just south of you from 1958-1960, one of the games we always played was, we saw a lot of the Palestinians doing a lot of the grunt work. They were also in the military and everything else while the Saudis were not taking much control over things. It was the game of "How stable are these governments?" The thought was that at some point there was going to be a Palestinian takeover because they were smarter than anyone else and also are more competent. Was this something you all were looking at in Kuwait?*

LUMSDEN: Certainly the political officers were very much focused on this, the stability of the regime. This is one misconception that hurt us and our policies a great deal. You say that everybody was fixated on the stability and longevity of the House of Saud. That reflected in political reporting from Kuwait as well, the stability and longevity of the House of Sabah. Visitors would come through from Washington - congressmen, senators, assistant secretaries, secretaries - and they would all get back to Washington and say, "You know, we really have a problem. The stability and the longevity of these Arab governments in the Gulf is really open to question and I know that for a fact because I really got the lowdown from our one real ally in the region, the Shah of Iran. We'd better rely on him. Saudi Arabia is going down the tubes." Well, it speaks for itself. It may be antique. I still think that if the House of Saud has a revolution against it and it gets turned upside down, what we'll find is that a different branch of the House of Saud is running the things. What I've just said doesn't mean that I say that it's completely stable. All I can say is, it lasted a heck of a lot longer than some of the ideas of people who said that it wouldn't.

*Q: What about the relations with Iran and Iraq? How were they perceived at this time?*

LUMSDEN: At this time, being 1969-1971, we did not report much on Iran. I guess Ambassador MacArthur was there at the time.

Anybody who tried to report in the 1969-1973 period that the Shah of Iran was a weak reed upon which to lean would have a tough time selling that line in Washington, where such verbiage would be considered much as saying to the Pope that the Immaculate Conception was a fraud. It just wasn't on. The Arabs were the weak ones. The Arabs were the problem of stability. "We are needing them more and more and they are so weak and so feckless that they're bound to collapse. The Palestinians or some radicals will take over." Of course, when Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, the Palestinians went with Iraq and the Kuwaitis threw them all out.

*Q: Were we concerned from the perspective of Kuwait that Iran might try to do something against Kuwait, or pressure Kuwait or anything like that?*

LUMSDEN: Iran at that time - and probably still - makes a little nod in Kuwait's direction. Kuwaitis don't like Iraqis. Kuwait as a separate burr under Baghdad's saddle is something that Tehran, whichever the government is there, finds somewhat agreeable. That is a wonderful discussion that would take hours that we don't have on the Kuwait-Iraq border.

*Q: Let's talk about Iraq at this time. Iraq had gone through the July 14, 1958 thing. I'm not sure*



*who was in charge by this time?*

LUMSDEN: Abdel Bakr.

*Q: They killed the other guy.*

LUMSDEN: Abdel Karim Kassim.

*Q: He was killed on TV.*

LUMSDEN: He was the one who tried to take over Kuwait in 1963 or 1964 and the Brits sent in a couple of paratroop units and things and frustrated that. The next time it came around, it took half a million men to get it out.

*Q: What was the feeling towards Iraq during this period?*

LUMSDEN: In Kuwait, the feeling was one of great trepidation that the Iraqis are still out to get us and the Iraqis would show their muscle, that they could do anything they wanted in Kuwait. One of the big shots of the Tikriti clan who fell out of favor in Baghdad was sent on a trip to Kuwait to visit with the Emir and the Iraqis went in and assassinated him on the way to this meeting with the Emir just to show, "Look, we can do any damn thing we want to in your country." The Kuwaitis were frightened of the Iraqis. At the same time, given all of the turmoil of the growing oil problem, the aftermath of the 1967 war, the stalemate in the Sinai, Sadat, and all this, their political focus was on trying to be more Arab than the Arabs. They had, if you will, an Arab policy of preemptive capitulation, which means that any time they saw an Arab political cloud on the horizon, they would move to preempt it, usually with money and a lot of propaganda saying how they hated Israel more than anybody else and the Palestinian cause was a holy one, etc., all to try to avoid getting on people's bad list.

*Q: Particularly in your field, did you find that when you met Kuwaitis, you had to sort of deal with Israel and then you would agree to disagree and then go on to other things? Did you find much real support for the Palestinians by the Kuwaitis themselves?*

LUMSDEN: They articulated a great deal of support up-front for the Palestinians. Kuwaitis themselves were still quite accessible. I understand that now in Kuwait being a foreigner is not this easy, but we had a fairly relaxed atmosphere there. We would go out socially with them, have Friday picnics and things like that. Yes, the question of Israel came up. Of course, I as a State Department Arabists said, "Look, Israel is a political fact in the United States. I don't necessarily personally agree with 1,000% support of Israel right or wrong in the U.S., but it is a fact. In the final analysis, you do need the United States for strategic support." It was kind of hard to convince anybody at that time that they needed the United States for strategic support. However, when you started bringing in the question of Iraq and the tough neighborhood in which they lived, I had some fairly good conversations with them. I didn't try to approach it as an apologist for Israel, but that Israel is a fact, Israel is here, it's established, it's a country, and it's going to be there. Now what are we going to do about that? Do you want to go on having a war forever or do you want to reach some sort of modus vivendi on this? The Kuwaitis were... Well,

you can't make a blanket statement. Some of them were very difficult on this subject and didn't appreciate where their own future was headed. Others were quite willing to sit and talk. Abul Atli Al-Hamed, the head of the Kuwait fund there, was very good on this. He was a Harvard graduate.

As far as the little Gulf Arab countries are concerned, never has so much happened to so few in such a short period of time. It's absolutely unbelievable what they went from to where they arrived. So, bizarre reactions to things shouldn't be considered too unusual. The Kuwaitis are probably - particularly now that we got all their chestnuts out of the fire in the early part of the 1990s - are probably still just as egotistical and overbearing as they've always been.

*Q: Did the Kuwaitis have the reputation and were you seeing it in the Arab world of this being overbearing and sort of nouveau riche? This came out during the Gulf War. There was no love for Kuwait at all, but the dislike of Saddam Hussein was paramount. I was wondering whether you were seeing that the Kuwaitis really weren't a well loved child of the Arab world?*

LUMSDEN: Yes, but they didn't give a damn.

*Q: What about Palestinians and Kuwaitis getting along together? I would think they would be more your natural friends and all because they would be more the technocrats and all this.*

LUMSDEN: It's interesting. In the Gulf, the Palestinians by and large gyrated more towards the bureaucracy, technocratic positions in ministries, in funds, in lots of positions where they could assure Kuwait government support - financial and otherwise - for Palestinian causes. The entrepreneurial types that came in to make the fastest buck they could were practically all Lebanese. It was amazing. I noticed that in Kuwait and then when I got down to the United Arab Emirates, it's the same bifurcation of expatriate Arabs. Palestinians into the bureaucracy, Lebanese into entrepreneur business undertakings.

*Q: You certainly found the Lebanese throughout Africa and Latin America, the entrepreneurs.*

LUMSDEN: Yes. There is that famous joke about the Lebanese family that emigrated to Brazil and took their little boy to the first grade class to transfer and the teacher wanted to find out what class to place him in. "Okay, Amin, what does two and two equal?" He said, "Are you buying or selling?"

*Q: How was Egypt viewed at that time? Sadat was in charge. Nasser was dead.*

LUMSDEN: Nasser was dead. Sadat was respected. Egypt was still the largest Arab state. The Egyptians didn't have the emotional account to draw on that the Palestinians had. However, the necessity of Egypt getting its act back together again was recognized by the other Arabs. There is no doubt about it though that the debacle of 1967 had really trimmed Egyptian influence throughout the Arab world, actually to the delight of capitals like Baghdad that always considered themselves in competition with Cairo anyway. Egyptians, however, are a likeable people. People always like to have Egyptians around. They have good senses of humor. They have a nice fatalistic approach to the world. They were still popular as a country. They did not

have the commanding presence that they did under Nasser.

*Q: Were Egyptians seen as true Arabs? Did you find the Kuwaitis saying, as the Saudis often would, "We are the true Arabs and the Egyptians really are...?"*

LUMSDEN: Well, if you want to talk race, they're right. The Egyptians are Hamites and the Gulf people are Semites. That came up from time to time. Lord knows, if you say that the Egyptians are not Arabs, what are the Algerians and the Berbers and everything else? But, no, you did run into that. It's funny that under Islam as far as racial equality goes, it's not all that equal. The prime minister now - then defense minister - Abdullah Sabah, is the son of a slave. He is African.

*Q: Is this the one who is known as the "Black Prince?"*

LUMSDEN: Yes, exactly. There was no problem there. He was of royal blood. However, there was slavery and maybe in some ways still is in some parts of the world there. There is amongst the Bedouin tribesmen a definite superiority complex over Africans. I've seen them any number of times insisting in going through the door and things like that. There is prejudice there.

*Q: This was the first term of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger as national security advisor. Did you get any feel for that at all either from the Kuwaitis or from Washington or were we sort of off everybody's radar?*

LUMSDEN: In Kuwait, the style of the Nixon-Kissinger administration of foreign policy was basically not felt by the Kuwaitis at all and by the embassy only to the extent that I was puzzled why our reporting seemed to have very little influence back in Washington. When we get to the next step, returning to Washington as desk officer, then certain other things become apparent. But way out in Kuwait, the intricacies, the subtleties of the shift and things like that were not apparent.

*Q: How did the visit of Spiro Agnew go?*

LUMSDEN: Of course, this was before the Nattering Nabob met his Armageddon. The Kuwaitis were very complimented that a vice president of the United States would come to Kuwait. They had never had anybody... They liked that. They enjoyed it. He was only there for 48 hours. They were pleased that they were at least on the radar there, particularly when, of course, Great Britain sends everybody of importance to these former protectorates in the Gulf. Even the Queen goes and visits them incessantly. Kuwait was not really considered very important in Washington at the time.

*Q: Did you and your colleagues at the embassy feel that you were in somewhat competition with the British? Was there a difference there?*

LUMSDEN: Oh, yes. This, of course, was at a sensitive time for the Brits. The East of Suez policy came into effect while I was in Kuwait. I can't remember the exact date when it came in. This meant that, although places like the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman really would

have been delighted if Great Britain would have continued to do their foreign policy and defense, nevertheless, they were going to be forced to be independent countries. I first started to visit the lower Gulf in 1970. Fortunately, the Department made a good decision. They decided in the interim to make Bill Stoltzfus the non-resident ambassador for all the little lower Gulf states rather than having it operate out of Saudi Arabia. The Saudis were big and strong and pushed people around. The recognition that we saw them as being an independent little thing like Kuwait was sold well. As economic officer, I had the task of visiting the lower Gulf and saying, "I'm an American. You haven't seen many of us around here because we never could get in here. We were locked out by the Brits. There are all kinds of things we can talk about. You're forming Gulf Airlines. We're going to come down. We are going to talk about all these wonderful Boeing airplanes we've got, etc." So, that was good for us, but the Brits, I must admit, correctly saw, "Boy, now we're getting a lot of competition for what was a monopoly commercial situation that we had in places that are going to boom now." So, there was some tension there. But they accepted it with aplomb and resignation, although quite clearly it was not to the taste of some of the old hands in the British foreign office.

*Q: Were there any other developments we should discuss?*

LUMSDEN: I'm trying to think. When we had the incessant border argument going on-

*Q: The border with whom?*

LUMSDEN: With Iraq. They have constantly tried to get full recognition by Iraq of their border which came in during the 1920s with Sir Percy Cox and the line in the sand when they traded off a chunk of Kuwait which is now Saudi Arabia in order to get the Iraqi neutral zone for the new Saudi-Iraqi neutral zone. Then they said, "Well, leave it at the red line." Before World War I, the Turks and the Brits negotiated something, which was never ratified. This was a scar on the hearts of the Kuwaitis to get this thing regularized. I bet it really still hasn't been done yet. I'm trying to think of what else interesting in Kuwait that we might not have hit on yet... I can't think of anything more.

*Q: In 1972, you came back.*

LUMSDEN: In 1972, I came back.

*Q: And you were what?*

LUMSDEN: I was the desk officer in NEA/ARP. I was the desk officer for Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. I remember my first NEA staff meeting. Joe Sisco, the assistant secretary, looked at me and said, "Oh, well, who are you? Introduce yourself." I did. He said, "Where have you been?" I explained that I had joined the Foreign Service in 1957, I had had the A100 course and then been sent to the reception center in New York in 1958, much to my chagrin going right back home, but in 1959, I had left for overseas assignment and I had had continuous overseas assignments from 1959 through the end of 1972, which technically broke some sort of law. They were sort of aghast because I had never been back to Washington between 1959 and 1972 except on home leave. Probably for that reason, at the end of the tour of

which we speak, I was subjected to Henry Kissinger's GLOP (Global Opportunities Program) Program, which basically was a way to bust up old-line Arabists and get them to look at something else.

*Q: I think it was precipitated by Latin America. Kissinger went to a meeting in Mexico City and discovered that nobody was particularly interested in developments in the Soviet Union.*

LUMSDEN: Certainly I was a prime candidate. Actually, it worked to my advantage.

**WALTER M. MCCLELLAND**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kuwait City (1970-1974)**

*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.*

*Q: You left there in '70?*

MCCLELLAND: Yes, I was transferred from the Iran Desk in the Department to the American Embassy in Kuwait in 1970.

*Q: What did you do in Kuwait?*

MCCLELLAND: I was Deputy Chief of Mission.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador?*

MCCLELLAND: The Ambassador was James Patrick Walsh. When I went to Kuwait I had been informed that I would be replacing a very fine FSO, Bill Wolle, who was leaving because he somehow could not get along with the Ambassador. However, I thought that somehow, since I did not know Mr. Walsh at all, we would be able to get along -- and I very much wanted to go to Kuwait.

*Q: Can you tell me a little bit about Ambassador Walsh?*

MCCLELLAND: Before taking the assignment I talked to him, then had some correspondence. I told him I would like to come to Kuwait, that I had hoped to be assigned there some day, but I was not sure I could do the job he wanted. I said that if he thought I would be OK, I would do my best for him. He replied and invited me to come ahead.

However, he really didn't want me or anyone else competing with him. Ambassador had been the Executive Secretary of the State Department, and he was very able, knowledgeable, and competent; however, he also drank a lot. ( From time to time, when he had been drinking and was up late, he would call me, or another officer, and ask us to come over for a chat. The talk would go on for an hour or so without any particular point.) He told me he could run the whole State Department with one arm tied behind my back, so he didn't think he needed much of my help taking care of Embassy Kuwait.

He severely restricted my normal duties. He did not want me to go to the Foreign Ministry to discuss anything; he did not invite me to parties he gave for political purposes (except the ones where everyone was invited.) When I came through the receiving line, he looked the other way. He simply demeaned me and my wife in every way. It was a very uncomfortable time for Franna and me.

*Q: Was he a professional Foreign Service Officer or more a Washington Operator who went out?*

MCCLELLAND: He was a Foreign Service Officer who had served in several posts before he was Executive Secretary of the Department. As it turned out, he was recalled from Kuwait when he became involved in a political dispute with local dignitaries at the end of 1971.

Ambassador Stoltzfus arrived to take over the post in early 1972. It was wonderful! He is a real professional who knows the language, understands the culture, and makes friends readily. He also knows how to make the Embassy function well, and he let me play a normal, and much more involved, DCM role. I think I did my best work for Bill Stoltzfus. I tried to do my best for Ambassador Walsh also, but he didn't want it.

*Q: Do you have any feel for how Ambassador Walsh dealt with the Kuwaitis, or not?*

MCCLELLAND: He was very active in Kuwaiti social and diplomatic life and he had several close Kuwaiti friends. He did not speak Arabic, but he did entertain frequently, often with small dinner parties. He had one or two well-known Arab women friends who acted as his hostesses.

*Q: Was Ambassador Walsh not married?*

MCCLELLAND: He was a widower with a daughter about 11 years old. I believe, although I do not know because I never saw any guest list, that he had important Kuwaiti guests. After a while I think everyone began to know what his problem was. Some incident occurred, he may have criticized the Amir or something like that. This was blown up in the papers, word got to the Department and he was recalled.

I was very thankful that while Ambassador Walsh was still in Kuwait, we had an inspection that I think saved my career. I explained the situation to the inspectors and they could clearly see what was going on. Their reports got my side of the story on the record and they gave me a good rating that led to a promotion.

*Q: Was this a regular inspection or were they coming out there to see what the problem was?*

MCCLELLAND: Actually there were two inspections -- and I think they were both regularly scheduled, although the interval between them was not the usual two years. The first inspection did not help me. I had just arrived at the post and the situation had not yet developed. It was the second inspection that really helped me.

Later, when I became a Foreign Service Inspector, I was very sensitive to the plight of Deputy Chiefs of Mission at difficult posts.

*Q: Just when were you in Kuwait?*

MCCLELLAND: I was in Kuwait from 1970 to 1974.

*Q: What were the issues between Kuwait and the US at that time?*

MCCLELLAND: Relations were very good between Kuwait and the US, except that the Kuwaitis always criticized us for our close relationship with Israel and our favoring Israel over our Arab friends. There were also several situations of interest that were developing:

The Kuwait Oil Company was being restructured. The Kuwaitis demanded and got control of the Company. As it worked out I believe Kuwaiti ownership was affirmed and a part of the old KOC organization remained as management, responsive to the "owner". This involved, of course, many foreign oil companies.

There were also problems in the Neutral Zone between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait concerning oil. The two countries had agreed to split oil revenues equally and there were two companies extracting the oil: Getty, an American Company, for Saudi Arabia, and Aminoil for Kuwait. There were plenty of complications. But the more difficult problem was one of legal jurisdiction and which laws were being enforced. At one time it was legal under Kuwaiti law for Kuwaitis to buy and drink alcohol but all alcohol was illegal under Saudi law. Your problem was determined by which police were involved.

We were selling, or trying to sell, military hardware to the Kuwaitis -- but he had very stiff competition from the French and British. We were also concerned with the Israeli Boycott of products produced in Israel. Coca Cola and General Motors were having a hard time in this regard.

In 1971 the British turned over to Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial Sheikdoms the handling of their own Foreign Relations. This meant that the US could establish new posts in those places. This we did, and Embassy Kuwait was the general overseer of these new posts until they were fully staffed.

In general, we had good relations with the Kuwaitis and Kuwait was an interesting post.

*Q: With your economic officer background, what was your impression of how Kuwait was using its money during this period?*

MCCLELLAND: The Kuwaitis spent quite a bit on their military establishment -- perhaps they should have spent more! (They were always in danger from Iraq and Iran.) They also undertook some large, important projects like their desalinization plant to provide adequate drinking water, and the Kuwait Towers for a Tourist attraction, as well as water storage. Also, they spent some assets on roads, a university, and other amenities.

But one of their most important expenditures was in foreign investment. Since Kuwait would probably run out of oil at some time in the future, they set up the Kuwait Investment Company to build up their assets in the future. They invested a great deal in US real estate, for example.

Another major expense item was to provide all necessary social services for Kuwaitis. No one paid taxes. Schools (including a college education abroad), hospitals, etc. were free. Kuwaitis with no income received generous allowances.

Most Kuwaitis, especially the ruling family and relations, had plenty of money and many spent it lavishly -- fancy cars, big houses, estates in Lebanon, Egypt, maybe the US -- and invested it abroad. Kuwait really has nothing but oil so I can't blame them for investing elsewhere -- and going abroad whenever they could.

*Q: Were they concerned about the large group of Palestinians who both were working there for some time but weren't allowed to have a particular stake in the country?*

MCCLELLAND: The Kuwaitis were very concerned about the Palestinians, because they constituted about a quarter of the population of Kuwait. When Kuwait was young and most of the Kuwaitis uneducated, the Palestinians provided the educated people who were competent to set up government, police, hospitals, social services, newspapers, etc. When I was there, Palestinians still held many important positions. But Kuwaiti law was clear -- Palestinians could not become full Kuwaiti citizens, they could only have restricted rights (no voting rights), and it was very difficult for them to reach even this second-class status.

There was a very close control over the Palestinians. The head of the Palestinian Community was closely supervised by the Interior Minister, and if anything got out of control, he was held responsible for rectifying the matter. Kuwaiti Security knew all about the Palestinian Community and it took swift and drastic action in case of any political movement or strike or other perceived threat to the Kuwaiti monopoly of power.

*Q: Looking ahead up to around '90 -'91, how did we look upon Iraq and also Iran as threats to Kuwait?*

MCCLELLAND: Iraq and Iran were always threats to Kuwait. As you may know, not many years ago Kuwait was just a walled city, a small sheikhdom, that the British carved out when they were trying to bring peace to the area. It just happened that Kuwait was located over an enormous oil field that no one knew about at the time. So Iraq has always considered Kuwait as



one of its provinces -- and the Iraqis would announce this from time to time. Then there would be heightened tension, borders would be closed, etc. It was only talk when I was there, but it kept the Kuwaitis -- and us -- a bit nervous. The "boundary" is only a disputed imaginary line in the desert. When Iraq finally did attack Kuwait, it had clearly been a possibility for a long time.

Iran is also very close, just on the other side of the Shatt-al-Arab. The Persians always hated the Arabs, and vice versa, so we always felt that Iran would like to take over Kuwait; however, the threat was not quite as direct, and Iraq was somewhat in the way.

*Q: How did Bill Stoltzfus run the Embassy?*

MCCLELLAND: He ran it as a real professional. He delegated responsibility well, but kept everyone fully accountable for their own duties. He was open in his dealings with the staff and concerned about their welfare. He made you want to do your very best and gave serious consideration to your ideas and reports. In my case, he gave me the full responsibility of Deputy Chief of Mission, as well as political reporting officer.

On the social side, Ambassador Stoltzfus included Embassy personnel in his dinners and receptions. He fully supported us in the work we were trying to do. In short, the Embassy worked as a team to carry out its assignments, and I believe the Department was aware of a great difference. The fact that Ambassador Stoltzfus learned Arabic as the child of a missionary in the Middle East and so spoke it very well, made a big difference also. It enabled him to have closer contacts with important Kuwaitis -- and we all benefited from that. Needless to say, I thought he was a great Ambassador!

*Q: Was the American or British connection stronger when you were in Kuwait?*

MCCLELLAND: It would be hard to say because they were both very important. Politically, the British were there first, of course, but from very early on there was also an American Christian Medical Mission that provided medical care for the ruling family and many others. The British also had a military mission there, and many Kuwaitis went to school in the UK. But the US was very much in the picture, and I did not get any feeling of competition, except perhaps when it came to sales of military equipment, or other commercial ventures.

In fact, the British and Americans worked fairly closely together. Officers of both embassies knew each other and often compared notes. Socially we mixed well together and we had many of the same Kuwaiti contacts. I guess I would have to say that the British connection was probably more important to Kuwait at that time, but the United States was stronger and steadily growing in importance.

*Q: Did we have much of a military presence in the Persian Gulf at that particular period of time?*

MCCLELLAND: Not very much. We had COMIDEASTFOR, stationed at Bahrain, with a converted seaplane tender, Greenwich Bay, as his flagship. A couple of US Destroyers would visit from time to time. The Commander made a series of calls at ports in the Persian Gulf area to

"show the flag", but he didn't have any naval force to back him up. COMIDEASTFOR had a small liaison office on Bahrain and we would visit there from time to time. We were welcomed at the British Naval Officers Club nearby.

We also had a Navy Training Team in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, to train a budding Saudi naval force in seamanship, whale boat handling, etc. The Officer in Charge was stationed at the Consulate General in Dhahran. This was a kind of coast guard effort directed, I imagine, to intercepting smugglers. It was not a significant presence.

**FRANÇOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**State Department; Arabian Peninsula Desk Officer**  
**Washington, DC (1972-1976)**

*Ambassador François M. Dickman was born in Iowa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1947 and received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He served in the U.S. Army during both WWII and Korea. Ambassador Dickman joined the Foreign Service in 1951 and served at posts in Columbia, Lebanon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. He served as the Arabian Peninsula Country Director until his appointment as the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Stanley Brooks beginning February 2001.*

DICKMAN: Aside from seeking of funds to open proper embassies in the small Gulf states, one of my initial efforts was to encourage the Saudis to place some of their growing dollar earnings into U.S. securities. This interest was shared by then Treasury Deputy Secretary Bill Simon and Treasury Under Secretary Jack Bennett. This interest was also shared by large money center banks. I can recall during my last six months in Jeddah seeing representatives from the large money center banks lining up at the Saudi Monetary Agency, which was the Saudi central bank, with each trying to outshine the other in offering services for Saudi deposits. Unlike Kuwait, which had deposited its surplus oil income in foreign financial institutions and equities for its Future Generation Fund, the Saudis did not have a similar fund and they were looking at various alternatives. By the fall of 1972, the Kingdom was meeting half of the world's annual incremental oil demand. Saudi oil production had risen rapidly in three years from 2.9 to over 7 million barrels a day. Coupled with the higher price of oil, it meant that the income received was growing beyond the Kingdom's absorptive capacity, at least in the short-run.

While the Saudis (and the Kuwaitis as well) wanted a safe place to place their excess funds, they also wanted complete confidentiality as to the amounts invested. One of the first important visitors from Saudi Arabia after I became ARP [Arabian Peninsula] Country Director was Saudi Monetary Agency governor Anwar Ali. In the fall of 1972, we also had separate visits of Oil Minister Zaki Yamani and Deputy Oil Minister Saud al Faisal. Saud was a son of King Faisal and later became (and still is) foreign minister. They proposed a special relationship with the United States whereby we would be assured of access to Saudi oil in return for allowing Saudi investments in the U.S. oil industry. While American officials were not keen on the idea, it is my

recollection that Treasury Under Secretary Bennett was sent to Saudi Arabia about this time to work out arrangements where the Saudis could invest their surplus income in a variety of U.S. Treasury notes, bonds, or other U.S. government securities. Since large sums were involved, the deposits would be "ex-market." In other words, they would be kept outside of the normal market for these securities and would be kept strictly confidential.

I should mention that during the time I was ARP country director, I was heavily involved in issues relating to arms sales to the peninsula countries, especially Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I worked closely with my Pentagon counterpart in the Office of International Security Affairs, which was headed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Jim Noyes. In 1972, there had been periodic border episodes between Kuwaiti and Iraqi forces with the latter building a road along the border. In March of 1973, Iraqi forces occupied a Kuwaiti border post and laid claims to the two mudflats of Waraba and Bubiyan, which command the approaches to Um Qasr, Iraq's only port on the Persian Gulf. The Kuwaiti's reaction was to declare a state of emergency and a request that we send a military survey team.

The team made a number of recommendations calling for air defense capability, tanks, and a quickly available air cover. A couple of months later, in response to Kuwait's request, we arranged to demonstrate some used Navy F-4 Crusaders that were being replaced and were immediately available. The Kuwaitis were also approached by the French, who were seeking to sell their much more sophisticated Mirage. After months of hesitation and despite Ambassador Bill Stoltzfus' effort to get the Kuwaitis to make up their minds, they finally decided to buy 38 Mirages from France. However, I should point out that we did sell the Kuwaitis the Hawk surface to air missile.

Although our moves to offer to sell arms to Kuwait generated some opposition among Israel's supporters in Congress, it was mild in comparison to the adverse reaction in the summer of 1973 when the Department agreed in principle to sell F-4 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia. The F-4 was a supersonic aircraft. Up to this time, we had supplied the Saudis with sub-sonic Northrup F-5s. By the spring of 1973, we had already concluded four military sales agreements to modernize and train the Saudi national guard, which serves as an internal security force, to build shore installations for the Saudi coastal navy, which included training, and to supply a variety of trucks and other vehicles to improve military mobility. I remember preparing a memorandum for Roy Atherton, who had replaced Rodger Davies. Rodger had been named to be our next ambassador to Cyprus. Roy was now the principal deputy NEA assistant secretary that I reported to. I do not recall exactly what arguments I used in the memorandum, but it was enough to convince Roy that we should respond positively to the Saudi request for the F-4 Phantoms. Roy in turn persuaded Sisco. I think one of the winning arguments was that in light of our growing dependency on Saudi oil, we could not turn down what the Saudis considered to be the litmus test of our commitment to their security. If we turned them down, the Saudi leadership would conclude that it had no recourse but to buy Mirages from the French.

Once the decision to make the F-4 available to the Saudis had leaked out, objections were heard in the Congress and hearings were held in July 1973 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The criticisms directed at the Department came mainly from Congressmen Rosenthal and Gilman. They had no problem responding positively to supplying arms to the

Shah or for that matter Israel, but they had a number of reservations when it involved sales to the Saudis. In the hearings, they asked what guarantees we had that the planes would not be diverted to another Arab country and thereby undermine Israel's military edge over its neighbors. They ignored the fact that only a small number of aircraft were involved. They also ignored that it would take a couple of years before these aircraft could be delivered and that under U.S. foreign military sales legislation, the recipient was obliged to not transfer equipment to a third party without prior U.S. approval. Besides, there was no mention that the Israelis had received the Phantom F-4s several years before and were expected to receive the top of the line F-16 in the next three years.

Every time we had this kind of hearing, it would generate a host of letters from members of Congress relaying questions from their constituents which asked about the future of our defense commitments to Saudi Arabia. Behind these objections were fears that our growing dependence on Saudi oil would impact directly on U.S. support for Israel. This required the time consuming preparation of replies, many of which Congressional Relations (or H ) objected to, particularly if the reply sounded too much like boiler plate. It was one of the Directorate's most onerous tasks. We were seeking to spell out how the arms sales supported U.S. interests in the region, but H wanted the letters to be as pleasing as possible to the member of Congress' constituent.

During the last year and a half I was Arabian Peninsula director, Joe Sisco had become Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Roy Atherton had become Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asia, and Sid Sober became the NEA deputy assistant secretary I reported to. With 1976 being a presidential election year, the Secretary realized that very little would be accomplished in the Middle East. So, he turned much of his attention to Sub Saharan Africa. During this year, the ARP directorate continued to be involved in preparing testimony on various arms sales. By then, we had established a small U.S. military liaison mission in Kuwait, whose acronym was USLOK (U.S. Liaison Office, Kuwait). One sale that generated a lot of opposition that I remember was responding to Kuwait's request for Sidewinder air to air missiles to be attached to A-4 aircraft, which the Kuwaitis had purchased to supplement their fleet of Mirages. In the end, after testimony by Sid Sober, the sale for a limited number was finally approved by the Congress.

As for the military sales program for Saudi Arabia, legitimate questions arose over the very high commissions that American suppliers of military equipment were paying to Saudi middle men such as Adnan Khashogi. I was concerned over reports that since the death of King Faisal, various members of the Saudi royal family were pushing hard to have a share in these lucrative commissions. By now, Saudi Arabia had made a formal request for the F-15s, whose long range was needed to protect the Kingdom's lengthy coastlines along the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Should the sale of F-15s be approved, plus a number of supporting facilities, there would be many opportunities for operators like Khashogi who we believed was passing a good bit of his high agent fees to certain favored members of the Royal family. This prompted Congress to pass the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1976 making it a criminal offense for any American company caught offering bribes to gain contracts. In light of this legislation and given the general opposition of Congress to more arms sales to Saudi Arabia, the Saudis were advised to put off their F-15 request until after the 1976 presidential elections.

Meanwhile, the hearings before the Church committee on the Arab boycott had generated moves

in Congress to include legislation suggested by the American Jewish Congress for the 1930 Export Administration Act, which was due for renewal in September of 1976. The hearings had also put pressure on the Commerce Department to release reports filed by American companies which had received boycott questionnaires. When the reports were released, the media misinterpreted them as evidence that the companies were complying with the boycott when it was just the opposite. The picture was further muddled by a Justice Department suit in 1976 against Bechtel, charging that the corporation was refusing to do business with Arab subcontractors because they were on the boycott list. At some point after the hearings, I remember talking to Senator Stevenson of Illinois, who was not planning to run again for the Senate and who seemed more reasonable than his colleagues. I told him I could not see how the proposed legislation would help deal with the Arab boycott. It was not going to make the Arabs change boycott rules. It would only harden their position. By drawing attention to the boycott, the hearings had given the Arab boycott bureaucrats in Damascus a field day and made them feel more important than they really were. It was undercutting our efforts to gain greater flexibility in the application of the boycott rules. The publicity generated by the hearings had made it more difficult for individual Arab nations to make exceptions to the boycott rules for commodities or services from companies that were included on the blacklist. In short, the anti-boycott provisions could drastically affect U.S. trade in this rapidly growing market.

**RICHARD W. BOGOSIAN**  
**Economic Officer**  
**Kuwait City (1972-1976)**

*Richard Bogosian was born in Massachusetts in 1937 in Massachusetts and educated at Tufts College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. His career included posts in Baghdad, Paris, Kuwait City and Khartoum and he was ambassador to Niger, Chad and Somalia. He was interviewed by Vladimir Lehovich in 1998.*

*Q: A strong undergraduate major in economics in six months. Dick, then what? Then Kuwait?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, then Kuwait.

*Q: What years were you in Kuwait?*

BOGOSIAN: We were in Kuwait from 1972 to 1976. Kuwait was, if you will, about as good and as exciting an assignment as the INR one was, and so in career terms that sort of back-to-back combination made a big difference in my career. When I was going to Kuwait, we were thinking in terms of this was the first time I was a section chief and so forth. There was no way of knowing that some of the things that were going to happen would happen in Kuwait, but in fact, it was a very tumultuous time. The 1973 War took place in those years. The quadrupling of oil prices, with all that that implied, took place in those years. While I was there, our exports increased 400 percent during the four-year period. Back then we did commercial work, and by the time I left we were doing eight trade missions a year. The posts in the lower gulf opened

around the time I got there. Our ambassador was accredited to five countries. He also was wonderful boss. Bill Stoltzfus was his name.

Q: *Bill Stoltzfus.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. And Kuwait was one of the most exciting places to be in the Arab World, partly because in Arab terms it was relatively free. There was a vibrant press; there were people from all over the Arab world; there were organizations like the Kuwait Fund and the Arab Fund and the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Companies that were based in Kuwait, as well as some major new initiatives underway. So that there was an interesting mix of people. It was very cosmopolitan. In addition, they were pumping three million barrels of oil a day when I got there, and by the time I left, what with the rise in the price of oil, it was the classic small emirate that was just bringing in so much money that you couldn't ignore it any more.

Q: *One of the highest per capita incomes in the world.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. I would note that while we were there the Iraqis threatened Kuwait. They attacked a border post. But interestingly enough the matter was quickly put down diplomatically.

Q: *The Iraqi claim to Kuwait goes way back.*

BOGOSIAN: I would note, though, that the Sabah family-

Q: *-goes way back.*

BOGOSIAN: *-goes even further back.*

Q: *1750s.*

BOGOSIAN: Something like that. I mean, Iraq itself has only existed in one sense since World War I. But you're right in saying that they claim a historical ownership of Kuwait.

Q: *Dick, in a sense you're describing a Kuwait that sounds somewhat more free than fun than it was 10 or 15 years later.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I think it was. There were a couple of things that happened. In terms of fun, I think some of my predecessors had even more fun than I did, because there was a time when one of my predecessors taught the Kuwaitis how to do national income accounts. While I was in Kuwaitis took over ownership of the oil company.

Q: *From whom?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, from a Gulf-BP consortium. And in contrast to Baghdad, the manager of the Kuwait Oil Company was an American, and needless to say, we worked very closely with him. When we were in Kuwait, this was probably in the last 50 years one of the happiest times in the Arab World because, given the way they look at things, they feel they won the war in 1973, and

at a minimum what they did was they overcame, at least to some extent, the shame they felt from the defeat in '67. This permitted them to be a lot more relaxed and open with the West, at least in Kuwait, plus with raising the price of oil, the money was just flowing in, and there was this sense that anything could be accomplished.

*Q: You say the oil price rose fourfold at that time? This was a catastrophic time in America, politically catastrophic.*

BOGOSIAN: We were in Kuwait, ha, ha.

*Q: Oil lines and coupons.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes.

*Q: What were U.S. interests in Kuwait? What were we trying to do there?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, needless to say, the one-word answer is "oil" - increasingly, oil plus money. Frankly, Vlad, what we were doing is the very thing that was at issue in the Gulf War. Kuwait is a place that we want to see in friendly hands. We want the oil to flow, and we want them to manage their affairs in a way that is the least disruptive to us. In fact, when I was in Kuwait, the oil minister in Saudi Arabia was Ahmad Zaki Yamani, who was a graduate of Harvard and clean-cut and things like that. And I used to say that Yamani caused more harm to the United States than Nasser ever dreamed of doing because of what he did in terms of raising... These difficult times in the United States were a direct result of what, in his cool way, Yamani did.

*Q: In OPEC.*

BOGOSIAN: And so you had a curious situation in Kuwait. When I was in Baghdad, the government was hostile, but they didn't move to take over the oil company, and the oil never stopped flowing. When I was in Kuwait, the government was quite friendly, and in fact, I knew, because Pete Hart told me during a visit in Kuwait, that their bottom line to the Americans was, are you going to help us if we ever are attacked?

*Q: By Iraq.*

BOGOSIAN: Well, the assumption is it's Iraq, but between you and me, they worried about Saudi Arabia and Iran as well.

*Q: They were not the most popular country in the world.*

BOGOSIAN: They are not the most popular. People don't like them because they're sanctimonious. We liked the Kuwaitis because they were very frank. Now we had Carl Albert come while I was there. He was Speaker of the House, and he met with Abdul-Rahman Salim Al-Ateeqi, who was the minister of finance and oil and one of the most important Kuwaitis, also a man very passionate on the Arab-Israeli question. And as the Kuwaitis did, he just raked the Americans over the coals, and as he was leaving, Carl Albert said to us, "I've never been

through anything like that in my life.” So when he was leaving at the airport, I was with a colleague, Arthur Houghton, who was an Arabist, who was accompanying him. They had been in Saudi Arabia. I said, “Arthur, why is he so amazed? You know the Saudis feel the same way the Kuwaitis do.” He said, “Yes, but, Dick, they’re so much more Olympian.” And this is true. The Kuwaitis tend to tell you what’s on their mind in a very direct way.

*Q: Interesting, yes.*

BOGOSIAN: And that means, if you’re living there and working with them, there are two things. First of all, you’re not trying to trick each other. On the other hand, you’re living in a context where the more positive parts of the relationship are out there as well. But on the other hand, they would say to me things like, “Don’t you want us to be frank?” and the short answer was no, we’d rather you didn’t, actually. And that’s one reason why the Kuwaitis were not particularly well liked.

*Q: Could one have anticipated a war with Iraq at that time, or the attack by Iraq on Kuwait?*

BOGOSIAN: Well, as I said, they attacked while I was there, but that’s more a function of understanding Iraq than of understanding Kuwait.

*Q: Was that a punitive attack or a takeover?*

BOGOSIAN: I forget what the ostensible reason was. It was a border post and we, through diplomatic channels, including getting King Hussein to help, it sort of was pushed back in. I don’t know. You know, after I left I believe that before he was the leader of the country, Saddam did some things in Kuwait that were in the nature of murder or I don’t know what. I visited Baghdad from Kuwait. I had reason to go up there once, and there was a Kuwaiti I knew, and we were getting ready to come back, and he said, “I can’t wait to get out of this country.” They’re so different in almost every way you can imagine, and the spirit of the two places is so radically different.

*Q: Did we work at all with the Kuwaitis on helping them invest their money?*

BOGOSIAN: Yes, we tried. First of all, as you can imagine -

*Q: They had a lot of money.*

BOGOSIAN: They had a lot of money, and one of our most frequent visitors was the assistant secretary for international affairs of Treasury. In that sense, in Kuwait - just to get back to the point you made at the beginning of our discussion of Kuwait - you said it was happier later, and there were three things that have happened that have made a big difference. One was a financial crisis they refer to as the *suq al-manakh*. In effect, it was a classic stock exchange situation that crashed. The reason it was traumatic for the Kuwaitis is they didn’t think that should happen. To them, up, up, up, up. And that had a kind of a sobering effect on them. It kind of revealed some of the weaknesses of the way the private sector managed its money. By the way, typically the Kuwaiti government has always been extremely prudent in its investments, including always



making sure a little bit was put away for a rainy day. The other thing, of course, was the war. There's no question that Iraq attacked and did what it did was traumatic. But the third thing was the environmental disaster of burning all those oil wells. And it's kind of like somebody -

*Q: We're talking about the recent war.*

BOGOSIAN: Yes. What I'm saying is those things have changed the atmosphere.

*Q: I was in Kuwait before the war, and my sense of it was not as relaxed and open and cheerful as what I got from you.*

BOGOSIAN: What year would that have been? Was it before or after the *suq al- manakh*?

*Q: This was circa '86-87.*

BOGOSIAN: I don't know what to say. I think the one thing I would say, though, Vlad, as the American economic officer and as one who knew just enough Arabic to sort of be able to shmooze a little bit, is that our ambassador had served twice in Kuwait, he knew everybody, he also was an Arabist.

*Q: Who was that?*

BOGOSIAN: Bill Stoltzfus. We simply had a wonderful relationship with a lot of Kuwaitis, and I don't think that many Americans had that kind of relationship. I mean, to be the economic officer in Kuwait when I was was simply a terrific place to be and to work, and it just wasn't that easy for the other people in the embassy because it's a town where business is what makes things go.

*Q: Absolutely. Anything else with Kuwait that we should touch on?*

BOGOSIAN: You know, I was there four years, and a lot happened in those four years, and the one thing that I think was interesting was that as the October War unfolded, there was quite a debate within the embassy as to whether the Kuwaitis would break relations with us. And the Ambassador and I said we didn't think they would. And in the event, they didn't, and what that showed was that the Kuwaitis valued their relationship with us even if they often took public positions that were somewhat antagonistic. And it's a very interesting thing, I guess, to serve in a Third World country, one which is as vulnerable as Kuwait is, when you feel that they look to you as their ultimate protector - because on the one hand it's kind of like a point beneath which your relationship is unlikely to go, because they value it so much, but it puts a burden on you that you may not wish to have.

*Q: Were we seen as a protector in that period?*

BOGOSIAN: I believe we were - when you say "seen," which is a lot different from treaties and things like that.

*Q: No, no, exactly, but indeed, through a certain amazing progression of American policy ten year later, we indeed became -*

BOGOSIAN: Well, I will tell you a story that I think is all right to tell. Pete Hart, as you know, used to be our assistant secretary for the Middle East. And he told me, he came to Kuwait as a private citizen, and we're both from Medford, Massachusetts, and we were chatting. And he told me about when the Emir visited in 1968, and you may remember that after the '68 election, but before the inauguration, Johnson let a lot of foreigners come and make state visits, and the Emir, as I said a little earlier, in his meeting with Johnson, he turned aside all his notes and said, "What I want to know is will you be there to protect us when the time comes?" And according to Hart, Johnson never really answered that question. I take it back - it wasn't with Johnson; it was with Rusk. But the point is, the question was made, and he wasn't told no. And of course, the proof of the pudding is what happened years later. So it wasn't formal, but when you say, well, were we *seen*, yes, I think almost everybody assumed that if it came to that we would help.

**WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS, JR.**  
**Ambassador**  
**Kuwait (1972-1976)**

*William A. Stoltzfus was born in Lebanon in 1924. He attended Princeton University and then entered the Naval Air Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1949 and his career included positions in Libya, Kuwait, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, and an ambassadorship to Kuwait. Ambassador Stoltzfus was interviewed by Lillian P Mullin in May 1994.*

STOLTZFUS: We were in Jeddah from July, 1968 to the tail end of 1971. And then we went back to the States on leave. I think we were there over the Christmas holidays of 1971. And in early 1972 we went out to Kuwait. That was when the British had left the Gulf area. They had Sir Jeffrey Arthur who was the British Resident in Bahrain. The British had a set up where they had the "Resident" in Bahrain who was the overall representative of Britain in the Gulf. And then they had Political Agents in each one of the countries along the pirate coast of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and so forth. There were seven principalities. I will get to those later. And Qatar and Kuwait. So the American Consul's counterpart in Kuwait when I was first there in the 1950's was the Political Agent. But by the time I got there as Ambassador in 1972, there was a British Ambassador in Kuwait.

I think Kuwait independence came in 1961. So they had been independent for some time before I arrived as Ambassador. In the Gulf the British had tried to make a federation of those various principalities, nine of them. Qatar, which stands by itself as a kind of thumb pointing up on the western side of the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which consists of seven states, and Bahrain, an island. But it was not surprising that the Rulers were jealous of each other. The Qatari and Bahraini Rulers were not about to bow to Sheikh Zaid, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi. Because Abu Dhabi is the biggest and most important state in the UAE, if they had joined the UAE they no doubt would have had to play second fiddle.

The Ruler of Dubai, who was of the Maktum family, also thought he should not be subservient, but Dubai is too small to be independent. Also, the Dubai Ruler does as he pleases anyway. It turned out that the UAE with the seven states formed one group. So I was Ambassador to Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman.

*Q: When did you learn that you were nominated to be Ambassador?*

STOLTZFUS: I mentioned this letter or missive or whatever it was that came from Washington to the Ambassador after the Agnew visit to Jeddah. Thacher then told me that I was being recommended to be Ambassador to Kuwait. So when I was back on leave I was on consultation. I was nominated somewhere toward the end of 1971. It must have been November or December, 1971. It was either in December or very early the next year that I went before the Senate Foreign Relations committee. Everything worked out okay. And then I left.

*Q: You didn't have a long wait?*

STOLTZFUS: No, no. It went quickly. They wanted somebody there pretty quickly.

*Q: Do you recall any of the things that the Senate committee asked you or what they seemed to be looking for? Did they know what they were asking during your interview?*

STOLTZFUS: It was pretty proforma. There were some questions about the oil companies. Who were the oil companies and where they were and so forth. There was not a lot of cross examining there. I did have one irritating experience though. The State Department gives you various suggestions for whom you should call on in Washington before you leave for your post. One was calling on my Senator from New Jersey, who was Senator Case. I'd always voted for Case. When I got to his office he just stood up behind his desk with his arms akimbo, rocking on one foot and then the other, making it grossly clear that I was not to sit down. I could see that his secretary was quite embarrassed by this. She clearly was uncomfortable. Anyway, he said, "Glad to hear you are going out. And we have an important base in Bahrain." He acted or pretended that he knew something about it. I wasn't there for more than two or three minutes at most, so that was not very good. But anyway, he voted for me so I guess I could say I was happy about that.

The questions by Senate committee members were basically designed to find out if I knew anything about the area. Who are the Rulers in various places? Or, what is the situation there? What is our interest there? You know, the sort of obvious questions that would be asked. But they were friendly. You might have thought that with my strongly Arab experience and background somebody might have asked, are you going to be balanced on the Palestine issue or something of that sort. I don't recall any questions like that, and I don't recall it being a difficult session at all. Then we went out to Kuwait.

*Q: Who was your DCM?*

STOLTZFUS: Walter McClellan was my first DCM. The first order of business was to present credentials of course. I did that in Kuwait fairly promptly. Issa Sabbagh, who was with USIS,

was in Kuwait at that time. As I have already mentioned, he was a very interesting character. He was of Palestinian background and had been with the BBC and then Voice of America. He spoke impeccable English and could mimic the British accent to the nth degree. An absolutely perfect British accent; he didn't use it officially but he certainly could put on the act.

He was also extremely strong in Arabic. He had a fabulous knowledge of classical Arabic and so he translated all the speeches that I made in my ultimately five presentations of credentials into classical. I was able to read in Arabic; my Arabic is by no means impeccable - fluent, but not impeccable. But to be able to read in classical Arabic was very effective with the various Rulers. Issa accompanied me on these presentations. The first one was in Kuwait. And then I went to Bahrain. The Ruler, Sheikh Isa Al Khalifa, speaks good English but was pleased to have me speak in Arabic. Then to Qatar. Then to the UAE for Sheikh Zayed al Nahayan, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi and also Ruler of the UAE Federation.

The Federation Rulership was supposed to rotate. Sheikh Zayed was to be first and Sheikh Rashid bin Maktum of Dubai to be next and then the others in turn. But it never happened. Zayed has remained head of the Federation. That is one of the reasons Rashid of Dubai was unhappy with the Federation arrangement. I'm sure he knew perfectly well that his rival Zayed would not relinquish, and wouldn't have to because he was more important and powerful.

Either at the presentation of credentials or at later meetings I was accompanied by one or the other of my sons, Bill or Philip, who were in their late teens.

Q: *Not your wife?*

STOLTZFUS: No. Ladies were not invited to such occasions. But Arabs love children and particularly boys. So Bill and Philip had periodic opportunities to be in on the meetings, fascinating for them. Our meetings with Zayed were in Al Ain, which is where he preferred to be within the country, not far from the Saudi border. Also not far from Buraimi, which years before had been a sticking point between the Saudis and Abu Dhabi, then under the British. The Buraimi oasis was in dispute for prestige reasons and because it might contain oil reserves.

But Al Ain was a favorite retreat, an attractive oasis. All along the road between Abu Dhabi and Al Ain, Zayed had had thousands of trees planted. The whole road was lined with these trees. And he did a lot of other reforestation. Or rather, foresting since there probably never were trees there before. The trees needed a great deal of water in that parched country. I complimented him. I said, "You have done a beautiful job. And of course that will bring more rain too. When you've got forests, they will encourage rainfall." And he said, "You know, Mr. Ambassador, my view of it is that Allah in his heaven looks down to see what his people are doing. When he sees them doing good things, planting trees and trying to make his earth beautiful, he takes pity on them and brings rain. That is when the rain comes." I thought that was a nice touch. He was a great hunter as well. He liked to go out in the desert. Didn't do a lot of shooting of animals but just liked to see them, like the ears of a fox lurking behind a bush.

So then I guess the last credentials presentation was in Oman with Sultan Qaboos. Oman is outstandingly picturesque, still reminiscent of the French Foreign Legion, a sort of "under two

flags" type of atmosphere. Very much British oriented. The military is in the British tradition. The British are very comfortable there.

Particularly striking is Muscat, which is built right into lava mountain rocks - extinct volcanoes. Of course it is as hot as it can be with the sun off those rocks. But it is very attractive none the less. The original port is an old volcano filled with water with the opening to the sea. And on either side of the opening are Portuguese forts in excellent condition. In previous times one of the forts was a prison, a real Chateau d'If. Any romantic image that came to mind would be perfectly in tune with the way Muscat looked.

Qaboos was ruler. He is the son of Sultan Said who, as I mentioned, spent most of his time in Salalah, Salalah being the part of Oman on the Indian Ocean. Muscat is on the Gulf of Oman. When I first met Qaboos he had no rank as far as I could tell and was not on speaking terms with his father. The two lived on opposite sides of the palace. But when Bill Eagleton and I said we wanted to see him, the Sultan assented and said, "I'll have my son take you around." So Qaboos took us around on a tour. He was pleasant, boyish and informal then, quite a contrast to his imperious manner as Sultan. So now he was Sultan when I presented my credentials. And he was doing good things for the country and people. Oil had recently been discovered so now the Omanis were really in the big time money.

*Q: Did you find the Embassy in Kuwait set up to do what you needed to do there?*

STOLTZFUS: The Embassy was on a choice piece of property owned by the Emir of Bahrain, right on the sea front. One of our periodic visitors was the Emir's agent, who would come up from Bahrain and say, "Don't you think you'd like to move to some other place?" And I would say, "No, I don't think we would at all." It was in fact a very desirable piece of land in a very good spot. The Chancery itself was just one of those, what do you call them? Pre-fabs. It was a sort of one story, rambling pre-fab. It was unprepossessing. I don't think it is much better now really.

The Ambassador's residence was nice but small. There wasn't enough space for our children still at home and our many guests. So we had it redone. My wife, our three girls and I moved out to Salmiya, which is a suburb of Kuwait City, and rented out there for at least four or five months while the residence was being worked on. We had a guest wing put on and the whole interior upgraded. In fact the first person who came to visit and stayed in our guest suite was Senator Fulbright. So it was known thereafter as the "Fulbright Suite". It was an attractive set up we had.

Occasionally something quite unexpected happens that gives one an insight into other people's attitudes toward life and society. Janet and I recall one particularly amusing episode that illustrates this. During our stay in Salmiya while the Embassy residence was being renovated and expanded, we rented a house on a compound owned and lived in by members of the important al Hamad family. Our immediate neighbor kept some chickens in a coop against the wall dividing our two yards. One day our frisky daschund Theseus burrowed a hole in the mud wall, entered the coop and killed a chicken. Of course we felt bad about it, but in the busy ensuing days of Id celebrations and calls we didn't get around to telling our neighbors what had happened.

A week went by and, probably on the off-day, Friday, I was in our back yard hitting some of my usual shaky chip shots. I wasn't watching Theseus, who took the opportunity to bolt through the fence again. This time he killed five chickens, almost all of the remaining flock. Further cover up of our dog's outrageous behavior was now unthinkable.

I went to our distinguished neighbor's door and asked to see him. A polite young man greeted me to say that unfortunately his father was ill; was there any message? I replied there certainly was. It was my sad duty to report that our dog had killed six of his chickens, and appropriate compensation was due him from me.

The young al Hamad listened to my story and then shrugged his shoulders. "It is your dog's nature to kill so he is not to blame. Also it was clearly the chicken's time to die. It is Allah's will, that's all." Subject closed as far as he was concerned.

Feeling quite persuaded that the chickens would not have died had Theseus not gotten his teeth into them and believing that canine crime should have its consequences, our driver Abdul Mu'ti and I went to the animal souk, bought a half a dozen fine chickens, brought them back in the official car and offered them to our neighbors. Young al Hamad was firm. Nothing doing. Cannot accept them. No point arguing.

We said we would accept defeat but we didn't have a coop and we couldn't keep the chickens in the back of my car. Al Hamad eyed us suspiciously. "You plan to trick us by putting them in our coop," he protested. No, no we said. We would take them as soon as we could build our own coop. Grudgingly al Hamad allowed the new chickens to "board" at his coop while we dealt with the logistics of henhouse construction. I doubt any Admin Officer ever had chicken coop construction in his job description, but there's a first time for everything. A coop was designed to repose at the end of the residence yard on the Embassy compound, but the project kept getting delayed (not exactly a high priority).

One night we returned to our Salmiya house after a late dinner to discover a stern message under the front door. It read: "Do not forget your chickens!" A few days later we moved our hens and the few eggs they'd laid while boarding ("Unthinkable that we should eat your eggs," said young al Hamad) to the Embassy coop and there the fowl lived happily enough.

My father came from a farming family in Ohio and although as a child I rarely visited our farming relatives, I have periodically dreamed of having a farm. Not much could be more absurd since I know nothing about agriculture and, more important, I abhor rising with the dawn. However some of my earliest recollections are of sheep and goats. I can see myself at a tender age feeding lambs in a field, and I remember my father slowing to a stop on a foreign road as our car was engulfed by a river of white fleeces - sheep being driven by the thousands from pasture to market. Anyway, I felt the need of having my own sheep in Kuwait, as we had from time to time at a farm we owned for a while in Virginia. I bought several ewes and a mighty ram. He was impressive, very large, sturdy and black. One day he lifted my littlest child Rebecca right off her feet with a butt to the rear. Another time, one evening, we had several International Executive Service Corps (known to us as the "Paunch Corps") volunteers and their wives to drinks at the residence. They were staying at the Hilton hotel, across the street from the Embassy, on one of

the upper floors so they could look down on our compound. One of the ladies exclaimed, "Where are your buffalo?" "Buffalo?" we asked, puzzled. "Yes, the buffalo we can see in your yard from our hotel room." Yes, lady, right.

Among the al Sabah Sheikhs we remember best were, first, Abdullah al Jabir, our Consulate landlord during our first tour. He was friendly, gracious and accommodating. No one took him too seriously, however, ridiculing him surreptitiously for his many marriages. He was not allowed more than four wives at once under Koranic law, of course, but he married and divorced with dizzying speed, over fifty times all told. But there was one wife he could not divorce, a daughter of the Gharabelly family. You don't divorce a Gharabelly, even if you are of the ruling family. Janet remembers calling on the Gharabelly wife who had just had an infant son, only to learn that Sheikh Abdullah had recently married "Miss Syria". When Janet commiserated with her, she made it very clear that on the contrary she was delighted. She showed my wife wedding pictures of the Sheikh and his Syrian bride and gloated, "I have my house, and my baby, and my jewels, and I don't have to have him anymore!"

Another senior Sheikh was Fahad al Salim, head of the Public Works Department. He spent most of his time enjoying himself but his wife Badria was a power to be reckoned with. She became a prominent and successful business woman with her own company. Most of her children were educated in the States, kept under the wing of a former member of the Dutch Reform Mission in Kuwait. I remember that at the beginning of one of the banquets Fahad gave periodically for foreigners - "sheep bashes", the British called them - he asked a missionary guest present to say grace. A number of his retainers, seated way down the long table, had already dived into the meat and rice. They certainly never had heard of saying a prayer before meals. Under the Sheikh's reproving glare they sheepishly sat back and submitted to the missionary's tactfully ecumenical blessing.

I have mentioned Abdullah Mubarak, who thought he should be higher in the ruling family hierarchy. Under the British Kuwaitis could not be Ministers but various Sheikhs, like Fahad, headed what later became government Ministries. Abdullah Mubarak could be said to have been head of Public Security in the mid 50's. A cause celebre took place during our first tour in Kuwait one time when, out on winter desert maneuvers with his troops, the Sheikh lost a valuable ring. For the next several days hundreds, or thousands, of his men were put to work sifting through the ground of the whole exercise area. They may not have honed their military skills but they did find the ring.

Sheikh Abdullallah al Ahmad was what we would call head of Interior Affairs. He commanded the police and ran the prison. Public beheadings, unlike Yemen or Saudi Arabia, were rare, but public beatings, often for fast violations during Ramadan, were common. The victim would be stripped to the waist and tied to a post or scaffold. Abdullah al Ahmad would light a cigarette, the signal for the beating to begin. The flogging ended when the Sheikh put the cigarette out.

Jabir al Ali was another restless member of the al Sabahs, harboring resentment similar to Abdullah Mubarak's; he thought he should be higher in the pecking order. Jabir al Ali owned a charming garden - an oasis - in the desert north of Kuwait City. He welcomed our visits to his place anytime. Once he was there when we arrived. Sitting on mats under the trees, we drank

coffee with him and his many companions. We had brought our own food so we declined his invitation to lunch. But later as we ate in another part of the oasis servants brought us camel's milk, fruit, goodies of all sorts and a horse for us all to ride.

Like many Kuwaitis Jabir al Ali loved the desert. He would hold horse and camel races, raising huge clouds of dust and sand along the barren plain.

During our second tour Abdul Rahma al Ateeqi was Minister of Finance. Rough and ready, outspoken, impatient of niceties, Ateeqi "took a bit of knowing" as the British would say. He hid his admiration and basic liking for Americans and Westerners in general behind a stern and critical attitude. When David Rockefeller came through Kuwait I warned him just to listen to Ateeqi through his anti-US tirade, not argue, not agree. Simply take note and get to business. Later, after the call on the Minister, Rockefeller said, "If you hadn't given me that advice, I would never have imagined him a friend."

During the distasteful period of arms merchanting, I had occasion to meet with Ateeqi in his office regarding the bills for the Raytheon missiles and other hardware that Kuwait was buying from us. He started the session with a blast. "You obviously don't consider us friends...you have no respect...we are just little inferiors to be treated like dirt and taken advantage of..." On and on he went. At one point he turned to his Deputy, Khalid Abu Su'ud, and said, "Take notes, you're taking notes, aren't you?" Khalid looked at him and assured him he was taking notes. In fact he was not writing anything, which was clear to me and had to be to Ateeqi as well.

Then Ateeqi suddenly stopped fuming, smiled, and pulled open a drawer. He dismissed Abu Su'ud and said to me, Okay, now let's have some tea. I have many kinds here, which would you like? We had tea, a very pleasant chat, no more talk of prices. I reported to Washington that Ateeqi and I had discussed military costs and his hope that we could keep them down as much as possible. I didn't report a word of his tirade. No point in trying to explain to a humorless bureaucracy back home a Kuwaiti Minister's ploy.

Near the end of our second Kuwait tour I was confined to bed for several weeks with a painful disk problem. Ateeqi came to call one afternoon. Our conversation moved to the subject of oil reserves under the Gulf's waters and the disputes between Iran and Kuwait and other Arab Gulf states as to where the boundary in the water lay. At one point I said I had a map in our bedroom closet. My wife, arriving with a tray load of refreshments a few minutes later, was horrified to see Ateeqi's feet protruding from our closet as he rummaged around in a mess that would make Fibber McGee proud, digging out the map. Ateeqi could be a dangerous adversary. And he could be a wonderful friend.

We were close friends of the al Turkis. Abdul Aziz al Turki was a Saudi we had known in Jeddah. He married Barbara, one of our Embassy secretaries. While he spoke impeccable English, was an avid tennis player and married an American, yet he retained conservative Saudi attitudes. Abdul Aziz was a protégé of the famous oil Minister Ahmad Zaki Yamani. He became Deputy Minister of Oil under Yamani and later headed OAPEC, the Organization of Arab Petroleum Countries, based in Kuwait. A complex and in some ways troubled person, he represents a breed of Arab that has been educated and exposed to Western ways so that they have



an identity crisis. It shouldn't be surprising then that conservative Islamic societies in countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia are so antagonistic to Western influences which they see as undermining their basic values.

We had outstanding local employees in Kuwait. Abdul Mu'ti Haroun was the Ambassador's driver. One hot summer day in 1954, I believe, a ragged, dirty, smelly Palestinian came to the door of a Consulate looking for a job. "What do you do?" I asked. "Driver," he said. "Get in this car," I told him, "and drive." The car immediately smelled like a cross between a skunk and rotten eggs. I steeled myself. He drove - very well. Back at the Consulate I said, "You have the job. Now go and wash and never be dirty again." Abdul Mu'ti walked away. When we next saw him he was spotlessly clean, shaven and neatly dressed. It is no exaggeration to say that for the next 30 years at least (I think he's now retired) he was never less than impeccable, along with being an exceptional driver.

Another unforgettable character was our butler Gulzaman, who had originally been hired by the Kuwait Oil Company. Back in the '50s when L.T. Jordan, then manager of the company, learned that Harry Symmes, our Consul, was looking for a good servant, he offered Gulzaman. A Pathan, over six feet tall, with his white loose blouse, baggy trousers and a turban folded so that the colorful end flared up like an Indian feather, Gulzaman was an impressive sight. He was the epitome of a British Raj's butler, discreet, imperious, skillful, reliable. He remained with our Consulate and then our Embassy for many years.

The end was sad, though. When we arrived for our second tour in Kuwait an older Gulzaman seemed to have lost his joie de vivre and his energy. He became further downhearted when we dismissed a woman employee of the residence. We had Dinke, our Ethiopian nanny, so we didn't need the other woman. Finally, early one morning when we were living in Salmiya awaiting the completion of the residence renovations, our cook came running to us breathlessly. "Gulzaman, something is wrong with him," he said. Something was indeed. He was lying dead on the floor of the downstairs bathroom. It took several of us to haul his large, lifeless body up the stairs and out to the back seat of the car. Abdul Mu'ti drove the body to a hospital. In Gulzaman's room were some pills and powders that we sent to the Mission hospital for analysis. I don't recall what the report on them was. Presumably not drugs. It was a sad end to a dignified and proud man's life.

One of the main American groups in Kuwait was Raytheon, which was putting in an anti-missile program. Of course the oil company was the most important group. Gulf and BP were the two companies that formed the Kuwait Oil Company, with headquarters in Ahmadi, a town south of Kuwait City.

*Q: How big was your staff?*

STOLTZFUS: We were about a dozen Americans; it was small, a "Class Four" Embassy. As time went on and our responsibilities increased, we thought it should be upgraded. It eventually became a "Class Three" post. But at the time it was one of our modest ones. Mainly there for the oil company.

Our relations with Kuwait were good. Kuwait did not break relations with us as did a number of

other Arab states after the June 1967 war. While Kuwait never wanted to appear to be in our pocket, as a very small state it has had to rely on others for its security - first the British and then us.

*Q: Did you see much difference in Kuwait when you came as Ambassador compared to you first service there in 1954?*

STOLTZFUS: Oh, it was completely different. In 1954, oil was just starting to come in. Kuwait still had its mud walls and virtually no paved streets. You went through gates in the wall to get into town. And after rains, the laborers would slap mud on the walls. The American Consulate was a ways out of town in a little leaky, mud-adobe place on a sandy beach that was owned by one of the Sheikhs, Abdullah al Jabir. Those were really modest times.

By the time I got there as Ambassador, the wall was down and there were paved streets. The cemetery in the middle of town had been removed and there were major buildings all through the city. It became a city. And the atmosphere was totally different. It was on its way to looking the way it does today. I would say if you exchanged the buildings in Dallas for those in Kuwait, nobody would know the difference. I mean, nobody would know the difference. Kuwait looks like Dallas on the sea. Tall buildings and spread out city and ring roads. It was a completely different scene from the mid '50s.

Of course as an old timer who grew up in the area, I found it more interesting in the "old days". It was much more informal. It was friendly and relaxed and everyone, right up to the Ruler, was easily accessible. Important dignitaries might be sitting out on their verandahs or by the sea. By 1971 you had to set up appointments well in advance, and everything was much more bureaucratic.

*Q: I think we were talking about your post to Kuwait where you were Ambassador to Kuwait, Bahrain and the Emirates. And you started with your arrival and the size of the Embassy.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. We arrived in the early part of 1972. My job was not only to present credentials and get settled in Kuwait but also to start setting up our posts down in Bahrain and Qatar and the UAE and Oman. Over the course of the four years I was there, I spent a great deal of time down the Gulf as well. But I considered it the best job in the Foreign Service because of the variety and the interests and the different rulers and countryside. You could never be bored because you were in one place for awhile, and then you moved out and were paying visits down the Gulf.

In 1972 Secretary Rogers visited Bahrain and Kuwait. Our government had devised what was called the "Rogers Plan", which was an effort, one of the myriad efforts, to solve the Middle East - Palestine problem. It was a good plan but it ran into our usual domestic political obstacles and so went down the tubes like all the rest of those plans.

My first year was largely a matter of establishing our various posts down the Gulf. 1973 started to get really interesting because in March of 1973 the Iraqis made some threatening moves on the Kuwaiti border. The fact is the Iraqis have never accepted Kuwait as an independent country.

They have always coveted Kuwait and periodically have tried to grab it. Well, this was one of those times. They made a feint at the border, which the Kuwaitis were very upset about.

The Iraqis also claimed a couple of islands owned or at least also claimed by Kuwait. One is Bubyah and the other Muskan, I believe, just around the corner from Kuwait City. It is very close quarters there. From the Iraqi point of view these islands, especially Bubyah, block a good part of Iraqi territory at the head of the Gulf. The British had some troops that they were prepared to deploy if something really serious happened. So the Iraqis backed off and just harassed the Kuwaitis. They are very good at that. They would take any occasion to harass the Kuwaitis, trying to keep them off balance. I remember a visit by Crown Prince Saad al Abdullah, who was also Minister of Defense, to Baghdad where of course he was showered with Arab brotherly love and all that kind of thing. But he got the treatment all right. "So sorry we have upset you. You know very well that Baghdad is your capital and Kuwait is our capital and we are all brothers together." All of us who heard about the visit guessed that the Kuwaitis would be more concerned about the latter part of that sentence than the former, to say the least.

So that was the main thing that happened in 1973. And what it resulted in was an effort to sell arms. Of course, we are the biggest arms merchants in the world. We didn't waste any time and neither did the British or the French to offer the Kuwaitis military equipment that I doubted seriously would ever enhance their security. At least it made them feel good. Like Raytheon with its missiles and anti-aircraft system. Lockheed with various security devices. And fighter planes. We were the security and missile types. The British were the tank types. And the French were trying to sell their Mirage planes as well. These activities were carried on sporadically during that year.

Then in October, 1973 was the Yom Kippur war, when Nasser decided on a surprise attack which strangely and uncharacteristically the Israelis were unprepared for. The local atmosphere was tense for some weeks. Any American in the Arab world was at risk in this situation. The Kuwaitis, however, were very anxious to keep everything calm, and they did remarkably well on that. There were no demonstrations and Americans were not put in a position of feeling that there was a high degree of danger there.

We did hit on something we felt had no political aspects to it, just a humanitarian gesture. The Kuwaitis had called for blood donations. So my wife, Janet, went to the blood center to see about giving blood. The assumption of everybody was of course that they wouldn't take an American donor. Americans shouldn't be hanging around those places and so forth. She found a long line of Kuwaiti women waiting to have their blood drawn. And they were all extremely nervous. They had never done it before. They didn't know whether they were going to or not. The nurses took Janet right up to the front of the line. She kind of protested, you know: "I don't want someone else's place just because I'm a foreigner." They said, in effect, look, if you are willing to do this it will be a very good example for the rest of them. We need someone who will do this so we can get these nervous nellies to go along. So that was very helpful. And we certainly felt that whatever young man needed blood, no matter what side he was on, should have it. This was not a political matter. We never got any flack for doing that. I doubt we ever reported it anyway.

The serious aspect of the crisis, of course, was the Arab threat led by King Faisal of Saudi

Arabia, to cut off the oil. That caused a tremendous brouhaha in the western world and sent oil prices up ten fold. Everyone was in a great tiz over this. In the event, the oil was never cut off. But it was a pretty nasty situation. It certainly rocked the energy and the financial markets. The result of these painful oil prices was a massive effort by the west to recycle petro dollars by selling goods - whatever they could sell - to the Arab world, particularly, of course, to the ones who could pay: the ones that had the oil and that were making the fantastic profits.

Armaments are the best thing to sell because they are the most expensive. There you are talking about billions of dollars instead of selling cars or refrigerators or whatever for relative peanuts. That was big time. I became, much to my distaste, an arms merchant. I mean, I was seeing the Minister of Defense often, assuring him we had the best stuff.

My competition was my British and French colleagues, friends of mine. John Wilton was the British Ambassador and we were thick as thieves. We played tennis and so on. Paul Carton, whom I had known at other posts, was the French Ambassador and we were also close friends. Here we were battling each other over who would sell the most arms for the most money. I found it highly distasteful. For example, I told the Minister of Defense that he didn't have to pay hundreds of millions of dollars to the French for Mirages; we had perfectly good, refurbished fighter aircraft for a fraction of the cost of new ones. So I had our Air Force fly in these planes to show them off. They put on a good show. We went out to the airport to watch these planes take off like rockets. They were impressive and the Minister professed to be impressed. Of course he was too polite to say otherwise.

They would have been perfectly adequate planes. I mean, I don't think any new or old planes would have been of any real use to him if Kuwait were attacked by a big neighbor like Iraq. These would have been just as good as any, and in my opinion the best buy. But you don't buy second hand. You are a Kuwaiti, for heaven's sake! You aren't going to buy anything second hand. Some cast off from another country? Never! So obviously it had to be Mirages, which cost them three or four times as much.

We had tanks but the British also had tanks, and of course the Kuwaitis were anxious to spread their arms purchases around. The choice would be the British Chieftain. So Raytheon and Lockheed mainly were the companies that we dealt with. And it took forever for the Kuwaitis to make up their minds. They would hem and haw over the choices, and I didn't really personally care whether they bought them or not. But of course you do your job. So I pressed them periodically.

One of the checks that was issued by the Kuwait government was for eight plus million dollars - in my name! I was a bit taken aback when it came in and returned it quickly. Obviously I was not going to pass checks through my name. Aside from the fact that it wasn't my money, I didn't want to be taxed for eight million dollars by the IRS! And spend the rest of my life in debtors prison. But I wish I had taken a picture at least of this check of \$8,120,000 pay to the order of William A. Stoltzfus, Jr. It was a pleasant thought for a few seconds. That would have been a nice chunk of money.

Then came the assassination of Roger Davies in Cyprus and of Cleo Noel in Khartoum. And our

Embassy in Beirut was blown up. Those were depressing times. I lost a lot of enthusiasm for what I was doing when that sort of thing happened.

It is not only that you are concerned about your own safety and that of your wife and children. All Americans were at risk. The children were going to school in town. We would get CIA reports on hit squads in town. So you had a car follow you everywhere. The Embassy did a complete job of installing iron grilling and sub-machine guns and surveillance equipment in the Chancery and the residence. I have a tendency to claustrophobia anyway. I found it extremely uncomfortable and I would have a lot better taste in my mouth for the latter part of my career if those horrendous events hadn't taken place. And I suppose I have to admit I was scared.

It was not a pleasant situation. You couldn't go anywhere. You couldn't walk along the beach. You couldn't go out to the desert. As I said, I became claustrophobic and I felt I was in a citadel. What is interesting to me in my reflecting on my feelings about that is how elusive security really is. The more you try to make yourself safe with concrete, steel and weapons, the less secure you feel. You realize that a professional is going to know how to get in regardless.

It makes me think of the Israeli and Palestinian situation where the Israelis are so concerned - quite rightly - about security. And the lengths to which they go to protect themselves, and to not move forward on peace arrangements with the Palestinians except very grudgingly because of this preoccupation with security. The problem is you can never be one hundred per cent secure. I mean, there is no doubt that hit squads from the Hamas and other Islamic militants can get through sooner or later, one way or another to do some terrorist act.

That was my state of mind when I was in that situation in Kuwait: that the more security measures we took, the less likely we were to feel secure. There is no such thing as one hundred per cent security without digging a hole and just sitting underground somewhere. Even that probably wouldn't do it. Somebody would roll a rock on you. It made me extremely uncomfortable to be spending so much time trying to make everything secure. It is such a negative exercise and it just turned me off, I must say.

By 1975 I was getting pretty antsy. I decided that I didn't really want to go back to a job in Washington. Whether I could have gotten another post abroad was another matter. I learned later that Bill Schauffele, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, had wanted me to go back to be one of his deputies. It happened that one of my Princeton classmates, Bill Sword, came out to Kuwait on a visit. He was an investment banker at that time, just leaving Morgan Stanley to set up his own firm. And he said, "Why don't you join me?" In retrospect, there are pros and cons to my having decided to do that, to go with him, which I did.

In 1975 I also developed a back problem and was in bed for awhile, but that worked out okay. My Egyptian doctor there said, "I am not going to operate on you. If you want an operation, you have to go to the States." Well, I told him I didn't want an operation, to which he replied that he thought he could get me back on my feet. He and his therapist did a first class job. When I got back to the States the doctor said, "We would have operated." And I said, "Thank God I wasn't back here in that case."

A little bit later the Minister of Finance, Anwar al Ateeqi, paid a visit to the States. I asked the Department if I could come along with him. He and I were good friends, and I thought I might be of some help to him and his aides during their visit. The Department said "okay". So I accompanied the Minister of Oil on various events that took place in Washington and elsewhere. One of his interests was handicapped children. There was a care center in Kuwait for handicapped kids which my wife was involved in. At Ateeqi's request, he and I went to Wilmington where Dupont has a major facility for handicapped people. I thought there were some very positive aspects to that visit.

I tendered my resignation from the Foreign Service in September, 1975 but offered to stay in Kuwait until the Department found it convenient for me to leave the post. I didn't get an answer right away. Finally, I guess it was December, I was told it was okay to come out. So I was there for another three months.

The period of the mid '70s was a very active time. There were a lot of visitors. Throughout, there were a lot of visitors. I think I mentioned Fulbright; he came twice, once while still a Senator, later as a private citizen. After 1972 as I remember, America suddenly found out where Kuwait and the Gulf were. There were agricultural visits - it is not too clear to me why. Congressman Poage was the Chairman of the House Agricultural committee. He was an aging Texan who had served in Congress for over three decades. We had Senator Fulbright. We had Senator Hatfield and Senators from North Carolina, South Dakota, California, etc., etc. coming through. Congressman Solarz of New York, a Jew, was nevertheless welcome in Kuwait. Senator Percy of Illinois and his wife Louise came. Percy was sufficiently impressed with his Mid East trip that he later made some public statements that got him in trouble with the Israeli lobby in Washington. We had a whole host of visiting officials who came so they could say they knew something about this crucial area. Some of them were pleasant and thoughtful and others pretty demanding; the latter were nothing more than boondogglers. One Congressional worthy, whose name is mercifully forgotten, invited himself to my secretary's apartment, plied himself with liquor and promptly passed out on her bed.

We also hosted a blue ribbon mission of top US corporate executives, on the lookout for opportunities to recycle petro-dollars back to the US. Iacocca of Ford was one of the most prominent visitors. Ford of course had been on the Arab boycott list for many years but Kuwaiti businessmen were literally panting after Ford and Coca Cola, later removed from the banned list.

Most of these visitors were interesting. We got a good view of how they felt about US politics. We always liked to talk to them about that. There were visitors right up to the time we left. We left in early January, 1976.

*Q: What was Fulbright looking at?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, the first time he came Fulbright was Chairman of the Foreign Relations committee, touring the area. He came to Kuwait from Teheran and a call on our great friend the Shah of Iran. It isn't always clear why these people take the trips they do but they are not always boondogglers. The Chairman of a committee can pretty well dictate his own terms about what he wants to do. And after all the Gulf and oil and the Middle East in general were hot items. It was

useful for Congress to have some first hand knowledge of the situation post the 1973 war, especially with the Israelis upset by what had happened.

I think they all felt they needed to have some knowledge so they wouldn't show their ignorance in a debate on oil or Arabs or Israel. Or when somebody might ask, "What do you think about the Middle East, Chairman Poage?" He wouldn't want to say, "Well, I have never been there." I think they really felt that they needed to know something about the hottest spot in the world at that time. So that would be their reason for coming.

To me, looking over my career, I must say I had infinitely more fun in the early years than in the last. As I've said, I'm slightly claustrophobic and I don't like a lot of pomp and ceremony and formality. Perhaps I never took myself as seriously as I should have. I always felt at home in the Middle East. I was born in Beirut. I just felt very comfortable with Middle Easterners whether they were Arabs or Jews or whatever they were. It was my part of the world and therefore I was able to do a lot of things on my own.

My bosses let me roam around when I was younger to do whatever I thought was useful. I was much freer to go and visit people and talk to them and bring back reports of how people felt and what the countryside looked like and so forth. The farther you get up in the ranks, of course, the more formal things become. There is truth in the joke about owning a boat. The two best days of owning a boat are the day you buy it and the day you sell it. With some exaggeration I would extrapolate that to say probably the best two days of my tenure as Ambassador were the day I made Ambassador and the day I left. So...to some extent I didn't have a lot of regrets leaving.

And looking over my career, I realize I did a lot of things that were fun to do. I would say primarily Libya, where I first started abroad, and certainly Yemen are at the top of the list. And Saudi Arabia, where on my first tour I literally spent day and night with George Wadsworth, who was a unique character in the Foreign Service. He did things entirely on his own, much to the distress of the State Department on occasion. Later in that tour Ambassador Heath gave me incredible full rein - to the extent of seeing the King in his boudoir, on my own initiative.

*Q: Wadsworth built a golf course everywhere he went.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes, he did. He was very unorthodox. But I was with him constantly. It got so I was thinking the way he thought and writing as he wrote. He liked to work at night and sleep late in the morning. I never saw my wife for weeks at a time. But it was a year in which I learned a tremendous amount. That was great.

Donald Heath was kind and gentle and not very energetic. He has now passed to his reward so I can say that. He preferred playing golf and he gave me incredible rein. I could just go ahead and do things on my own. I would take off to Riyadh and call on anyone from the King down to the garbage collector. That was a fantastic experience, to be able to do pretty much what I wanted to do. I would come back to the Embassy, write up my report, and he would send it in to Washington. He had been Ambassador to Cambodia, a kingdom, so he was already very much royalist oriented when he got to Saudi Arabia, where Saud was King. King Saud was a most unfortunate ruler, not mean or cruel but totally inept. He bankrupted the country building palaces,

concocting crazy plots and indulging his every whim. His brother Faisal was Crown Prince who took over later, as I have mentioned. Saud had to be removed. He couldn't handle the job.

But Ambassador Heath was focused on the fact that he was accredited to the King. Some of us in the Embassy felt that it was important not to ignore Faisal, who we knew was very unhappy with Saud. At the same time it was obviously up to the ruling family, not us, what they did about their problems.

*Q: Back to your ambassadorship in Kuwait. You had an enormous district to cover. I mean from Kuwait to the last of the Emirates is practically 2,000 kilometers. How did you do that? And how often did you make these trips to represent the United States in these far-flung little places?*

STOLTZFUS: Before about 1973, the communications were not that great. There were not that many flights. A certain amount of overland travel was required. But once Gulf Airways got organized, there were plenty of planes and plenty of flights. And it is less than an hour by air to Bahrain island, for example. It is about the same to Qatar. It would be an hour and a quarter or an hour and a half to Abu Dhabi or Dubai. Going to Muscat in Oman would be two hours. But it was really not that far.

*Q: Did you always fly?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, no. I went overland when I could. It was a question of time, of course. I hate flying. I would infinitely rather drive. So we would occasionally drive and I would take the boys down. And we would drive through Saudi Arabia to Qatar.

*Q: What were the road conditions at that time?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, they gradually improved. Initially they were sand roads and rubble and dirt roads. As time went on they kept improving. The coastal road from Kuwait to Dhahran was okay. It was not too bad. It was trickier to drive across and into Qatar And you were in pretty deserted country there. Still, it is not that far. I mean it is not like crossing Saudi Arabia which I had done before when the roads were just dirt tracks. And you are talking 900 miles from Dhahran to Jeddah. Whereas here, well - maybe 200 - 300 kilometers, 200 miles. It would take all day but it wasn't all that bad.

I really wanted to drive from the Emirates to Oman. But it was only later that the road was good enough so that you weren't spending days on the journey. It was a question of time and opportunities. You weren't sure that you could see the Rulers or the people you wanted to see exactly when you wanted to see them. And in particular, if it was a Thursday or a Friday, which is a day off, that was not a time to be there. You might go down on a Friday and be there by Friday evening and try to make calls the next day. If that plan didn't work out, you simply had to wait for the summons. In Yemen that wait might be days or even weeks. In the Gulf Rulers and Ministers were more considerate or at least more up-to-date. A Ruler isn't at your beck and call, though. So it might take some time to see him. I imagine at least every quarter I visited one place or another. It was fascinating. I loved that. That was just great.



*Q: Did your officers make these trips and cover these small Emirates?*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. The economic officer, for example, would go down because as the posts were being set up they weren't fully manned. And so he could be considered a regional officer. As time went on and the facilities were established - the Embassy and the housing and so on - then each post had its economic and political officer. In time it became less of a chore for anybody else but me to travel down the Gulf.

We had chargés in each of those posts. Initially they were occupied with setting up. As I explained earlier, the late 1960's to early 1970's were a time when the British were withdrawing from the Gulf and establishing independent countries. These little Sheikdoms were just barely independent. We moved quickly to set up posts, as did the French. And of course the British were already there. All they had to do was change a Political Agent to a British Ambassador. So from 1972 - 1976 I was Ambassador to Kuwait. And from 1972 - 1974 I was Ambassador concurrently to Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman.

During those times I paid a lot of visits to the posts, working with the Chargés. We were gearing up for an Embassy and an Ambassador. By the end of 1974 Ambassadors were coming into the posts. On their way to those posts they would come through Kuwait and we would have consultations and so on. By the time I left there were Ambassadors in each one of those countries.

By 1976 and perhaps by 1975, even, Muscat, Bahrain, Doha, which is the capital of Qatar, and Abu Dhabi all had Embassies and Ambassadors. In the case of the UAE we also had a Consulate in Dubai, an important economic center. Our main activities of course revolved around oil issues. These were the key matters. And then once in a while there would be tiffs between the states. What Hermann Eilts would have called "an Ox-Bow incident". Some people will remember a fine Western movie with Henry Fonda called The Ox-Bow Incident. I was reminded of that film when these little dust-ups occurred. I'm not referring to the Iraqis. They were always tough. But the Bahrainis and the Qataris, for example. They had and probably still have disputes over where the line is between them in terms of oil in the Gulf. Because there is oil in the Gulf. It is not just on the land. There is oil under the water as well.

More serious were the Iraqis and perfectly serious also were the Iranians on the east side of the Gulf. There was supposed to be a line dividing the east and west sides of the Gulf but if you found that the oil was slightly on the wrong side from your point of view, why, of course there are well known ways of drilling down and then bending the drill across. Nobody trusted anybody else. Then there were the Gulf island disputes. Our great buddy, the Shah of Iran, was busy making remarks such as, Bahrain really belongs to us. And by the way, Abu Musa and the Tumbs also really belong to us.

Then Dubai and Sharja would take exception on the islands issues. So there was always plenty of action going on that gave you occasion to report to Washington; you never knew where somebody would start shooting. Probably never terribly serious when it came to one little principality on the Arab side against another. But when the Iraqis or the Iranians flexed their muscles, this was trouble at another level. The Iraqis had gun boats and they would periodically

steam up and down the Gulf, making the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis and the UAE very nervous. Let me say that in Abu Dhabi several of the senior advisors to Sheikh Zayed were Iraqis, but not of the revolutionary stripe. They were from royalist times, certainly not on the side of these Iraqis with gun boats. The Iranians also were a threat, especially the Shah and his demands on the islands.

The state on the Arab side that had the best relations with Teheran at that time was Dubai. Dhow owners from Dubai traditionally smuggled gold to India and they kept their lines open to Teheran and to the Iranians for all manner of goods. There was always hanky-panky going on between Iranian shores and Dubai. The Omanis were also on pretty good terms with the Shah. They were careful to keep their lines open too. The Shah even offered troops to Oman at one point. I have forgotten the circumstances.

The Gulf area was and always will be a very interesting area, very unsettled. It will always have the potential for trouble.

*Q: What was the makeup of the royal family, I guess that is what it was, in Kuwait at the time you were there?*

STOLTZFUS: The Saudis are the only ones who allow themselves to have Kings and Princes. The other Rulers and male family members in Kuwait and down the Gulf are called Sheikhs. The Sheikh of Bahrain, Sheikh of Kuwait and so on. The Ruler of Oman is called a Sultan. Their families are the Rulers and usually family members retain the most important, key ministries as well.

The Saudi royal family is huge. There must be ten or twenty thousand of them. They are a huge, huge family, bigger than most tribes. The Kuwaiti family is much smaller. But of course they have their disputes among themselves too. While we were there we would learn about arguments regarding succession among various branches, and I think I mentioned the same was true in Saudi Arabia, the branches there being based on the wife, the progeny of a particular wife. This is family politics in a very real sense.

As I explained, in Saudi Arabia the branches form political groupings. The government is basically an inner family elite with its own parties or branches totally exclusive of the rest of the country. The rest of the country has no look in, in terms of leadership. This was true in Kuwait as well. But Kuwait, I always thought, was a little more democratic. The Kuwaitis have had a parliament, off and on. They did allow criticism as long as you didn't criticize the Ruler directly. Every once in a while some member of the family would try to assert a claim to move up on the ladder of succession. If he persisted enough to be troublesome, the family would send him out of the country for a while to cool him off.

Probably the most important of these dissidents when I was there was Abdullah Mubarak, a senior member of the Sabah family but not of the favored "Ahmad" branch. He was asked to stay out of the country for a number of years.

*Q: Wasn't he at the United Nations?*

STOLTZFUS: I thought he cooled his heels in Egypt or France. But maybe he represented Kuwait at the UN for a time. I am not sure. It probably would have been a good spot for him. That was a favorite way of getting rid of an important troublemaker: giving him an Ambassadorship. You don't have to use him. Just park him out of the country.

Succession is of course a problem in any undemocratic society. Take President Assad of Syria. Assad is only 66 but he is not in the best of health. He wants one of his sons to take over. His brothers are giving him a problem I guess. Particularly Rifaat, whom he sent out of the country for trying to stir up the military. Later Assad allowed him back in and to keep his Vice President title, but he keeps a wary eye on him. That is a good example of ruling family squabbles. Assad could be a Sheikh or even a King. He is unquestioned now but cannot automatically assume his choice is going to take over when he's gone or his authority has been weakened.

There are two main branches in Kuwait. The descendants of the "Great Mubarak" are the al Ahmad branch and the others are the al Ali branch. The family tries to keep the two in balance but in recent years the al Ahmads have tended to be stronger. Not surprisingly the shenanigans tend to be from the weaker side and therefore that group loses credibility. So there is considerable jockeying around. Right now the ruler is Jabir al Ahmad from the al Ahmad branch and the Crown Prince is Saad al Abdullah al Ali. Whether Sheikh Saad would actually ever take over is not clear. I think he is about the same age as the Ruler. So down the line they may have a little bit of a problem.

But it is not the same problem as in Saudi Arabia because the merchant class and the business people in Kuwait have always exerted a very strong influence. The religious leaders and the Saud family are the ruling duo in Saudi Arabia, while it is the business class and the Rulers who are the duo in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti ruling family can't afford to alienate the business community. In fact top Kuwaiti families like the al Ghanims consider themselves just as good as the Sabahs. And some of them, at least in the past, felt they should be Rulers instead. And I can see why they might.

Before oil it was the business class that controlled the wealth: the pearling, the trade with India, East Africa and neighbors. Who would have supported the ruling family if it hadn't been for the business people? So they always enjoyed a very strong position.

*Q: Were some of them actually related to the central family of that tribe?*

STOLTZFUS: Well, yes, I guess. The ruling family of Kuwait are originally Anaiza, one of the main Saudi tribes. They came originally from Saudi Arabia, which at that time was Arabia. The Sabahs have been in Kuwait for several centuries, but in one way or another Kuwait has always been subject to encroachment from the desert.

Along the coast the towns were inhabited by fishermen and merchants, not desert tribesmen. The traditional merchants from way, way back considered themselves just as important as the ignorant desert Sheikhs in the palaces. They supported the Rulers in exchange for full say in decisions affecting the country's welfare until the oil came in. With oil the power balance shifted

in favor of the Rulers. They managed to acquire the lion's share of the oil income and could do with it what they wanted. They made sure that money filtered down to the business community, but clearly the merchants no longer had quite the same hold over the Rulers that they had before.

*Q: I guess that is because the oil was actually found by foreigners, not by these merchant families.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. And the oil deals were made with the Rulers, not the businessmen. In the case of Kuwait, the British were in control. So they could pretty well dictate what happened. They arranged that one third of the oil income would go to the ruling family, one third to developing the country and one third to what is called a "fund for future generations".

Of course the money from a couple million barrels a day gave the ruling family a lot of clout. The merchants did not have direct access to the money. Kuwait has a parliament now which has a say in the state's budget, but at first the "government" was the Ruler and his Ministers, with members of his family in the key ministries. It was the government who decided how money would be spent in the country. Of course to placate - and not only to placate but to develop - the country the government would make sure that the business class got the contracts and got plenty of the country's trade. Most of the business was in the hands of probably no more than 50 of these families, who became extremely wealthy but remained restless. They look down on the ruling family, which is not as well educated or modern oriented as themselves. And in fact the Sabahs cannot be compared with the senior families of the business community: the al Ghanims, al Bahars, Behbehans, Qabazards, some of whom are related to people in Iran and others related here and there up and down the Gulf. Their sons and daughters received education in Europe and the States while the Sabahs went abroad to gamble, play about and engender bad publicity. The Sabahs have probably done better in recent years. But they certainly were considered, as I guess George Bush or Bob Dole would say, "bozos". They are probably still considered bozos.

At the same time, it has been convenient for the merchants to have an on-going leadership that they at least have some influence over. And that is basically the way they look at the ruling family. Being conservative themselves, they find it better to tolerate the Sheikhs than to risk the possibility of a revolutionary figure rising to rock the boat.

*Q: Did the ruling family in Kuwait have any kind of significant military units or presence? Or did they ever develop that after the Brits left?*

STOLTZFUS: While the British were in control they made themselves responsible for foreign affairs and defense. They did train men who presumably formed the nucleus of an army when they left. I guess in recent years the military has improved, mainly in response to Iraqi threats. The perennial problem is that Kuwaitis don't want their kids in the military and certainly not below officer rank. That would be beneath them.

So what you do is recruit Bedouin from the desert. There is always that problem in Kuwait of who is a Kuwaiti? Of course traditionally there were no borders and those established by outside powers didn't stop the nomadic tribes from going back and forth across them. And when you have small country like Kuwait, a little piece of territory between two large entities like Iraq and

Saudi Arabia, there is nothing to prevent tribes from wandering in and out at will, regardless of where they came from. So any tribesman could say he was a Kuwaiti and the Kuwaitis, needing soldiers, probably wouldn't ask too many questions. Thus it would be a little difficult to see where their loyalties lay. The officers were members of the royal family or senior people. They were all kind of spoiled. It didn't seem like a real army that could do very much. But in fairness, no matter how good they were, they wouldn't be a match for any neighbor, and they were kind of pragmatic. What could they do against an Iraqi juggernaut? The Saudis you could scarcely call a juggernaut, but their forces certainly were much stronger and bigger than Kuwait's.

If you are an Iraqi tribesman you are going to go where the water is and the pastures are. And so will the Saudis. And if that leads to Kuwaiti territory, so be it. The Kuwaitis traditionally counted on the British to defend them. When the British left, they still felt an obligation to come to Kuwait's aid when needed. Well, of course we do too. As in the Gulf war. All these little Gulf states are going to need our backing if they are going to remain independent.

So far it is to our interest that they do. That is the reason they are still there. Because they are defended by Europe and the United States. It becomes more obvious every day how important it is for their defense that the US or the British or the French or whoever it is, is prepared to defend them. Otherwise they would be gone.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are quite different in many ways. In the case of Kuwait, the British set up the current system of a constitution and the three-way split of the oil income. In the case of Saudi Arabia, the whole country is treated as a fief of the ruling family, of the al Saud family. The oil income is controlled directly by the King. He is careful to dole it out to government ministries, the military, his restless tribesmen and, in contracts, to major families like the bin Ladins, Ali Rezas and other top merchant families in Jeddah, Riyadh and the East. The powerful religious lobby also must be catered to. And they would have problems if they didn't pass out plenty of money. In short, Saudi Arabia is an autocracy.

The Arabian Peninsula has three major countries: Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. The little Arab Gulf states are no more than blips between the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, except for Bahrain island. Other than the Arab townsmen the population of these little states consists of foreigners - Pakistanis, Indians, etc. - and people from the hinterlands of Saudi Arabia and Oman. These latter are the workers and soldiers and policemen. Some are still Bedouin, some have become settled. The indigenous populations of all these states are exceedingly small, Kuwait being far the largest with perhaps 400,000. As I said before, the whole desert hinterland where these tribesmen go back and forth has no boundaries, and nationality there has little meaning.

The nomads can play that game very well. They can be Saudis for part of the time and when it suits their purpose they can say, "Well, we are Omanis." And of course they have tribal connections within all of the smaller countries too. So they can say, "Well, my cousin Ahmad there is from Abu Dhabi and I am from Abu Dhabi too. And I'd be glad to join your army because I am not doing too well with my flocks." Many used to say that the UAE army is made up mainly of Omanis.

What is the UAE? Except for Abu Dhabi, the UAE consists primarily of several coastal towns or

cities that traditionally looked outward to the Gulf and to India and to Zanzibar. They were the Trucial or Pirate Coast that the British eventually subdued and where they installed the ex-pirates as Sheikhs of their towns.

*Q: Without the British the borders of these so-called countries wouldn't be there in the first place.*

STOLTZFUS: That is true. My first visit to the lower Gulf was in the 1950's when I was stationed in Saudi Arabia. I was sent over periodically from Jeddah to be the interpreter for the COMMIDEASTFOR that is, the Commander, Middle East Forces, who was an Admiral in Bahrain. We have always had a naval presence in Bahrain. I would join the Admiral to be interpreter for his various visits around the Gulf. It was great fun to travel on his ship and visit all those exotic places.

We certainly can conclude that the Gulf will be an important - and hot - spot for oil there. Or, let's put it this way - as long as the West needs the oil. Presumably if we in the United States ever seriously studied our energy alternatives, we wouldn't continue to be hostage to this oil. There are plenty of other sources of fuel. Of course oil is still the most convenient fuel on the scale that we require it. Other types of fuel will not take the place of oil for a long time. But clearly the area will not have the same importance once oil is gone.

**RICHARD E. UNDELAND**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Kuwait City (1974-1975)**

*Richard E. Undeland was born in 1930 in Omaha, Nebraska. He graduated from Harvard University in 1952 with a degree in English literature, received an M.B.A. from Stanford University, and studied in Egypt from 1955-1956. In addition to Algeria, Mr. Undeland served in Vietnam, Egypt, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in July of 1994.*

*Q: Now, Dick, we've got you going to Kuwait for a relatively short period, 1974-1975. What were you doing in Kuwait?*

UNDELAND: I was again PAO. I had wanted to stay on another year in Jordan, but Washington, primarily NEA, rejected that, and I went to Kuwait on a direct transfer. In addition to Kuwait, I was responsible for our activities in Bahrain and Qatar. It was a two American officer post, and we divided up the work, so I did most things in Kuwait, and the deputy, Bob Hall, handled the lion's share in Bahrain and Qatar. I must admit I found the work and place no where's near as interesting or stimulating as Jordan. In my book it was a considerable step down, although bureaucratically both posts were on the same level, for apparently, the presence of two American officers rather than one carried far more weight than the size and scope and nature of the activities. I never understood the reasoning, but then nobody asked me to.

The climate was entirely different, but we had some of same kind of programs we had had in Jordan, except very little in the way of exchanges. Again, there was no center, not even a reference collection worthy of the name.

No exchanges with a couple of notable exceptions, and that is a huge difference, for I have normally focused so much attention on IVs and Fulbrighters, which I have put at the very center of trying to expand understanding and impact on attitudes towards the U.S. The difference was money. Many Kuwaitis went to the U.S. on missions of one sort or another and were graduate studies programs in American universities, and they didn't need or want our help to do it. Funding was never a problem for them. For other exchanges, such as IVs, they could have worked had they been willing to accept less than first class air tickets and Hilton hotels, but most wouldn't. They didn't have to. And they found the education office in the Kuwaiti embassy in Washington, adequate to their needs. I personally didn't, but it was their show.

One area in which we were more active was dealing with the press, a far livelier and more independent institution than in Jordan. We placed some materials, but, as always, nothing that would or could be considered political. I spent a good deal of time in dialogue with editors and writers, some of whom were avid readers of our information materials and deeply interested in the States. The radio and television were government owned and run, very tame and very friendly, so long as one stayed away from the political. We had modest placement of cultural stuff and with the TV station got involved in the project to put Sesame Street into Arabic, something which was funded by Kuwait.

There were four main daily newspapers, all privately owned though subsidized, which were surprisingly outspoken and willing to dig into stories with a seriousness and objectivity rare to the Arab World. Because of this, the press had considerable influence on opinion, greater than in most Arab countries. Still, there were severe limits. They didn't attack or question the security services or military. The royal family was off limits, and they were cautious in how much they might promote getting the parliament back into business and the workings of other fledgling democratic organizations, but they could also be quite critical of ministers and corruption and many things that went wrong. They even got a little bit into questioning the restrictions on the role of women in the country. In that area, despite the limitations, Kuwait was light years ahead of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, except for Bahrain. We in USIS got along well the editors and newsmen, with many of our discussions revolving around press freedom and responsibility.

We put on a concert, a piano recital, which was a rarity in the Kuwaiti scene, but quite well attended by Kuwaitis. We also organized jointly with the Kuwaitis a couple of seminars on city planning, which struck responsive chords. In fact the second one only a few months after the first came from their strong and persuasive request for more. Post relations with the University were close and cordial. Many on the teaching staff and a couple of deans had Ph.D.s from the U.S. We put up on an Agency exhibit of technical books there, which they wanted to buy lock, stock and barrel for their library. We couldn't do that, as it had to go on to other posts, but we did the second best and arranged for them to buy a second set of the collection.

The University of Kuwait's administration tried to get me to vet the unending proposals from American universities, including some elite ones, for cooperation, joint projects, endowments,

etc., which all too often seemed to be little more than an effort to glom onto Kuwaiti money by any means. I was dismayed at the crassness of some of the approaches, one of the most brazen coming from an Ivy League school, not the one I attended of course. It was not up to me to pass judgment, and I refused that role, but I did all I could to provide requested factual information and could not refrain from cautioning the University's vice presidents to look very carefully at all the details of the proposals and make sure they got satisfactory answers to their questions. They got burned a few times, but got pretty good at saying no.

Salesmen, hucksters, promoters et al. were coming to Kuwait in droves with proposals to get their hands on Kuwaiti money. Some were legitimate, worth-while and had in mind things that served Kuwait's interests, but many were not. Kuwaitis fortunately could be hard-headed and tough, indeed, had to be, but they were also far more forbearing than I would have been. While I was there they did say no forcefully to a scheme of Spiro Agnew's. The hotels were full of foreigners grunging after money -- they came from everywhere, but I felt there were more Americans. It did not present a very pretty picture and enough rubbed off on general perceptions that it did not help build confidence.

Kuwait had long had cordial and close associations with us, going back to the turn of the century when American missionaries introduced modern medicine to the country -- Dutch Reformed missionaries, if I remember right. Americans developed the oil industry, and though nationalized, they remained in key positions. Investments, which were so important to Kuwait's future, were closely tied in with the U.S. industries and financial markets. Thus, Kuwaitis looked on it as only normal to turn to USIS and other parts of the Mission for information on who these visitors were and what they were up to. It sometimes put us in awkward positions.

I was there for only a year, which is not long enough to get very deeply inside the society and culture, which has been my aim wherever I have been stationed in the Arab World. I found it a useful, if not my favorite, posting, for it introduced me to the Gulf, undoubtedly a less distinctive area after oil money flowed in, but still like no place else. I feel that anyone setting out on an Arab World specialization needs to have Gulf and Saudi experience, for everywhere you encounter reactions to and attitudes on the oil-rich Arabs, and their money has impacted every corner of Araby. I did some traveling to Qatar and Bahrain, trips I always looked forward to. They provided other perspectives than those from Kuwait, albeit brief and surface ones. I was much taken with the Bahrainis, whose friendly, open and flexible ways made them easy to work with, interesting interlocutors and good partners in projects. With the Bahraini Ministry of Education and the Ford Foundation, we sponsored a regional manpower conference, which was the programming highlight of my abbreviated Gulf tour.

*Q: What about the Palestinians there? You had come from Jordan where the Palestinians had had a very uncomfortable role but at least had achieved something. How did you find that situation in Kuwait?*

UNDELAND: Kuwait had a population of about a million, of whom nearly 300,000 were Palestinians, forming far and away the largest foreign community. I might add there were only half a million Kuwaitis. The Palestinian community was well established and many of its persons were well placed, though only a handful had been given citizenship. They were at the center of



nearly everything, often the drivers and movers, although the very top positions were held by Kuwaitis, as was in many cases required by Kuwaiti law. Thus, the editors-in-chief of the daily newspapers were Kuwaitis, but most of the practicing journalists were Palestinians. Still, it was not 100%, for one long-time Egyptian resident was a chief editor of the country's leading magazine. The same pattern was true at the radio and television stations. Deans and above were Kuwaitis, with again a notable exception of one vice president, an extraordinarily Egyptian who was in fact fully Kuwaitized, while the majority of the professors were non-Kuwaitis, including a sizable contingent of Palestinians. Similarly, businesses were Kuwaiti owned, but the managers were often or perhaps usually Palestinians. In a sense, they were second or third class citizens, but then every non-Kuwaiti was. There were many close Palestinian-Kuwaiti relationships on professional, business or outside activity levels, but there was next to no intermarriage or other personal ties. It is hardly surprising that Kuwaitis were wary of so large a foreign community, which played such a key role in nearly everything. The security services watched the Palestinians carefully. Still, government services were open to them, the hospitals, schools and other institutions. Many were students at the University.

Notwithstanding their importance and in many cases relatively high status, it is easy to understand Palestinian resentments. Strains were never far beneath the surface. One constantly heard from Palestinians stories of the way Kuwaitis were lording it over them and otherwise treating them badly, or at least not showing them respect. They particularly resented being watched by the police and other security services. One of our long time USIS employees, a Palestinian married to a Lebanese, went to great effort and considerable cost to acquire Lebanese nationality, in order to get away from the stigma of being a Palestinian in Kuwait. Kuwaitis were determined to remain in control of their destiny, and they made no bones about it being they who set the agenda. The result was good and bad, cooperation and collaboration along with tensions on both sides.

The PLO played a large role in the Palestinian community, levying taxes, running organizations and profoundly influencing Palestinian attitudes. By tacit agreement, the PLO would not do anything political in the country that affected Kuwait at home or abroad, would not be a base or training ground for operations and, whatever it thought of Kuwaiti policies, would keep this under wraps. In return, the PLO had untrammelled access to the Palestinians, the right to tax them, and the quiet support of the Kuwaiti government. The PLO particularly saw to it there was no public or otherwise potentially embarrassing Palestinian criticism of the rulers, the Sabahs, and Kuwaiti government institutions. So far as I know, both sides scrupulously lived up to the bargain, although that silence was not observed in private comments we were hearing all the time.

*Q: Did we aim part of our information program at the Palestinians, or was this a no-no?*

UNDELAND: Let me start to answer by saying we counted Palestinians as a major audience we wanted to reach and we dealt with them all the time. But we did not have specific materials or programs or projects aimed specifically or uniquely at them. Rather, we recognized the realities of the Palestinian-Kuwaiti equation and, in a program sense, treated them pretty much the same, while not losing sight that the Kuwaitis were paramount. There were two basic reasons. The first is that it would have been extremely difficult to separate them out, in our dealings with

organizations or institutions. For example, at the University, we were in contact with Kuwaiti and Palestinian professors and students, and it would have been absurd to try to exclude or only include one or the other. It was the same with the media, where our materials went to both Kuwaitis and Palestinians. Also, our two city planning seminars. The only place I recall us drawing a distinction was with our few exchange programs, where the Kuwaiti government insisted we include only Kuwaitis. We did not argue.

The second is that had we tried to single out or favor Palestinians, it would have been intensely resented by the Kuwaitis, who did not object to our seeing and dealing with them, as they themselves were doing, but not to the exclusion of Kuwaitis. After all, it was USIS-Kuwait, not USIS-Palestine in Kuwait.

Still, there was pressure from NEA in USIA to develop Palestinian specific approaches, which I rejected, trying time after time to explain the point I've made in the previous sentences. I never really understood why Washington, even those with wide experience in the Arab World could not easily see this reality. The same had been true in Jordan, where NEA made it a bigger issue of it than in Kuwait. I received instructions they wanted us to single out a Palestinian audience and concentrate efforts on them. I tried to explain we dealt with Palestinians all the time. I pointed out our designated audience was 70% Palestinians and included three ministers, top educators, leading artists and the like. Were we to make this distinction, it would be obvious to anyone who opened his eyes. The result would have been to scare off the Palestinians and anger the East Bankers. Something similar would have happened in Kuwait. But as I say, I never succeeded in getting this thinking across very well and found myself at loggerheads with NEA over it far more than I wanted.

*Q: How did the Kuwaitis strike you?*

UNDELAND: I am leery of generalizations concerning a people or a nation, yet there were certain traits that were widespread and which tended to separate the Kuwaitis from other Arabs, and particularly those of the Arabian Peninsula. It is hard to comprehend just how rich they were, so much so that the Government had no problem in seeing this largesse was shared, so that nobody had financial worries. And lots was left over for palaces and the like, making Kuwait a place of opulence, that is for the Kuwaitis, though I might add this wealth had hardly turned it into a place of beauty.

You might have thought that this would have made Kuwaitis soft and complaisant, but these are not adjectives I would use to describe them. I so often encountered a toughness of character, a show-me or prove-it attitude that on occasion could border on the truculent. They were nobody's pushover and in many instances were not shy in wanting everybody to know it. If they were out after something, they would often pursue it in a forceful, direct way. This did not conflict with their readiness to come to us for advice or evaluation or other help, for that was merely information and counsel; putting it to use was something else. This did not mean that the politeness and graciousness that mark Arabs everywhere was absent. Indeed, it was not; the two sides seemed to go together quite easily.

They tended to look down on Saudis and other Gulf Arabs as weak and indecisive and all too often were blunt in so saying. It is hardly surprising that Kuwaitis were not very popular up and down the Gulf. A high ranking Bahraini official asked me about living in Kuwait and working there, adding he wouldn't want to do it himself, as he found Kuwaitis overbearing and unpleasant. On the other hand, I knew Kuwaitis who admitted they were not easy to get along with, some being proud of it, others apologetic.

I must add I got to know a quite a few Kuwaitis, whom I liked, respected and enjoyed being with. More to the point, I did not find my job in any way impeded by this trait of toughness. In fact, I left Kuwait feeling that this streak of reality and hard-headedness was exactly what the country needed and, barring a disaster coming from outside, it had a better chance of making it than any of the other small Gulf states. How sadly that was put to the test 15 years later.

*Q: Outside of the more usual parts of the USIS program, were there areas where you were involved or interested?*

UNDELAND: Two come to mind. The first was one of our few exchange programs, alas later discontinued, which had a subtle but significant impact. It was CIP, in those days the Cleveland International Program which later was named the Council of International Programs. It brought persons from the working level in social programs to the U.S. for a few months or up to a year of on-the-job experience in the Mid-West. They could be placed in camps, social services operations, voluntary organizations, mental institutions, even prisons, all sorts of places. We sent off two or three a year from Kuwait -- in Jordan we had also had 2 or 3 yearly -- who came back with batteries charged and full of ideas. Most of them worked in an imaginative, entirely Kuwaiti program, in which Ministry of Social Affairs social workers worked, and with considerable success, to bridge immense generation gaps separating Kuwaiti parents psychologically and intellectually from their children. The cause was the speed of change that untold wealth was bringing to a very traditional society, that had seen one century very much like the last one. It was an imaginative and surprisingly beneficial initiative. I got to know some of these social workers quite well and was tremendously impressed by their dynamism, flexibility and skill. I used those three descriptive words once in talking with a CIP returnee; she smiled and said that's exactly what she and others had gotten out of being with CIP in the United States.

We in USIS had only a minor role in it, but I found myself sought out as a sounding board on a wide range of issues concerning the emergence of women in Kuwait and questions of its pace and content. The majority of the social workers I have just mentioned were women, and this was an issue on their minds. They welcomed an American sounding board. So did the head of the legal section in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Kuwaiti woman lawyer and quiet feminist, whom we enrolled in a program in the States. The Dean of Women at the University -- I saw her often and usually at her request -- was faced with questions not so much of what change, but rather of how fast it should and could come about. Most of the faculties had mixed classes, though not all, but much was up in the air, such things as was it acceptable for a boy and girl to sit next to each other. Then there was the question on how male students and professors would accept and deal with women professors. I put her and others in touch with visiting American academics, a small gesture but one which gave more than a little standing to USIS. This was the kind of thing that had no place in our country plan, but yet paid off, and I think promoted

American interests far more than some things carefully written up, justified and approved by the USIA machinery.

*Q: Your Ambassador in Kuwait was Bill Stoltzfus?*

UNDELAND: That's right.

*Q: How did he operate?*

UNDELAND: He knew the area very well, in fact had spent much of his career there. He liked the Kuwaitis. I think he found many frustrations in dealing with the "new rich", who were harder to get to know, more difficult to see, less inclined to real dialogue than Kuwaitis had been a few decades earlier. I think it fair to say he had found those simpler times of the recent past more satisfying, but this was hardly strange. It was the common view of every long time Arabian Peninsula type I have met. I got along well with him. Although it was a fairly distant relationship, he was open to what I had on my mind, and I could usually get his backing for our activities, but the USIS world was not one of his major interests. He was concerned about keeping U.S.-Kuwaiti relations on an even keel and concentrated on political, military and economic issues, in that order. My impression was he did it pretty well; it was not a time of major problems and tests for an American ambassador.

*Q: Then you returned to Washington. Were you due to come back?*

UNDELAND: I'm not sure I have the full story. At no time in my career have I felt less on the same wave length with NEA than then, and I had a silly home leave battle going on with NEA and Personnel that angered me. Whatever the whole picture, I was pulled out of Kuwait after only a year, the ostensible reason -- who knows, it may be true -- being that I had spent too much time overseas. There's a rule saying you have to spend three of the first fifteen years...

*Q: I used to be a personnel officer and I used to yank people out much to their screaming. In those days everybody wanted to stay out.*

UNDELAND: Maybe that was it. A few years earlier, USIA got a new computer that supposedly was going to transform the way the Agency did business, but that proved far too optimistic and unrealistic, and its scope was trimmed back to keeping track of motor vehicles and assignment records and other hum-drum stuff. Did it catch up with me? In any case, I should have come back according to the rules, for I had been out 14 out of 16 years or some such, certainly longer than was specified. In ways I was sorry, but the idea of a Washington assignment also had its appeal, and there were personal reasons, including letting the kids have some schooling in their own country.

**FRANK E. MAESTRONE**  
**Ambassador**  
**Kuwait (1976-1976)**

*Ambassador Frank Maestrone was a military government officer in Wurzburg, Germany at the end of World War II. He entered the Foreign Service in 1948. His career included positions in Vienna, Austria; Hamburg, Germany; Khorramshahr, Iran; Cairo, Egypt; and an ambassadorship to Kuwait. Ambassador Maestrone was interviewed by Ambassador Horace G. Torbert on June 6, 1989.*

*Q: As ambassador to Kuwait in 1976 through '79, what were the principal American foreign policy objectives in that country and in that part of the world as you saw it from Kuwait?*

MAESTRONE: Our principal objectives, really, related to two aspects of our relationships with the Middle East and with Kuwait, the first being the whole peace process. We were seeking to obtain Kuwaiti support for the peace process, for Camp David, for all sorts of steps that were being taken to try to bring peace to the Middle East, and particularly, the Palestinian question. The Kuwaitis were, of course, very interested in the Palestinian question. In fact, one quarter of the population of Kuwait were Palestinians. They occupied the middle level of the bureaucracy in Kuwait. In fact, they were the ones who made it run. But the policy decisions were taken by the Kuwaitis, not by the Palestinians. That was quite clear.

The other aspect related to oil and finance. We were concerned about the various steps OPEC was taking, particularly, with respect to raising the price of oil. I know the Secretary of the Treasury, Mike Blumenthal, made a couple of trips over there in this connection, both of them unsuccessful.

The other matter that was of considerable concern was the question of the dollar, which, at that time, had lost a great deal in value. There was concern, on our part, that the oil-rich countries in the Middle East might shift their dollar assets to marks or yen. The yen was not particularly popular then--or Swiss francs or something like that, further pushing down the value of the dollar, while we were trying to hold it at a reasonable level. The Kuwaitis were particularly cooperative in that respect, and held on to their dollars. As a result, when the dollar, after this crisis had passed, really went up, they profited from all of this. So it was a wise move on their part, and they were very supportive of us. They looked at it in terms of supporting the whole world economy, since the dollar is such an important element in it. I thought they took a very responsible attitude on the issue.

*Q: You know, there are many players in the Middle East. How would you rank Kuwait in terms of influencing the policies of the Arab world? And how would you rank the United States in terms of outside influence on the Middle East, particularly in Kuwait?*

MAESTRONE: The last part of that is a rather large question. In terms of the Kuwaiti influence, the Kuwaitis were influential in OPEC questions. They had pretty much of an intelligent oil policy, and they had some capable people running it. So they did have a good deal of influence there. Politically speaking, the Kuwaitis had relatively little influence. It is a very small country. They were anxious to keep the best relations with all of their larger neighbors, such neighbors being Iran, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, etc. All of them were bigger than they. Therefore, they

were not very prominent in making policy in that respect. They did take certain stands from time to time. But they tended not to be major policy makers in that respect.

When it came to oil and financial matters, there they were much more active and they did play a role. Their people were, generally, much more experienced, much more capable than the Saudis, for example, in this field.

*Q: Now, in terms of the second part of the question, how much impact did the Americans have in terms of oil policies? In terms of Arab-Israeli conflict issues, in terms of the terrorist problem, how influential was the U.S.?*

MAESTRONE: The United States' role in the peace process was very influential, starting all the way back with the Kissinger shuttle. It continued to play a role, although its influence after Camp David became less and less, since most of the Arabs objected to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Since we had been the engineers of this treaty, we were not that popular in the political terms.

However, in other aspects, we had a good deal of influence. For example, we had an extensive military sales program with the Kuwaitis, in which we supplied them with military equipment. It had been determined by a U.S. military survey conducted years earlier that it would be necessary for them to maintain a creditable defense; that is, at least, a short-term defense of their country if attacked.

*Q: From whom did they expect the attack?*

MAESTRONE: The attack could have been expected from Iraq, with which they did not have particularly good relations, and which had--and I think still maintains way on the back burner--a claim over Kuwait. Although it was not part of the Ottoman Empire, the Sheikh of Kuwait paid a tribute to the Turkish governor, General Basra, or the Wallie, I guess he was called--Wallie Basra. And the Iraqis presumed from that that the Basra authorities had some influence and authority over Kuwait and have maintained this claim, which I have not heard has been dropped.

**FRANÇOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**Kuwait (1979-1983)**

*Ambassador François M. Dickman was born in Iowa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1947 and received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He served in the U.S. Army during both WWII and Korea. Ambassador Dickman joined the Foreign Service in 1951 and served at posts in Columbia, Lebanon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. He served as the Arabian Peninsula*

*Country Director until his appointment as the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Stanley Brooks beginning February 2001.*

DICKMAN: We left the Emirates at the end of August 1979 knowing that the next posting would be Kuwait. After a short leave in Wyoming, I had my nomination hearings before Senator Frank Church on September 26. The hearings were attended unexpectedly by former Wyoming senator Gail McGee, who had been my diplomatic history professor at the University of Wyoming and who at the time was our ambassador to the Organization of American States. Senator McGee testified supporting my nomination. He knew that I had previously appeared before Senator Church in testy testimony on the Irwin mission and especially on the Arab boycott. Senator Church's demeanor was visibly glum. He asked a few perfunctory questions but he didn't block the nomination, which was approved by the Senate 10 days later.

After two weeks of consultation, including a visit sponsored by the CIA for ambassadors to Camp Swampee near Norfolk, Virginia, we flew directly to Kuwait, arriving on October 20, to be met by the charge, Peter Sutherland. The public affairs officer was Ray Peppers. Jim Clunan headed the Political Section, Ralph Bressler the Economic Section, and Mark Sanna was the security officer. Four days after arriving in Kuwait, I presented my credentials to the Emir, Sheikh Jabir al Sabah. This was in contrast to the Emirates, where it took a couple of months before Sheikh Zayid received my credentials.

Kuwait was a bigger post than Abu Dhabi with about 80 American employees and over 100 local employees, several of whom were very skilled professionals. Included in this total was a 17 man U.S. military liaison team headed by a colonel as well as teams from the U.S. Highway Administration, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the Civil Service Commission, all of which provided technical assistance funded by the Kuwaitis. There was also a Marine guard detachment. The chancery, the administrative building, and the residence were located within a compound roughly the size of a couple of city blocks. It was surrounded by a high wall. Its only entrance was along a side street that was protected by a steel gate. Next to the embassy compound was a 10-story Hilton hotel.

On November 4, 1979, or two weeks after my arrival in Kuwait, I received a phone call from the Operations Center asking if I could contact our embassy in Tehran, which apparently had been taken over for a second time by demonstrating students. Since Kuwait was the closest geographically to Tehran and easily connected by phone, the Department thought the embassy might be able to find out what was occurring. Our attempts to reach Embassy Teheran failed. All I could report was that our agricultural attache in Iran had apparently made it to the Canadian embassy.

Working closely with the embassy security officer, Mark Sanna, the events in Tehran caused me to review our own security arrangements. It so happened that one of the secretaries in the Political Section of our Embassy in Tehran was visiting Kuwait for a few days of R&R. Hearing news of the seizure, she came to help my secretary, Gladys Chun in the front office. Noticing the steel safe filing cabinet in my outer office, she wondered if Embassy Tehran's Political Section, which had two similar file safes, had been able to destroy their contents when the embassy was

seized by the demonstrators. After reviewing the contents of the file safe in the front office, it got me to thinking whether we would have the time to destroy the classified files if we were overrun in Kuwait. Since I was the new boy in the embassy, I initially ordered that all classified files prior to my arrival be destroyed or shipped back to Washington by the courier. This included the contents of the cabinets located behind the safe door protecting the communications room. It took 10 days for the Marines working day and night using the shredding machine to pulverize the classified material. The staff was also instructed to turn in their in and out boxes each night for storage in the code room, which was the most heavily fortified room in the chancery. Logs would be kept of incoming and outgoing messages which could be shredded immediately in the event the embassy was overrun.

While the shredding was underway, we were making arrangements with Kuwait's Minister of Finance, Abdul Rahman al Atiqi, for the visit of U.S. Treasury Secretary William Miller, who had replaced Blumenthal. Secretary Miller was accompanied by Treasury Assistant Secretary Fred Bergsten, Joe Twinam ( who had recently been promoted to be a NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary), and Congressman Jim Leech from Iowa. The party was scheduled to arrive on November 27 after stops in the Emirates and Saudi Arabia and was going to leave the following day. The purpose of the visit was to urge oil price moderation and to point to measures underway to maintain the strength of the dollar, which had recently appreciated in relation to other currencies. But the visit promised to be difficult. Finance Minister Atiqi had a very prickly personality and I was not sure if he would be at the airport to meet Secretary Miller. Atiqi was angry over the announcement that the Treasury Department had frozen Iran's assets in the United States, which amounted to over \$10 billion, until the embassy hostages in Teheran were freed. He asked what assurances Secretary Miller could give that the same thing would not happen to Kuwait's investment in the United States. A great deal of the 10% in oil earnings that were set aside for Kuwait's Future Generation Fund was invested in a variety of stocks, bonds, and real estate holdings in the United States. Secretary Miller sought to assuage Kuwaiti concerns which seemed to be very exaggerated.

On November 20, as I was returning to the Embassy following a meeting with Atiqi, I heard over the car radio that the grand Mosque in Mecca had been seized by a group of Islamic militants. I considered this to be a very serious development, made only worse by Ayatollah Khomeini's propaganda attacks against the House of Saud for being an unworthy protector of Islam's holiest shrine. Two days later, just as we had finished Thanksgiving dinner for the Embassy staff at the residence, I was called aside for a visit by the head of Kuwait's Criminal Investigation Department (CID). He alerted me that members of Kuwait's Shia community had been overheard at their Hussainiyas (Shia mosques) who were planning anti-U.S. demonstrations in the next 10 days which could result in an attack against the embassy compound. The warning greatly concerned the Department. While we were awaiting the visit of Treasury Secretary Miller's party, we received instructions from the Department to encourage embassy dependents to evacuate. At that point, I made plans to establish an alternate command post located outside of the compound in the event the embassy compound was overrun. It was located in an Embassy apartment about four blocks from the compound but close enough for communication by walkie-talkies.

*Q: Did you have to put these security measures into effect?*



DICKMAN: Indeed we did. The night before the arrival of Secretary Miller, we received a second security alert from the Kuwaiti CID which was a bomb threat. This caused us to empty the compound except for the marine guards. Nothing happened, however. The visitors came on schedule and Atiqi showed up at the airport. The visit, including the call on the Emir, Sheikh Jabir, went well. Secretary Miller was able to soothe Atiqi's ruffled feathers by explaining that the freezing of Iran's dollar assets was a unique preemptive action in the face of American diplomatic personnel being held hostage and that Kuwait's assets in the U.S. were absolutely secure. When the party left Kuwait, the wife and children of the Economic Officer boarded the Secretary's plane as our first evacuees.

Our third security alert occurred in the morning of November 30. It was not unexpected because it was Friday, the day of Ashura, which is the holiest day of the year for Shia Muslims. What concerned me was that the CID reported that the police had arrested persons near the Embassy filling water bottles with gasoline. Margaret had gone to the airport to see the departure of some Embassy dependents. The Embassy compound was empty except for myself, a communicator, and the Marine security detail. Following Friday prayers, a very large and noisy crowd assembled outside the Embassy compound made up largely of Kuwaiti Shia and Iranians working in Kuwait. I managed to get word to Margaret and others to congregate at the alternate command post. After several tries, I also managed to contact the Foreign Ministry duty officer. After about one hour, we heard the rumbling of tanks which had finally been brought in to quell the demonstrators who fled leaving thousands of sandals on the pavement outside the compound. Since similar demonstrations had occurred against our Embassies in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Department made the evacuation of Embassy dependents mandatory. In spite of the angry reaction of many wives to this order, Margaret set the example leading the remaining US government dependents to the airport. She was not allowed to return until the all clear was given six months later on June 20. Margaret spent this time in Wyoming staying alternately with my mother in Laramie or her father in Cheyenne.

The evacuation of embassy dependents posed a problem when responding to questions from the sizeable American community in Kuwait. The question was, should they do the same thing. It was especially a problem for the large number of American women married to Kuwaiti men who had studied in the U.S. Most of them had children who were registered as American citizens at the embassy. I discouraged the idea that these women should evacuate Kuwait. I thought the Department was overdoing it. But it did move me to institute monthly meetings at the residence with the American community as I had done in the Emirates. The warden system was revised with block captains holding lists of phone numbers of Americans in their districts. These monthly meetings gave me an opportunity to review political developments in the region, talk about U.S. taxes on foreign earned income, and to listen to their security concerns. I always invited the embassy's consular, political, and economic sections to participate in the meetings to make them better known to the American community.

My efforts at outreach were greatly assisted by Margaret's organizing abilities in the kitchen, be it for dinners, for visiting VIPs, lunches for Kuwaiti bankers, or national days. When national days were celebrated, they were always held at the residence, not at a hotel where catering for a single reception would wipe out a year's representation allowance. Margaret would work with a

cook preparing food ahead of time for as many as 700 guests. As a result, there was always representation money available for other officers. It was through this effort that we came to know a number of Wyoming girls who had married Kuwaitis. Through them, we came to know other American women married to Kuwaitis who, along with their husbands, had never been to the residence.

In the four years we were in Kuwait, the embassy security would remain a constant concern. Personally, I felt secure. When I left the compound, the Kuwait CID provided a bodyguard and a tail car. But I wanted to make sure there would be no major security breaches as had occurred at our embassy in Tehran. Copies of Embassy documents that had not been destroyed in Tehran would appear periodically in the English Kuwait Times, which could easily be identified as being genuine. During my time in Kuwait, all unneeded classified material was shredded every evening. Only logs of key messages were kept. As I already mentioned, Embassy officers were required to store their in and out boxes in the code room when they left the chancery. While this was a pain, especially for the Political and Economic Sections, the one advantage was that no one received any security violations. I also instituted weekly drills. The number of bell rings alerted the staff whether it was a fire drill, an unauthorized entry into the compound, or a hostage situation. In addition, I insisted that any trucks that entered the compound had to have one of our local employees enter the cab and stay with the driver. Except for the embassy security officer, the staff thought I was overdoing it. But they carried on in good grace.

My four year tour in Kuwait also coincided with the Sabah's family's growing concern for its own political legitimacy and its fears of external threats over which it had no control. The leadership's sense of insecurity was reflected in Kuwait's often ambiguous foreign policy. Kuwait was very rich, very vulnerable to military attack, and its resources were coveted by others. It was situated between three larger, more powerful neighbors, which regularly made conflicting demands on Kuwait's leadership. Kuwait's population was ethnically and religiously divided and although the majority of native Kuwaitis were Sunni Muslims, there was a large Shia minority whose co-religionists were in Iran. Foreigners composed of Palestinians and "guest workers" from third world countries provided the menial as well as the sophisticated labor that the country required, and who accounted for 60% of Kuwait's inhabitants. The leadership had traditionally sought to compensate for the country's weakness by avoiding entangling alliances, by trying to play one strong neighbor against the other, and by avoiding public stances that would antagonize any of its near neighbors.

However, by the end of 1979, Kuwait's leadership was faced with an unpredictable Iran which was holding American hostages, which was encouraging young Kuwaitis to return to conservative Islamic ideals, and which was trying to subvert the Gulf monarchies. Kuwait's sense of insecurity was also affected by the difficulties the Saudis were having in dislodging the Islamic militants who had seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca as well as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December of 1979, which had resulted in moves by the United States to improve its military posture in the Gulf. In addition to this was the unresolved boundary issue with Iraq and the strained relations with the United States over Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The Kuwaiti government was opposed to US economic sanctions against Iran as long as the hostage crisis remained unresolved. Although it condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, it also criticized the United States for trying to bring superpower rivalry into the

Persian Gulf and to force Kuwait to take sides. As long as there was no resolution to the Palestinian issue, Kuwait's leadership saw the country's large Palestinian diaspora, accounting for about 22% of the country's inhabitants, as representing the largest potential internal threat. While the leadership refused to grant citizenship to its large Palestinian population, it was very conscious of its presence and did not want to be out of step with other Arab nations on the Palestinian question.

The Kuwaitis were apprehensive that the political turbulence in the area could upset their apple cart. They sought to deal with these shocks by trying as much as possible to burnish their non-alignment image by trying to portray themselves as more Arab than the Arabs. The Kuwaiti press was never really friendly to the United States and it became more strident than ever during my time in Kuwait.. Much of the emphasis was on the Palestinian question. The press saw the United States as uncritically supporting Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. One criticism that came up repeatedly was Washington's refusal to have any contact with the PLO. The Kuwaitis would always refer to the private meeting that our ambassador to the United Nations, Andrew Young, had had with a PLO representative in August of 1979, a meeting that the Israelis had bugged and then leaked to the press. This had caused such a row among Israel's supporters in Congress that it forced Ambassador Young to submit his resignation to President Carter. I recall that Ambassador Young along with Maynard Jackson made a private visit to Kuwait in March of 1980 at the invitation of Kuwait's UN ambassador. I had a reception for Ambassador Young and some members of his delegation overnighted at the residence.

The Kuwaiti press was also critical of the U.S. decision to boycott the Olympics in Moscow. It objected to President Carter's statement in January 1980 that the United States would use force if necessary to protect the western world's vital interests in the Persian Gulf. It complained that moves by the United States to gain access to military facilities in Oman were injecting the Cold War into the Gulf. When the U.S. would veto a resolution in the Security Council that was critical of Israel, the Kuwaiti press would headline my being called in to receive a protest from the foreign office's Under Secretary Rashid al Rashid.

This constant drumbeat of the press made it difficult for me and other embassy officers to explain how the Camp David Accords could serve as a basis for further peace negotiations and how we saw the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in geopolitical terms. Moreover, this negative attitude toward the United States was reflected in other ways. Although I had had a lot of contact with Sheikh Salim al Sabah when he was Kuwait's ambassador to the United States and I was the ARP director, by the time I got to Kuwait, Sheikh Salim had become the defense minister. Every request that I submitted to him for a port visit by one of our Middle East Force destroyers was refused. This had not occurred during the time of my predecessor, Frank Maestroni. Another example was when Kuwait Air was in the market for new aircraft and had decided to choose the Boeing 767. But the decision was reversed at the political level in favor of Airbus. Another example was when TWA sought to establish regular service to Kuwait as one of its stops on the way to India. The application was turned down because TWA also had flights that stopped in Israel.

On reflection, I'm not sure that I handled the press very well. I did go to the various newspaper establishments and talked to the editors and occasionally I was interviewed in English and in

Arabic, but again, I don't think I handled it very well. Kuwait's sense of insecurity heightened even more in September of 1980 with Iraq's sudden invasion of Iran. It so happened that the invasion occurred while I was away for a short leave to receive a Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Wyoming. I had left the embassy in the very capable hands of Brooks Wrampelmeier. Brooks had replaced Peter Sutherland, who had been appointed as ambassador to Bahrain. Ray Peppers was about to leave to be replaced by David Good as our public affairs officer as was Ralph Bressler, who was replaced by Jim Larroco as the head of the Economic Section, with Dale Dean as the commercial officer. Upon my return, I reviewed again to see if there was anything more we should do to improve the embassy's security. The one thing that bothered me was that we were still keeping copies of evaluation reports because they were unclassified. Perhaps I was being paranoid, but I asked that they be kept in the Administration's office for only one year. My recollection is that during the seizure of the embassy in Teheran, they had found these evaluation reports. Of course, you can glean a lot of information from them.

Iraq's invasion of Iran caused Kuwait's foreign minister, Sabah Ahmad al Sabah to revive a proposal to create a regional economic association among the traditional Arab Gulf countries. The idea had been set aside earlier when Iraq insisted on being a member. But now with Iraq preoccupied with its war with Iran, the Kuwaitis saw an opportunity to push for a political as well as an economic grouping of the six traditional ruling regimes in the Arabian Peninsula. It came to be known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) when these rulers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman met in Abu Dhabi in May 1981. The headquarters were established in Riyadh and Abdullah Bishara, who had been Kuwait's ambassador to the UN, was named as the GCC's first secretary general.

The GCC fit well with U.S. policy of promoting regionalism in the Gulf. We were careful, however, in how we gave our support, lest we give it the kiss of death. In private discussions, it gave us a favorable political subject to talk about. But as Kuwait energetically promoted Gulf cooperation, it also found itself having to side with Iraq in its war with Iran, particularly as the war increasingly became stalemated. Kuwait, along with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, became major financial backers of Iraq's war with Iran. Kuwait's contribution alone amounted to some \$13 billion. Kuwaiti ports also became the main transfer points for military supplies for Iraq. These were loaded on huge convoys that would leave in the dead of night destined for Iraq. The Kuwaitis hoped that their financial and logistic help to Iraq would allow for a friendly resolution of the boundary issues with that country. In 1983, Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Abdallah visited Baghdad for this purpose only to be given the back of the hand by Saddam Hussain. The Kuwaitis were also disappointed at a later date when Saddam resumed Iraq's claims to the mudflats of Waraba and Bubyian and seek a new boundary "correction" with Kuwait.

The visit of Treasury Secretary Miller in the early days of my assignment to Kuwait gave me an opportunity to initiate and maintain good contacts with the Minister of Petroleum, Ali Khalifa al-Sabah, and the Director of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, Abd al Latif al Hamid. Both were very well educated and spoke perfect English. Ali Khalifa was a member of the ruling Sabah family. He had been instrumental in requiring that the oil companies operating in Kuwait make investments to capture all the associated gas for conversion into valuable petrochemicals. This was an example that the Saudis would follow a few years later. Under Abd al Latif al Hamid, the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development had become second only to

the World Bank in the number of low interest loans made to developing countries. Initially, the loans had been extended to poor Arab countries, but by 1979, that restriction had been removed. The Kuwait government supported this institution for very good political reasons since they generated interest and support in the Third World for Kuwait's continued existence, particularly when Kuwait was faced with periodic threats from Iraq. Sometime late in 1980, Abd al Latif replaced Atiqi as finance minister, which allowed for a much more pleasant exchange of views.

By the time I reached Kuwait, the spot prices of oil had gone through the roof. The fall of the Shah and the decline of Iran's oil production from over 5 million barrels a day to only one million had resulted in a new world oil shortage and new gas lines in the United States. It had caused the oil companies to bid one against the other for supplies, causing the price of crude to rise in the spot market to over \$30 a barrel. The high spot prices made it extremely difficult to try and jawbone the Kuwaitis to show price moderation. However, perhaps because of our diplomatic intervention, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the Emirates tried to preempt the price hawks (mainly the Libyans, Nigerians, Iranians, Indonesians, and Venezuelans). Just prior to the December 1979 OPEC meeting in Caracas, the three oil exporting nations raised their prices by about 30% to approximately \$24 a barrel for marker crude. But the move failed. The embassy hostage crisis and the failed attempt by American special forces to free the hostages was causing so much uncertainty that the other OPEC members could sell at higher prices. So, this OPEC meeting ended in a new form of discord.

By June of 1980 when OPEC met in Algiers, the Kuwaitis refused to go along with the Saudis to hold the price of marker crude to about \$32 a barrel. Because of the frantic bidding by the major oil companies, the Kuwaitis were receiving over \$40 a barrel for their oil. In the fall of 1980, when it looked like market conditions were beginning to ease a little bit, Iraq's sudden invasion of Iran in September of that year created a new uncertainty. At the time of Iraq's invasion, Iraq was producing about 3.5 million barrels a day and Iran about 2.5 million barrels a day. I recall reporting Ali Khalifa's concerns since this was the first time one OPEC nation was invading and waging war against another OPEC nation. Coupled with the division within OPEC over whether to accept Saudi leadership over oil prices, it had had made negotiations within the organization very tense. In spite of Iraq and Iran's attempts to destroy each other's oil production capabilities, 1980 would prove to be the peak for oil prices. The anticipated supply shortfall did not materialize. By then, oil production from the North Sea was rising, the Nigerian civil war had ended, production from Alaska's north slope had begun, and the conservation measures that had taken place under the Carter administration were beginning to have an impact. I should also mention that in their frantic buying, the oil companies had stockpiled a good bit of oil.

As panic buying declined, prices leveled off in 1981. I did a good deal of reporting on Ali Khalifa's efforts in OPEC councils to maintain high oil prices. One of the oil minister's moves was to try to bring Norway and Mexico into OPEC. However, both these countries preferred to be price followers rather than bear the onus of being price leaders. By 1982, prices had begun to decline. This caused OPEC to have an emergency meeting in the fall of that year to apportion production quotas among its members. But assigning production quotas only caused some members like Libya to cheat by selling their oil at a discount in order to gain market share. In the spring of 1983 at a meeting in London, a new production quota system was worked out which placed Saudi Arabia as the central price defender by becoming the swing producer. In other

words, if demand for OPEC oil fell below the 17.5 million barrels a day, which was the overall quota for OPEC, the Saudis were left with the responsibility of reducing their production. Because I had regular access to Ali Khalifa and would occasionally see Yamani and Utayba when they visited Kuwait, I was able to continue providing some insight on developments within the OPEC councils.

*Q: Earlier you had talked about Kuwait's insecurity because of outside forces it couldn't control. How about its internal security by now?*

DICKMAN: Well, with the Iraq-Iran war becoming a stalemate, there was growing fear that the internal security situation in the country had deteriorated. Responding to an earlier pledge that there would be new elections for the national assembly in four years, the Kuwaiti leadership made preparations in 1980 for elections that were to take place in 1981. I should mention that the national assembly had been dissolved in 1976 over the lack of cooperation between the executive and the legislature and had not been reinstated. Another reason for the closure was that the outspoken statements by some members of the Kuwaiti parliament had become an embarrassment, particularly with Kuwait's relations with Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

While a referendum on whether women should gain the right to vote captured the headlines in the reporting of the elections, in fact, it was only a peripheral issue. What worried the leadership was that the Iranian revolution had given the Kuwaiti Shia minority and, to a lesser extent, Arab nationalists a way to express their grievances in a more public manner. The demonstration against the embassy in 1979 was but one example. It had been followed by fiery declarations in the Hussainiyas as well as several bombings. One incident involved the firing of an anti-tank bazooka at the Iranian Embassy by pro-Iraqi Dawa operatives. By gerrymandering the electoral precincts of the 50-man assembly, the government was able to reduce the large Shia and nationalist representation while at the same time increasing the government's traditional elements. As a result, the Shia won only four seats compared to the 10 that they had held in the previous assembly. The right to vote, by the way, is limited to Kuwaiti males who have to be at least 21 years of age, who were born in Kuwait, and who can prove that they have a link to ancestors who lived in Kuwait in 1920. By the way, the vote for women's suffrage was defeated.

In reporting on the elections, we drew on the helpful resources of the political science department at the University of Kuwait. Occasionally, one of the professors would sneak me the draft of a research paper that was under preparation. One that I remember was as a poll of high school males in the Peninsula on how they identified themselves. The study indicated they first identified themselves as Muslims, then their immediate family, followed by their extended family, the location where they lived, and finally the country and the ruling family where they lived. I thought this contrasted with how the average American high school student in the U.S. would probably identify himself, first as an American, then the State where he lived, followed by his immediate family, whether he was a Democrat, Republican or an independent, and lastly his religious persuasion. Some of the papers were quite critical of the Sabah regime. As one professor put it, the issue of legitimacy was vital for the ruling Sabah family. With no political parties in the assembly, the older generation remained dominant in power and wealth. This made the young generation frustrated by its inability or its lack of drive to change the existing order. They were looking for something else. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why there was a

noticeable increase in attendance by the young generation at the Friday mosques.

Impressions of political attitudes were also gained by attending the diwanias, which are social gathering centers located in homes and attended by adult males. The diwaniya is an institution which is unique in the Arabian Peninsula and is especially well developed in Kuwait. It is a place where issues are discussed informally and where the host, normally the eldest male in the family, often serves as a kind of arbiter. Each year, on the occasion of Id al Fitr (breaking of the Ramadan fast) and Id al Adha (the big feast), I was expected to make courtesy calls on the diwanias of at least a dozen or more leading families of Kuwait and to drink at least one cup of coffee and one cup of tea at each stop. Strong kidneys were needed.

During my tour in Kuwait, I maintained my monthly meetings with the American community. While some joked that members of the community came only for the beer, I felt it proved to be a useful form of communication on several occasions. One was explaining why the Kuwait government and the public were so upset over the extradition of Ziad Abu Ain, a young Palestinian from Jordan who was arrested by the FBI in Chicago after he had legally immigrated into the United States. The arrest came at the request of the Israeli government, which sought his extradition. He was accused of having planted a bomb in Tiberias in 1979 which had killed two Israelis and wounded others. This had resulted in a lengthy legal battle with Abu Ain protesting his arrest on the basis of questionable evidence as well as affidavits that he was 100 miles away from Tiberias when the explosion occurred. His lawyer argued that he was being charged with a political, not a criminal, offense and therefore was not extraditable. Abu Ain went on a hunger strike, protesting his innocence. However, the judge ruled that there was probable cause and refused to grant a writ of habeas corpus. The case went to the Supreme Court, but the Court refused to take the case on appeal. So, Abu Ain was extradited to Israel in 1981, where he was tried and jailed. The case was a highly emotional one and was viewed as another example of American discrimination against Arabs. It generated anti-U.S. demonstrations in Kuwait's large Palestinian community as well as expressions of regret by the Kuwait government.

Another occasion where communication with the community was important was a child custody flap that broke out in June 1981 resulting in our Consul, Robin Bishop being declared persona non grata and in which I was implicated. It concerned a custody battle over two American-born children. The, mother, Kristine Olman had married a Saudi student, Mustafa al Ukaily, when they were both geology students in the United States. They had two U.S.-born children. They had come to live in Saudi Arabia, where the husband taught at Dhahran's Petroleum and Minerals University. Kristine had become an abused and battered wife but could find no way to leave Saudi Arabia with her two children without having a Saudi exit visa which required her husband's permission and access to her passport. The husband kept her passport. The opportunity to escape came when her husband was invited to speak at the University of Kuwait. She and her children entered Kuwait on her husband's Saudi passport. But she carried valid U.S. passports for her two children. As an American citizen who could prove her nationality and was not engaged in any illegal activity, our consular section issued her a replacement passport. Although the embassy assisted Ms. Olman and her children to go through the exit formalities at the airport, it was the kind of assistance often rendered to American citizens. The foreign ministry's consular section was told what we had done. The next day, the irate husband came to the embassy accusing our consul of having spirited his wife and children out of Kuwait.

Nothing was heard of the incident until three weeks later when I was called in to the Foreign Ministry and read a bill of particulars that the embassy had violated Kuwaiti law by issuing passports to the mother and the two children and spiriting them out of Kuwait. I explained that no passports had been issued to the children and that the embassy had not violated any laws in issuing Mrs. Olman a U.S. passport, which was her right as an American citizen. I had barely left the Ministry when I heard over the car radio that I had been called in to receive a protest that the embassy had been engaged in kidnaping Dr. al Ukaily's two children, a charge which I had denied. The matter soon became a cause célèbre when the deputy speaker of the national assembly, Ahmed Sadoun, demanded that the government declare me, Consul Robin Bishop, and other embassy personnel as persona non grata. The deputy speaker also characterized the statement from the State Department defending the action of the embassy as "tactless and rude." After three or four days of verbal sparring, we received a note from the foreign minister declaring our consul, Robin Bishop, persona non grata, and giving her 72 hours to leave Kuwait.

The Department chose not to retaliate in kind by expelling the Kuwaiti consul in Washington, although I felt it would have been justified in doing so. Three months later, as I was leaving Laramie after a short, three week leave, I picked up the copy of the September 13, 1981 issue of "The Denver Post," a copy which I still have, with a front page story of two children who had been kidnaped in Aurora, Colorado, with the police issuing a warrant for the arrest of Mustafa al Ukaily. Apparently, he had hired a private detective to track down his wife and two children, who had gone into hiding, and had managed to spirit the children out of the United States. Later, the mother returned to Saudi Arabia to try and seek custody of the children, but her request was denied by Saudi courts.

I should mention that my support of the embassy's consular section did not win me any friends among the Kuwaitis. With the departure of Robin, the Consular Section became very short-handed so that Kuwaitis now had to stand in long lines in order to get a U.S. visa. I dismissed the many complaints that I received, saying we did not have an extra supply of consuls for their beck and call. I also backed up our consular officers for refusing to issue visas to maids who were accompanying their Kuwaiti employers when they traveled to the United States on vacation. Most maids were from the Philippines or South Asia and were often poorly treated by their employer. Our experience had been that many of these maids would leave their Kuwaiti employer once they entered the United States and they would join the ranks of the many illegal immigrants in the country. Many Kuwaitis who were unhappy about this would revert to intermediacy in seeking to jump the visa line and to gain exceptions to bring their maids. They would do this by appealing to Margaret, but it didn't work.

By the spring of 1982, Kuwait's investment in the United States had again become a sensitive issue. Kuwait was accumulating substantial foreign exchange reserves with the high price of oil. Kuwait's first real estate investment was in Kiaweah Island in 1974 for a resort facility when I was ARP director. It was the kind of news story that elements unfriendly to the Arabs would point to. In May of 1981, someone gave columnist Dan Dorfman a list of U.S. equities totaling more than \$7 billion that Citibank managed for the Kuwait government's account. It amounted to a mutual fund with the Kuwait government owning shares in some 150 U.S. securities which included shares in all of the Dow stocks. The article quoted Congressman Rosenthal, raising



questions whether there was a genuine danger of Kuwait gaining control of or influencing leading American companies. The publicity caused the Kuwaitis to withdraw all their funds from the bank and place them in other financial institutions that could assure confidentiality.

As Kuwait continued to accumulate cash reserves, it decided to use some of them for downstream investments in Europe and the United States, especially in energy related activities. In Europe, the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) purchased a refinery in Amsterdam which had belonged to the Gulf Oil Company and they also acquired a large number of former Gulf gas stations in Europe. In the United States, the Kuwait Petroleum Company formed a joint venture with AZO industries, which was an agribusiness company whose major shareholder happened to be Saudi businessman Adnan Khashogi for the purpose of exploring oil, gas, and minerals in the United States. But what really attracted attention was KPC's announcement of its intention to purchase California-based Santa Fe International for \$2.5 billion or twice the company's share value on the stock exchange. By purchasing Santa Fe, it would give the KPC the technical ability to drill anywhere in the world. It so happened that Santa Fe was doing some drilling in the North Sea. The news generated a storm of criticism in Congress led by Congressman Rosenthal. The proposed purchase was reviewed by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, an interagency group which was established in 1975 to examine problems posed by foreign purchases of American companies. This was the first time in the six years of its establishment that this interagency group had met, which indicated just how political the sale had become. To facilitate the purchase, the Kuwait Petroleum Company agreed in the spring of 1982 to dispose of Santa Fe's subsidiary, the Braun Construction Company, which at one time had provided engineering services at Rocky Flats in Colorado. Santa Fe had also added former President Ford to its board of directors. In March of 1982, the former president visited Kuwait for a board meeting where he spoke in support of the Kuwait Petroleum Company's investment. I wondered but never asked the former president if he owned shares in Santa Fe at least before its purchase by the KPC. As one Kuwaiti wag at the time of the visit, "We can't vote for a President, but we can buy one."

The Santa Fe purchase created a political storm in Kuwait as well. The national assembly criticized oil minister Ali Khalifa for paying too much and for making Kuwait vulnerable to pressures from the U.S. Congress. The controversy got even worse in March 1983 when Interior Secretary James Watt, responding to domestic political pressure, reversed a decision that he had announced two months earlier that would have allowed the Kuwait Petroleum Company to drill in federally owned lands in western states. Exasperated by these political moves to appease elements in the U.S. opposed to Arab investments, the Kuwait government filed a suit in a Delaware court against the Interior Department over this whole issue. In July of 1984, the court overturned the action of Secretary Watt. However, because of this, the Kuwait Petroleum Company has never undertaken any drilling in federally owned lands in the United States.

*Q: What was your worst moment in Kuwait?*

DICKMAN: I think probably it was Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon on June 6, 1982. This was going on as recriminations over the Santa Fe issue were occurring. The Kuwait government to its credit had spent a lot of political and economic capital in trying to mediate an end to the civil war in Lebanon and to allow the Lebanese government to reestablish its control over the

entire country. During the year before the invasion in my meetings with officials in the foreign ministry, I tried to describe how the efforts of our special envoy, Philip Habib, were maintaining a cease-fire along the Israeli-Lebanese border. However, any credibility we might have had disappeared when Israeli troops went beyond their announced plan to advance only 25 miles into southern Lebanon with the announced purpose of wiping out PLO positions along the border. Once Israeli forces went beyond the 25 miles and reached Beirut and began to bomb the city, the Kuwaitis were convinced that Secretary of State Haig had given the green light to Israeli defense minister Ariel Sharon. I denied this assertion, saying that I believed we had been duped by the Israelis. Toward the end of June, I recall receiving a very tough instruction which had been sent to peninsula posts from Secretary Haig, which in effect said, "Tell the Kuwaitis that the jig is up for the PLO in Lebanon and you Kuwaitis get that message across to the PLO leadership." I did not act on the instruction in the belief that its nasty, overbearing tone would infuriate the Kuwaitis. I believe it was the only time in my career when I deliberately disobeyed an instruction. I just simply didn't carry it out. Fortunately, a few days later, President Reagan, at the urging of his wife, replaced Secretary Haig with George Shultz in the last days of June of 1982.

As the bombardment of Beirut continued, which was shown on Kuwait television constantly, and the negotiations conducted by Phil Habib on the terms for the PLO's withdrawal dragged on, the Kuwaiti leadership became increasingly anxious over how this could affect the country's internal security. We reported that the government had staged several anti-American rallies in sports arenas to let off steam and to reflect Kuwait's public distancing from the United States. But the leadership's greatest fear was that PLO guerrillas that were being removed from Lebanon might end up in Kuwait. To prevent that possibility, the government had instituted strict new entry visa regulations and had ordered a cutback on the gruesome TV footage on Lebanon in order to avoid stirring up more pro-PLO emotions. My confidential report on Kuwaiti internal security concerns was soon leaked by someone in Washington to Evans and Novak to the discomfiture of the Kuwaiti government. To my knowledge, none of the PLO guerrillas who had been in Lebanon ended up in Kuwait.

Once the PLO guerrillas were finally removed from Lebanon, followed by the issuance on September 1, 1982 of President Reagan's Middle East Peace Plan, I tried to get Phil Habib to make a trip to Kuwait to meet with Kuwaiti officials and have him provide a first-hand account of what he had accomplished. However, his schedule was very full and the possibility of a visit was overtaken by the assassination of Lebanon's president elect, Bashir Gemayel, in mid-September, and the massacre of thousands of unarmed Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by the Christian Phalange with the support and complicity of the surrounding Israeli forces.

In the spring of 1983, Secretary Shultz tried his hand at shuttle diplomacy with the objective of getting both Israel and Syria to withdraw their troops from Lebanon. The Secretary did most of his shuttling between Jerusalem and Beirut. The Secretary had not accepted the wise advice of our ambassador to Syria, Bob Paganelli, to keep Syria fully informed or keep it within the negotiating loop. So, when the Secretary finally engineered an Israeli-Lebanese agreement on May 17, 1983, it provided that Israel's withdrawal was conditional on Syrian withdrawal. This in effect gave Israel a veto power. When the agreement was presented to Assad, he found it

unacceptable and it resulted in the Secretary's shuttle effort being a complete failure. In the course of the shuttle, Secretary Shultz apparently became irritated by what he considered to be Paganelli's unhelpful attitude. This would cause the Department to send me a cable asking if I would be available for Damascus. My answer was a bit evasive. In any event, there was no follow-up by the Department and Bob remained in Damascus for a period of time.

During the last year of my tour in Kuwait, the country's economy was trying to recover from a bout of unparalleled greed and economic irresponsibility by buying and selling stocks using postdated checks. It amounted to an unofficial futures market using deferred payments. The market had developed a couple of years earlier and was located on the ground floor of a large car parking garage in downtown Kuwait. It was known as the Suq al Manakh. At one time, many years before, it had been the spot where camels were bought and sold. The shares of the companies, most of which had very few assets, were bid up and up by using checks which were supposed to be honored sometime in the future, generally three to six months later. As the price of the shares rose, some shareholders would borrow from banks in order to honor the checks when they were due. Other checks would exchange hands with some having as many as 12 different endorsements. The whole approach was unbelievable. We did a lot of financial reporting on what was occurring.

I remember asking Finance Minister Abd al Latif al Hamid why the government was not stepping in to stop this speculation. To my surprise, Abd al Latif seemed relaxed about it all. Perhaps it was because there was a rumor that even the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheikh Saad Abdallah, was among the speculators. As I recall, Abd al Latif's attitude was "Well, if they lose money, they will get burned." I also recall taking an incredulous Deputy Treasury Assistant Secretary, Charles Chotta, to the suq to see for himself how the shares were being bought and sold. Local brokers would move from one stall to the next buying or selling shares using checks whose dates when due kept being extended more and more and who themselves were caught in the speculative mania. In September 1982, there had been so much speculation that the government was finally forced to step in and stop the practice of forward check writing. The Ministry of Finance called on all checkholders (and shareholders) to declare their position. But the action came too late. The Suq al Manakh crashed in October 1982. Nearly 29,000 postdated checks, held by over 7,000 individuals, had been registered for the equivalent of \$93 billion and were now being held at the clearinghouse. One individual, Jassim al Mutawa, who was an employee in the Passport Office, had 5,000 checks for some \$12 billion that he could not cover. Initially, the Kuwaiti leadership sought to establish some financial order by establishing an arbitration committee and by setting aside \$5 billion in government bonds to pay off the small investors. But this did not alleviate the impact of the crash, which caused a sharp decline in retail activity. It would take several years before the internal retail market had recovered.

Since a large number of Kuwaitis, including prominent members of the ruling Sabah family, were involved in the Suq al Manakh, we were careful to classify our reporting cables as "Secret Exdis" in order to reduce their distribution only to discover that they became the basis for an article by Edward J. Epstein. The article, entitled "Embassy Cables," appeared in the May 1983 issue of "The Atlantic Monthly" and contained a number of verbatim quotes. The article also quoted a cable from the Department asking for the embassy's assessment to a series of questions and our response. I protested this leak and asked the Department to undertake an investigation. A

few days later, I was called in to the Foreign Ministry to meet with an exercised under secretary, Rashid al-Rashid. He asked if the contents of the article were what the embassy had reported. I did not admit its veracity one way or the other except to say that, as he knew, I had been outspoken in raising my concern about the use of postdated checks with a number of bankers and Kuwaiti cabinet officials, including the Minister of Finance. As for the source of the leak, the Department was never able to identify who had provided copies of the cables.

My last official act in Kuwait was to seek the *agreement* from the Kuwaiti government for my replacement, Brandon Grove. After submitting his vita, I was called in by Under Secretary Rashid al Rashid and told that Grove was unacceptable. His last post had been as consul general in Jerusalem. This would make him a target of criticism by many Kuwaitis and by the large expatriate Palestinian community. I pointed out that the United States had had a consulate general in Jerusalem for more than 100 years. Grove's presence there did not mean that the United States recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Our position was that its future should be the subject of negotiation. I didn't get an answer from Rashid. So, during my farewell calls on the ruler as well as the oil minister and the foreign minister, I appealed for their reconsideration, pointing out that it would probably result in a long delay before another nominee would be proposed. But it was clear that the decision not to accept Brandon Grove had been made by the ruler, Sheikh Jabir. By the time I returned to Washington, I read in the paper that Kuwait's refusal of Brandon Grove had been leaked. I later was told that Under Secretary Eagleburger had taken this unprecedented action thereby enshrining Grove's name in international law textbook as an example of a nation not being required to accept a diplomatic agent.

*Q: What happened after Kuwait?*

DICKMAN: Well, it took a year before my replacement, Anthony Quainton, was named as our next ambassador to Kuwait. During this period, Phil Griffin, who had replaced Brooks Wrampelmeier as deputy chief of mission in the fall of 1982, was the charge. We left Kuwait in mid-August for my next assignment as diplomat in residence at Marquette University. On the day of our departure, I remember our PAO, David Good, asking me what I considered to be my accomplishments during my four years in Kuwait. I said I could think of none. I had not even been able to get the Kuwaitis to accept my replacement. It had been a contentious four years and I had to admit that I had enjoyed my posting as ambassador to the United Arab Emirates a great deal more than I had in Kuwait, where I felt much more confined.

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Kuwait City (1980-1982)**

*Brooks Wrampelmeier was born in Ohio in 1934. He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1956. His career has included positions in Beirut, Amman, Jeddah, Lusaka, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Dhahran. Mr. Wrampelmeier was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.*

*Q: Well, then you left in 1980.*

WRAMPELMEIER: I left there in the summer of 1980, took my home leave and then reported to Kuwait as DCM, again working for Fran Dickman. He had moved up from Abu Dhabi to Kuwait in 1979 and been replaced by Bill Wolle from Muscat. This was the third time that Fran was my boss.

*Q: From 1980 to when?*

WRAMPELMEIER: To 1982.

*Q: Where is Fran Dickman now?*

WRAMPELMEIER: He is retired and lives in Laramie, Wyoming where he teaches courses at the state university on the Middle East and the oil industry, makes model ships and is very active in all sorts of state historical associations. I see him occasionally when he and Margaret visit their daughter in Falls Church.

Kuwait, when I got there, was just recovering from sending everybody home in 1979. The spouses were just beginning to return to post. I was there only a about two months when Fran and Margaret Dickman went on home leave beginning in September. A few days later the Iraqi-Iran war began. We first learned about it when two American engineers showed up in our office one morning to report that Iranian aircraft had bombed their construction camp in southern Iraq. Two American employees were killed and the bombs had destroyed the office in which all the Americans' passports were kept. Only these two men happened to have passports and Kuwait entry visas. There were a number of American workers and their dependents who wanted to get out of Iraq but were unable to cross the border because they didn't have documentation. We sent our RSO (Regional Security Officer) and a vice consul, Keith Loken, up to the Kuwait-Iraq border to see what was going on and how we could get our people to safety in Kuwait.

In the meantime, I contacted the Foreign Ministry and worked out an arrangement that we would give these Americans some sort of documentation and would be responsible for them if the Kuwaitis would allow them to cross the border. We had to assure the Kuwaitis that they wouldn't be in Kuwait for more than a day or two before we would send them on. As most of them worked for one or two U.S. employers, we were able to get the companies to charter aircraft to come pick them up in Kuwait. To deal with the documentation problem, my consular officer, Karen Reed, prepared pieces of paper stating the bearer was an American citizen, leaving the name blank. A whole bunch of these papers were photocopied and had all kinds of gold seals and red ribbons put on them to make them look extra official. We sent these laissez passer up to the border where our RSO and vice consul crossed over to Iraqi side, and wrote the names of each American on a document. The evacuees holding these documents were then driven back to the Kuwaiti border post which processed the documents and allowed the holders to enter Kuwait. Meanwhile, we rented several buses to go up to the border and bring the evacuees down to Kuwait City. We also sent our embassy nurse to the border because we weren't sure whether people were injured. We knew of at least one woman whose husband had been killed in the bombing raid and we were concerned about her physical and mental welfare. Our Admin Officer,

Bill Hoffman, had secured as many hotel rooms as he could. I stayed in Kuwait City trying to organize and coordinate all this and also to keep in touch with the Department and with some of the other embassies like the British who also had people trying to cross the border. I remember calling one South Asian embassy and saying, "There are a lot of your people up there on the border and they can't get in." The response was, "Well, I'm sorry but I've got a tennis game scheduled for this afternoon. We will send somebody up this evening." I am happy to say that by midnight all of the Americans who wanted to come across had arrived in Kuwait City and were in hotel rooms or, if necessary, in hospitals. Within a day or two most of the evacuees had been flown out by chartered aircraft or regular commercial flights. The evacuation went quite well and subsequently the post received a Superior Honor Award for our efforts.

For the next two years most of our time was obviously spent on trying to follow what was happening in the Iran-Iraq war. We also reported on domestic politics. The Ruler of Kuwait had dismissed the national assembly a few years earlier and now decided to restore parliamentary life. There was an election in 1981, which we observed with some interest. It produced a mixed bag of deputies, some of whom were critical of the U.S. for one reason or another, but most of whom were supporters of the Kuwaiti government.

We did have, as a consequence of the military mission that I went on in 1972, a military training mission in Kuwait that advised the Kuwaitis on flying and maintaining A4 fighters and some other military items they had purchased from us. We did not have many naval visits because the Kuwaitis were not enthusiastic about our navy being in their waters and attracting the Iranians' attention.

*Q: One of the things I have heard is that one of the problems that came when Kuwait was taken over by the Iraqis in 1990, that in the Arab world, particularly their neighbors, despised the Kuwaitis because they were this arrogant, not very lovable people and they had really stiff shouldered us until the minute after the last minute. How did you find this?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the Kuwaitis did have that reputation among other Arabs. Their treatment of Palestinians and other foreign nationals in Kuwait was not of the best. These people were able to make money and Kuwait was not a bad place to live, but the Kuwaitis were rather contemptuous of them. I found it amusing that the Kuwaitis and Saudis didn't like each other. The Kuwaitis would make snide remarks about the Saudis and when I returned to Saudi Arabia several years later, I found that Saudis would make snide remarks about Kuwaitis. I think there was a feeling of smugness on the part of the Kuwaitis of "we are doing well."

We were very much concerned about Kuwaiti oil policies. We were following what they were doing in the oil business, which, of course, had been nationalized by this time except for the Getty oil operation down in the Kuwait-Saudi Neutral Zone. I think Getty had the Kuwait concession and the Japanese-owned Arabian Oil Company had the Saudi concession. Although Fran Dickman was primarily his own petroleum reporting officer, I was once again following what was happening in the oil industry and trying to keep track of Kuwait's oil income and its official investments abroad.

One important event that happened during this time was the financial disaster that struck Kuwait

with the collapse of the Suq al-Manakh. This was an unauthorized stock market that had recently arisen. Companies selling their stocks on this exchange were mostly off-shore firms registered in Bahrain, Sharjah or Dubai. Many of them owned nothing more than shares of other similar companies. They were not producing anything material. One might compare it with tech stocks which are now in NASDAQ. The Suq al-Manakh just ballooned like the famous "South Sea Bubble" in the 18th century. The prices of these stocks were going up and up and everybody in Kuwait was buying them and trading them, paying for them sometimes with checks dated as much as a year in advance. There were remarkable stories. Telephones had to be set up outside Kuwait University classrooms because the students and professors were constantly going out to call their stockbrokers. Even cabinet ministers were excusing themselves from meetings to check on the market's performance. Finally, somebody tried to cash a post-dated check that bounced. When it couldn't be cashed the whole edifice began to crumble. It was a multi-million dollar disaster for the Kuwaitis in terms of how to deal with the losses. So many people owed other people money that eventually some individuals, including at least one member of the ruling family, went to jail. He was not a prominent member but nevertheless a member of the Al Sabah family. I think that was done in part to demonstrate that the government was indeed not playing favorites in dealing with this disaster. The government ended up having to bail out a lot of people. Our economic officer, Jim Larocco, who later was our ambassador to Kuwait and more recently senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA, was one of the few observers who could understand the Suq al-Manakh; he did some excellent reporting on it. That disaster put a damper on the Kuwaiti spirit the last year I was there. All of a sudden Kuwaitis' belief that things were always going to get bigger and better was suddenly jolted to a halt.

We had a visit from former President Gerald Ford who came to Kuwait because he was on the board of Santa Fe International. Santa Fe International was a U.S. drilling company that had been bought by the Kuwaitis and they held a meeting in Kuwait with their new board of directors. We did not have many other remarkable visitors, I'm afraid. In 1982 we did have a visit from former Maine Senator and Secretary of State Edmund Muskie. I can't remember why he came out to Kuwait but the ambassador hosted a luncheon for him with a number of prominent Kuwaitis. We thought it would lead to a lively discussion of foreign policy and regional issues, but Muskie ended up talking mostly about growing strawberries. Incidentally, I found that he and I had something in common. As teenagers, we had both worked at summer hotels on Kennebunk Beach, Maine. The farm to which Muskie retired was about a quarter mile from my family's cottage there.

*Q: Did we have somebody there or did Treasury people come up to try to direct Kuwaiti money?*

WRAMPELMEIER: No, I don't think so. The Kuwaitis were pretty good at directing their own money. They were probably much more sophisticated than the Saudis were at that time in what they were doing with their surplus government funds. There were branches of U.S. stock market companies operating in Kuwait. I think we were always interested in what they were doing and at times we would try to push them in the direction of giving money to this or that under-developed country which we thought deserved help. But generally the Kuwaitis pretty much went their own way on these sort of things.

*Q: What about dealing with the Kuwaiti government at that time?*

WRAMPELMEIER: By and large we worked with them reasonably well on those things that were of interest to them. We had reasonably good access to most senior officials. Not so much to the Ruler, however. Sheikh Jaber was not all that accessible but we could call on the Crown Prince and most of the people in the ministries. That doesn't mean that they were always forthcoming with us. On their part, I think, there was always a reserve in dealing with the American, but we did have access.

One custom that our ambassador was careful to preserve was the practice of paying official calls on the Ruler, the Crown Prince, and certain prominent merchant families on the first two mornings of the Eid al-Fitr (at the end of Ramadan) and of the Eid al-Adha (the holiday that marked the end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca). By tradition, one half of Kuwait always called on the other half on the first day and vice versa on the second. The British and American consulates had adopted this practice when they were about the only diplomatic missions in Kuwait. Hardly any diplomats other than ourselves and the Saudis and Gulf Arabs made these calls. One or two carfuls of us would go to each house in turn, congratulate the hosts on the holiday, have coffee and sweets, and chat awhile with whomever else was in the diwan.

I should mention an incident that was of some importance while I was there. An American woman had married a Saudi university professor in the U.S. They were living in Dhahran and she and he were having great difficulty in their marriage. She had decided to leave him but feared she would be unable to take with her their two children, both U.S. citizens. She knew that she could not leave him in Saudi Arabia so she persuaded him to take her and the children up to Kuwait, where he was going for a conference. As soon as he left their hotel for the conference, she jumped into a cab with the two children and came to the embassy. She explained that her husband had flown off to Switzerland on business. She had just received word that her father was dying in California and that she and the children must fly there immediately. She persuaded the consular officer to issue the children with new American passports as they had entered Kuwait on their father's Saudi passport. The consular officer then accompanied her to the Kuwaiti Immigration Office which accepted her story and issued them all exit visas even though the children had no entry visas. The consular officer next escorted them to the airport, put them on a plane and off they went to the States.

The husband returned to his hotel that evening and discovered the wife and children were gone. Somebody said they had heard the wife ask for a taxi to go to the U.S. embassy. He came to the embassy and asked where were his wife and children. The consular officer properly said, "I can't tell you that, but I can assure you that they are safe." The next thing we knew the husband had returned to Dhahran and complained to his government, which in turn complained to the Kuwaiti government. The acting Foreign Minister summoned Ambassador Dickman and read him a strong protest, saying that our embassy had abetted the kidnapping of these Saudi Muslim children from their Saudi father. The acting Foreign Minister then announced all of this to the press. Very quickly the consular officer was PNGed (declared persona non grata) and obliged to leave the country.

This occurred right in the middle of the very busy summer visa-issuing season, leaving the embassy with only a junior first-tour consular officer who was predictably overwhelmed by the



added responsibilities. We soon had long lines of Kuwaiti students on the sidewalk each day waiting in the hot sun to get in. The Kuwaiti press reported, "Ah, the Americans are punishing the Kuwaiti students because we have PNGed their consular officer." I finally gave a press interview to a Kuwaiti journalist in which I said, "Look, this is the problem. This is the summer visa-issuing season for all the Kuwaitis who want to go to the U.S. as students or tourists. We only have one vice consul and he can only do so much and we don't have any place indoors for them all to wait." We did try several things including giving out numbers to the first 50 or 60 who showed up and telling the others to come back the next day, and so on. That may have helped a bit. Finally we got a temporary consul who was sent from London to help until a replacement could be assigned. I should mention that the consular officer who was PNGed did not have her career adversely affected by this incident. She was an excellent officer and made it into the ranks of the Senior Foreign Service.

*Q: Did you at some point say, "Well, you brought it on yourselves, fellows?"*

WRAMPELMEIER: I didn't put it quite that way, but we did make it clear that the issue was, if we don't have a consul then I can't speed up the process in any way. I think that point got across. In fact, I understood that there were some Kuwaitis who actually said that they hoped their government would do for them what the Americans had supposedly done for one of their nationals.

By the way, this case cropped up again while I was Consul General in Dhahran. By that time the Saudi husband had come to the U.S. and kidnapped the two children back to Saudi Arabia. The wife then took a job in Saudi Arabia and remarried another American there in an effort to try to stay near the children. Eventually she had to return to the States. We finally found a way to get the ex-husband to sponsor her for a brief visit to Dhahran so she could see the children. That took a lot of effort on the part of my consular officer in Dhahran, but it seemed to work. When I left Dhahran she was coming back, I think, for a second visit. This goes to the heart of one of the problems that you have out there when marriages between Saudi men and American women don't work out.

*Q: That one will never go away.*

WRAMPELMEIER: That issue will never go away, that's right. The whole problem of child custody issues because of different laws, etc. is a major one that we face in the Middle East and elsewhere. I think it was interesting that the Kuwaitis were not only willing to go to bat for a Saudi on this, but also to make such a public display of their anger and annoyance with the embassy.

*Q: Do you think this was calculated, that they liked to do this to the Americans?*

WRAMPELMEIER: It could have been simply the action of the individual who was acting Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time. I suspect that if it had been somebody else, they might have handled the matter in a more quiet manner. Some of this may have been done to try to demonstrate to the Saudis that the Kuwaitis were going to be supportive in an issue of this sort. And, of course, the Kuwaitis themselves would be concerned that we not be doing things like

this involving their own citizens, so they did want to make a point of it. Whether that was decided at a high level or was sort of a whim of an individual official I don't know.

*Q: What about the Iran-Iraq wars? Kuwait is located right on the borders. Was this seen as any kind of threat? How did you view it?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the Kuwaitis were concerned about it in part because there was always a threat that if the Iraqi defenses collapsed, the Iranians could move into southern Iraq and therefore be in a position to threaten Kuwait. There was also an issue over the islands of Warabah and Bubiyan, which control the entrance to Umm Qasr, by then Iraq's only access to the Gulf. The war had closed the access of Basra to the Gulf through the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The Iraqis kept saying that they wanted to station some troops on these islands to protect them from the Iranians and the Iranians were always threatening to seize the islands to keep the Iraqis from doing so. The Kuwaitis finally put some troops on the islands in order to deter either side from seizing them. The Kuwaitis felt under pressure from Iraq to provide it with financial assistance and to allow shipments to Iraq through the port of Kuwait. There was a fair amount of trade going up through Kuwait to Iraq throughout the war. It was always a matter of concern to us that the Iranians might try to block that commerce by bombing Kuwait.

*Q: During this time were tankers a problem?*

WRAMPELMEIER: No, it wasn't a problem when I was there.

**ANTHONY QUAINTON**  
**Ambassador**  
**Kuwait (1984-1987)**

*Ambassador Anthony Quainton was born in Washington state in 1934. He graduated from Princeton University in 1955 and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. He served at overseas posts in Australia, Pakistan, India, France, Nepal and as ambassador to the Central African Republic, Nicaragua, Kuwait and Peru. Ambassador Quainton has also served as the Deputy Inspector General, Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security, and the Director General of the Foreign Service. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.*

*Q: Tony, they got you out of Nicaragua and supposedly out of the line of fire, I guess. Do you know any reason why you got the appointment to Kuwait and were there any problems with it?*

QUAINTON: As I mentioned, once it was apparent that the White House was anxious to have a new man in Nicaragua, Secretary Shultz arranged for me to get an onward assignment. There were not a whole lot of posts currently vacant for which I was suitable, but Kuwait was vacant. Kuwait had been without an ambassador for the best part of a year by the time I got there in the summer of 1984. The previous ambassador had left in 1983 and then in September of 1983 the embassy had been blown up by a very substantial car bomb with loss of life - FSNs were killed;

no Americans were killed - and one of the two principal buildings of the embassy had been almost totally demolished. I think probably because of my previous experience in counterterrorism and my familiarity with a lot of the issues that went with terrorism, Kuwait seemed like a fairly logical choice to which I might be assigned. I was not an Arabist, in fact on leaving Nicaragua in May, 1984, I went almost immediately, after a period of leave, into the Arabic fast course with my wife. That was extended another couple of months as we waited for the confirmation process to be complete. In three months of Arabic, you can't get terribly far, but we got to the point where we could read a certain amount facilitated by the fact that we had earlier studied Urdu, which is written in a very similar script to that in which modern Arabic is written.

Of course, a lot of time was spent on being briefed on the situation in the Gulf. The period, as you may remember, was one of hostilities in the Gulf which did not involve the United States directly. It was a war between Iran and Iraq which had been going on already for several years by the time that we got there. It was a very bloody and passionate war which had really been fought to a stalemate by 1984, although the Iranians succeeded in a major offensive in the following year by advancing into Iraq towards Basra. All the time we were there we could hear from our livingroom the sounds of the shelling of the Iranians and the Iraqis. It was very close. Kuwait was only about 50 miles away from the actual fighting. Frequently one heard flying overhead, Iraqi planes on route to attacking Iranian targets. The Kuwaitis gave permission to these flight. There were often sonic booms as the planes went over.

*Q: You were there from 1984 to when?*

QUAINTON: Until the summer of 1987.

*Q: We will come back to the war in a while. What were American interests in Kuwait at this time? What were your concerns when you went out?*

QUAINTON: One of my principal concerns was with the personnel of the embassy, itself. The embassy was deeply traumatized by the experience of the bombing the year before to the point where many embassy families refused to bring their spouses or children to swim in the embassy pool. To attend social events which involved the embassy or the ambassador's residence. The ambassador's residence was on the same compound as the embassy and although very considerable steps had been taken to improve the security around the chancery and residence, people were still very fearful. It took a very concerted effort on our part, my wife's and mine, to try to restore a degree of normalcy to the day-to-day functioning and living of the embassy. When we arrived, there was still on the compound a great deal of equipment scattered about. Offices were still in tents. Indeed, we were not able to move into the residence for several days because the health unit was set up in the ambassador's bedroom, the motor pool was still run out of the library, etc. Eventually, all that all changed. Pre-fab buildings were put up and tents taken down, and the embassy got back to fairly normal working conditions. That certainly became a major objective at the beginning of our stay.

American interests were related first and foremost to oil. Kuwait had the capacity to produce about 2 million barrels a day, but most of the time that I was there, it produced only about 1 ½

million barrels a day. Oil had been nationalized so it was all produced by the Kuwait Petroleum Company. Some of it was sold in the United States, but most of it went to our allies in western Europe and Japan. However, on the southwestern border of Kuwait, in the neutral zone, Texaco was producing oil, both on the Kuwait side of the border and on the Saudi side. It was a joint Saudi-American endeavor and there was a large camp of Americans working on what was legally Kuwaiti territory up against Saudi Arabia.

We were obviously concerned with the fighting in the Gulf, the war between the Iranians and the Iraqis, the potentially destabilizing effects that that war had, and the opportunities which it might provide and indeed did provide in 1986-87, for the Soviet Union to increase its influence in the region, something, of course, which was anathema to us given our interest in the larger petroleum production capabilities of not only the Saudis but of the other emirates in the Gulf. This was a period in which we were tilting towards the Iraqis, although this didn't impinge very much on our stance in Kuwait. The fact that we were on the side of the Arabs in what was seen as an Arab-Iranian war was certainly a positive dimension for our bilateral relations with the Kuwaitis and other Gulf Arabs. Whatever suspicions they may have had of the Iraqis, and the Kuwaitis were always deeply suspicious of the Iraqis, they were even more fearful of the Iranians and what they might be able to do in terms of subverting the substantial Shi'a minority in Kuwait. About 15 percent of the Kuwaitis were Shi'a, many of them families still with ties to Iran. Many sent to Iran for brides for their sons. So, there was a strong linkage which the Kuwaiti government feared would be used to subvert it. The Iranian rhetoric was very hostile to Kuwaitis for allowing Iraqi overflights to Iran. Of course, the Kuwaitis also provided substantial financial support to Iraq during the war, money which I think they deeply regretted later when they were attacked by the Iraqis, but at the time it seemed to be a reasonable insurance policy for Iraqi good behavior as well as for putting them on the side of the Arab cause.

Going back for a second to the petroleum question, one of our interests which extended to other neighboring countries was that petroleum prices not be artificially maintained by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The Reagan administration at that time strongly believed that the market ought to be allowed to operate in a free way without the intrusion of the oil cartel represented by OPEC into market mechanisms. This, however, turned out not to be an entirely sound policy as the Kuwaiti foreign minister, Sheikh Ali Khalifa, made clear to me on one occasion when I was instructed to wait upon him and inform him that we hoped the next OPEC meeting in Vienna would not be used to keep prices up artificially. He read me a short sermon on the subject of market forces and suggested that I didn't know what I was talking about, nor did the President of the United States. A free market in oil would be more deleterious to American interests than to Kuwaiti. He suggested, correctly, that Kuwait was capable of producing oil at just over a dollar a barrel at the well head and would realize considerable profits even at very low international oil prices. However, if we compared Kuwaiti costs with the cost of production in west Texas, the oil patch of the United States, it was not possible to produce oil at one dollar a barrel but more nearly 10 dollars a barrel. He ventured the thought that what we really wanted, regardless of what we said, was that oil prices should be maintained at about \$17 or \$18 a barrel, sufficient for a good profit for the Arab producers and an adequate price for the domestic American oil producers. I assured him that we still favored a free market in oil and he said, "Let's see whether you think that if the price is allowed to fall."

For reasons not related to my demarche, the Arabs could not reach agreement on oil quotas at the Vienna meeting and the Saudis, Kuwaitis and others all began to produce over their quota. Oil quickly fell to something like seven or eight dollars a barrel. This, of course, was disastrous for Texas oil producers and we ceased to make strong representations to the Arabs on this subject. The Arabs working with their other non-Arab OPEC producers some months later managed to push quotas down. Oil prices then rose to a level which the world found entirely satisfactory.

*Q: There must have been American oil experts in the government snooping around Kuwait from time to time, did you ever raise this question with them?*

QUAINTON: I told them the story after I had this conversation with the foreign minister. I had reported it to Washington, of course. The oil experts recognized the realities, but it was such a strongly held belief in certain quarters in the administration that prices should be allowed to find their own level in the international market place that it was only when that was clearly demonstrated to be a policy which had unfavorable implications for American producers that we backed away. It was also thought that it was unlikely that the Arabs would allow production to rise to the point that it did rise.

*Q: What was the reason for the bombing as far as we can gather of our embassy before you arrived? What was the Kuwaiti response?*

QUAINTON: The explosion in Kuwait came on the heels of two bombings in Beirut. There was clearly an orchestrated campaign directed against American interests in the Middle East designed to influence our policy with regards to the Israeli dispute. One of the things that became most controversial after the bombing in Kuwait was the fate of the terrorists who perpetrated the bombing. They were being held in Kuwaiti jails. There was a constant fear that this would only lead to further terrorist, especially hostage taking, acts in order to get them freed from Kuwaiti control. There were in fact no such efforts, at least none that were successful, but it was always a worry that terrorism would feed on itself in the sense, that having captured the perpetrators the organizers behind those who had actually carried out the bombing would want to see them freed and would take further terrorist actions.

There was, in fact, almost no violence in Kuwait in the period that we were there. There may have been one or two small bombings but no major terrorist incidents. The Kuwaitis had a fairly efficient security apparatus which focused much more heavily on dissident Palestinians. There was a very large Palestinian population, some 500,000 in Kuwait out of a population of 1.7 million. Almost as many Palestinians as Kuwaitis lived in Kuwait at that time. The Kuwaitis were outnumbered in their own country by other Arabs, so they were always concerned that within the Palestinian community there would be terrorists groups. On the other hand, Palestinians, themselves, the vast majority of whom were professionals working in public service or as doctors, teachers, etc., realized that their whole status in Kuwait would be jeopardized if terrorism was allowed to get out of control.

*Q: How would you sound out what the Palestinians as well as the Kuwaitis were thinking and whither? There was no real political life there was there?*

QUAINTON: There were elections in 1985 for a national assembly. The electorate was very

small, only some 60 or 70 thousand voters, since voting was limited to adult males who could trace their family ties with Kuwait back before 1922. These were the so-called first class Kuwaitis who were longtime residents. Kuwaitis who had come later, the Bedouin, for example, who had moved in from the desert, were not eligible to vote. Women were not eligible to vote. And, of course, none of the Palestinians or other Arabs who had been there in some cases for 40 years were eligible to vote. But, elections were free. There was competition which was carefully monitored by the emir and by his government. The power of the assembly was greatly circumscribed so political life was quite limited, but, there was some genuine political debate, more than in any other Gulf country or in Saudi Arabia for that matter.

The Palestinians were extremely accessible. They were active across the board in Kuwaiti life, but at another level they were untouchable. Many of the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) lived in Kuwait. At the time, we had an absolute prohibition on contacts with the PLO except those that were authorized in Tunis through Ambassador Pelletreau. In fact, on a number of occasions I came in contact with senior Palestinian leaders. By chance I would sit next to them at a function or occasionally at a Kuwaiti's home, or in a Palestinian professional's home, and I would meet someone who had a political agenda as well. But, those contacts were fairly rare and certainly were not encouraged by the Department. I have to say in all honesty that in most cases I didn't report that they had taken place. I had not sought them out and they had not sought me out, it was casual conversation sometimes turning to political subjects of the day.

*Q: Were you monitoring the Palestinians? I was a vice consul in Dhahran in 1958-60. At that time in that part of Saudi Arabia we were concerned about the Palestinians, who in those days were considered the tools of Nasser of Egypt.*

QUAINTON: Not in any great significant way. We did a little reporting on the Palestinians as they were organized in Kuwait. They were not allowed to have any formal political structures such as the PLO, or the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The Kuwaitis, themselves, monitored the Palestinian community very carefully. And, indeed, the terrorist attack that took place against the American embassy in 1985 was caused not by elements which had come from Lebanon, not resident Palestinians.

*Q: How did you find dealing with the Kuwaiti government?*

QUAINTON: It varied a bit. The emir at the top was quite inaccessible. In three years, I certainly saw him no more than half a dozen times and almost always in the company of a senior visitor. The next level down, the crown prince and foreign minister, were extremely accessible and I saw them regularly. They spoke English. The emir may have spoken a little English. He certainly understood a little English, but he never spoke it in public, at least not in my presence. The crown prince on the other hand spoke reasonable English having done a year's training at a police training college in England. Most of the ministers also spoke reasonable English. They were divided into two categories: those who were members of the Sabah family, the defense, interior, information and foreign ministers. Then there were non-Sabahs who held ministerial portfolios. Clearly the more important portfolios were held by the family, not all by direct descendants of the emir but by collateral branches, cousins, etc.

We had a tremendous amount of dealing with the defense minister, who had been ambassador for many years in Washington, particularly in the last year that I was there. I will come back to that. It was the period when we were engaged in flagging Kuwaiti tankers. He knew the United States and was open and accessible. My only problem was with those members of the royal family and those ministers who did not speak much English. I did not have on my staff anyone whose Arabic was sufficient to do translation or interpretation. That was a frequent problem. Although we had several people who had studied Arabic, their Arabic was not at the sufficient level that would enable them to do interpretation. So, I was frequently forced to take a local employee along or ask the Kuwaitis to provide somebody who could do the interpretation.

*Q: Was the government fairly effective with what it was doing as far as money and control over running the country, etc.?*

QUAINTON: One has to remember that this was one of the wealthiest countries in the world on a per capital basis and so whatever they needed they bought, whether that was in terms of talent, equipment, or anything else. So, you had free hospital care, free healthcare, free education, subsidized housing for all Kuwaitis to the tune of something like \$100,000 per house. There was no taxation. The government had enormous oil revenues which they very shrewdly invested. To give you an idea of the shrewdness of their investments, they bought into the American stock market when the DOW was at 800. Now it is well over 10 times that. So, their investments have been enormously profitable. They had very considerable disposal income which they used to pave over the country. The road system was still being constructed, but it was of extremely high quality. In fact, they had a team from the Federal Highway Works Administration helping with the development of their road network. They had very modern hospitals. What they didn't have was terribly good nursing care in these hospitals. No Kuwaiti would do work of that kind and they all had to be imported, mainly from South Asia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc. But, the country was reasonably well run. Things worked in terms of public services. The housing was uniformly good. It was a very prosperous and successful little country.

*Q: I have been told that because of their wealth and, I guess, attitude, the Kuwaitis really had no natural friends in the area. Their relations were rather formal with other countries. Is that true?*

QUAINTON: Of all the Arab countries in the Gulf, the Kuwaitis had tried to adopt a policy of non-alignment. They were frequently critical of American policies. They tried to balance relations with us by relations with the Soviet Union. Many other Arabs did not have relations with the Soviet Union. So, there was a conscious effort to steer an independent path. I think their history suggested to them that they were a small country with two large, not particularly friendly, neighbors. One, Iraq, which we know in hindsight was not a friendly neighbor. The other was Saudi Arabia, whose influence they feared, and whose politics and religious fanaticism they did not wish imported into Kuwait. Kuwait was a Muslim country. Alcohol was banned, but on the other hand women in Kuwait enjoyed quite considerable social rights - drove cars, didn't wear the veil, etc. - and there was no attempt by the emir or by any of the other senior Kuwaitis to convert Kuwait into a formal Islamic state. Christians were free to worship and indeed there was a Catholic cathedral and several Protestant churches in Kuwait. There was even an American missionary presence there.

Kuwaitis on the one hand were very suspicious of the Saudi model and were also suspicious, of course, of the Iraqis. That led them to think that their best policy was to have good relations with the great powers. The United States was a friend of Saudi Arabia, and the Soviet Union a particular friend of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis, so the Kuwaiti whole strategy was one of careful balance.

This only began to change when their interests were directly threatened in the latter phases of the Iran-Iraq war in 1986-87. As the Iranians mined the access to Kuwait's harbors, the Kuwaitis saw themselves in a situation where they would not be able to export their oil without some direct support from one or other of the great powers. As a result, the oil minister, Ali Khalifa, had the bright idea that the way to protect Kuwait's tanker fleet was to have the fleet fly a foreign flag. He approached the Russians and asked whether they would be willing to protect Kuwaiti tankers. The Russians actually expressed some interest in doing this. Whether the Kuwaitis were serious in this inquiry of the Russians makes little difference because it set off very considerable alarm bells in Washington where it was thought that the Soviets were being invited into the Gulf in a military capacity. The Soviets had deployed additional warships into the Indian Ocean which occasionally sailed into the Gulf. The result was that we decided we could not let the Soviets get the upper hand. Through a very torturous process in Washington, both bureaucratically and legally, we allowed the Kuwaitis to set up a corporation in Delaware to which the tankers were transferred. The tankers became American vessels, enabling the American flag to be flown on them. This, in turn, allowed us to provide direct military protection with the Middle East Force, COMIDEASTFOR, based in Bahrain, while not beefed up, to the extent that came later, it was still a significant presence.

Those negotiations took a very long time, a number of months. There was resistance by some in Kuwait to the whole idea of turning to the United States. This ran counter to Kuwait's traditional foreign policy of balance. There were a lot of people in the United States who were suspicious of the Kuwaitis because they had been non-aligned for so long. They were not a reliable partner in the eyes of some Washington officials. There were people who said it was crazy to take on an obligation to protect another country's fleet which might draw us into the Iran-Iraqi conflict. All of these arguments played back and forth, but in the end, the fear of the Soviet Union, which was such a controlling factor in our foreign policy throughout the Cold War, led us to swallow a lot of things we would otherwise not have swallowed and to agree to, like the flagging of the tankers.

It was then a question of how to get the tankers in and out, given the fact that there were mines scattered up and down the Gulf. We had to bring in minesweepers to get rid of the mines and then to escort the tankers down the Gulf at regular intervals, always fearful that they would be attacked by the Iranians as they passed through the Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz at the far end. In fact, the Iranians didn't attack the Kuwaiti tankers. The only attack that took place was the attack by the Iraqis on the *USS Stark*, one of our ships in the Gulf, part of the Middle East Force that was there to protect the Kuwaitis and to insure that the sea lanes were kept open for the other Gulf states that exported oil, including Saudi Arabia.

*Q: Prior to the flagging, the problem had been that small Iranian boats were coming in almost like a militia with shoulder rocket launchers, etc.*



QUAINTON: And small boats came in and laid some mines. That, of course, was very threatening to Kuwait. They were afraid this would happen elsewhere in the Gulf, Kuwait being much closer to Iran than anywhere else except Oman. It was only a few miles from the delta of the Euphrates to Kuwait territory, so it was easy for Iranians to use small boats to come across into Kuwaiti waters and threaten Kuwaiti shipping.

*Q: Had the Kuwaitis been making any representation to the Iranians or were they pretty much shut off from that?*

QUAINTON: The Kuwaitis never closed their embassy in Tehran. They kept it open but it was not staffed at any very senior level. The Iranians kept their embassy open in Kuwait throughout all this period. The Iranians were increasingly anxious about Kuwaiti support for Iraq.

*Q: During the negotiations on the flagging, was this something pretty much carried on in Washington?*

QUAINTON: It was largely carried on in Kuwait. I did much of the negotiating directly with the defense minister and the prime minister. We had, of course, visits from Washington. Senior visitors came from the Pentagon, from CENTCOM, etc. We had a steady stream of people to discuss some of the technical elements of the reflagging. And then once the ships were reflagged, we needed to increase our presence so that we could support the reflagging. The presence of foreign troops on their soil was always a neuralgic issue for the Kuwaitis, at least until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They did not want to see that happen, but we were able to get agreement to bring in on a rotating basis a small number of people who worked directly with the Kuwaiti shipping and petroleum authorities on the protection of ships.

*Q: When you fly under the American flag don't the majority of crew have to be American?*

QUAINTON: There was a whole series of requirements that had to be met and the Kuwaitis did in fact meet those requirements. I have forgotten exactly what they were with regard to the manning and officers of the ships. Tankers don't require very many people. Many of our requirements only apply to ships that come into American waters and these tankers never came to the United States. Once they got out of the Gulf they sailed to Western Europe or the Far East.

*Q: Was it your impression that what was driving us was not the flow of oil as much as it was the possibility of the Soviets supplying protection?*

QUAINTON: We had two concerns. I think the Soviet concern tipped the balance because we saw the Soviets getting a potential foothold in Kuwait, if they were allowed to protect the Kuwaiti tankers. We certainly didn't want that to happen. We were also concerned at the general Iranian threat to oil exports from the Gulf region and wanted to provide as much reassurance as we could to all of the Gulf states that their oil exports would not be threatened. The Saudis, of course, had by this point built a pipeline across to the Red Sea at Yanbu, and a great deal of oil could go out without going through the Gulf, although they still had substantial exports from the Gulf. Kuwait was the second most important producer of petroleum after Saudi Arabia, so the threat to the oil in Kuwait was in itself an important concern for the United States.

*Q: What about relations during this 1984-87 period with the Iraqis?*

QUAINTON: The Iraqi ambassador was the dean of the diplomatic corps. He was a big man around town. He didn't speak any English so I had relatively little contact with him. I called on him a couple of times. Clearly the Iraqis and Kuwaitis were very close. I won't say they were always terribly friendly, but Iraq was an extremely important country for the Kuwaitis. The Iraqis had a very large embassy doing all sorts of things, and undoubtedly had a very large intelligence presence in Kuwait. They were certainly important players on the Kuwaiti scene.

*Q: What about the Iran-Iraq war? It seemed to be moving more towards the side of Iran while you were there?*

QUAINTON: Yes. The Iranians had successfully advanced their front quite a distance into Iraq and there was a point when it seemed possible that they might actually be able to reach Basra. Of course, reaching Basra would have meant closing off most of Iraq's oil exports. Some could have gone out by pipeline across Turkey, but Iraqi oil came out basically through Basra. The Iraqis put everything they had into the campaign to stop the Iranians. I think history will judge that in all probability it was the Iraqis who were the original provokers of the war in their efforts to gain those portions of southwestern Iran, which was inhabited largely by Arabs. On the other hand, there is a counter case which the Iraqis were quick to make that the Iranians were provocative and had started shelling across the Iraqi border and the Iraqis responded back. There certainly was some shelling but I think the origin of the war lies more heavily on the side of the Iraqis than on the side of the Iranians. I am not an expert on that.

*Q: Were you at the embassy making plans for a possible breakthrough by the Iranians?*

QUAINTON: We certainly worried a little bit about it and there was some question as to whether the Iranians would try to come through Kuwait. However, they didn't have to come into Kuwaiti territory in order to get to Basra. What was a bigger issue was whether the Iraqis would demand of the Kuwaitis access to several offshore islands which bordered Iraqi territory in order to be able to more effectively shell the Iranians from the Kuwaiti side. That never happened, but there certainly was a great deal of talk about that possibility. The Iraqis, I think, pressed very hard to get authorization from the Kuwaitis. But almost everything in Kuwait's foreign policy tried to keep both sides in play. They never wanted to take a stance so provocatively pro-Iraqi that it would lead to Iranian intervention. So, they never gave in to the pressure put on them to allow the Iraqis to use Kuwaiti territory. They were only allowed to use Kuwaiti air space.

In hindsight, it just may be that this whole experience for the Iraqis and their vulnerability to an Iranian attack, increased their desire to annex Kuwait and have an effective buffer on that side from which they could operate against any future incursion by some outside force. The legitimacy of the borders created by the British was always an issue and contributed to the disastrous Iraqi strategy several years later.

*Q: You were sort of the new boy on the block in this area. From talking to people when you would go back, was it your impression that the Iran seizure of our embassy and the subsequent*

*acts had so traumatized us that we almost by reflex were looking upon Iraq as our friend?*

QUAINTON: I think that is right. We were only five years or so from the hostage taking in Tehran, and the perception of the Iranians as being fanatical was deeply held. While Saddam Hussein had never been a friend of the United States, and had consistently tilted towards the Soviet Union, in large part because the Soviet Union had tilted towards the Arab cause in the Arab-Israeli dispute, nonetheless, it was important to us that the Iranians not gain control over Basra, southern Iraq and particularly Kuwait.

We saw Iraq as a nasty dictatorship, not a fanatical dictatorship and certainly not one in that time that seemed to have regional ambitions. It was a secular state ruled for many years by the Baath party. It was one which was and is in some respects more open than any number of other Arab countries. You can get a glass of beer in Baghdad and the women aren't veiled. The superficial aspects of life in Baghdad were more western than anything we had seen in Iran since the Ayatollahs had taken over some years before.

*Q: Did our policy towards Israel intrude on you much?*

QUAINTON: It was always a source of discussion. There was constant criticism in the Kuwaiti press of our policy towards Israel. The perception was widely held in Kuwait, as elsewhere in the Arab world, that American policy was controlled by Jewish interests in the United States. We were always explaining, defending our policy. One aspect that I think was common to other countries and certainly involved my staff a good bit was the Arab boycott. There was a secondary boycott by the Arabs of American companies who did business with Israel. There was a list of companies that could not sell in Kuwait because they were selling to Israel. We were constantly involved in that.

*Q: The boycott had been in place for a long time. I would have thought that by this time everybody would have gotten so sophisticated that by bypassing the second party it would have become a moot problem?*

QUAINTON: No, it never did. There was a very elaborate certification process whereby exporters had to certify that they were not doing business with Israel, but there were always new players, people who entered the Israeli market and then found that Arab countries had added their name to the list of companies that couldn't do business with one or all of them. So it was always a neuralgic issue with the Department of Commerce, which kept up the pressure on us. My commercial attaché spent a good bit of time on boycott questions.

*Q: We had to be very careful not to get involved in making this certification for anybody, didn't we?*

QUAINTON: Yes, that is right.

*Q: They couldn't come in and swear in front of the consul that they didn't deal with Israel and that sort of thing.*

QUAINTON: We were prevented by American law from doing that. They could take positive steps to prove that they were not doing business with Israel. Of course, they would argue their case forcibly.

*Q: During this time were there any other events that concerned you?*

QUAINTON: A great deal of time and effort, as I suggested, was given to security matters. We built around the compound the most expensive wall that had ever been built in history. It cost just over a million and a half dollars to build this wall. It was made of reenforced steel concrete set many meters into the ground and would have withstood anything short of an atomic weapon. There was constant discussion as to why we were spending this kind of money.

Another event that did not directly touch us but actually had an impact throughout the region was the Iran-Contra affair. Iran-Contra took place against the background of the Iran-Iraq war, and the hostility which Iran was showing to its Gulf neighbors on the southern side of the Gulf. Visits to the ayatollahs, etc. had a negative impact on our relations with the Gulf Arabs, including the Kuwaitis. They saw this as a very foolish policy that the United States was pursuing.

*Q: Did you find yourself trying to say we have some stupid people in our government?*

QUAINTON: I followed the line that was being taken in Washington. Of course, we ran away from the policy fairly quickly. But the Kuwaitis didn't dwell on the issue at great length. The United States was held up to some initial ridicule, but the Kuwaitis are a pragmatic people and their interests were to protect themselves, not to attack us. They thought our methods were really quite crazy, and they certainly weren't enthusiastic about the offer of arms to Iran. On the other hand, you would get Kuwaiti commentary, never publicly made, but sometimes privately, that just as they had maintained contacts with Iran throughout the Iran-Iraq War, they were not surprised that the United States with much bigger fish to fry would want to do the same.

*Q: Did you get dragged into the whole Iran-Contra affair because of your Nicaraguan experience?*

QUAINTON: No, happily, I never had to come back to testify on this. I knew nothing beyond what I read in the newspapers and what we were told officially. I guess I wasn't terribly surprised when I learned who the actual author of this was, the same senior CIA officer who had orchestrated some of the more bizarre covert operations during my stay in Nicaragua.

*Q: When you left in 1987, how did you see things coming out?*

QUAINTON: Things were very upbeat. As relations in Nicaragua got steadily worse every day I was in Managua, in Kuwait, relations, by and large, got better every day. The reflagging had just taken place. We were developing a new political/military relationship with the Kuwaitis. So, I left Kuwait with a sense of accomplishment, having helped to build a new, more mature relationship with Kuwait. And, I think the Kuwaitis felt that their relations with the United States had taken a decided turn for the better. I got a bit of credit for that, I must say, and I was very gratified.

**KENNETH A. STAMMERMAN**  
**Economic Counselor**  
**Kuwait City (1987-1989)**

**Consul General**  
**Dhahran, Saudi Arabia (1989-1992)**

*Kenneth A. Stammerman was born in Kentucky in 1943. He graduated from Bellermino College in 1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1966. He has served in post in Israel, the Philippines, France, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mr. Stammerman was interviewed in 2000 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

*Q: You were in Kuwait from '86 to*

STAMMERMAN: '87. Summer of '87 to summer of '89. '86 to '87 was Arabic.

*Q: As economic counselor.*

STAMMERMAN: As economic counselor.

*Q: Who was the Ambassador when you arrived?*

STAMMERMAN: When I arrived, it was Tony Quenton. Just two months. Jim Hooper was the DCM, so Hooper was chargé for a short while, and then Ambassador Matt Howell arrived. I knew Matt from NEA days. And Matt was the consummate Arabist. He'd done Jordan and served various places. Ambassador Quainton was not an Arabist at all. He apparently left a good impression with the Kuwaitis. A week after I arrived, an American flagged Kuwaiti tanker hit a mine, and the started the whole episode of the U.S. escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers. That was Howell's baby. Tony Quainton and I only crossed paths for a little more than a month.

*Q: From your point of view, Kuwait is so small and so wealthy, what does economic officer do? I'm not denigrating, I'm just saying it must be quite specialized as opposed to other places.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, well this is what we got involved in. Got involved in of course energy economics. The Kuwaiti oil minister Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah was one of the founders of OPEC along with the Saudi Sheikh Zaki Yamani. They were the two prime movers, way back when. The Kuwaiti Emir, a very smart man, was once finance minister. He started this process in Kuwait of taking 10% of their oil income every year and putting it into Western capital markets. Investing, a Fund for the Future. They put very little money into Kuwait itself. The roads are so-so, in fact he brought in the FHA to administer contracts to build their roads, they didn't want corruption. No palaces. In terms of Saudi palaces, or Bahraini palaces, nothing like that in Kuwait. But we had a lot of issues because the Kuwaitis were funding the Iraqi war effort, along with the Saudis. Whatever the IMF rescheduled the Latin American debt, this was the big Latin

American debt fiasco, the Kuwaitis were always in on it because they had invested so much money in the international capital markets that we had to convince the Kuwaitis to go along with rescheduling.

They had some very good economists, sort of like the Israelis. Their finance ministry had very good people. The Kuwaitis would talk to us about economics. Granted I had studied some resource economics, but I got to do a lot of financial reporting and got to know a lot about the Kuwaiti oil industry. The Kuwaiti oil minister Sheikh Ali Khalifa, he's cousin of the Emir, distant cousin... He's a brilliant man. Brilliant. One of the smartest people I've ever met in my life. Of course, he has his doctorate from an American University. We did this with all the senior OPEC people. We educated them, gave them doctorates in economics, they went back and formed OPEC.

*Q: And we've been suffering ever since.*

STAMMERMAN: Suffering ever since. And he's one of them. When I got there, the Iranians started mining Kuwaiti ports, or Kuwaiti ships, because the Kuwaitis were funding the Iraqis. So, the U.S. Navy started escorting the Kuwaiti ships, Kuwaiti ships reflagged with U.S. flags. Well we have no military attachés in Kuwaiti, the Kuwaitis never allowed military attachés. That meant that the contact with the Kuwaiti government was through the Embassy Kuwait economic section, and the Kuwaiti Petroleum Corporation. We were working as intermediaries with the U.S. Navy and the KPC, with the escort mission, which was an unusual position for an embassy to be in. We did it.

*Q: The Kuwaitis have a reputation of being disliked by about everyone.*

STAMMERMAN: By everyone, yes. I liked them. I used to call them my poor little Kuwaitis. The reason nobody likes them, is they have a reputation for being abrupt. And they are, so those of us who have been elsewhere in the Arab world, like Saudi Arabia, when you walk into a meeting, you call on someone, they offer you coffee. You talk about a lot of things, about the weather, about people's cousins, about camel racing, about... you may have seen the guy yesterday, but you talk to him for 45 minutes before you ever get around to the subject of the meeting. With the Kuwaitis you walk into a room and he looks up and says, "What do you want?"

*Q: Sounds like the mirror image of the Israelis.*

STAMMERMAN: Very much so. I got along with them very well, because I could talk... We had these wonderful Arabists walk into a meeting like that and they are insulted. If they know the culture they aren't surprised to be talked to this way. "Did I do something?" "No, they're just that way, because they do this to Arabs too." That's why other Arabs think they are just arrogant. They're not arrogant, they're just direct. They've been merchants since 1850 when they starting going out in sea-going vessels into the Indian Ocean, merchant peoples. They learned how to be merchants, they're not desert Arabs, they are town Arabs and seagoing, and they are very direct. I got along with them fine. They also had these diwaniyyas, night meetings, where the families meet together, the men of the families, and that's where business gets conducted. Well, I and a

political officer would go to these, we'd get invited, we'd go to these things. We got to know the Kuwaiti families. There are 15 major Kuwaiti families, I knew them all. Their genealogy is fascinating. Learn the genealogy, get to know who's kin to whom, learn the marriage connections and you'll know how Kuwait works, which is what we did.

*Q: You got the impression from the newspaper accounts and all, that although we were trying to do something about getting, you know flagging the tankers and escorting the tankers, that the Kuwaitis weren't very pleasant recipients of our efforts or not.*

STAMMERMAN: Well, they were. What the Kuwaitis were upset about was, they came to us first. This was before I got there actually. They said, "We want to put American flags on our tankers, and we also want to put Russian flags, we want to foreign flag out tankers so that the U.N. major powers will allow us to take oil out of the Gulf despite the Iranians." But we had of course a Carter Doctrine, which said the United States will maintain access to oil in the Gulf, by war if need be, and the last thing we want to do is invite the Russians into the Gulf. So we said, "Fine, hey, our goals coincide. You want your oil to get out, we want your oil to get out, if you want to flag your boats, good idea. That'll make it easier under international law for our ships to escort you." So they went ahead and did it and then they found out about things like the U.S. Coast Guard, and U.S. maritime laws. They didn't like that. They said, "We got a deal, why are you doing this?" "Well if you fly our flag, you've got to have a U.S. radio operator." "Our ships have no radios, we have a captain, we have this electronic gadgetry." The old days with the dit dit dit dit... You don't have those people any more. Well, the U.S. maritime law says you have to have one. So the Kuwaitis rolled their eyes.

So this is how they did it. Not just Kuwaitis, the Kuwaiti Petroleum Corporation has a lot of foreigners working, mostly the Irish and British. They went to Florida to old people's homes, to retired sailors homes, and hired people who still had their radio operator papers and put them on the stupid ships. We said, "Why did you do this?" They said, "Well we'll put them on the ships if you want." "Okay, do it." So they did it. But they didn't like it. They then had to refurbish their ships. They didn't have to double the hull, but they had to, the safety standards. They'd hire Filipinos, and really cheap labor. They said, "No, no, under the U.S. flag, you're going to pay U.S. wages." They didn't like it, but they understood it.

*Q: How did the Iran-Iraq war play while you were there? '87-'89?*

STAMMERMAN: Well, here's how we heard it. The embassy in Kuwait was an old dilapidated bunch of buildings. I don't know if you have ever been there, but these looked like early post-war Army barracks. Remember, our embassy had been bombed. So the main building, which was not in a terribly secure area or street, it had been bombed. In 1985, by a group called al-Dawa, not exactly clear who they are.

*Q: It was a Lebanese connection.*

STAMMERMAN: Lebanese, Iraqi connection, they were anti-Saddam, but it was unclear exactly who all they were, but they were in jail. They tried to assassinate the Emir as well. They hit the American embassy and the French embassy. They weren't executed because the Amir

would not sign the death warrant. So they were in jail all the while I was there. We never rebuilt the embassy; that part of the embassy was repaired, but the Ambassador's office was in sort of like an old Army surplus building. Had a tin roof that would creak in the wind, noises all over the place, the walls would shake, and you'd hear the thud of the war. The Iran-Iraq fighting was just north of Kuwait, we'd be working and everything would just shake, baboom, baboom. You knew the Iraqis or Iranians, some soldiers being pounded in the trenches. This would just go on, day in and day out, you'd hear this shelling to the north.

The Iranians were mad at the Kuwaitis, so they would shoot missiles at Kuwait, missed everything. They were firing Silkworm missiles which are shore to ship. If they missed, they'd fly straight over Kuwait, which they did, fly over Kuwait City and crash in the desert. And the Iranians were fomenting unrest, send in agents in to set off bombs around town. We did get followed sometimes, but it was one of those... you just do your job and we weren't targets, not really, because the Kuwaitis were targets. I think in Israel you are not really targets because everybody's targets. So the Iran-Iraq war, the Kuwaitis would talk to us about it. Not a lot, but they would talk to us about the Iran-Iraq war. They didn't care for the Iraqis, but they were afraid of the Iranians. They knew if the Iranians won, they'd immediately march into Kuwait. Kuwait had 30% Shia population. Kuwait is very Westernized.

*Q: Did we try at all as a mediator or something via the Gulf Arab states, Saudi Arabia, or the Jordanians to be nice to the Kuwaitis? Did we as an intermediary?*

STAMMERMAN: No. The Kuwaitis were part of the Gulf economic corporation, the GCC, Gulf Cooperation Council. Inter-Arab affairs was their bag. We were promoting the Peninsula Shield which would be a joint shield against northern invasion, meaning literally Iraq and then Iran, in the end it was Iraq. In terms of foreign policy, the Kuwaitis were aggressively neutral. Their Sheikh Sabah was the longest serving foreign minister in the world. And he was very anti-U.S. At the United Nations, he would also be the most pro-Palestinian and would often denounce the United States because of our Palestinian policy. That was the foreign minister. Meanwhile the oil minister would talk to us about our close economic ties. Culturally we were close. The Kuwaitis would send every male who graduated from high school to study in the United States. Almost completely. They really wanted that Western education. They weren't worried about their kids coming back too Westernized. The Saudis were. The Saudis brought American teachers to Saudi Arabia. Kuwaitis just sent their kids to study in the United States. So, no, we did not try to improve the Kuwaiti image. It's funny how the embassies in the area, region, sort of reflect their surroundings. Embassy Kuwait would report on its own, of course, but Embassy Riyadh would always try to speak for the embassies of the Gulf. We would not clear anything. Why should we? They would report something about the Arabs think this, or OPEC ministers think this. And we would report, that's not true, the Kuwaitis think this and this and this and this.

*Q: What was our impression of the Gulf Cooperation economic pact?*

STAMMERMAN: They were a gentlemen's club. We didn't see there would be any integration of the economies, there was nothing to integrate. They would keep from competing on certain things, so that one company would build the petrochemical plant and the other would build a different kind of petrochemical plant. But they would not compete in export markets. It was a



nice gentlemen's club, but we did not see any future political integration. The Saudis like to think of it as, this is what will be the future state dominated by Saudi Arabia or GCC, the club of the Gulf. A lot of the other Arabs didn't like that idea, but they couldn't speak out against the Saudis, they were just too big. The Kuwaitis would make fun of the Saudis, a bunch of nomads who found oil and didn't know how to spend it, where we know the value of a dollar.

*Q: Did the Iran Contra affair have any affect on you while you were there? Or was that dissipated by that time?*

STAMMERMAN: It was dissipated, didn't have an effect.

*Q: I mean nobody was coming around... did you find yourself in any of things where for one reason or another would come around hat in hand wanting money?*

STAMMERMAN: No.

*Q: Was there anything we were trying to direct the Kuwaitis to...*

STAMMERMAN: No, this was '87, so we are already fairly well along with that. The Kuwaitis would sometimes look us and say, "What in the world are you guys doing talking to the Iranians?"

*Q: A lot of Americans would just...*

STAMMERMAN: These are a bunch of rug salesmen. They really took you guys to the cleaners. We weren't part of it... Mostly we'd talk about money, rescheduling debt.

*Q: When you left there in '89, did you feel Iran was... the war was still on, I guess, wasn't it?*

STAMMERMAN: No, the Iran-Iraq war was running down. I think it ended right when the Vincennes shot down that Iranian airliner.

*Q: The airbus.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the airbus. I was still there when that happened. After that happened and the Ayatollah said, "We can't fight the Iraqis and the Americans, and the Americans will do anything, they will kill women and children. So we will make peace," along the lines of the Algiers agreement or something. So it ended, before I left, because the Kuwaitis were already talking to the Iraqis about debt, about rescheduling economic reform. The Iraqis owed the Kuwaitis a ton of money, and the Kuwaitis as they had done, they were leveraging their aid. There was always the contrast between the Kuwaiti foreign aid operation and the Saudi foreign aid operation. When a Muslim ruler from a developing country would come to the Saudis and say "I need to build a new mosque, some water works, I need some money." The Saudis would hand them a bag of gold and say, "Very good, tell them to go ahead and please name the mosque after King Fahd." And the Kuwaitis would say, "Show us your project plans, and we are going to send in our accountants to make sure your people get the money." That would make everybody

mad. So the Kuwaitis were very strict on their aid, though they were very generous. But nobody appreciated it. The Saudis would hand the leader a bag of gold and everybody loved them, and the Kuwaitis would give a higher percentage of their GDP in foreign aid and everybody hated them because they were just so rigorous. They wanted to be sure the money would be well spent.

*Q: Was Saddam Hussein by the time you left seen as a real threat to the region? Was he...*

STAMMERMAN: No. Not by the Kuwaitis, and I don't think by the Americans. He was very weak because his country was worn out. I do remember years earlier, when I was in Tel Aviv, back in the late '70s, I once took a congressman around to see the usual round of people the foreign ministry gives us. One of the people they put on our list was the Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Shamir, who by then barely spoke English. Used a foreign ministry interpreter. His English was very poor. The congressman listened as they took him on a tour d'horizon of the region, and then asked Shamir "What do you think of Saddam Hussein?" Remember this is Israel 1980, and the Israelis had bombed the Iraqi nuclear reactor. He said, "Mr. Speaker, what do your people think of Saddam Hussein?" Shamir said, "Aaah, what do you consider a man who had 25 people who elected him, put him in power and he then killed every one of them. That's what we think of him. We know what he is." The Israelis hated him all along. The Americans figured he was kind of worn out, the Iraqi army was tired, had fought a hard war. The Kuwaitis thought he was broke and they wanted to help, but as far as the economics, the Kuwaitis would get in there and show the Iraqis how to run their economy.

STAMMERMAN: When our time to leave Kuwait came around, we wanted to stay overseas. We did not care to go back to Washington ever again for that matter, and looked for a job in the Gulf. We saw that the consul general job in Dhahran was open. I knew the position. Dhahran was the place the backup post, as it were, for Kuwait. We would get the pouch. Material would come into Dhahran, so some of us would make the pouch run, every two weeks from Kuwait to Dhahran. It was always a bit of an adventure since you went from Kuwaiti to Saudi Arabia. And it was funny when we would re-enter Kuwait from those trips, the Kuwaitis would search us thoroughly. This always caused a problem, being diplomats and all, and we had a big thing about the pouch, of course, they could not search the pouch. All the Kuwaitis were worried about was booze, because they knew the Saudis allowed liquor for diplomats. Sort of an open secret. And the Kuwaitis did not. Kuwait was the driest post in the Foreign Service in those days. They would not allow liquor imports. They would look at our stuff, not take it apart, but just look, so that was always an adventure. And contrasting the living styles of the Saudis and Kuwaitis, for those living in Kuwait it was always an adventure because Kuwaiti women could drive and don't wear an abaya, the cover-all cloak.

*Q: You were saying the Kuwaitis didn't allow liquor... it's the reverse, wasn't it?*

STAMMERMAN: No, the Kuwaitis were the driest post in the Foreign Service. The Kuwaitis, they are not Wahhabis, they are not that branch of Islam, but the government at that time, the parliament had been dissolved or suspended, and the area is very devout Muslim, and the government felt that Islam indeed forbade the consumption of liquor. So they banned it, completely. Granted, they respected people's privacy, so if you made your own, they would never raid anyone's home. Of course there was some smuggling done, but by and large Kuwait was dry. They would do things like when businessmen would move in, the Kuwaiti customs

would go through their shipments, down to fingernail polish, to see that they were not smuggling alcohol. So the Kuwaitis were concerned about alcohol. They didn't care about anything else.

So they would look in our cars and we would have to open the trunks. They wouldn't actually take our stuff apart, but they would look. I remember we had one admin officer who really objected to this. They said, "Open your trunk," and he said, "No." Well they said. Fine, well we won't search your trunk but you aren't entering Kuwait. So you can go back to Dhahran or you can open the trunk." That's just the way it was. The Kuwaitis were very strict on that. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, there was an unofficial arrangement by which diplomats were able to obtain alcohol. It was sort of well known. So that when we had diplomatic receptions in Saudi Arabia there were always these codes. You would have a wet bar and a dry bar. The wet bar was in alcohol, and the house man, or whoever was pouring, people would ask for white or brown or red, that is there were certain codes... gin, or scotch or bourbon, there were all these codes that nobody said but everybody knew what it was. There was all this hypocrisy, but it was I always called an open sort of constructive hypocrisy. Everybody knew what was going on. And so they could tell the Wahhabis, all these guys forbid liquor, and they would look the other way. It made things go pretty smoothly.

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*Q: Did you find, when you were in Saudi Arabia, that there was sort of a natural aversion of Saudis towards Kuwaitis?*

STAMMERMAN: Ah, good question. The Saudis and Kuwaitis don't particularly care for each other. The Kuwaitis think of themselves as merchants and they have a merchant culture. They left their Bedouin roots long ago. They claim to still have some Bedouin connection; they don't. They are merchants. They send their children to study in the United States, they are bankers, they are comfortable with Western style banking. They generally consider the Saudis to be Bedouin who happened to have struck oil and don't know how to handle the money, besides which they are, in Kuwaiti eyes, sort of backward and are religious fanatics in many ways. The Saudis had a real problem with Kuwait. First of all the Kuwaitis have elections. That's a real problem. The people who are close to the Al-Saud are very disturbed about the Kuwaitis. The Emir is not strong. That's a rule. He's equal with the major Kuwaiti families. This is not good from the Saudi point of view. But in merchants, there's less of a problem because a lot of merchant families run across the border. There's much stronger kinship ties among the Sunnis, along the Gulf, rather than the Gulf into the interior. So I would meet any number of people in Dhahran who might have the same family name as someone in Kuwait, who might be distant cousins. The Kuwaiti businessmen who visit in Dhahran would never think of going to Riyadh. So, the business communities got along well, but the official communities did not get along well at all.

*Q: While you were there, when was there any growing disquiet, I mean, how did things develop there with Iraq?*

STAMMERMAN: There was nothing... it just happened all of a sudden. The main problem as many of us, as I saw it, that led to the invasion was oil. OPEC. The Kuwaitis were cheating, so called cheating. They were producing over quota. Everybody knew it. So the effect of this was,

first of all, the Kuwaitis got a bigger market share than they had pledged to take within OPEC; second, their overproduction kept the price of oil down. By keeping the price of oil down meant that Iraq then could not afford its rebuilding, and Saddam's socialist schemes through its own income but had to keep borrowing from the Kuwaitis and the Saudis, who always lent with strings attached. So, in July, the Iraqis demanded that the Kuwaitis quit overproducing. You know the Kuwaitis never admitted that they were overproducing.

And the Iraqis rattled a few sabers so the Saudis called a conference in Jeddah. They would mediate between the Iraqis and the Kuwaitis. And they held the conference. I'm told what happened was that the Saudis said, presented the issues and said we really should work this out. The Iraqis, by the way, had pressured Kuwait on a number of fronts, not only the money but also there were a couple islands strategically placed. And the Kuwaitis felt backed into a corner, so they apparently, I'm told, told the Iraqis, you owe us \$35 million and we think you better start making payments on that. At that point, the Iraqis stormed out. They were not going to be talked to by the Kuwaitis like that. Saddam lost his temper and brought up this issue of the border, whether the Kuwaitis were really drilling into the Iraqi oil fields from right across the border, who knows. In the end it wasn't that important because there's enough oil to go around. Then the Iraqis started rattling sabers a little more loudly. And most of the Saudis thought, this has happened before, the Kuwaitis would find a way of buying the Iraqis off, for that's what the Kuwaitis always did, and everything would be solved peacefully. There were no alerts, no Saudi businessmen, military, anybody, ever said a word to me that they were worried about Iraq. Just here we go again, the Kuwaitis would get pushed around and they'll probably have to pay off, this will cost them a few billion dollars, but they can afford it. And then, you know, the invasion happened. Shocked everybody, shocked. In fact the Saudis were in denial, they would not even admit that it happened.

*Q: Had there been any talk in Saudi circles prior to this about Saddam Hussein, about his personality and concerns about him?*

STAMMERMAN: I didn't hear any. The Saudis were very careful not to talk about Iraqis. They'd talk about Kuwaitis because they are cousins, and they'd talk about Bahrainis, but they would be reluctant even to talk about Iraq, other to say that they made them nervous, they generally would not talk about Saddam. Generally not.

*Q: By this time you had a new ambassador. Can you talk about that?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, we had a new ambassador who arrived... When I arrived, David Dunford had been chargé for most of his time there. We had a couple of ambassadors who came and went. One went very quickly. I never did understand that one.

*Q: Hume Horan?*

STAMMERMAN: Hume Horan

*Q: Yes, I'm interviewing him next week.*

STAMMERMAN: Good. I never heard. One heard only rumors, so fine, you don't talk about

what really happened. So, David Dunford had been DCM and chargé a good part of his tenure. Chas Freeman, who was a new ambassador, had been working on UN matters, came out not an Arabist. The Saudis in fact, I heard this I was in Dhahran, but I'd heard this from embassy people in Riyadh, that the Saudis were really did not want another Arabist. They were concerned about people who really had training and insight into their culture. That bothered them. They preferred a political appointee in the first place, feeling that this gave them a tie in the White House.

*Q: Morocco felt the same way.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay. They had the feeling that a political appointee was better because he would be closer to the President, just as their ambassador was there because the king respected him. Not because the foreign ministry had anything to do with it, so they felt both things. They wanted the political appointee because of the White House, and second that they did not want an Arabist, they'd take a professional as long as he was not an Arabist. So Chas Freeman had just worked out the Namibia compromise, and his background was in Asia...

*Q: He was a Chinese language officer.*

STAMMERMAN: Chinese language officer. He accompanied Nixon on the trip, as an interpreter. Had quite a success in Asia. So the Saudis said fine, that's fine, he'll be a professional and not an Arabist. Chas arrived and we had a very good meeting, myself and the CG in Jeddah, had a very good relationship with Chas. To this day I do. He immediately summoned us to Riyadh. We worked an arrangement where we would visit there once every month. This sort of carried over from before, but he formalized it. We'd visit for a country team meeting, it would be country-wide, including the CG from Jeddah and me, once a month, and we would discuss with him and the DCM everything going on in our provinces. The four of us together, sort of a little executive committee. Any reporting we did would be vetted through Riyadh. I didn't have any big problem with that since what we were doing was mostly economic reporting. David Dunford is one of our better economic officers, he's a well trained economist. Where we had some friction between our reporting and that of petroleum officers in Riyadh was not I would say of that nature. We would just differ on policy matters. That is, on the analysis of what would be the optimal Saudi oil policy. Kind of a basic argument because it was a long-running argument. So Chas moved in and I thought he ran a very good ship, established his authority early on and really set out to learn about Saudi Arabia. He came down to visit us a number of times, got to know the local business community, called on the prince. He established himself in Riyadh pretty quickly, smart guy. Very, very smart.

*Q: Very smart, yes.*

STAMMERMAN: Very, very smart, so it's one of those things where you realize you are dealing with somebody who really, who doesn't know the region very well, he's listening, he's learning very, very quickly. He picked up some Arabic also very quickly.

*Q: Well then how did things develop with the first of August?*

STAMMERMAN: The second of August, 1990.

*Q: Were there any other developments that we haven't covered in the year before?*

STAMMERMAN: No, it was a quiet place. Again, one of my concerns was the... that the staff knew little about Saudi Arabia and I was trying to do some cultural things, bringing them to gatherings, majlis, eid calls, and so on. And I'd work with the junior officers especially. I was concerned, but it was a quiet post. The other officers, admin, whatever, my deputy, I figured well they could do their tours, but it's not hectic, it's a quiet place.

*Q: Was there a plan for evacuating the Americans, having had the Iran-Iraq war I imagine there must have been some concern or planning or something of that nature?*

STAMMERMAN: There was a plan, but it was a plan that had been worked out some years previously. The assumption was that the threat was Iran, not Iraq, and that we would have sufficient notice. Because if Iran, probably if there was trouble with Iran you'd have Bahrain first of all, or else, the other possibility, if the Iraqi forces were not held at Basrah, the Iranian forces would probably turn into Kuwait, so there would be fallback from Kuwait, with the remnants of the Iraqi army and the Kuwaiti army and the Saudis picking up a battle somewhere in the middle. So you had time. And Dhahran air base was massive, so we could move people out by airlift. There was a getaway plan that we all kept in the file cabinet and review once a year. Somebody asked from Washington, and you said, well, yes, if things work out according to plan and you can probably move everybody out. But at that point, we figured if anything happened we have lots of time.

*Q: [laughter] So Okay then, how did "you know what" happened [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: [laughter] As I was saying, you always wanted to review the evacuation plan. None of that was considered realistic at the time. So what happened is that on the morning of August 2, I would typically listen to the BBC world service, and indeed turned on the radio and oops it said that the Iraqi forces were that they'd crossed the border into Kuwait. Hm. The first thing I did was pick up the phone and call the political officer in Kuwait. His home is near the Embassy, he's a friend of mine. Turns out he was on home leave. But his maid answered. So I said is so and so there and she said no. She was very nervous. She said, "What are we going to do? What are we going to do? There are troops in the streets." "Well, maybe you better call the embassy," I told her. So I called the embassy and I got not much out of them. It was an open line, just we are very busy, call back. Interestingly enough, that day we were having work done on the consulate grounds, it was quiet, summer, and although I had an outside line, the phone line to the consulate wasn't working because the workers had cut the line. Now, Riyadh was trying to call us. When they could get no answer, they got very nervous. What is going on in Dhahran? They finally made a connection through the military side. They called the military who was there and said "What's going on?" "Nothing's going on." The military, at least the guys at the phone, didn't hear that anything was happening at all. So they then linked to us and said... this wasn't that long afterwards, say 7 o'clock in the morning... I then spoke with the DCM. Our concern was that American citizens would be fleeing Kuwait, and furthermore the Saudis who were sticklers on admitting people into their country might be sticklers at the border. We think they would, but just to make sure, we wanted an American presence at the Kuwaiti-Saudi border. So I

woke up my head of the consular section...

*Q: Who was that?*

STAMMERMAN: Les Hickman. I told him, "Les, the Iraqis have invaded Kuwait, we need someone at the border to make sure that the Americans who show up at the border are taken care of. I know the governor in Khafji, here's his name, I will try to call him and find if there is a way. And he will take care of you. I'm sure he will take care of you, just use his name to get to the border." So Les, and for a while the deputy CG who went for a short while, were up there. Les stayed there for a month. He left that morning with just a change of clothes and stayed there for a month, at the border, with Saudi border guards. Basically, the crossing north of Khafji was just a Saudi border station, Saudis just treated it as a border station, with offices, border guards drinking tea, and the American consul and refugees just pouring across the border. There was a no-man's land of a kilometer or so between the Kuwaiti exit station and the Saudi border post, so they could see the Iraqis when they eventually arrived at the Kuwaiti border post and took up positions. If any Americans were picked up by the Saudi patrols, and some were, they'd be escaping through the desert, not on the main road for fear of Iraqis, the Saudis wouldn't hold them at the main gate. The Saudis would bring them over to our consul. The Consul would arrange through the governor to have them taken by car down to the consulate at Dhahran. We would repatriate them to the United States, which got to be a good system after awhile. Anyway, the day of the invasion then, we had the American consul there by 11 o'clock in the morning.

*Q: Well, that was a very fast reaction. What about the British and others who had a lot of citizens up there? Were they...*

STAMMERMAN: The British unofficially had two diplomats who lived in Dhahran. That was because of the British airplane deal, they had all these British citizens in the province, they needed a consular backup. Even though the British had somebody there, there was really no official British diplomatic mission. The two officers were assigned to Riyadh and detailed to the Eastern Province. We had the only accredited mission in the Province. Otherwise there were no other foreign diplomats in the Eastern Province. So it took a lot longer for the rest of them to respond. They had to come from Riyadh, plus they didn't know the situation and they didn't have the contacts that we had. We had Les up there and he got on the phone later that day to me and he told me that the senior Kuwaitis had gotten out. The Kuwaiti Emir and senior Kuwaiti family members had all gotten out, made it to the Saudi border. I'll tell you later how that all happened, which we can go into. The Saudis had put them on helicopters and gotten them away from the border as quickly as possible. Apparently the Saudis were worried hot pursuit. They might be inviting Iraqi invasion if they kept the Kuwaitis right at the border. So the Kuwaitis then were evacuated out of the border area. Meanwhile I heard also that day from the air base that Kuwaiti planes were landing, asking to be refueled, and the Saudis were refusing permission to refuel. The Saudis were just saying, if a Kuwaiti plane landed, it would just stay on the ground. In turn, then, they would just...

*Q: These are Kuwaiti what? Military?*

STAMMERMAN: Kuwaiti military. No, not civilian. Kuwait military who were fleeing, who

apparently had fought. There was this airbase in Southern Kuwait that had held out for a couple of days, they'd done strafing runs against the advancing Iraqi troops. They couldn't get any fuel supplies. The Iraqi units eventually advanced on the base and as the base guard was collapsing, what remaining planes that had any fuel took off and landed in Saudi Arabia, one after another, and as they landed the Saudis disarmed them. The Kuwaitis wanted to be re-armed, they wanted to go back and fight. But the Saudis said, "No we are not at war we can't do that." That day was the first day we started hearing about the Kuwaiti aircraft arriving. The consulate general is just a few hundred meters off the end of the runway, so we'd see military activity, we'd see planes flying around, we didn't know what it was, necessarily. So we heard during that day that this was going on and my consul Les Hickman stayed up there and said he'd just stay there for the duration. In a couple days the British and Japanese showed up, and I think French. And they got hotel rooms or whatever, and they stayed up there for another month, pretty much.

*Q: At the beginning, was there concern that this was going to be a rolling thing or was this pretty much an Iraq-Kuwait thing?*

STAMMERMAN: That's a very important question, and opinions differed. Opinions differed in the American government, opinions differed among the Saudis, definitely among Saudis. The Saudi reaction in the Eastern Province was first of all denial. No newspaper said anything about the invasion. This happened for about 4 or 5 days. Just nothing appeared in the newspapers. As far as you knew, nothing has gone wrong. Everybody knew it because it was on BBC, on whatever. But the Saudis simply refused to acknowledge that anything had happened. Meanwhile, all these people were crossing the border and being put into camps. Third country nationals were put into refugee camps. The Americans were being sent down to us, the British and other foreigners went wherever their consular people took them.

It turns out, I found this out later from Saudis, that the Saudi National Guard had moved forces. The Saudi military, that is the army and air force as opposed to the National Guard (haras watani in Arabic) did not, as far as I know to this day. I do know that the Saudi National Guard moved its forces from west of Dhahran, that is toward Riyadh where they are permanently stationed, to a blocking position north of Dhahran. The National Guard leadership was very concerned that the Iraqis would keep going because there was nothing other than lightly armed border guards and a few national guard units between the Kuwaiti border and Dhahran. There were no Saudi military. The military had a big concentration near Yemen because that's where there's some real border problems and there was a certain airbase and support units up in the north toward Jordan and Israel but there was nothing much other than national guard in the Eastern Province other than the airbase. There was a little outpost near the Iraqi border to the west I guess. But these were minimally manned border posts, so the national guard moved their units to a blocking position. These were lightly armed Bedouin fighters.

I have since then talked to senior commanders in the Saudi national guard. They said that because of the configuration... there's only one road south from the Kuwaiti border, and there's a lot of sand dunes on either side of the Kuwait-Dhahran road, they figured that if the Iraqis rolled south in force, they could probably hold them for a matter of hours, maybe 10 hours, but that would accomplish two things. First, that they would have defended the honor of the Al-Saud family, and second that the Americans would have to fight. They thought that if the Saudis put



up a fight, as opposed to the Kuwaitis who did not, that the Americans would somehow see that their interests would be threatened at Dhahran, the oil fields, ARAMCO and all that. So there was a national guard force, but that was it. The commanders were sure that the National Guard units would fight if ordered to do so. I agree.

*Q: Was there an influx of American military officers, intelligence people and all that to see what the hell was happening, where I would imagine they would have been mainly up in Riyadh around the embassy.*

STAMMERMAN: As far as I know, no. Remember that there were no U.S. military forces stationed in Saudi Arabia at the time, other than training units.

*Q: What were you doing?*

STAMMERMAN: We were busy. We were doing several things. What we had our hands full with was ARAMCO Americans. The first thing we were doing, it's funny, we had a port call scheduled. There was an American ship that came to port. It was some little ship. We had these port calls every once in a while.

*Q: A port call. But it's a military ship.*

STAMMERMAN: Military ship. A U.S. Navy ship. And we had a big... there was a small fleet based out in Bahrain. But it was regularly scheduled, there would be a port call by a U.S. Navy ship in Dhahran. Every few months. Well we happened to have a small ship, I don't know what it was, a mine sweeper, or something, that had arrived, so I used the occasion... this was about two days after the invasion, to have a big reception for the American business community, including as many ARAMCO Americans as I could find, bringing the U.S. Navy captain to speak to everybody to say, hey the American Navy has this big presence in the Gulf, and American military's strong in the region. Our concern was that the American community in Dhahran wanted to leave. Most Americans I heard from wanted to go, and senior ARAMCO executives, both Americans and Saudis, confirmed that Americans wanted out, and soon. Since a lot of the dependents were gone from ARAMCO for the summer, we had probably 9,000 Americans in ARAMCO. We had another 8-10,000, the numbers were never very good on this, people didn't register with consulate, who with all the others, McDonald Douglas, Bechtel, we probably didn't have that many, but you never know... we had dual citizen children and we had lots of other people. And it seemed everybody wanted to leave. They were afraid. Many Americans who had been there for years were contemptuous of the Saudi military. And they really thought the Iraqis had a strong military. They were afraid the Iraqis would invade and the Saudis would do nothing to stop it. And furthermore they had no confidence that the American government thought anything of them... that we thought more of oil than of their safety. Because after all ARAMCO was producing 5 million barrels of oil a day and if the Americans left, they would be producing zero.

*Q: That was probably the most, along with the troops we put in, was the most important thing keeping those people in place.*

STAMMERMAN: Keeping those people in place. Absolutely.

*Q: But was that apparent to you at the time? I'm talking about within the first couple of days.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. The reason I say yes so quickly was that we had a crisis in that ARAMCO called. First of all we had calls from the Americans saying what's going on. If they were reading Saudi newspapers of course nothing was going on. And yet they saw that the Saudis were denying, in complete denial. At Saudi ARAMCO, as with many Saudi organizations, if you went to work there as a foreigner, you turned your passport in to your employer. Your employer had your passports. And we told people it's not terribly important because we can get you out of here without a passport. We can get you into America, although we can't get you out of here without Saudi cooperation. We can get you into America. You don't need a passport to get into American if you have other proof of being American, don't worry we're not going to keep you out. It's not a big deal. You are registered, we know who you are, if you want to turn in your passport as a condition of employment, that's between you and your employer. It's not against American law.

So a lot of Americans stormed the ARAMCO passport office, demanding their passports because they thought they needed their passports. In fact, they did if they wanted to leave and ever come back, they had to get a Saudi exit stamp or the Saudis would never let them back in. So a couple days after the invasion, there was a near riot at the ARAMCO personnel office with people demanding their passports. And the Saudi leadership of ARAMCO said, "You want your passports? Take your passports. We don't care. Because we assume you are not leaving. If it will make you feel better here's your passports." I talked with some of the Saudis who were working there, I talked with some of the senior people, executive vice president, the man in charge of personnel, and they were just having a terrible time because these things were filed alphabetically in Arabic and how do you spell these names, and here are these people pressing and pushing and fighting and shouting, and near riots.

The Americans would call and say, "These incompetent Saudis can't give us our passports. What are we going to do? We hear rumors that the Iraqis are invading. What's happening?" [I'd say] "Calm down. If we have to evacuate you, you don't need your passports. We'll get you out of here." And from the Saudi point of view, I said, "Look, find more Saudis speaking English, give them their passports, please. Because these people have this idea that you're holding them hostage and you're not." This all happened with the other countries' citizens as well. And rumors were rife because the Saudis were silent over the invasion. I got a call from a senior executive at McDonald Douglas one night about 3 days after the invasion who said, "Ken, our information is that the Iraqi units have moved across the border." I said, "First I heard, but then I might not know. So I'll check." So I called both the embassy and senior military people. "No, everything's quiet. Quiet enough." There was some trouble. What I think happened is that there was a Kuwaiti unit that fought itself south from near Kuwait City and fought its way all down to the border with Iraqi units in hot pursuit, and as they crossed the border the Saudi units fell in and let the Iraqis know they had to stop advancing. So there was a little confrontation. It did not turn into an armed conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iraqi, it was a near thing, but rumors might have gotten around. Anyway, the McDonnell Douglas people had heard that and similar things I suspect from lower-level U.S. military contacts who also were nervous about the Iraqis moving south. A

lot of the McDonald-Douglas personnel were ex-military, so once word got around of what the situation was, that there was no invasion then they stayed where they were.

*Q: What were you getting from the embassy, was somebody from the embassy saying, Ken, It's really important to keep these Americans here, or was this just something you knew?*

STAMMERMAN: Something I knew. It was more the reverse. I was telling them, the embassy was being swamped by calls from Americans in the United States. "Get my daughter out of there." And they were saying, "What's going on?" And I said, "A lot of people want to go, but if all these people go we're shutting down ARAMCO, you know that." The Saudis are good, but there's just people down the line who are going to need those Americans there. The senior guys were okay, but as you go farther down the line there are key Americans being scattered throughout. It was kind of a mixture. I think, again, the senior leadership in the embassy understood right away. We sort of talked it out what the issue was. The ambassador's attitude was if Dhahran became unsafe, we should get everybody out. Unquestionably. We were not going to sacrifice Americans. That was clear from the beginning. Even later on when we talked about poison gas and threats like that, if it appears that Americans were under direct threat, get them out. End of story. And there were ways and means. So I would go and see... I remember talking to Saudi ARAMCO leadership and trying to figure out how to handle this. We'd stress if it's time to get out, we want to work with you to get Americans out of here as quickly as possible. On the other hand, we want to minimize any panic or any unnecessary problem. It came out that the Americans meanwhile were having community meetings inside ARAMCO, at least I heard about these. Some of our consular officers would go over there and say our information is the Iraqis were stopped at the border. This is in the first week or two. And we don't see an immediate threat of invasion.

The Saudi ARAMCO authorities eventually said to ARAMCO Americans, "We have your passport, we'll give it to you, that's no problem, and we will let you go. We will give an exit stamp, exit proof, you need an exit visa or such... for anybody who wants to go, dependents included. Here's the ticket, we'll pay for the dependents' flight home. They will be gone for the duration until this crisis has passed. But if dependents want to go, that's it. If you are a worker and you leave now, you will never again work for Saudi ARAMCO and if we have anything to say about it you will never work anywhere in the Gulf for oil companies or their governments. You have nice salaries out here, you have lived very well out here for the past 20 or 30 years. We expect you to stay on now." So, the Saudis were very clear about it.

The Americans then came to us and said, "The Saudis are holding us hostage. We were being threatened of being killed by the Iraqis, and if we leave, we lose our jobs." We said, "Okay, if you leave you lose your jobs. That's a private contract between you and your employer. Fine. If you have a problem getting a ticket out, we'll help you. But we're not going to change that contract between you and your employer, we're not going to try to." Meanwhile the embassy was under all kinds of pressure from the congressionals, you had all these people saying, "They are holding my daughter hostage." This is not that long after Iran, so using this word "hostage" had a lot of emotional power.

Then one of the American oil companies, I can no longer remember which one, one of the

partners, former partners... remember some of these people were not working for ARAMCO, they were employees of Exxon, Texaco, and all those. They flew a plane into Dhahran to evacuate their people without Saudi permission. I mean there should be Saudi permission to land or their planes could get shot down. What were the Saudis going to do? So they just flew this stupid plane into Saudi air space and landed. And guess what, essentially they took out the dependents, which was less of a problem, they didn't lose all their people. But they felt they didn't want Teheran, and Iranian-type crisis, to happen again, where Americans got left behind. So they unilaterally sent the plane back to evacuate the dependents. I had two consular officers there once I heard about it, since the airport is a short drive from the Consulate General. I should mention by that time I had already borrowed one consular officer from Riyadh. We were a small post. We had a consul, and two consular officers.

*Q: And you had one officer up on the border.*

STAMMERMAN: Had a congen officer, the Consul, who ran the Consular section, up on the border. So we had essentially two junior officers left at the consular section. The week of the invasion, this one lady, a first tour FSO, had been visiting the female vice consul on my staff. She walked by my office late in the day of the invasion, she just kind of walked in the hall, and I said, "Hey you're working for me." I called up the DCM, I said "I need bodies, she's it." And he said, "Sure." So they were both out at the airport helping to process Americans who had escaped from Kuwait when suddenly they had like 200 American dependents show up, immediately trying to get on this plane that had arrived on half-hour's notice. The American oil company employing their husbands had called from the United States and said, "Better get out to the airport because we've got a plane landing in half an hour. Get on it." So it was a mad scramble and they went up there.

But the problem was they needed exit visas. Saudi border control doesn't let anybody out without exit visas. The concern there is you might have dual citizens, you might have children, this might be smuggling people out, who knows. So I got on the phone, this was at night, they were already starting to have a mini riot out at the airport. I called the governor's office, and actually the governor controls everything, but he doesn't control exits. That's the Saudi frontier force. So I finally found some general and said, "You really don't have a choice in this, you've got to give those people visas." And he went, "Well, I will have to check." I said, "Do it quick. Because you'll have the American press on this, you'll have American congressmen. This will be messy if those dependents don't get out." Then shortly afterwards, suddenly the visas appeared, passports got stamped, off they went. So it was hectic those first few days, crises one after another, all involving consular work. Well the next major, let me move on, the next thing that happens after that we get a call from NEA, sort of a conference call, or whatever it was, or they called the embassy first. The assistant secretary of state is coming out to visit. He wants to see the Kuwaitis. This was...

*Q: Kelly.*

STAMMERMAN: Kelly. John Kelly. And I said, "That's fine. And we will establish contact with the Kuwaitis if we can find them." So I went to the Saudis and they said fine. It turns out the Kuwaitis were cooped up in a Saudi palace. It's called the Gulf Palace, near Dhahran, it's one

of the big palaces the Saudis built to host official visitors and hold conferences. I called over there and got in contact with the Kuwaiti Minister of Planning, whom I knew from my Kuwaiti days. I sent my deputy over to talk with him and we set up some meetings. So Kelly came out. That would have been about August 15, mid-August, before the deployment of forces began in any numbers. A/S Kelly first went to Jeddah and Riyadh and then Dhahran. I got a call from one of my contacts in Jeddah who said, this man is in a bad mood. Let's say his reception in Jeddah wasn't the greatest. I have no idea what it was all about, but he lost his temper at some American officer, I'm told. Anyway, he arrived in Dhahran, along with an embassy political officer, note taker. I had set up the meetings, and we went over and talked to the Kuwaitis.

Part of what I felt good about, because we'd just had time to brief the secretary on the way over. He was not going to stay overnight. Throughout the crisis, whenever you had visitors, from the embassy or anywhere else, they would not stay overnight. People were still very concerned that the Iraqis, even if they didn't invade, might still have people in the area at that time, infiltrators.

So, I briefed him on the way. I told him first of all, we'll probably be met by the oil minister, Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah. He was the American connection for the Kuwaiti Government during the Iran-Iraq War. Very smart man, American educated, very used to dealing with Americans. So the family usually puts him up front because he's more prepared, when it's very serious, he'll be the guy up front. The Kuwaiti foreign minister had made a career out of being anti-American. He was the head of the sort of Third World anti-American Bloc over the Palestine question. The Kuwaitis had been very pro-Palestinian. And the Emir was a financial genius who liked to garden, that was his hobby. Turns out A/Secretary Kelly was a gardener as well, which I'd had heard from somebody, so I told him, if you want to break the ice, talk about gardening, he loves to putter. That's the Emir's hobby. So I briefed him very quickly in the car on who else he might see and what their concerns were. A/S Kelly had his agenda of course. So we went over, and sure enough, Sheikh Ali Khalifa met us and we did the rounds.

Again, many of the Kuwaitis I knew, they recognized me, so we talked about how they'd gotten out. They all had their stories. Very interesting stuff. The story I heard was as follows: The Emir had been at home in his palace... The Kuwaiti Emir's home, by Saudi standards, is modest, maybe a businessman's home. The Kuwaiti Emir does not live in a palace in the Saudi style. A very modest, large house, as does the Crown Prince, very large house, but modest by Saudi standards. Anyway, he'd been at home when the Crown Prince came in with his bodyguards, and said the Iraqis are in town. Iraqi invaders are in town. There was some gunfire and the Crown Prince went out and said, "An Iraqi unit is out in front of the palace right now, fighting some Emiri guards." Those are the Kuwaiti special forces troops assigned to guard the Emir. The Crown Prince took the Emir out the back door and over the back garden wall, they walked around front on the next block over where some of the Emir's cars were parked, and the two of them hopped in their Mercedes and drove to the Saudi border. Nobody saw them. The Iraqis did not close the gate at the border crossing until late in the following afternoon. That's what I heard from one of the Crown Prince's aides. That's also where one of the Kuwaiti Emir's brothers was killed, at the Emir's palace, apparently because he, the story the Kuwaitis told me, he grabbed a gun from one of the Emiri guards and said, "I'm going to go out and kill some Iraqis." And he did, and he got killed. Kelly expressed his condolences over the death of the brother.

Also, I heard the story while waiting with Kelly that there was a cabinet meeting going on when the Iraqis invaded, and the foreign minister was chairing for the prime minister. The Crown Prince, who serves as Prime Minister, wasn't there at the time. And he heard what was happening, this was shortly after midnight when the Iraqis came across, and the foreign minister said, "My friends, this meeting is adjourned, let's get the hell out of here." And he and the interior minister, another al-Sabah, just walked out the front door, got in their Mercedes, headed for the border. Sheikh Ali Khalifa (by the way, the 'Sheikh' title for Kuwaitis applies to all males of the al-Sabah family, it has no religious significance) actually, the following morning, he saw Iraqi helicopters flying along the coastline where he was living and said, this is not right. And he grabbed his family and headed south. For some reason, the Iraqis did not close the gate. There's only one road out, but they did not close the gate until later the next day.

So we heard all these stories, Kelly and I. He spoke to the Kuwaitis, who were generally were in a state of shock, especially the Emir. He was just shocked. I had seen him many times before, but never like this. He just kept shaking his head, how could this have happened? Anyway, we had a round of conversation, met all the Kuwaiti leadership. I'd said, you'll probably see the oil minister first, then the Crown Prince, then the Emir, and probably the interior minister will sit in on the meeting because the Kuwaiti defense minister was irrelevant. He was made defense minister, as the Kuwaitis said, because he was probably the least talented of the brothers, and the mother wanted him to be taken care of, not to be treated as a poor relation. So he was made defense minister, which was not very important in Kuwait. The really important jobs in Kuwait were finance minister, foreign minister, and interior minister. Defense? Pshh... The way Kuwaitis for 200 years they'd kept their existence by playing off their neighbors, or by buying them off. So he was defense minister. So I said this is not important, he may sit in, but... Kelly asked me, what about the defense minister? I said it's not important, it's truly not important.

So the important meeting was with others, and we'd ask them to do the necessary requests if they wanted our help... and this eventually became public because the next day Secretary Baker made it public... the Kuwaitis asked us for support under the Self-Defense Article of the UN Charter. They asked us for support formally in a diplomatic note that they handed to me the day afterwards. Which took a day to write only because somebody had to find an Arabic typewriter. the Kuwaitis themselves wanted to type it up. They didn't want to depend on the Saudis. So they said, search through the Dhahran Suq for a manual typewriter. Such little incidents, but these things happened. So I went over the following day and the Kuwaitis were packing up. The Saudis had told the Kuwaitis that they would be moving to the other side of the peninsula, hundreds of miles away.

*Q: What was Kelly saying? Was he giving you any intimation on how we might respond?*

STAMMERMAN: No. Nothing. I could hear what he was telling the Kuwaitis, which was, in broad terms, we do not accept the permanent annexation of Kuwait by Iraq.

*Q: I mean, our President George Bush had said rather early on, this will not stand.*

STAMMERMAN: Right, exactly.

*Q: Was anyone coming around and looking and saying, Alright, if we land our paratroops here or if we do this...*

STAMMERMAN: Not yet. Not yet. What happened... that happened after Cheney. Secretary of Defense Chancy and the senior military leadership, General Schwarzkopf arrived in Riyadh, that was after the Kelly visit. The Kelly visit result was the Kuwaitis by unilaterally asking us, giving me a note the following day, were asking for our intervention.

*Q: Because the Kuwaitis had always been very standoffish about the United States.*

STAMMERMAN: Right.

*Q: They had really said, we don't need you and...*

STAMMERMAN: That's not exactly the way it worked. By then, we had, remember we had worked together with them on the ship escort issue.

*Q: Right.*

STAMMERMAN: But that was by a private company. The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation dealing with the American embassy and the U.S. Navy. I mentioned that previously. That's why I suspected strongly that the person meeting us would be the oil minister, or the former oil minister who had had that American connection, because the Kuwaiti foreign minister indeed was on the record as saying, we don't need the Americans, we'll call the Arab League if we have trouble. The signal we got from the oil minister was this is now bilateral American-Kuwaiti. The foreign minister was there but he didn't speak, so we had the Emir and the Crown Prince saying we respect and appreciate your support, and then us telling them what we need you to do is ask us. We want it in writing, under the UN Charter, you are asking us for assistance in self defense. And they asked us formally. I took it back to the Consulate General and sent it up, and the following day, Secretary Baker said the Kuwaiti government has asked us for assistance under the UN Charter, the Charter Provisions for Self-Defense. Interestingly, one of the senior Kuwaitis pulled me aside and said, "Ken, you remember so and so?" This was a senior Kuwaiti official, he didn't get out. "We want him out, can you help us?" I said, "I'll see what I can do." Essentially, I sent word back through channels, they want to get somebody out, somebody very important to them – can we do it? And in the end we did... I'm still not sure to this day how we did it, but he showed up on our doorstep in Dhahran a bit later, which was nice.

*Q: How about your wife? You had kids at that time?*

STAMMERMAN: My wife... no; my son was at the University of Virginia. We'll get on to what happens after the Cheney business, things changed completely. No, my wife Patty had... we'd been in Kuwait together, but she was concerned as I was about our consulate general staff in the not being attuned to the local culture. So she made a project of helping spouses and junior officers, trying to teach them about Arab culture and inviting Arab ladies over to talk. In many ways, consular families, like almost all the military families, had very little contact with the surrounding culture, other than ARAMCO which was really an American culture. So she had

done that a lot. She helped set up that dinner where we had the American Navy people come and meet with the American business community. She thought, as I did, that the Iraqis would not advance farther, we sort of knew the region, and we had not thought that Iraq would invade Kuwait. So we were wrong on that score, but also we didn't think they would come farther south.

But in any case, panicking wouldn't help anything. So Patty's attitude was... she was in contact with the ARAMCO wives... we're not going anywhere. And also with our local employees, who were all third country nationals, she took a big role in dealing with them. Because their attitude was, as one of our drivers told her, you're going to leave. She said, "I'm not going to leave." He said, "Yes you are. A big helicopter will arrive and take you and the consul general away and leave us behind. This happened in Somalia. All our FSNs were left behind." So she said, "No I'm not going anywhere." So as long as she stayed, the FSNs believed us. She stayed for the duration. The State Department immediately put out a voluntary evacuation plan. Any dependent could leave, but you'd be gone for the duration. Patty and I said, "she's not going to leave," and she didn't. That really helped with the FSNs. They were very nervous, and were essential to keeping the Consulate General operating.

*Q: So, what happened then? You've had your meeting with Kelly and the Emir, they'd gone back, and then what happened?*

STAMMERMAN: The senior Kuwaitis then went away. The Saudis did not want them in the province. They were worried that it might draw, if not the Iraqi army, Iraqi infiltrators. Security would be kind of tough. So they shipped the Kuwaitis off to the other end of the peninsula. South of Jeddah. We then had the Cheney visit to Riyadh. The following day, the U.S. military arrived. I heard first from our military training mission liaison, who told me that we've got lots of people moving in. Then the embassy told me the American military is deploying, you're going to have a few hundred thousand soldiers real quick. That morning, the day after I heard that, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne showed up at the consulate, a couple of intelligence officers wanted to talk to me. The general said, "Here's where we're going, here's the Shia, is that going to cause us a problem." "No, they're not. The Shia are our friends, they love us. Don't worry about the Shia. They'd love to have American soldiers around to protect them from the Sunnis." I'll say right now, there never was any trouble at all, none, between the Shia and the American Army.

*Q: Prior to the actual arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, were Saudis coming up to you, acquaintance and others, saying why aren't you doing something...*

STAMMERMAN: No, they were not saying anything along those lines. A lot of people were leaving. This is what made the Americans nervous, was that the Saudi business people were sending their families out of the province. One of the positive outcomes was that within a week of the invasion, the Mutawwa, the religious police mostly left, the religious police and their families and anybody connected with the Mutawwa left. They thought they would be better off in Mecca, praying I guess, but they all left. They were worried both that the Iraqis might invade, or the Americans would take over the Province, or something. Whatever was going to happen would not be good for them. So they left.

*Q: Well, that was handy.*



STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: It kept that particular fly out of the ointment.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes it did. So, they left, in general. I said fine. Some of the American military as they deployed were worried about that. They said, "They're gone, they're not here. Finally, we did something." But the Saudis were evacuating the families, but they were not talking about why. There was a lot of concern. In Saudi Arabia, you don't want to appear disloyal. If the Prince, the King's son, governor of the Province, was staying, which he was, you didn't want to look like you are leaving. So they started staying with the program. They would ask, "Well, Ken what do you think is going to happen?" But it was never, "Hey, I'm really worried." So business got less. I have to say this... One American company with a major contract fled. Their Saudi sponsor, he actually did not live in the Eastern Province, he lived in Jeddah. This American company's personnel all left. We had a consular phone net, a warden setup, where we call the American business community, and we couldn't find them. We finally talked to their landlord and he said, "They left the morning of the invasion." "So where are they?" We called around and called around, and found they were in Jeddah, they drove all the way across the peninsula right after the invasion, and they didn't come back until months later. These guys had a billion dollar contract, and I said this is insane. I looked them up and said, "This is not smart, walking out on a billion dollar contract because you are worried about Iraqis," I said, "Don't." And most of the American businessmen understood that. And the Shia could not leave after all. They stayed. But a lot of Saudi businessmen sent families away. A lot of Americans by then took ARAMCO up on their offer and sent their spouses and children out. Saudi ARAMCO paid their fare, but their offer after that was the standard, if you leave you're gone, don't come back, we'll never see you again. But as for dependents, they said, fine, no problem. We'll send them out. And that calmed a lot of the problem. But the people who lived there, the Sunnis, the establishment, they had a lot of money there. They realized that if they left, showed disloyalty to the regime, that was it. They'd send out children and so forth, but all the senior businessmen stayed.

*Q: Were you seeing any change in the Saudi regular military? Were they beginning to make moves and do things?*

STAMMERMAN: Not that I saw. Again, the Saudi military, they were out in the encampments in the desert. There was no increased military presence or what have you in the Dhahran areas. If you drove around nearby, no roadblocks. I drove up the border, probably not the first week, but after the first couple weeks, you'd run into roadblocks, but you didn't see tanks on the roads or trucks with troops or anything. Wasn't there. I started seeing Saudi military more after the U.S. military had deployed.

*Q: How about on the Arab side? Were there more flights?*

STAMMERMAN: Lots. Yes. Sure. The Saudi air force by then was launching aircraft a lot, presumably running patrols along the border. The Saudis had air supremacy. That was a given. Against either Iraq or Iran. Now that the focus was on Iraq nobody would talk about it, but you saw a lot of flights going. But I did not deal with the Saudi military. Our training group would

deal with them.

*Q: When the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, I assume their liaison officers were going to call when arrived. That was before the full deployment, right?*

STAMMERMAN: Before the full deployment. The first two people deployed were General Pagonis of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Support Command, who was a logistics man, and his deputy. As soon as the Riyadh meeting broke up with Cheney and Schwarzkopf and so on, Pagonis moved to Dhahran. He was living out of a jeep for about a week, just driving around, looking at the port, looking at the airbase, looking at the other airport which was semi-finished out in the desert, and trying to find how do you supply... you know, we'll have a hundred thousand men here in a couple weeks... where are we going to get food? Do we have to ship it all in? There's a port, how much support can we have? And I made contact with him fairly early on, or he made contact with me, we got to talking, and then the 82<sup>nd</sup> arrived.

I should say that an incident that happened around then was a senator from New Jersey showed up...

*Q: Brighton or Torecelli?*

STAMMERMAN: No, the other one, the one that's just retiring just now. Lautenberg. He showed up around August 18, or so. He was in Cairo. It's interesting how the State Department works. He was in Cairo and sent a message saying he was going to visit Dhahran. The Today Show was already there... no I take that back... this would have been after the deployment had started, that would have been probably around the 20<sup>th</sup> or so. Anyway, the Today Show was already there starting to interview the 82<sup>nd</sup> that had just arrived, and he said he's coming to Dhahran to see how deployment is going. The State Department said this visit is not supported because the U.S. Senate leadership wants to visit first. So the embassy is not to welcome this visit. And Chas Freeman and I both laughed at that.

*Q: Yes, ho ho ho.*

STAMMERMAN: Ho ho. We laughed. Both of us... I called somebody up and Chas sent some messages back, "Do you really want us to tell a U.S. senator NOT to come? Are you out of your minds?" So I sent a cable to Cairo saying hotels are full but the senator is certainly welcome to stay at the consul general's residence. Chas did the same. So he showed up, just took a commercial flight in and we met him. He met with General Pagonis, we talked about what the military was going to do. It was good meeting, this is what we were going to need. We fed the good Senator some MREs, at his request. This is what our troops will be eating. He said, "Euww, this is awful."

*Q: Yes, MREs are...*

STAMMERMAN: Meals Ready to Eat.

*Q: They're strictly emergency rations.*

STAMMERMAN: Emergency rations. Some units ended up living off of them for months. You know, they were way out in the desert. If you put Tabasco sauce on them, they are edible, so Tabasco sauce got to be a hot commodity. Anyway, that first visit was kind of funny just in the way the State Department does these things, trying to tell a U.S. senator that he's not welcome. I said this is silly.

So when the Saudi families were contacted by military logistics, I recommended one to the logistics people and can we get 10,000 breakfasts tomorrow morning, and they said sure. And they did. One orange, some kind of breakfast roll, and, I don't know, but they had enough for a decent breakfast. Eggs, enough to form chow lines... So then the 82<sup>nd</sup> showed up and then their liaison officers came over...

*Q: They all came by what... air transport?*

STAMMERMAN: Oh, yes, everybody landed at Dhahran airbase. So the 82<sup>nd</sup> guys came over and I gave them a little briefing and they said there's a lot more people coming in. We didn't know how many, but they said, thousands of people in the next few days. So I said, "That's fine, there's lots of space in Saudi Arabia." We then saw these big C-5s flying over the one end of the consulate general compound, we'd see just a constant stream of these things for the next several weeks. And I met the various commanders, invited them to the house, and we all had meals and talked with them about the liaison arrangements.

The senior guy in Dhahran, actually IN Dhahran as opposed to out in the field, out in the desert where the forces deployed, was General Pagonis, who was then a 2-star Army officer. He and I worked out a very good working relationship. Very good. Early on, we agreed that if any of his people had trouble with the consulate, he would tell me, and if any of my people had any trouble with one of his soldiers, I'd tell him. Let's keep Riyadh out of it. I don't want an argument with General Schwarzkopf, and you don't want an argument with Chas Freeman, and it worked very well. One of my officers would attend his staff meetings. He had a standup staff meeting every day. And two of his officers would attend my weekly staff meetings. So we always kept close touch on what was happening.

We also worked out an arrangement early on and that involved... General Pagonis had already established his own ties with the various Saudi commanders, which was what he should do, it was appropriate. He also took over our training mission facilities. The trainers were immediately moved out. They shipped them all off to Riyadh. So our usual contact with the military weren't there anymore. We had to set up new arrangements with support commands. The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne had their own group out in the desert, the 101<sup>st</sup> had their group, and the Marines landed and they had their group. So we were all very busily trying to keep up with all this. Washington kept augmenting my staff, which was good. I'd started off with maybe 10 American officers, maybe fewer. By the time it all ended, I had 35 Americans. We had people sleeping in the rec center, we had a little rec center, sleeping on floors, doubling up in the various officers' houses. The military actually wanted to deploy a unit at the consulate grounds, and I told them, "No we can't do that. It was a diplomatic establishment. No guns on this place, except for the Marine guards. So we didn't allow any military placements." We didn't want that. We did have a problem. We

were very concerned about our outside perimeter security, because the consulate had walls, which were mainly to keep camels out, I guess. To keep out wandering herdsmen or whatever. They really were not very secure. They weren't very high, they had barbed wire on them, but they really wouldn't keep anybody who was very determined from scaling them. So we were very concerned about our security. After all, it's the American diplomatic establishment and we had all these military outside Dhahran who were very well capable of defending themselves, and we had Marine guards who were very good, but not enough of them, and their job was very specific. Our outside perimeter security was unarmed Indian rent-a-cops, who were good, but all they did was search automobiles. We had one armed Saudi post at the compound entrance, manned by a couple Saudi National Guardsmen.

So I asked the RSO, I asked Washington, I said, "We need bodies, we need security, we need something. We're vulnerable." We were vulnerable anyway. I thought the security arrangements were not good anyway. But we need help. Of course, the Washington response was, "No, we can't spare anybody, and we have no budget, do what you can." So I called up the National Guard commander, the Prince, and said, "I need some help. How about it?" So he said fine, and he deployed a couple units, meaning dozens of National Guardsmen, and he supervised, he built a double ditch around our entire perimeter, enough to stop a tank, with an earthen escarpment on the side of the ditch, and he set up four watchtowers in our four corners. He put up a barbed wire fence so there's a place for a jeep to drive between the barbed wire fence and the consulate fence. His National Guardsmen would run their jeep along that and man the guard posts. I figured if our government would not provide security, theirs will. They did very good. They responded very well to that, and I'm still very grateful to the Saudis for doing that.

*Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop for now.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay, good.

*Q: And we'll put down we have just covered the arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, and we've talked about your consulate security using the National Guard to do this, and we'll pick it up from there.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay, very good.

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*Q: It's the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, 2001. Ken, you've heard where we are, but I'm not sure you talked about the visit of John Kelly, who was the assistant secretary for near eastern affairs, so we'll talk about it, just in case.*

STAMMERMAN: Okay. Assistant Secretary Kelly showed up and I can't be sure of the dates, but it's mid-August of 1990. That is to say, the Kuwait ruling family had arrived in Dhahran. The Saudis had admitted publicly that there was, indeed, an Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which they had simply been silent on for the first week after the invasion. We still had two consular officers up at the border watching what was going on and helping American citizens who were crossing, who were walking across the border. At this point, there was a notice that came out to the

consulate via the embassy, via Chas Freeman's office, that Assistant Secretary Kelly was coming out from Washington to meet the Kuwaiti Emir. He flew first into Jeddah where he met the consul general there, Phil Griffin, and then went to Riyadh where one of the political officers, head of the political section, latched on to him, and the two of them came to Dhahran.

Meanwhile, I established contact with the Kuwaitis via the Saudis because the Saudis were keeping them secreted away in a palace near Dhahran. The Saudis were wanting the Kuwaitis to keep a very low profile because they were afraid the Iraqis, I found out later, they were afraid the Iraqis in sort of hot pursuit would go after the Kuwaiti ruling family all the way to Dhahran. So they had them in a guest palace, so called. Assistant Secretary Kelly first arrived in Jeddah, and then flew to Dhahran. As an aside, I had a phone call from the CG in Jeddah saying, watch out for Mr. Kelly, that he had a very bad temper and that he was in a terrible mood. Because apparently the administrative arrangements in Jeddah had really fallen through. A lot of small stuff that apparently he really got angry at the CG.

Nevertheless, the two of the arrived, that is Assistant Secretary Kelly and a political officer from Riyadh. I met them, having already established contact with the Kuwaitis through the Kuwaiti planning minister who I knew, not well, but I knew him from my days in Kuwait. So, when the Assistant Secretary arrived, we wanted to get him in in the morning, and get him out before nightfall. We didn't want to do an overnight, just for security reasons. Those were directions from Riyadh. He arrived, and as we drove from the airport to the palace, which is 20 minutes, half an hour, I briefed the Assistant Secretary on whom he probably see. The Kuwaitis hadn't briefed me, they just said they'd make the Emir available, and the Saudis of course. We'd worked it out with the Saudis so that the Saudi security was all over the place when Kelly arrived. So we drove in my car, and we knew where we were going, so the Saudis just told us to go there. As we went along in the car, I told the assistant secretary that we'd probably be met by Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah, who was the oil minister. He was our main contact at the embassy in Kuwait with the ruling family. He has an advanced degree from an American university, speaks perfect English, was the author of Kuwait's OPEC strategy for many years. A trusted man, a very trusted man within the family by the Emir, and he was sort of the Emir's man to deal with the Americans. I briefed the Assistant Secretary on the other members who were in the family, including the Emir. I mentioned that the Emir's favorite hobby, besides marrying dozens of young ladies (only four at any one time), was gardening. And since Mr. Kelly apparently also was a gardener, he said, "Well good, we'll have something to talk about." I'd mentioned a couple of other members of the ruling members who would probably be there and gave him a very brief bio on each one of them. He apparently had some bios, but I sort of gave him just a little gossip about each one of them. For example, the defense minister, who was a sad case, he was made defense minister, word had it within the family, because he was a brother of the Emir and apparently the mother made the brothers say they would take care of him because he was very slow, he was slow and didn't seem to have much future, but they'd all said they'd take care of him. So they made him defense minister, but he had no power within the family, had no responsibility really. It was other members of the family that took care of defense policy and defense purchases. But that he might call on him. But the real power, the real people to be concerned about were the Emir, the Crown Prince, who was the Emir's cousin, and the interior minister and the oil minister.

So we got in the car and drove out to the palace, and doors opened, we were waived into the parking lot, all the guards just waved us through, they were expecting us. I don't recall if I had the flag on the car or not, but the Saudi guards knew who we were. Got us in. We got out of the car, and sure enough, Sheikh Ali Khalifa was there, which was nice. He's a very engaging man. He said, "You'll have meetings. You will see the Emir, first you will see the Crown Prince and then the Emir."

*Q: He was called the Black Prince.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. That is, he's dark skinned. That is because by rumor, his mother was a black concubine of his father. His background was that he was trained in police work in Britain.

*Q: A capable man.*

STAMMERMAN: A very capable man. He always wore sunglasses because of an eye ailment. Some people thought he was just putting on airs, but he has something wrong with his eyes. Anyway, yes, he's dark. He's very competent. The Emir is very strong on finance. He's a financial genius. The Crown Prince is very strong on security, police work, that sort of thing. They are from different sides of the family. They alternate being Emir, one side of the family and the other side of the family, since they are cousins. So, the first two people we saw were the Crown Prince and the Emir. It could have been opposite. The assistant secretary talked with the Emir and he's very engaging. They hit it off and they talked about gardening. The Emir really likes to garden, when he's not on official duties. That's one of his two joys in life. And they talked for a while about gardening and sort of broke the ice. The Emir used an interpreter. It was an interpreter he always used in Kuwait, and they apparently got him out. So, they talked for a while, just breaking the ice, and then the assistant secretary told the Emir what he wanted, which was a formal request from the government of Kuwait under the United Nations Charter for American assistance in self-defense. The Emir sort of nodded, and then we just went off, that was the end of the meeting. Everybody was in a hurry and they're all in makeshift quarters. Then we saw then in sequence, after we saw the two of them, the Emir and the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince meeting wasn't terribly substantive, it's just that they appreciate our being there, and looked to us for assistance. We talked to the interior minister, Sheik Salman, who is a tough guy and told us what he was doing. He was going to other Arab countries to round up support for the Kuwait position. We also called upon the foreign minister who was polite, but not much else. The foreign minister had a long history of being anti-American. We had avoided him during the whole tanker war. We worked, he was a foreign minister and deputy prime minister, sometimes prime minister, acting prime minister sometimes. We'd made a practice of avoiding him because he had a policy of aggressive neutrality, which meant in the U.N., he always voted with the Soviet Union. So we did the whole oil tanker thing, just as an aside, working with the oil ministry, not with the foreign ministry, and not with the defense ministry.

We saw a couple other members of the ruling family and as we went through the sequence, we saw the defense minister, which was simply a hello, shake, welcome, hello, shake hands and leave. He was really non-substantive, and the Kuwaitis made no pretense that he was. We left... there were some side conversations going on all the while, which I will mention one with the Kuwaiti oil minister who pulled me aside and said, Ken, did I remember a certain man, his name

was Abdel Fatah al-Badr, did I remember him. A hard man to forget, he was about 350 pounds, a huge man. He was the head of the Kuwait oil tanker company. He would be a target in Kuwait of the Iraqis who hated him, and he said, "Ken, we didn't get him out, can you get him out?" I said, "Well we'll see what we can do."

Other than that, at the end we got back in the car. The arrangement was made with the planning minister that he would get the document to me that Assistant Secretary Kelly had asked for, that is the formal request from the government of Kuwait. Of course, we had, Assistant Secretary Kelly had reiterated to the Kuwaitis that we recognized them as the government of Kuwait, and that we did not accept the occupation. We then left, headed for the airport, and off went our two visitors.

*Q: Question.*

STAMMERMAN: Sure.

*Q: I've been told that when dealing particularly with the Saudis and people in that part of the world, that if somebody nods after you make a proposal or something like that, that it's essentially an acknowledgment, I've heard your question, and you want to make sure you get some... In a case like this, I would think force majeure would take over, it was assumed that they would, but did you have any disquiet about that you... nobody... did you get a definite commitment?*

STAMMERMAN: We had a definite commitment as I recall.

*Q: From who?*

STAMMERMAN: From the Emir. He was the only one who could have made that commitment. It's the same way as what I've heard what happened in Riyadh about the King making the commitment. Normally, the Emir would nod and then consult. Normally, but they didn't have time for consultations, so I'm fairly sure it was the Emir who said yes, but by the time we walked out of those meetings we had a commitment from the planning minister. We had a commitment from the Kuwaitis with our being told that the planning minister, who was my contact, would get me the document as soon as possible. No later than tomorrow, the next day. So, they left, and I was satisfied, and I assumed they were, that the Kuwaitis were going to make the formal request.

The next morning, I think it was, I got a phone call from the Kuwaitis, from the planning minister, saying, Ken, I've got your document. I went over and it was indeed a document in Arabic and English, because we'd given them a suggested text after all. And the planning minister said, "We're sorry it took so long, but we didn't have a typewriter." The planning minister himself, it's one of these little incidents, he went to the suq in Khobar, looking for an Arabic typewriter. He had to just buy one because the Saudis hadn't given them anything, no paper, no typewriter. It was simply a palace where they were living. So he had gone to the suq and had found an Arabic typewriter and had typed the thing up himself. It was signed by the Emir, as appropriate.

As I got there, it was weird. Because the Kuwaitis were clearing out. As I drove in, you had people in Mercedes Benz', in all manner of cars, people with guns out the windows, all roaring out of the palace, with this planning minister staying behind to talk to me, and a couple of the other Kuwaitis I knew, who were friends of mine. And they told me, we're out of here. The Saudis have told us they want to get us to the other side of the peninsula, and the Emir is already gone, they are leaving for Taiz, which is way the other end of Saudi Arabia. Because they were worried about Dhahran. They did not want him to be a target.

*Q: Well, just get in the feeling, there's still concern that there might be suddenly something launched at Dhahran?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, very much so. The Kuwaitis were very worried about it. The Saudis were worried about it. And they were worried that the Kuwaiti Emir being there, and word was sort of getting out among some people...

*Q: Would be an attraction.*

STAMMERMAN: Would be sort of a hot pursuit reason, that it would give the Iraqis a reason to go after him, to go after Dhahran just to get the Kuwaitis, and in the process they'd take the oil fields. [laughter]

*Q: Yes. [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: So the Kuwaitis were spirited away, on the orders of the Saudis. This was not their choice. They were happy to leave and would go wherever the Saudis gave them a place to stay, but the Kuwaitis told me the Saudis want us to move to the other side of the peninsula, so we're gone. A couple of them stayed behind to talk to me. The planning minister told me the story about getting the typewriter and handed me the paper. I took it, shook his hand, said good luck, then headed for the consulate where I called the op center and said, "I've got the document. I'm pouching the originals. Here's the English version." Sent a very restricted cable. That was that for a short while. Then the next day, Secretary Baker was on television saying we have this request from the government of Kuwait for self-defense under the United Nations Charter. I thought, cool. [laughter] Hey, this gives us an excuse to go to war. I'm part of it. Hey. The story of things going on. Glad to see it.

*Q: This is in August.*

STAMMERMAN: This is in August. Mid-August. Early on. Again, at this point we were concerned about a lot of things. We were concerned that the Iraqis would still come, just for the oil. I mentioned earlier about the arrangements that we made with the Saudis over security, the Department not being responsive at all, but the Saudis really coming through for us, setting up... I should mention that the Saudi National Guard chief, a prince, one of the bin Saud... he not only supplied dozens of soldiers for us, built watch towers, he also dug a trench completely around the compound, except for the one road, the setback we had.

An amusing incident, I have to mention this. Not long after that, my deputy at the consulate



general came into my office and said, "Ken, do you know what the Saudis have done?" I said, "No, what now?" He said, "They've arrested two of the American professors at the university." The University of Petroleum and Minerals, which was right next to the consulate. I said, "What in the world for?" He said, "They were jogging around the warning track, that the Saudis had established along our perimeter. You've got to do something, call somebody in protest." I said, "Are you kidding? They're lucky they didn't get shot." There's sort of the attitude of the American community, and a good many of my staff for that matter, about security. I was very worried about this and said we've got to be very strict. And people were kind of... It was kind of strange sometimes.

Meanwhile, the American community was still in full-fledged panic, in Dhahran. They were watching CNN, more importantly, their families were watching CNN, all showing arrows pointing to Dhahran, and so everybody in the States was calling up to say, get my daughter out of there. That is, calling the sons to get their daughters home, and get everybody out of there. The Saudi-ARAMCO policy was that if the American embassy and the consulate general called for the evacuation of American citizens, they of course would cooperate. Short of that, if you left their employ, and flew back in panic, you lost your job. As far as they were concerned, you would be unemployable in the Gulf if they had any say in the matter for the rest of your life. This left a lot of the American community, the oil guys, torn between fear and greed, and they were very angry at me personally, and at the embassy, for not evacuating them, because they kept hearing on TV that Dhahran was in danger of being overrun. As soon as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne deployed, though, I was confident that there would not be an invasion. I was sure of this because having been in Kuwait, knowing how the Iraqi army fights, I thought they would not dare to take on the American army in any way, shape, or form. I was very confident. None of my staff were, or very few of my staff.

*Q: Where did the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne go? North of Dhahran?*

STAMMERMAN: The 82<sup>nd</sup> deployed north and west. In the west, they occupied the oil processing area, where you separate the natural gas from oil, at Abqaiq. They covered Abqaiq and that area. The first thing they did though was set up a blocking force north of Dhahran where the Saudis...

*Q: North of Ras Tanura.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, it would north of there, north of the Shiite area, which is near Ras Tanura. They also deployed near where the Marines were to land. That was part of what they were doing. Essentially, there was a Saudi blocking force that was up there on the initiative of the Saudi National Guard commander. Until the 82<sup>nd</sup> arrived, we simply had that small blocking force of National Guardsmen that were up there. Then we had the deployment, large numbers of forces deployed. My main contact after the first week of deployment... Again, the deployment starts in mid-August. By the third week in August, I suppose, I'd contact with General Pagonis, who was the head of the 22<sup>nd</sup> support command. That was his vehicle..., he was the head of logistics, became known as the logistics genius behind Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. He and his second in command colonel arrived and were living out of an Army vehicle for about a week until we made contact. I invited him over, and they were always having

good reason to come by the house because they get served good American food at the house. This is before they had their units deployed. Anyway, I worked with them very closely and put them in contact with the Saudi merchant families, who could supply, who were good at the logistics supply.

*Q: Al Gusabis...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the Al Gusabis, the Al Zamils. The incident there with the Al Zamils, the Al Zamils were one of the major families of the Eastern Province. They were asked by General Pagonis, as soon as he arrived he said, I've got thousands of troops arriving in the next couple of days, can you supply 10,000 breakfasts tomorrow morning? They said yes we can, and they did. Which really surprised the General. He said, he was worried that he was getting into a third world country. I said, "No these guys are good. They really know their stuff." There was another family who had the local Sears franchise. They had a local manager who was Pakistani, whose job was on the line because on his own authority he had ordered a big shipment of sledgehammers for the local Sears outlet. Saudis don't use sledgehammers for anything, well I guess they can for tent pegs. Anyway, these things were just sitting on the shelf. They'd just opened 2 months earlier, and nothing was moving. And then the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne arrived and said we need sledgehammers. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] I assume there was an "Allah be praised."*

STAMMERMAN: There was an "Allah be praised." A helicopter lands in the parking lot and a guy walks in and says, I need sledgehammers. All these buyers, all these logistics guys, they all had authority to spend \$20,000 out of their pockets, and he walked in and said, "I'll take every sledgehammer you have." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: Allah be praised. The Saudi owners told me about this later on and said this is unbelievable how this came out of the sky to rescue this guy's job, because they thought it was the height of foolishness to have ordered all these American sledgehammers. The Saudis wouldn't use them. As they arrived, General Pagonis was the contact with the local Saudis on the military side. I would go with him on some meetings, others he arranged on his own because of ARAMCO, the king, the royal family did not want the Al Saud messing around with ARAMCO. They did not want corruption in the Saudi ARAMCO arrangement. There were only 5 princes in the entire province. Among them, though, were Prince Turki bin Nasser, who was head of the airbase. He owned the airbase, essentially. And he answered to no one except I guess the king, the Crown Prince, or the defense minister. Within that airbase, his word was law. The governor, Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, governed outside the airbase. So General Pagonis made his arrangements with Prince Turki and kept me informed of what was going on. I said fine. I advised him when asked what to do.

Part of the arrangement was, he told Prince Turki, that over half of his personnel were female, and that they had to be able to drive in order to perform their duties. And he understood of course what the local arrangements were about women not driving, and about women being alone in a

car and all these sorts of things. And Prince Turki and Prince Mohammed bin Fahd said the same thing, we were off base when we saw him. I saw Prince Mohammed with the General, I took him over to introduce him to Prince Mohammed, set up so that they would have their own contacts and arrangements. The Princes, Prince Mohammed and Prince Turki both said, "American women who are military personnel can drive in the Eastern Province as long as they are on a mission. To signify they are on a mission, they have to wear their hats. American females in uniform wearing a hat will not be disturbed. If anyone disturbs them, they will have to answer to Prince Turki or Prince Mohammed." After those commands were issued and word got around, no American females were bothered. Nobody wants to mess with either of those two gentlemen. They had a way of making people disappear if they wanted to. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: There were rumors, I should mention, all during the deployment, that American female military personnel had beaten up Mutawwa, religious police. I've heard this from any number of Saudis, from ARAMCO Americans, same story. Turned out to be an urban legend. Near as we could understand the legend, a Mutawwa had accosted a female soldier who then beat him up... used judo on him or somehow embarrassed him and kicked him around. Which all the Saudis loved to hear because Eastern Province Saudis really don't like the Mutawwa.

*Q: No. No. [laughter] These are sort of the equivalent of the Taliban to the Eastern Province.*

STAMMERMAN: Exactly. In fact, shortly after the deployment, I'd say within a month of the deployment of the U.S. forces, as far as we know, all the Mutawwa disappeared. All the sheiks, the religious scholars, all the ones with the scraggly beards, we called them the bearded ones, they all left figuring their efforts would be better appreciated in Mecca. So they moved out to the Jeddah area to pray for victory or something. But they disappeared. So we had no trouble as far as I know with any of our military personnel in the Eastern Province.

*Q: Was there any concern about Iraqi sympathizers or spies or saboteurs or that sort of thing?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. I was certainly concerned because between us and the Kuwaiti border was just a lot of sand, and the borders were very porous. The Saudis did not seem concerned. I was not concerned about major... I did not think we would have major units slipping in under cover of darkness, but we were worried about terrorism, as were the Saudis. The Saudis not as seriously, I think. They were fairly confident about their internal security. They were more concerned over the years about Shia, the Iranian sympathizers than Iraqi sympathizers. Our soldiers were primed... There were a couple of incidents, a couple of close things... For example, at the airport, not long after the deployment after we set up our guard force out at the airbase. Our forces deployed on the Saudi airbase. We had both Saudi security and American security in various places. We had an American security checkpoint on the public highway as you go towards the airport. At the airport where there was an American security presence, U.S. soldiers in uniform, there was an incident where a drunken Saudi walked in like he always did, just lurched through the security checkpoint, and I heard this second hand, that the American officer said, "This guy's guns went up, but our guys didn't fire because they figured this guy might well

be drunk.” And indeed he was. So it’s one of these lucky things. We didn’t want a dead Saudi. But we were concerned. I think I was more concerned probably than most of the people on my staff. People on my staff and the ARAMCO Americans sort of shared a fear that the Iraqi military would arrive, that the Iraqi airplanes would bomb us and Iraqi tanks would appear over the horizon. I wasn’t concerned about that at all.

*Q: Well with the arrival of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and the logistics command, did this begin to change perceptions in the ARAMCO community or was this still a nervous group?*

STAMMERMAN: It was a very nervous group. They became more nervous as time went on. They’d heard... Again, it’s not universal because there were, I thought, some level-headed people among the bunch, but they’d heard from the U.S. military guys, lower ranks. We had a ‘take a soldier home for dinner’ program, and they would hear from them all these tales, you know the Iraqis have poison gas, you know the Iraqis have weapons of mass destruction. We’re prepared to go to war next week. And so on...I got one call, and I would get calls occasionally, fewer... the first week after the invasion I got several, but from senior executive among not ARAMCO but ARAMCO contractors, American citizens, that we have word from the military that the Iraqis are coming over the border tonight. What do you know? Nothing I’ve heard. [laughter] We’re here.

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: We heard you guys are bailing out. That sort of thing. [laughter] No, we’re here, we’re staying. We had an around the clock op center, operations center, the rumor control mill sort of thing. I should mention here that, not long after the Iraqi invasion, a special assistant to the governor, the Emir, Emir Mohammed bin Fahd, a special assistant to the Emir... I knew he existed. I’d called his telephone number a couple of times. He’d never returned my calls. I was sure, because I had asked, he had no other contact with anybody in the U.S. mission either. He was sort of this internal security guy, special projects, contact with the secret police. That sort of thing. Not long after the invasion, he called me and said, “Ken, we can talk now.” [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: And he came over that day and called on me. This is a man who lived in the United States for a long time, spoke perfect English. Was a member of an old family in Saudi Arabia. He said if I need to talk to him, if you need to get a message to the Emir, any hour, day or night, call me. Here’s my number. And likewise, if the Emir needs to talk to you, we can talk. There’s the problem that if the Emir himself, Mohammed bin Fahd, talks to me, it’s a matter of diplomatic record, a matter of government conversations. This is all, as far as I’m concerned, off the record. I said fine. It can be off the written record. We can talk about it. So throughout this entire event then, I had a back channel to the Emir which worked very well. It turns out, I gathered indirectly, that he was also talking to some of our senior military people. Which was useful.

*Q: You must have had somebody designated to be the soother, somebody who would take calls to the Americans, talk nicely to them, or meet them or something.*

STAMMERMAN: What we did was have this 24-hour operations center. We always had somebody at the phone. The consul was Les Hickman, who was to my point of view, a very capable officer. Unfortunately I had him at the Kuwaiti border for the first month and a half. Just across the border from the Iraqi tanks. Welcoming Americans, making sure the Saudis treated them right and put them on transport to Dhahran and evacuate to the States. We were not a very large staff. I had a consular officer who was then sending Americans out on empty U.S. military planes on the reverse flight. There was one young female officer from Riyadh who was visiting us on the day of the invasion, who I saw walking by my office that first week, and I said, you're working for me. I called up the DCM and said, "I need bodies, she's on my staff, right?" He said, "Okay, as long as you need her." So, I grabbed anybody I could and put them to work on that late shift because we had people calling at all hours of the night.

We just didn't have enough people to have anybody to designate as chief hand holder until my consul, Les Hickman, got back, which was maybe a month and a half after the invasion. The concern by the Americans, and it got worse as time went on, was they would... every time there was a story on CNN about Iraqi capabilities and intentions, we would get a wave of calls from the American community. CNN showed over and over... By the way, I should say AFRTS, Air Force Radio TV Service... once the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, which is sort of the senior group over the 82<sup>nd</sup>, once they arrived en masse, the U.S. military went live on U.S. TV, so we were broadcasting American television in the Eastern Province, in the clear, which was really quite a cultural experience for the Saudis.

*Q: Well, actually, it wasn't, because when I was there in the late '50s, the airbase, which had an American TV station, was doing it and apparently the Emir loved to watch wrestling. [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: [laughter]

*Q: So, then it died away after...*

STAMMERMAN: Well, actually, there was still an arrangement of sorts. It could only be received by certain Saudis. Our training mission had set up an arrangement where American TV was going to them would be piped to certain Saudi people like the Emir. I'm not sure it was the Emir this time, but it was people like that. But this was just broadcasting in the clear so that everybody could see CNN and CNN kept running the sequence of showing our soldiers training for germ warfare and chemical warfare. They would show an American soldier in uniform having a fit, as it were, shaking all over, and by all accounts dying on the sand. This is what it looks like if you are caught in the open by poison gas without a gas mask. So from that moment on, a) they wanted out, and b) if not, they wanted gas masks from us. Our response was, if you want to get out, talk to the Saudis. We're not going anywhere. Second, you don't need gas masks, the Iraqis would never gas against American civilians, we were sure of it. I was sure of it. I remained sure.

I should say that the ambassador and DCM still were talking to me, we would meet at least once a month, I would go to Riyadh, with the Consul General from Jeddah. There was an understanding. Ambassador Chas Freeman had said to me early on, do I think we ought to bail

out? And I'd originally said no, and that was the last we talked about it. The understanding was that if I thought we should bail out I would tell him. I didn't think we should bail out. Never did. Whenever I would talk to the American community, and I'd talk to small groups occasionally. They would be at the consulate for various things, I would call meetings of the American business community at least once a month and have a speaker. I had General Pagonis speak to them early on. I would tell them the latest travel advisories. I would say, we're staying, informally. Formally I would say we have no reason to evacuate. They of course didn't really believe us and thought we were playing up to the Saudis, because if the Americans pulled out it meant 5 million, no by that time 7 million barrels of oil would go off the world market. Because without the American workers at ARAMCO, ARAMCO shuts down. We knew it, the Saudis knew it, the American workers knew it. The American workers felt that we were downplaying the danger in order to keep them on the job to keep the 7 million barrels flowing.

*Q: Well, in a way you were. The point being, we were trying to keep this thing together, and there was a risk involved.*

STAMMERMAN: There was a risk, but I was personally convinced that there was no risk to American personnel, either to my staff or American citizens, except through a very, very random chance that if the Iraqi ever fired SCUDS they might by chance hit something. I'd been briefed by the military on SCUDS about how they tend to have a target radius of 3 miles, in those days. I'm sure characteristics are different now. But in those days, the Iraqis would be lucky to hit Dhahran, Khobar, very unlikely to even hit all of the entire ARAMCO compound if they aimed at it. So, I'd tell them, "There's a random chance that something might happen, but unlikely. So the risk is not worth it for us to get out. So, if the risk bothers you, you are always welcome to leave." That made me very unpopular, comments about holding them hostage were very typical. When we did have open meetings, there were some very angry people around.

*Q: Was it a matter of sort of well, it's your decision, you can leave.*

STAMMERMAN: This is what we told them. The Saudi ARAMCO management had a standing offer that any dependent, wives and children normally, who wanted to leave could leave. They would give them a free ticket back. Okay, but if you are a worker... at first there was a big, long thing about getting a passport. ARAMCO, like most Saudi employers, kept their employees' passports. But eventually they gave them out their passports. There was no reason under law that they had to have passports. Even though there's no reason under law the Americans had to have their passports to get back into the United States. We told them, no big deal, if we have to get you out of here, we'll put you on planes and believe me, they will let you into the United States. They were convinced, though, that they had to have their passports to enter the United States. I told them not to worry about it. But they were again... during the deployment, there were some very angry people.

*Q: Was there any response? Would you say, well then get out?*

STAMMERMAN: We would say, "If you can't take it, well, the Saudis will let you go." And then they'd scream, "Yes but then we'll lose our jobs." Oh, okay. They wanted us to help them have it both ways. "You are just playing down the risk." "No we are not." Very confident what

the risk is. Then they started... “Well, give us some gas masks.” I said, “I don’t have any gas masks.” They were convinced that we had a store of gas masks, and such, at the consulate, which we didn’t.

*Q: Well, Chas Freeman found out, as did Bill Brown in Tel Aviv, that Defense and the CIA, the defense attachés had stores of gas masks. But nobody else did and they told them to get rid of the damn things.*

STAMMERMAN: [laughter]

*Q: Either everybody has them or they don’t.*

STAMMERMAN: That’s interesting. We didn’t have any defense attaché personnel, as such. There was the training group, but the training group immediately redeployed to Riyadh when the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne arrived, because the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne and General Pagonis, who outranked the JUSMAAG, or whatever we called them, the training group, ordered the training group out. He needed their offices. And so he got them, which was good because he was much more attuned to local conditions after a few weeks than the JUSMAAG officers were after a year. He was a genius. A good man. Of course, they had gas masks, they had lots of gas masks. The deployed U.S. military did. CIA personnel is an interesting question. My understanding was that they had arrangements to evacuate if needed. That was their business. I said to other agency folk that with my staff I know what I am doing, and I’ll thank you to shut up. Unfortunately, I do have to say that there was more than one incident where other agency personnel had told State personnel working for me that they thought I was underplaying the risk. That they were convinced that I was playing with their lives. And this made at least one young officer, two young officers do things they shouldn’t have done. One sent his family home, which made him very unhappy the rest of the deployment, because he had been told by somebody in another agency that I was downplaying the risk and this other agency knew that we were in great and imminent danger. And there was another officer, was a young vice consul, did the same thing, was told that both I and Les Hickman, the consul, was playing with their lives, that we knew that the danger was much greater, or that we were ignorant. Either we knew it or if we didn’t knew it we were ignorant. And they, the other agency people, knew, by gosh, what was going to happen.

*Q: And so what did he do or she do?*

STAMMERMAN: She was unhappy and engaged in sort of bureaucratic guerilla warfare the rest of the deployment. Just complaining about her boss. I think it turned her against him, unfortunately. She worked well. She did, under instruction, she worked long hours, but it made her morale plummet. Absolutely destroyed, because all the while she thought we were ignoring the reality, either intentionally or through ignorance.

*Q: But it does show, there’s this feeling that people are rallying around and some don’t quite rally quite as much as other people.*

STAMMERMAN: Some don’t rally.

*Q: Chas Freeman said he had some people, a few that he asked, just had to let them go.*

STAMMERMAN: I did ask his permission to send one of my state officers, who also had gotten this attitude from I think from other agency people. I don't know. But he had this attitude. I had a staffing problem. I may have mentioned earlier. None of the officers on my staff when the Iraqis invaded Kuwait had ever served in an Arab country. They were there mainly because of the high differential. They lived there, lived behind the compound walls, didn't meet the Saudis, didn't know the customs, certainly didn't know Iraq. They didn't know Iraq from Iran, most of them. This officer, he's the one officer I asked Chas, one more time, I've got to put him on a plane. While we were evacuating Americans, he threw a temper tantrum, what I consider a temper tantrum, in front of American civilians who were waiting to be evacuated, and in front of U.S. military personnel who were trying to evacuate them. He absolutely exploded and said that I didn't know what I was doing. I told him, "Look, calm down, and go home. Just go home." I sent him home for the day. We never talked about it afterwards. I'd say he was under a lot of pressure. But there were a lot of people like that. This was the only one who absolutely exploded and said you're doing a... you're wrong, you'll get us all killed, kind of thing. The situation when he exploded was, I've got a better way of doing this, and you're endangering us all by this ineffective way of getting people out. Oh, well. That jumps ahead, though.

*Q: One last thing, we were talking off mike, you said there were two schools on the consulate compound, one British and one American. And these continued during the time...?*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the schools remained open. We had the international school there, we had a British stream and an American stream, with an American headmaster and a British headmaster. They remained open the whole time. The superintendent would come over and see me fairly often. Patty, my wife, would have the teachers over occasionally. Of course they lost a lot of their students because of an unfortunate incident early in the deployment with Bryant Gumble doing a show on the runway as American troops arrived. He mentioned...

*Q: Bryant Gumble being...*

STAMMERMAN: The NBC anchor at the time, the Today Show. Said, in passing, "Oh, the American community is leaving here and the American school is closed." The headmaster and the superintendent said, "Oh we're not closed." And they did contact NBC, which would just not retract it. It made the headmasters very upset. They lost a lot, the school stayed open, even with a lot fewer students than they would otherwise have had. Their students remained the international students... no Saudis go to school there...the international contractors' children who were non-ARAMCO. ARAMCO has its own schools.

*Q: When you move into, from August to September and October, what was happening?*

STAMMERMAN: We were having of course the deployment of U.S. forces and material. And our compound is a couple hundred meters from the end of the airbase runway. The airbase, I should say, is King Abdulaziz airbase at Dhahran. Dhahran airbase they call it, is dual purpose, it's both military and civilian. So that when the C-5s, these huge, American transport planes were arriving, they would fly right over the end of our compound. So we saw a steady sky train of these massive airplanes arriving day and night. We also had F-15s and F-16s constantly taking



off and circling the... flying cover over Dhahran. The Saudis meanwhile had opened up, for our use, the other airbase that they had been constructing. There was another civilian airport under construction in the Eastern Province. It had been under construction for years, under Bechtel management. Bechtel was the contractor. Subject to much scandal because, while Dhahran airport has capacity for couple million passengers a year, this would have more than doubled the capacity of passengers, this was going to be a civilian airport, it was about 20 miles north of Dhahran and out in the desert area. There was no reason in the world to build this airport following the downturn in the oil economy in the mid-'80s. Yet, it kept going, and the assumption was that members of the Al Saud were getting their pocket lined by continuing to build the airport.

General Turki took General Pagonis and some of air force commanders out to the airport. When our logistics general and the Air Force commanders saw this airbase, they were overjoyed. It was usable. The control tower was up. The runways were finished. The passenger terminal was not finished. Who needs a passenger terminal? So, the Saudis, through Prince Turki, and the Saudi military commander of the Eastern Province, who was a non- al-Saud, by the way, both said, "You want the airbase? Take it." Bechtel would stay there to manage, because Bechtel, the contractor, was an American company, knew what needed to still be done, and what was in shape and what wasn't.

And so that became our other deployment airbase. We couldn't see things arriving there, but essentially that's where we put all our helicopters. All the Apaches came in there, and a lot of the deployed units, the C-5s were diverted to there as well. All civilian aircraft continued to come into Dhahran. That's one thing that went on. So we had massive numbers of troops deploying. We had Pagonis putting together... hiring people, setting contracts up, military making contacts throughout the Saudi society. I was setting up a lot of officer meeting merchant family dinners, like every other week if I could. I had a Saudi merchant family who had agreed to host a dinner for American officers. And the Saudis were lining up to do it.

The deployment of American forces was welcomed by the Saudi community. We're talking the Sunni merchant community. The Shia kind of laid low. I'll mention here that I did have some concern by various units as they deployed, they were deploying near Shia areas. The units were quite concerned about security, because remember not long before, in the late '70s and mid-'80s, there had been Shia uprisings which were put down brutally by the Saudis, and they were concerned that we, the Americans, were identified with the Saudi regime, and that therefore the Shia, who were pro-Iranian to a point, almost by default, since nobody else except the Americans ever took notice of them, that the Shia might act against the American forces, might somehow sabotage, or engage in violence or something. I told the American commanders that there was no concern because as far as the Shia were concerned, we were their only friends in the entire world. They loved Americans, because if we were in the area, the Saudis wouldn't beat up on them so much. I did make some contacts with the Shia community and explained what we were doing, and they said fine they weren't going to cause any trouble.

Anyway, the American officers would go to these dinners hosted by the merchant families. This happened all the way up to when the war started. One of the funny things going on was, General Schwarzkopf had issued general order number one, to the American forces, which was the

American military is dry. There will be no alcohol, and any officer, any man, anyone caught drinking would get an Article 16, which was sort of a summary, not quite a court martial, but it's a summary punishment. For any officer it means he's on a plane back to the States. It would effectively end his career. So the American Army was dry. We'd go to these gatherings, and alcohol is illegal in Saudi Arabia, and there would be whiskey on the tables, invariably. Because the Saudis had it. The Saudis had, what I always considered a constructive hypocrisy about alcohol, that it's illegal, you can't sell it, and it doesn't appear, but it's there, once you are inside the walls. This is the Eastern Province; now I've heard things are different in Riyadh, but as for the Eastern Province, once you are inside the walls of someone's house, or inside the compound, then the Mutawwa are forbidden to enter. So if you want to drink under your own roof, that's your business, just don't have it in the car, don't go anywhere with it. Don't sell it on the street.

So we go into these dinners and there's alcohol on the table. The American officers couldn't drink because if any one of them had admitted it, then they would all get Article 16 and they would all go home. None of them wanted that. So it was funny, I might drink a beer, but never have been much to drink whiskey anyway. The Saudis and maybe myself or another American officer might drink a beer, where the American Army was dry. These turned out to be very constructive gatherings.

The American officers by and large didn't know a lot about the Saudis other than what they had heard. These were officers from the deploying units like the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. You mentioned the Al-Gosaibi family. One day an al-Gosaibi, the son-in-law of the old man, called me up and said, "Ken, we'd like to invite the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne." I said, "The 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne." He said, "Yes, as many as you can get, we'd like to have them over." They've got this vast compound, several compounds, this vast compound in al-Khobar (the town next to Dhahran), and I replied, okay. Then I called up my contact with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. The deputy commander of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, I would see him probably once a week. I had good contacts inside the deployed forces. And I said, as many as you can get. He said fine, we'll deliver however many... This was probably October, so it wasn't like we were on the front lines, ready to attack and all that. As many guys as we can pull off the line, we'll get them down there. There were busloads and busloads of 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, showed up at this family place, the al-Gosaibi compound. We tried to keep track of how many were expected. I kept telling him, hundreds. He said, great, the more the merrier. And they were invited and had this massive feast with long tables, as many of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne as we could get onto the compound had a wonderful day. The general Saudi attitude was, we love these guys, we had no problem at all.

*Q: Were you following the politics back home, whether, you know there was a big debate going on about whether or not we would attack. One was a defensive, that decision had already been made, Desert Shield. But Desert Storm, the attack on Kuwait, it was a big debate and it was rather close in the Senate. Was this being followed by you all?*

STAMMERMAN: We were following closely, yes. As the deployment went on... there were a couple of incidents that we want to get back to, but as the deployment went on, I would also, as invited, brief American military units. General Pagonis would ask me over to brief his staff, especially as new people arrived I briefed more of them. But there were others, for example, one of the secretaries in the consulate, excellent person, had arrived not long before the deployment. Her son was deployed to a front line unit. He was in a tank unit. The first deployment was the

airborne units and the Marines. But then, the President deployed our heavy armor from Europe.

*Q: Fifth Corps or something.*

STAMMERMAN: Fifth Corps... it was an armored corps under General Franks. It was General Franks organization. She was scared stiff about her son. She wasn't worried about Dhahran, she was nervous about her son. I kept reassuring her, and she believed me, but she was nervous because she kept hearing about this argument going on in the Senate. We were told about all the body bags that the Army was bringing over, that we had expected thousands of casualties. Since her son was going in the first wave, this made her very nervous. So I briefed his unit, not at the general officer level as usual, but they were in Dhahran on leave, and I briefed them. I told them their main problem was going to be taking care of prisoners. That the Iraqis will consider that you guys beat the Red Army. The Red Army didn't want to fight you, and your main problem will be how to care for the prisoners you take. I don't know if they believed me or not, but that's what I told them. My attitude insofar as I made it known was typically when I mentioned at our weekly staff meetings that the sooner we went to war the better. Because I had a lot of sympathy for the Kuwaitis; I would care about what was going on in Kuwait, these were my friends. I hoped we kicked the Iraqis out of Kuwait, the sooner the better. I did not know the details of how we would do it, but I was fairly sure that whatever we did, that it would be a walkover. The secretary was the only person, by the way, after the victory, who said, "Ken, you were right." The rest of my staff never did come back and say that. But she did. Her name is Barbara. Quite a lady.

Back though, to what happened those first few months. There was an incident, unfortunate incident involving CBS TV. One of my USIS junior officers who normally were there for education liaison, our educational shop telling Saudis how to go to school in the States. He by default became the press officer for the American embassy in the Eastern Province. The ARAMCO civilians had a theater group, and they wanted to put on a USO-type show for the American military. The only auditorium that could handle them was at the American school, which is on our compound. So I said, that's all very nice. Take care of it. And they did, they practiced. They put on a USO-type show. I attended one of the rehearsals.

*Q: Sort of a variety show.*

STAMMERMAN: A variety show, featured a standup comic. And it featured dancers, dancers who did a can-can, which was modest. By American standards, quite modest. The women had their arms covered by sort of frilly things, went from shoulder to elbow, and the skirts went to just above their knees. And they danced. There was singing, it was a variety show. My USIS guy, unbeknownst to me, invited CBS TV in. This was not smart. This was not smart at all, because the CBS guy, a real jerk, he's still around, but he was one of the Middle East guys. He eventually was captured by the Iraqis. That might give somebody a hint as to who he was. He was a jerk. He filmed this. There was not supposed to be cameras on the compound for security reasons without my permission. He either smuggled one on or my USIS guy invited him and didn't caution him about cameras. But somehow he got in that auditorium with a camera. And filmed the show, at least parts of it, and then did a voice-over which appeared on CBS TV. And the voice-over showed the women dancing from their shoulders up, which showed of course only

bare skin, and from the knees down which showed only bare skin, and showed pictures of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne in the audience jumping and shouting and cheering. His voice-over was: you might not think this Saudi Arabia (snicker snicker, leering) but it is. It was a clip on TV. The Saudi ambassador saw it, of course, in the USA. Which meant the Saudi defense minister heard about it, which meant Prince Mohammed bin Fahd, the governor, heard about it [laughter] and so I got a call from my back channel contact with the governor who said the governor wanted to see me pronto. I'd also heard about it that morning from David Dunford, the DCM, he said, "Ken, what in the world is going on down there?" I said, "Beats me, Dave. I'll try to find out."

So I called my USIS guy who told me, well, it seemed like a good idea at the time, to show that ARAMCO people... his purpose in letting this guy on the compound was to show that the American community in the Eastern Province was being nice to the American troops. So he showed an appalling lack of discretion by not getting the right to review this film or something, or by just making sure they had no film at all. I'd rather they had none at all. Anyway, I called him, and said, "What in the world did you do?" He said, "Well it seemed like a good idea at the time," was essentially his reaction. I said, "Oh well."

So anyway, my back channel guy said, "The Emir will see you at 10 o'clock this morning." Didn't even say, "Ken please come." He said the Emir WILL see you at 10 o'clock this morning. So I got the car, got the driver, went over, got into the Emir's waiting room, and sitting in the waiting room with me was the president of Saudi ARAMCO who is by the way right now the Saudi oil minister. This is an oil industry veteran, educated by the Americans, joined ARAMCO at the age of 12 or something, he's an oil executive who can stand with any oil executive in the world. Excellent man, educated through graduate school by the Americans. Speaks perfect English. As far as I know, not used to wearing Saudi dress (thobes), he always works wearing Western clothes, has for most of his life. Anyway, I saw him in the waiting room and he was unaware of why he was being called. And we walked into the Emir's office and the Emir was livid. This was Mohammad bin Fahd. Like I say, he could make people disappear if he wants. He was livid. Red face, absolutely blowing his top. And he'd never before, we always were on good terms, I'd never seen him lose his composure. He lost his composure. He said, "I've received a call from the defense minister. The King hasn't heard about this, but everybody else has, and what in the world are you people doing?" He turned to the head of ARAMCO and just started going after him. I should say there were 3 people in the room besides the Emir. Me, the head of Saudi ARAMCO, and this is very interesting, the head of Saudi ARAMCO had an Arab affairs advisor, I'm sorry... government affairs advisor. Essentially an Arab consultant. The westernized Saudi management of ARAMCO never really dealt directly with the local Saudi government. They dealt with them through other Saudis. This may be one of the few times that these guys ever had a face-off. He starts off speaking English to the head of ARAMCO. I should say the Emir has a degree from an American University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and speaks perfect English of course. Anyway, he started going into the head of ARAMCO, "You know what happened, this is terrible. I'm hearing all these things from the defense minister, everybody is angry." Of course the head of ARAMCO had no idea what was going on. Zero. He had no idea about the TV show, he had no idea what had happened. Nobody on his staff had told him. I guess they didn't want to admit it or they didn't know that the Saudi government had heard about it. One thing the governor said, as he was livid, he said, "I know what goes on behind those walls. For example, I know you had church services. I don't care. None of us care."

But you've got to keep things behind the walls." Which is a wonderful exposition of the way the Saudi hypocrisy works. You've got to keep that behind the walls. I interrupted and said, "Excuse me, Your Royal Highness, excuse me. He doesn't know what's happened. Obviously. I know what happened. Please let me interrupt and tell you what happened." So I explained. I said, "This was done by a lower-ranking member of my staff. I didn't know what was going on, the American generals did not know what was going on. We would never have let this happen had we known it was going to be on American TV. It will not happen again, and there will be no more USO shows. You can be sure of that." At that point he kind of calmed down a bit. And then I explained what happened, and he said, "Well it better not happen again." I said, "Okay." So we walked out of the room, and the head of ARAMCO says, Ken, thank you. And later that day I got a call from the senior American on the ARAMCO staff. He said, "Ken, you rescued our guy and we'll remember that." I said, "I take responsibility for that, it shouldn't have happened, it won't happen again." It was quite an incident.

*Q: Oh, boy. Yes.*

STAMMERMAN: Schwarzkopf of course heard about it. I got a call from Pagonis. "Hey that was quite a flap, you guys." I said, "Yes that's a flap but it's over." Incident ended, with no more USO shows, nothing. Agreed. I said, "That's it, there won't be any more." So we had no more shows at all until after the war was over, and the shows we did have after that were male only, male country music stars, no females. Zip. Because of that. Unfortunately. It was quite an incident.

*Q: This also points out the irresponsibility of the people on TV and the press. They are out for a quick fun story and they don't give a damn about the repercussions.*

STAMMERMAN: Exactly.

*Q: And then they complain about that the military and government people mistrust them.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. There's another incident... we were talking earlier... You asked about the American Congress, the Senate. We, of course, had lots of congressional visitors, well over half the Senate, and at least a third, maybe half of the House came to visit during Desert Shield. The routine was that General Schwarzkopf, whose command center was in Riyadh, would always fly to Dhahran, with the Senators and Congressmen. They would all arrive in Riyadh in military aircraft which would take them further to Dhahran. We would do briefing at Dhahran airbase. The briefing would be General Schwarzkopf, Ambassador Freeman...

*Q: Now, Chas Freeman said sometimes he made three trips a day to Dhahran.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, it was incredible. We were just flooded with these Congressmen. They all wanted pictures. They all had to get out to see the forces. And there was a routine that the Army always found constituents of any congressman, would somehow end up having meals with them, eating MREs, Meals Ready to Eat, deployed. They would do a briefing, at Dhahran airbase, where General Schwarzkopf and Ambassador Freeman would do the briefing. I would sit up there at the table, but just be available for any specific questions which hardly ever came

up. There was one incident which sort of illustrates again the press and some of the congressional attitudes. We had the foreign relations, which was then called the House Foreign Affairs Committee, group came out. There must have been 12, 13, 14 congressmen. And quite a large number of their staff. There was a policy that no one could stay overnight in the Eastern Province. We were worried about security. You just never know... if the Iraqis ever did do some sort of sabotage, we didn't want to have a Senator or Congressman involved.

We did the briefing, and at the end of the briefing, a young lady who was on the staff of the House Foreign Affairs Committee came up to badger Chas Freeman, very aggressively, that she had seen on TV a very upset American couple who were evacuated from Kuwait, who'd gone through the American Consulate in Dhahran for assistance and were given an interview back in Detroit, or somewhere, that they were very upset with the State Department with the way they were treated. And she wanted to know what the details were. Chas, looks at me and says, "Beats me. We've evacuated a lot of people. And if they weren't happy, I don't know, I'll try to find out. Give me their names, do you know their names?" No idea. "When was it on TV?" She said, "I don't know, but I remember seeing it though and they were upset. I want all the details." I said, "I'll do what I can." She said, "Look, I want a written report, by you, before I leave this country, and I want it in 24 hours." At this point Chas was kind of backing away. This lady was on the majority side too, apparently a good friend of the chairman. I'm not implying anything, but she was sponsored by the chairman. So I said, "I'll do what I can." So instead of immediately leaving with Chas and going and making the rounds as I usually did, I made a quick call to the embassy. We didn't have cell phones in those days. I called up the consular officer, I think that was still the first month and a half, so the consul was still out on the Kuwaiti border. So I had no idea and I said, "Please search the files, and figure out what this was." She said, "I bet I know which one it was. There was a couple we had real trouble with." Turned out this was an American couple who had been evacuated from Kuwait. They had been in Kuwait for years. He was contractor with the oil company. Been on the staff with a contract with the oil company. When he crossed the border, I don't know all the details, but apparently in conversations with the Saudis, he was glad to get out, he walked out through the desert as many Americans did. You snuck or bribed Iraqis to within a kilometer of the border and then walked out. Apparently the Saudis, and he met the American consular officer who was there, and in some exchange said, oh, yes, they can find a job in Dhahran. Well, he got to Dhahran and ARAMCO did not care to employ him. And we had no way of employing him as an American citizen. He was very angry because he expected to move from a job in Kuwait to a job in Dhahran, seamlessly. Apparently his employer who employed him in Kuwait did not have a presence in Dhahran. So we just said, "Your choices are to go back to the United States by military aircraft or by civilian aircraft. But that's it." He was very upset. When he got back to the States, he continued to being upset, saying he'd been promised a job by the Saudis, or Americans or somebody. I never did get the whole story. Anyway, I wrote it up, I had the officer write it up. They had said they were leaving via Jeddah, so we've got to get this out by tomorrow. And then I rejoined the group via the military, and I found the lady and said, "Look this is what was going on during deployment." She said, "I don't want to talk to you. I've talked to the ambassador about this and I don't want to hear from you." That's the last I saw of her. So I thought, I'll latch onto a couple of Congressmen. I showed them around as we went to the deployed forces. We went to the briefings by local commanders. I later heard that through her influence on the Foreign Affairs Committee she became a deputy assistant secretary of state. But we'll let that go.

*Q: Who was it?*

STAMMERMAN: I can't remember her name right now, but I heard she became a DAS. She was just obnoxious. We had little things like that. But I have to say that most of the congressmen and senators who came through, they were all serious, there were a few who were simply getting their pictures taken and that was it. There was only one group, and they were the House Appropriations Subcommittee- (end of tape)

We were talking about [how] the congressional subcommittee shows up and I think they were appropriations or whatever. They were on the money side, in charge of Foreign Service housing, which of course made all the admin people perk up. And they came out with spouses. They were the ONLY subcommittee that came out with spouses. It was a standing rule... no spouses. Military didn't have spouses deployed. Foreign service did, because our rule was... we had voluntary departure... if an American spouse chose to leave, she was gone for the duration of the Desert Shield emergency. If she stayed, she stayed, if she was already there. He or she, but in this case they were all she. No military spouses were allowed in at all. So this bringing spouses along by the congressmen was considered very bad form to say the very least. And they were a pretty useless group. I took them on a bus tour of Dhahran. I took them out to see a unit that had some people from their districts. I'd go around the compound so they could see our housing. They just wanted to see it from the outside. It was very obvious they just wanted an excuse to get to the Eastern Province, get their pictures taken with the soldiers. The rest of the groups were serious, I'd say, in general. They listened, asked good questions. Congressman Hamilton, for example.

*Q: Lee Hamilton.*

STAMMERMAN: Lee Hamilton, whom I know. I'll say more about him later. After Desert Shield/Desert Storm I met him back in Washington. He's from the district directly opposite Louisville, which is my home town. So I saw him. We had a good chat, sort of privately at the time. We also had the Senator from New Jersey. I'm almost sure I mentioned earlier, showed up in Dhahran before the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne showed up. He'd come over despite the State Department's objections. He's a very rich man, he just came on his own. He came back later as part of a group of senate leadership visit, and introduced me to the various other senators. He introduced me to the senator who later became the Democratic Party Vice Presidential nominee, from Connecticut.

*Q: Lieberman.*

STAMMERMAN: He introduced me to Senator Lieberman when they arrived. They arrived on military aircraft and I met them out on the tarmac, and Senator Lautenberg told Senator Lieberman, Oh, Ken served in Israel, and he speaks Hebrew. And of course, Senator Lieberman speaks Hebrew. So we had a little chat in Hebrew on the tarmac of the Saudi airbase, which I thought was a first. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: But they were all, and Senator Dole and their group, were all very serious people. This was sort of interrupting, but it served a good purpose, it was very educational.

*Q: Yes, it's one of those things that is often overlooked. The Foreign Service gripes about congressional delegations, but in the long run, it's the one chance you really get to educate people about the complexities of what we are dealing with. It's a splendid opportunity.*

STAMMERMAN: Splendid opportunity. And I think we did some good, especially this time. I will also say as an aside, after all this was over, after I retired from the Foreign Service, there was a major debate within AFSA, the American Foreign Service Association, over CODELs, over what our association should say on the subject of congressional delegations. This was when CODELs became very unpopular, were considered to be junkets. There was an anti-junket movement in the U.S. Senate for a while. Many people in AFSA were, unfortunately, I think, talking to the press and saying that CODELs were nothing but junkets. Where Ambassador Atherton, as part of his discussion online, this was a computer online discussion, and I both said, "Hey, these are great educational opportunities, and we don't have a constituency so we ought to make one among the Congress." But that's, as you say, you get different opinions within the Foreign Service.

Back to what was happening there. As the deployment went on, you saw more and more American soldiers in public around in the Eastern Province. We had originally an arrangement with the U.S. military, some ground rules. The U.S. soldiers would not carry weapons in Saudi urban areas. By December, that had fallen by the wayside. So we had American soldiers heavily armed, just going to restaurants. But the Saudis okayed it. They understood. So I can say that throughout the deployment, in the Eastern Province, we had no incidents that I am aware of, of any trouble between American service people and Saudis. On the contrary, the Saudis went out of their way to make them feel at home. ARAMCO's attitude... ARAMCO had this Take-A-Soldier-to-Dinner program that went on and on. Our main problem with them was alcohol. We eventually laid down a rule... a soldier has to be returned to his unit in the same condition he was delivered: sober. We had American soldiers, the stevedore unit, at Dhahran port. Fascinating bunch of people, mostly women. Mostly women who were moving these large cargoes off of U.S. ships. Weapons... Their main complaint, and we would hear this because again, at these monthly businessmen's meetings we would always make sure various units were invited. And I got to know a lot of rec associations and try to put on outings. Their main complaint was showers, they had these outdoor showers that were just ramshackle things the military would put together. It was awful hot besides. So, Patty would have these evenings where she would invite people over, especially these women from the stevedore unit, and they would get in our bathroom and close the door and just stay, until somebody knocked, banged on the door and said, "Please let us in, we're missing the luxury of an American bathroom." Communal showers and all that, out on the docks, were not their thing.

Well, this whole deployment was a great educational opportunity, we had lots of things going on. My staff built up. I mentioned earlier that we were trying to get more security personnel from the State Department with no success. Finally I did get somebody who was attached to my staff, from the State Department's SY, who was a former Special Forces officer. He volunteered to come out, over the objections of his immediate superior, which I understand cost him later with



his career development. He joined my staff to be political-military liaison officer. He would go to General Pagonis' staff meetings, and any other military staff meetings, like the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne staff meetings. He made contacts.

*Q: Who was this?*

STAMMERMAN: I don't remember his name. He didn't last long, it turned out. General Schwarzkopf was invited in October to visit the Saudi military headquarters in the Eastern Province. He had not called on the Emir yet, Prince Mohammad bin Fahd. So, we took the occasion, we, the embassy military command, to have General Schwarzkopf call on the Emir Mohammad, Prince Mohammed. Which he did. It was a nice meeting. The way it worked, though, the military showed up at the consulate compound and we formed one of these long caravans of cars, all secured of course.

When Schwarzkopf showed up, he showed up with lots of people. This may have been the first time he showed up in Dhahran outside the airbase. Of course, General Pagonis knew his way around, we called the head of the Saudi military, a general officer, of the Eastern Province, and the internal security of the Saudis, we all went out to the airbase to meet General Schwarzkopf. He was supposed to arrive at say, 10 o'clock, at 9:30 a light plane arrives, U.S. Air Force type light plane, which is the kind General Schwarzkopf would be on, arrives, and General Pagonis and I look at each other and say, is he early? Because the Saudis had not all shown up. Well, it wasn't, it was his advance security. Guys wearing what we always called Banana Republic outfits. In civilian, really. They'd wear an Army hat, but they'd wear these vests, heavy vests, with all kinds of weaponry attached, with a big gun. He got out beside his plane and just stood there.

So the General and I kind of looked at each other and walked over to the guy and said, "Who are you?" He just muttered, "I'm General Schwarzkopf's security." "Okay, we are going to meet him." "Oh, okay." We just stood there and the guy just stood there the whole time. We thought it strange, since around the airbase, you are inside the perimeter, so what do you need a bodyguard for? We didn't have bodyguards. I never did have a bodyguard, by the way. Nor did General Pagonis. So General Schwarzkopf showed up and then his armored car showed up. We went over to see the Prince. We had a lead car who knew the way, supposedly, a car full of guards, then General Schwarzkopf's armored vehicle, and then a follow car for General Schwarzkopf, and there was another car, staffers or something, and then us, in my car, which was armored. Oh, I got an armored car out of the process. I have to say this. My car, which I'd been complaining about for years, it was always tearing out the clutch and wearing out the transmission and everything else, we got a new armored car. Mine was several years older, due for being replaced. We got one that was supposed to go to the consul general in Marseilles, and they diverted it to Dhahran. It's a nice thing, we got a new car out of it. Anyway, back to the procession, then there was somebody behind us.

So we all went tearing off from the consulate general, they came by the consulate general to pick me up. We all went tearing off through Khobar through Dammam, to the Prince's palace, which is at the other end of Dammam. All this at 60 miles an hour. The Saudis knew we were coming, so they cleared the streets and they'd worked this out... they had motorcycle cops with sirens. My

SY guy helped me out as a military liaison, was sitting in the front seat. My little Yemeni driver was driving. He was a wonderful driver, took wonderful care of the car. He'd been trained, of course, in security driving, and I trusted that. But he knew the car by then, and he did not like this idea of driving 10 feet behind the car in front of you at 60 miles an hour, as the military do, this high-speed security stuff. Besides, we are going through Khobar and Dammam, which are safe. So, he gave, of course, two car lengths, which meant we were not a tight unit like security likes.

So, we went over and saw the Emir. The meeting went fine. There was introductions, everybody shook hands, said nice words, the usual drill. We got back in the car, and the American SY guy says, I'm going to drive. This guy who had been attached to my staff as my military liaison from SY. He told my driver, you're not doing it right. I'll show you how to do it. So we went tearing off into the desert, I'm in the back seat, my driver is in the front right seat, and we've got this guy from SY driving, and we are 10 feet behind the car in front of us, or less, driving at 60 miles an hour through the desert. Going out to Saudi military headquarters.

So we arrive at Saudi military quarters and we slow down because it's a little village way out in the middle of nowhere. And we slow down, thank goodness, until we come to... We were going to have a luncheon, given by the Saudis, Saudi general staff. So we slowed down, which is good. Well the lead car unfortunately misses the turn to the banquet hall. It's a little U in front of the building, a U-shaped driveway. He misses it. So he stops. This is not smart when you are doing 30 miles an hour in heavily armored vehicles. So he stops, the car behind him slammed on its brakes, stops. General Schwarzkopf's car slammed on his brakes, stops. Skids a little then stops. The car behind him slammed on his brakes, stops. We didn't stop. We slammed our brakes of course, but being 10 feet behind the car in front of us and going 30 miles an hour, you don't stop terribly suddenly when you've got an armored car. So we hit the car in front of us, which hit the car in front of them, which hit General Schwarzkopf, which hit the car in front of them. The car behind us hit us. Nobody got hurt. We are all heavily armored anyway. Tap tap tap tap tap.

The Saudi general staff, meanwhile, was lined up watching this. [laughter] I'm trying to look ahead, and General Schwarzkopf gets out of his car. He is red faced. General Schwarzkopf has a temper that is legendary. He gets out of his car, he's red-faced, he's obviously ready to hang whoever hit the car. Meanwhile, he looks up and sees the Saudi general staff. They are bent over double laughing. They think this is the funniest thing they've ever seen. This is Saudi humor, really, Saudi humor is very slapstick humor. They are bent over double laughing and pointing. General Pagonis who had driven ahead during the meeting with the Emir and is standing up with them, he turns and walks away with his face red, because I can tell he's about ready to burst out laughing as well. General Schwarzkopf then sort of bites his lip and says nothing. I got out of the car, hey, I wasn't driving, and went over to the Saudis and melded into the general population. My driver, who is again a former Special Forces guy, disappears. Never seen again that day. [laughter] My driver then became my driver for the rest of the day. And the Special Forces guy shortly thereafter left the country, I suppose because he was unwelcome by anybody in the military. Nice guy. We chatted together after he left. It was none of my doing, he just decided he better leave. He was replaced by an officer who had been on our staff in Iraq, who helped evacuate the American Embassy from Kuwait. The officer was named Melvin Ang, who turned out... he was a first-rate officer. He was a great help. He became my liaison to the deployed

military units. That was one incident.

The other major incident at the time, there were several incidents that may come to mind. I'll mention this one and then one having to do with the Marines. President Bush came out to visit the forces for Thanksgiving dinner. This was a major event, of course. It meant pulling resources from all over Saudi Arabia. The White House sent out an advance team. The U.S. military essentially staffed the operation, provided staffing in terms of vehicles, facilities, helicopters, whatever the White House advance staff wanted, they got from the military. General Schwarzkopf designated a two-star general to be in charge of the visit. A good man, he knew his stuff.

I went out to meet the advance team with my admin officer. There were two team leaders, this guy in charge, and his deputy. They were thoroughly obnoxious people. They were private sector executives, detailed to the White House staff is what they were. And they made themselves obnoxious immediately by berating my admin officer about why didn't he have what essentially would have been a full-fledged White House staffing office ready for them on arrival. They need this, they need that, they need this many typewriters, this many whatevers. My guy said, we don't have it, we don't have it. Well, you should, you should. It's a managerial technique to belittle the man. Eventually, we agreed that we would detail a Foreign Service secretary to their staff. The rest of their staff would be White House people coming out. They'd be out there the next day anyway, and the U.S. military would back them up. We went to the same palace complex that the Kuwaitis had been in. This is also where the congressional people had been put up, had been using as a rest stop during the day, so I knew the guy that ran it. And this White House guy made himself further obnoxious by demanding things from the Saudis. He wanted to be treated like a prince. He wanted the best suite in the place. The Saudis went along with it, they said, it's White House after all.

We were then asked to come back the next day for a security briefing. The RSO from embassy Riyadh showed up to brief the White House staff who had come out. These two team leaders and a couple of their staffers who had shown up by then. They wanted a briefing about the current security situation in the Eastern Province. The RSO gave the brief, and I followed with a few words. And they said, tell us the real story. And we said, we've told you the real story. The deputy on the White House staff said, "Well look, we've had THE briefing." I said "Yes, well, you got another briefing." He said, "By the AGENCY," I said, "Okay." He said "Well, we've heard about the threat of poison gas, we've heard about the threat of SCUDS, we've heard about all these threats." I said, "Okay, well, we've told you what our threat analysis is. You really don't have a lot to worry about now. And certainly not you. And when the President deploys, I'm sure he will be secure, but what the RSO has said is our assessment."

And this deputy persisted, and he was shaking. He was frightened, he was truly frightened. He said "Look, our lives are threatened out here. I want to know where is the helicopter that will get us out of here. I want to know my place on the helicopter. Show me your evacuation scheme." The RSO just laughed, and said, "Oh, come on. If we have to bug out, we've got hundreds of thousands of military personnel here. We've got helicopters by the ton. If for some reason we have to bug out, we just hop on a helicopter and get out of here." And again, this guy says, "Well, again, where do I go, which helipad do I go to on the compound?" At that, the RSO

laughed and said, "You got to be kidding." The deputy stormed out and said, "I'm putting you on report. I'm calling the White House right now."

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: And this guy persisted, until the President came and went. Every time I'd see him, he was shaking, he was frightened. But it was an ambition thing for him, he didn't want to leave. He was convinced...

*Q: What was his position?*

STAMMERMAN: He was deputy head of the advance team for the President's visit. So we had the one guy, the head of the advance team who was simply obnoxious. And the second guy was nervous.

*Q: Coward.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] To use diplomatic language.*

STAMMERMAN: Diplomatic language. Coward. I don't know if that affected the RSO or not. I simply don't know. The White House man was angry. Another incident along that line happened. As I mentioned earlier, the secretary, I suggested the Foreign Service secretary, Barbara, on my staff, be the one detailed to work with these people because she was super efficient. She was an excellent secretary. The other Foreign Service secretary was quite good but had some health problems. So I didn't want to have her over there if, she had asthma, you never know if something would happen. So Barbara was over there working, and she was quite good. I had no complaints at all about her. I went over there one evening, shortly before the President's arrival. We'd been working out the President's schedule, and David Dunford and I had gone out with the team. We'd flown around in helicopters all throughout the Eastern desert about getting good photo ops [opportunities] where the President would be, and setting up the President's minute-by-minute schedule. And this one evening, there was this argument going among the White House staff. We weren't part of it, but were present for it. The military members of the White House staff, these were not military deployed member, just somebody on the White House staff, military, and civilian members were arguing over how much time the President would spend with certain military units. Front line, whether he'd spend more time at the Thanksgiving dinner, which was in one place, or with the front line unit, or out to the aircraft carrier. And this military staffer said, and I was sitting there talking to Barbara, the secretary, said, "Look, thousands of these men are going to die. They should have the opportunity to see their commander-in-chief." At that point, my secretary, who had a son who would be in the first wave going in, turned white, and got up and walked out of the room. Of course, I got up and ran after her. She just broke down and cried and cried and cried and cried. I said, "Barbara, this guy does not know what he's talking about. Believe me. I know the Iraqis. Nothing's going to happen to your son." This took a while, I talked to her and finally calmed her down. She was a real trooper, and after a while she went back in and got back to work. After a while, somebody told the guy, "Hey, by the way..."

and he apologized. It was one of those unfortunate things.

*Q: White House support staff are trying to prove their way, and they create so much ill will. It's unfortunate.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. The White House secretary was quite good. They deployed a secretary who was very good. She worked very closely with Barbara and I would go over and chat. But the White House aides were not, or worse. Anyway, the visit went off okay, as it turned out. One of the interesting side events was that there was a discussion about what Mrs. Bush would wear. We worked it out at the embassy, I had asked Chas Freeman and he said, "She should just wear BDUs." Battle Dress Uniforms. Because the problem would be an American civilian woman in the Eastern Province, what should she wear. How much attention to American customs, or Saudi modesty codes or whatever. Well, the easy way to trump the whole thing was to have her come in uniform. And it worked. The Saudis were quite happy. They said, "Good, it gets rid of the problem."

I will say another interesting event involved a marine. I would have this senior Marine general, General Boomer, head of their expeditionary force, to dinner every so often. He would come down to my house. And I mentioned that I occasionally would go up to the border to talk to the Kuwaitis. The Kuwaitis had a listening station at the border. They'd interview Kuwaitis who were in the border region, either escaping or running people across the border. The Saudis simply had a border police unit at the border, and there was a no man's land just about a kilometer between the Saudi unit and the former Kuwaiti unit now occupied by the Iraqis. I said, "I go up there occasionally." He said, "Really! I'd really like to see that." Because the Marines were not deployed near the border. The Saudis occupied that area. But the Marines would eventually have to invade through that area if they were going to go North. So I said, "If you want to come visit sometime, be my guest." He said, "Great." So I called him next time I was going to the border with one of the political officers from the embassy. We picked him up inside his fortress. The Marines had occupied a port north of Dhahran called Jubail. I went in through all manner of security, guards and Marines in battle uniform. And got in to see him. He was dressed in civilian clothes. I'd said, "You have to be dressed in civilian because you are going in our car. If you go by military you can make the arrangements with Saudi military; if you go with me, you are civilian." He said, "Fine." I got to his office and his bodyguard driver was with him. And his driver said, "Can I carry my weapon?" I said, "No. Not in my car you can't."

I should say, as an aside, much earlier General Pagonis had asked could he station military units inside the consulate general. I said, "No, we're a diplomatic property, we do not have deployed U.S. forces, we have Marine guards for security, but deployed forces are not within diplomatic property." We didn't want to compromise diplomatic status. Which he understood perfectly well once I explained it.

But I said to the bodyguard, "No weapons, but you can come along, fine." So it turned out that the general and I got in the back seat, and his bodyguard, without arms, extremely nervous man was up front, because again, it's his responsibility. The general's safety is his responsibility. We all went up and went right through the Saudi lines, through Saudi security. They saw me, saw the flag, and waived us through. Went up and we had a long talk with the Kuwaiti people who were

listening, and we walked right up to the Saudi border and had tea with Saudi border guards who, they would still process refugees. The Iraqis were encouraging Kuwaitis to flee, so that road was being used. The Saudi border guards would just process them in. So we walked up and had tea with them, and had an American Marine two-star or 3-star with me right there looking across the kilometer at Iraqi tanks. I'm sure if they knew we had a general there they'd WOW, but we just watched them and he took notes. That was fun. So that all went off well. It was just an interesting little experience of doing so. Later on, as we got closer to the American invasion of Kuwait and Iraq, that same CBS journalist that I'd mentioned earlier, disregarded, I'm told by the U.S. generals involved, disregarded their warnings to stay away from the border. He thought that meant the American military had something to hide. He went to the border and was captured by the Iraqis.

*Q: His name is Simon or something like that.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: I can remember talking to somebody who was saying, somebody in Kuwait, our ambassador in Kuwait, was saying he was asked to contact to see if they could get him out, and he said he did it with the greatest of reluctance. He was a son of a bitch to...*

STAMMERMAN: He may have been in Baghdad by then, because we had already evacuated Kuwait by then. I would have said the same thing. You probably would have heard it from me. He had been warned by the military. First he disappeared. I told the military, I hope we were not endangering any American soldiers looking for him while he was missing. The guy just thought the American military was lying to him and that there was something to be found up there. So he got captured by the Iraqis who were running patrols just like we were. The border's very ill-defined, so the Iraqis were running patrols.

Other adventures along the way... We had an American military unit called Civil Affairs Unit, which was then operating out of Fort Bragg, it's now a part of Special Forces. In those days it was attached to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne. They were our main working contact between all the U.S. units. I had a working relationship with Pagonis. We met each other at least once a week, or more often. The 82nd Airborne deputy commander would come over and he liked our cheeseburgers at our lunchroom, so I'd see the deputy commander of the 82nd Airborne, and we'd discuss what was happening. But for all the rest of the units, we had the Civil Affairs Unit. I would see them every once in a while. They'd take me out to see deployed units in the field. So I got to see know where a lot of our units were. I was not briefed about Desert Storm. Which leads to an interesting story.

*Q: I was wondering, just to capture the spirit of the times. Was it your feeling and the others that we were going to go in and that something was going to happen.*

STAMMERMAN: We didn't know. Our hope, certainly any time I had a chance to talk to anybody within the State Department... of course, I always let the ambassador talk to the senators and congressmen... our hope was, the sooner the better. I should mention another incident that just came to mind.

*Q: Wait a minute. [break in tape] You were saying...*

STAMMERMAN: I was talking about the Kuwaitis. A favorite theme of the American press was that the Kuwaitis were living high on the hog were happy to have the Americans come in and fight for them but were living in the fleshpots of Cairo and the United States, while the Americans were out there to liberate their homeland, and that therefore why should we endanger our boys' lives for these fatcats as it were. In the first place, I was in contact with Kuwaiti units. Their military is a very small group. There aren't very many Kuwaitis. There are 600,000 Kuwaitis in all the world. And they weren't well trained at all. But they were there.

They eventually ended up as advisors to our armed forces. They went in as interpreters. Plus, some of their air force escaped, fought their way out. There was an armored unit that fought its way out of Kuwait, just ahead of an Iraqi column that chased them across the border. That, by the way, was another reason why we...a lot of people were concerned about hot pursuit, because the Kuwaitis military personnel were still fleeing after all this, so there was a lot of concern about hot pursuit.

It must have been November or so, one of my main contacts within the Kuwaiti ruling family came to see me with a story. This man was a son-in-law of the Emir and an official of the oil company. I knew him well from my days in Kuwait. He was a young man, being a son-in-law of the Emir and a son of one of the major families. He's a Sabah, though not a part of the ruling branch. It's an interesting story. He had been in Kuwait. In Saudi Arabia some time earlier, he had been to the Emir in Taiz and said, "We need to find more about what's really going on." They were getting word out from their intelligence services and such, but they wanted someone from the family to see what was happening. So he, himself, had gone into Kuwait. The Diwaniyyas, that is the Kuwaiti extended family meetings were still going on, the Iraqis had not shut them down at that point. He went in and attended some of the Diwaniyyas of the families that were close to the Al Sabah to find out what was going on. What is the gossip? What are the Iraqis doing? He had been told by his family, by Kuwaiti intelligence, don't be in touch with the resistance, because if he went in like this and got caught, they might consider, hey, he couldn't tell them anything, that he was simply some hot shot kid off on a mission or something. But he did go to the families, and also wouldn't get to any of the families involved in resistance activities. So he went in and he came out and gave me a briefing on what was going on with the families and what the Iraqis were doing. He said the only time he felt he was in danger was he saw his car, his own personal car, being driven by a Palestinian. He went over and told the guy, hey that's my car. Then he realized, oops. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: Oops. Then he realized what he'd said and disappeared as quickly as he could. But his impression was the Palestinians were collaborating with the Iraqis, and that really bothered him and bothered the ruling family. It was not long after that that I told...Chas I assume also told the military because I passed this through Chas, Freeman, and David Dunford. We were hearing rumblings from the Kuwaitis, things like that and after Yasser Arafat showed up in Baghdad to embrace Saddam Hussein not long before the war, we passed the word to the U.S.

military to make sure that Kuwaiti units did not liberate Palestinian neighborhoods. We were worried about retaliation, massacres, so when liberation happened, it was American military and Egyptians who liberated Palestinian neighborhoods.

*Q: Oh.*

STAMMERMAN: The Kuwaitis then expelled the Palestinians en masse, there were something like 300,000 Palestinians in that country. They deported them by lifting their work permits, all but a few. But there were no massacres. We were worried that there would be. We did not want another Tel-a-Zaatar (in Beirut, where Christian militia massacred Palestinians) or Sabra/Chetilla. We didn't want anything like that. So the Kuwaitis did not liberate those neighborhoods. The American military made sure they didn't. Anyway, this Kuwaiti debriefed me and I reported it all. It was very helpful for him to do this for me, to brief me. He had ways in and ways out. It confirmed everything we were hearing about the Iraqis, that they were having a very brutal occupation.

*Q: Were you getting anything from your American military contacts or anything about the Iraqi army and Iraqi military system, which turned out under intensive bombing and all, to be a paper tiger. Were you getting any of that?*

STAMMERMAN: Sure. Every time we'd take the senators and congressmen around, and even when I'd talk to the local commanders or whatever, that when they'd do the briefing, they always showed these Iraqi forces at full strength. I would tell General Pagonis, I'm not a military man, but I would tell anybody I knew, including the 82nd Airborne when they first showed up, that these guys even at full strength they ain't much. As Melvin Ang who got out with, eventually got on my staff, helping Embassy Baghdad evacuate Embassy Kuwait. We just said, these guys are terrible fighters, and your main problem is going to be POW camps. Except for the Republican Guards, we always said be cautious, the Republican Guard will fight because they have to. If Saddam goes, they're all dead, they'll be lynched, en masse, if they are in Shia territory. But anybody else, all these poor Shia fighters in the Iraqi army, they're cannon fodder. Sad, we're going to have to kill a bunch of them. They'll be shot if they try to defect, and if they're in front of us we'll have to kill them. That's too bad.

Then, after Thanksgiving, we were all inspired by the American military good people. The American press was obnoxious, the press would accompany the senators and congressmen which always gave the press the opportunities to grill American military personnel, at the lieutenant, captain, colonel level. There were always questions... There was something in "Doonesbury" about this... it was a caricature of what was going on, things almost to the point of "What is it the Iraqis should know to shoot this plane down that which we're worried they might find out? What are the vulnerabilities, what are you worried, colonel, what are your vulnerabilities?" And he'd turn to the press liaison with him, and "Well can I..." "Don't talk to him, you're interfering with us." It was that blatant. "How's your morale? Are you worried you are going to get wiped out by poison gas?" "Well..." And soon the military press liaison would interrupt, "Look," then the press would say, "You're interfering with us. Shut up." It was silly. They were aggressive. They were not... they don't have to be with the program, but they shouldn't... the journalists were all trying to make a name for themselves after screwing up the press role in Vietnam. They wanted



to be THE reporter who cautioned them that we were going to get wiped out, and were shut up by the American military. So they were generally obnoxious all around.

There were a few that... were some American press people... I would brief them off the record, so there were a lot of things that would be a diplomatic source in the Eastern Province, and that was always me, because there are only two diplomatic groups in the Eastern Province, the Americans and Brits. So I would say, I would brief them mostly on oil, and on the al-Saud family, or the Kuwaitis, if they wanted to know that. I couldn't brief them on the military because I didn't know anything about it. But I would brief them on that and occasionally, people like Christiane Amanpour would show up. I did have one brief by a CBS guy. Funniest thing. He was a CBS news guy... he was the CBS News White House guy, then with ABC. I can't think of his name right now, he later became ABC Sunday with Kuralt and the lady. Balding guy from Arizona or New Mexico. He had been very aggressive when Nixon was in the White House. He was the very aggressive CBS reporter trying to nail Nixon. Good man. He'd gone up near the border right before the war began. The Iraqis shelled some Saudi installations. They shelled something called the Arabian Oil Company and started a fire. The Arabian Oil Company, as it turns out, was a Japanese managed firm just inside the Saudi border. They are property that is jointly owned by the Kuwaitis and Saudi Arabian... so called neutral zone. Well the Iraqis shelled this thing, and it was burning. This guy did a standup up there, saying, "This is what the war is all about. This is a Saudi ARAMCO installation burning as Saudis flee." And he came down to my consulate general and came in to see me, and I briefed him. I said, "You got it wrong. I'd seen this on TV, and said you got it wrong. A) it's not a Saudi installation, it's a Japanese installation; and in second place, those weren't Saudis running, those were Japanese." He laughed and said, "Oh, no I'm wrong." He said, "Would you like to go on camera? I'll make you famous." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter] (end of tape)*

STAMMERMAN: So we were talking about deployment of U.S. forces and what's going on during Desert Shield. There were various events. I'd meet various military officers and we'd brief them. My staff was of course meeting military people all the time. There was a lot of feedback... again I had problems within the consulate, a lot of feedback with concern over chemical warfare. Because the U.S. military by and large were saying that they were briefed that there will be chemical weapons used against American forces. Therefore, my staff wanted to know why we didn't have gas masks. My understanding with the embassy was, at the time, that if we really truly believed there would be chemical weapons, or bio weapons, but chemical weapons were the ones were about here, if we really truly believed that there would be chemical weapons used against American civilians in Eastern Province, we would get out. We would simply shut down. We would call for evacuation. Gas masks do not work. They would not be enough to defend us against nerve gas, skin contact. I remained convinced, even though the military by this point, by my friend General Pagonis, when I'd say this around him he would raise his eyebrows and shook his head. He really was worried that Dhahran would get hit with SCUDS, with chemical weapon warheads. I was saying they wouldn't dare. Saddam wouldn't dare.

*Q: What would possibly cause him to be concerned?*

STAMMERMAN: I was convinced, and this was from my days in Kuwait where I watched the Iran-Iraq war go on and on and on until it finally ended when by accident the Americans shot down an Iranian airplane, and the Iranians said the Americans will stop at nothing. The Iraqis know that if they used weapons of mass destruction against us that we would kill anybody. We would not stop. They believe it, we would not stop. I was convinced, and I said, "Look if Saddam uses nerve gas against American citizens we will kill him. The man has no morals, no conscience. He does have a lot of interest in self-preservation. He will not kill American civilians." I was convinced of it. I was not worried about my life, but the other Americans said "You are betting our lives too." But I said, "Yes but I know more about it than you do."

So that was a running source of tension within the consulate. I should also mention along the way, this led to what I thought was unprincipled guerilla warfare by another agency against one of my officers who was backing me up. Unprincipled as in, they accused him of essentially criminal behavior involving visas.

*Q: Who was...*

STAMMERMAN: They accused him.

*Q: Who accused him?*

STAMMERMAN: Another agency person accused an American officer of criminal behavior involving visas. I'm convinced it was a personality conflict that led to that. Because their source, it was not something they knew, it was indirect through Americans who really didn't like us. I'd said, when I was told of this by the ambassador, it's not true. I was convinced it wasn't true. I knew the guy, full confidence in his character. Later he was interrogated intensively by SY and the State Department, and they never did find anything. I was convinced there was nothing there. I'm convinced there were American civilians in Dhahran, non-government people, who were unhappy with us who passed word through their contacts to somebody inside another agency, who then passed it on as if it were known. I don't know. One never knows what's behind those...

*Q: The accusation was what exactly?*

STAMMERMAN: Was providing the visas in exchange for sexual favors.

*Q: Oh. I can't think of Saudi Arabia being a particularly good grounds, good area to play that game.*

STAMMERMAN: No, it's not. But we had third country nationals who'd come through. That would happen. And there were third country nationals who were maids and so on in Saudi homes. Anyway, I knew it wasn't true and it wasn't. He's gone on to have an excellent career in the State Department.

*Q: As a professional consular officer myself, I know this is always a problem. That when in doubt you can levy this charge for cash, either one. And it's very hard to disprove, and it feeds a*

*natural suspicion of somebody who has the power of judgment.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. This accusation was relayed to me.

*Q: I take it that you weren't particularly happy with the other agency at your consulate. Is this correct?*

STAMMERMAN: That is correct. We had very little to do with each other at a certain point. When I was in Riyadh, I would talk to the head of that agency. We had an excellent relationship, it turned out. He would ask me in great detail about Kuwait, about the government, how it works, and about the Eastern Province. He seemed to be very well informed. He's the only other person I knew from that agency. After this thing came up, I said, "Don't ever do that without telling me. Don't go to... have somebody tell me. Don't have the ambassador spring this on me." After that, that's the last I heard of it. Anyway, the guy has gone on to have an excellent career. I didn't believe it was true anyway.

There were a lot of tensions going on, and I understood why people were behaving strangely, they were under a lot of pressure.

*Q: How was your wife doing during this?*

STAMMERMAN: Oh, Patty. She ended up with an award for volunteering, by the way. She was hanging on, she was doing very well. She hung on very well, she was very supportive, but she was organizing community events. She was hosting things like the American Women's Group, which dissolved as most spouses left. We ended up keeping their records, all their records of many, many years were moved to the consulate. In terms of school liaison, she would go to the school a lot, and then she started serving dinners. As we got closer to the war, we had to have 24-hour presence at the consulate, and we did at first after the invasion, but then it sort of faded back to on-call after the midnight hours. But then we started going on 18-hour shifts almost, and somebody would cover the other 6. And she would have the household staff cook meals and bring them down so we would stay on the job and eat. So, Patty was extremely supportive, and everybody thought she was a very lovable person. She passed away last year, by the way, I don't know if that's on my previous tape... Everybody who knew her loved her and still do. When I've gone back to Dhahran in the years since, they always asked about her. She really lifted morale, and eventually she got this award from the Secretary of State for volunteering. It was very nice.

As we got toward the time of Desert Storm, we updated our evacuation procedures. Now, this was always an ongoing thing. If we have to bug out, how do we get out. As the profiles of the American military units in the neighborhood changed, we got to keep changing our procedures. So I had it worked out with ARAMCO where the Americans who wanted to be evacuated would deploy on the ARAMCO compound. We had another assembly spot inside Khobar for the Americans living in that area. The Americans would assemble at the school at ARAMCO, the Americans would assemble at an auditorium in Khobar, and we would have trucks and helicopters to get them out. The main concern then was not that we would have large numbers of Iraqis invading, but that we might have air strikes. We might have heavy SCUD bombardment. Who knows. But you've got to keep it updated.

So we would have meetings with ARAMCO management, Saudis and Americans, and with the American military. There's one wonderful meeting that I remember to this day. We had it after my staff meeting at the Consulate General. This sort of illustrates certain points of view. We had the 82nd Airborne guys there, we had people from the Civilian Affairs Unit of the U.S. military, we had people from the 22<sup>nd</sup> Support Command general's staff, because he's logistics but he's also the senior American military commander in the Dhahran district. And we were all sitting around this table talking about evacuation procedures and what happens if the war starts. This would have been probably December and the air war started in January. My admin officer raises a question, because he's been in East Asia before and there are a lot of Asians who live in the Dhahran area, the Khobar area, Dammam. In other evacuations, from other countries, you'd have non-Americans, that is third country nationals who were not on our staff who would rush, come into the American compound, would come to the evacuation area and try to get on American helicopters, try to get on American trucks to escape. At some point in evacuations, we'd often bring everybody into the American consulate or embassy compound where you could then air lift them out. That's how it was in those days. I assume now everything's changed.

And he said, "Well what happens if we're in there and we've got American civilians in our compound being evacuated, and all these south or east Asians decided to rush, run onto the compound?" I said, "Oh, the Saudi National Guard will shoot them." And the U.S. military is sitting around the table nodding, yes, yes, that's what they will do. And my administrative officer turned to me and said, "Ken, you wouldn't let that happen, would you?" I said, "Watch me. Of course we would. That's between the Saudis and the third country nationals. I'm worried about what happens inside my compound. Whatever force the Saudis need to do to keep it orderly, that's fine by me." And he just shook his head like, "Ken you wouldn't let them do this." I said, "Of course I would." That was a funny exchange. Our military agreed with me, but some on my staff just did not understand.

Anyway, as we proceed then... your question was about Saddam. Why was I convinced that Saddam was not going to use poison gas, nerve gas, whatever. As we got near the start of the war around January the 6<sup>th</sup> or so, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, that last week. The war started January 15<sup>th</sup>, the air war, actually more on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The defense secretary, now Vice President Cheney, came out to the Eastern Province. Came with, General, now Secretary, Powell. The two of them came and went around to visit all the forces. I went with them, as did Melvin Ang, Chas wasn't on that visit... because they were going out to see the units. So we went along. First thing, Cheney arrived to do a press conference. Somebody asked the question, I don't know if it was planned, "Are you worried about Saddam using weapons of mass destruction against Dhahran?" And his reply was, "If the enemy uses weapons of mass destruction against civilians, against population centers..." I don't know the exact words, but along those lines... "We will hold them personally responsible. We will respond in kind."

Now, the assumption throughout the Eastern Province was we were threatening nuclear retaliation. Because that's the only weapons of mass destruction we have and have used in the past. And the Iraqis I'm sure were nervous about that. And he said, and we will hold Saddam personally responsible. At that point, I was sure Saddam would not use weapons of mass destruction.

*Q: You know, in interviewing Bill Brown, who was our ambassador in Israel, when things heated up, was saying that they were convinced that if the Iraqis had ever used chemical weapons that Baghdad would still be glowing now.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. I was convinced that the Israelis would nuke them if provoked. I had lived in Israel, I was sure the Israelis were willing and able to use nukes, if that happened. If you start gassing Jews in Tel Aviv... But at the same time, our threat, which Cheney said very clearly, was enough that I was convinced Iraq was not going to use them. But there was a very interesting incident - and then I want to get to gas masks - in the Eastern Province at that time. As we went around with now Vice President Dick Cheney, then secretary Cheney, and General Powell, we went to the various units and they did their dog and pony show and pulled out the charts and tap tap tap. And I'd seen these with the congressmen and senators... We got up to one of the units, it may well have been the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne... I'm not sure. I know there were 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne personnel around, so it was either the 101<sup>st</sup> or the 82<sup>nd</sup>. Art Hughes was there, he was on the trip of course. I don't know if General Schwarzkopf was there. Marine General Boomer was there.

*Q: Art Hughes being...*

STAMMERMAN: Being the CENTCOM political advisor a senior State Department guy attached to CENTCOM. And we got in to get the brief. We had chairs and we were sitting there. And I'd made myself noticed as we went along, I'd met the secretary of defense and I'd seen General Powell before. And they did their stand-ups and really revved up the troops, especially Powell. He was a very inspiring speaker. Usually he comes across very diplomatic and such. But in front of the troops, he just, "You're going to go out there and kill these units all the way to Baghdad." He was good. Cheney though was very soft spoken. So we are in this meeting and the officer who was giving the briefing starts to brief Desert Storm. I'm not cleared for Desert Storm. I'm State Department, not even an ambassador, and I've got a middle grade State Department officer with me. And this is military plans, which a) we're not cleared for, and b) we certainly shouldn't know about it. And I'm standing there until it dawns on me what we're seeing. And that point, Cheney looks a little uncomfortable and he sees me. And he calls Hughes over, whispers in his ear and points to me, makes a thumb movement, out of here. And Hughes walks over and says to me, "Ken you better leave." [laughter] So I grabbed Melvin and the two of us walked out. So I said, "We better watch out for these 82nd Airborne guys, they're liable to lock us up for the next several days." I told Melvin, "Don't tell anybody about this. This is really, really stuff we're not supposed to know." We didn't get that much, but we got enough to have a general idea of what was in store. Or sort of what the general idea was. So we walked out and waited until everybody showed up, got out of the meeting. Art walked over and said, "Ken, do you know what's going on?" I said, "Yes, I know what's going on." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: I said, "I went in there, but nobody told me not to go in. I just walked in with the group." He said, "Okay." There's no effect of it after that. I didn't tell anybody. But it was a funny incident. I can say I was the only... it was the only episode I personally got thrown out of a

meeting by Dick Cheney during Desert Shield.

*Q: Well, after the summit voted rather closely on yes, we would go all the way, what was the feeling, particularly with the civilians, your own feeling and the staff and ARAMCO.*

STAMMERMAN: Here's what happened. The real key was the meeting in Geneva. We all figured, the military, we all, civilians, everybody figured the Iraqis had their last chance. Secretary Baker was going to meet them in Geneva. The deadline's already set by the Americans and the Security Council, the 15<sup>th</sup> we're going to war. They had a last meeting in early January or sometime, and we were all watching that very closely. Now some of us, like me, like Mel, some of the others, were hoping, please don't let the Iraqis compromise. What if they offered to withdraw from the northern third of Kuwait. Aw, that would be it. We would not go to war. I'm convinced to this day that if they had offered to just take the oil fields and evacuate Kuwait City, that would have been it. That would have been terrible if that had happened because that would have left the army alive and threatening Saudi Arabia and would have put Iraq in charge as far as OPEC is concerned. But the Iraqis true to their stupidity refused to compromise at all. So, we're going to war. I thought, that's great.

*Q: Was there concern, we were picking up that... putting the American army, I mean it was a huge army, a half a million men...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: In Saudi Arabia, this couldn't last very long. We had to really do something, or we'd have to evacuate.*

STAMMERMAN: All manner of problems. It was not so much the Saudi civilians, at least not in the Eastern Province. They didn't mind. Quite happy. But in Riyadh, a lot of tension about it. We would hear rumblings out of Riyadh, but in addition the American military.

*Q: Yes.*

STAMMERMAN: They deployed as units. It wasn't like Vietnam where individuals came out back and forth. We had the entire unit, and we called up families and people left their kids behind, and the reserves were called up, and it was very hard to keep them deployed. Morale would have been declining.. they were all primed to fight. But they wanted to get there and do their job, and this is something they all told the press. "Well, what are you here for?" "I'm here to do my job. I want to go home. You bet I want to go home. But I'm going to do my job." The press wanted to hear something else. And so we all knew that these guys wanted to go home. Fine. We all, some of us anyway, said, "It's terrible what's going on in Kuwait." We've got to get the Iraqis out of there. So, yes, we wanted it to start soon. I'm told that, again, if you read the books, a lot of the military did not want to fight. And by the way, in the general scheme of things, it was State Department people, in my experience through this whole episode, who wanted the war to start. They wanted the war to start sooner rather than later. They definitely wanted to start it. The American generals did not want to fight. They were worried they didn't have enough forces. They were convinced they would take heavy losses, in terms of thousands of

men, people killed. We were arguing...

*Q: I've been interviewing Joe Wilson, who's our chargé in Baghdad at the time, who still feels very bitter about the testimony that the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, Admiral Crowe, made testimony in front of the Senate in the fall period. Stating that we should let sanctions do their job and all that. He felt that that strengthened Saddam Hussein's resolve that these Americans are not going to fight.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, and if one report in the book called, by the Washington Post reporter, Ju-

*Q: The Generals?*

STAMMERMAN: The Generals or something. It wasn't Generals, it was something like that. The Commanders

*Q: Something like that, it was a joint work, but it was by Woodward.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, if one is to believe that book, Colin Powell was on the side of people who did not want to go to war immediately. He wanted to give sanctions another six months. In another six months, I think we would have been lost. Morale would have plummeted, being out in the desert, the Saudi religious nuts might have gotten some leverage against us. As it was, in the Eastern Province, we had no trouble with the Saudis, they were behind us all the way. All the families, all the commercial people, everybody.

As we got closer to the war though, we... Within the consulate, we had some problems. A few of us, myself, Ang, the USIS guy, there weren't that many that were still there that I'd inherited, that were still there when deployment started. We were all saying that the important thing is we go to war and liberate Kuwait. It will be over soon, and we aren't in any particular danger. We should be prepared to evacuate Americans, because the war is going to happen. Others on the staff continued to be upset because they thought we were putting them in harm's way for no good reason. I'm talking about the State Department employees. There got to be this whole big thing about gas masks, which we kept arguing to the ARAMCO Americans, you don't need them. We don't have them. They thought we were lying. Many people thought we were lying. Maybe somebody on the staff did have gas masks, but we certainly didn't.

So then the Saudis started distributing gas masks to anybody who wanted them. We told the ARAMCO guys, "You want them? Take them. The consulate doesn't have any." But they didn't trust them. It was funny, somebody got me one of them... no they didn't get me a gas mask. They got me the kit that comes with it... the instructions are in Swedish. I thought it was hilarious. It serves them right. David Dunford came down from Riyadh, along with the senior army guy on biochemical weapons defense to brief the ARAMCO civilians, at their request. They wanted David to come down and wanted a briefing. We knew a lot of this because we had these regular monthly meetings with the American business community, so David Dunford, the DCM or else Chas would be there almost every month. And he'd brief them and said in general how you're not in much danger from incoming SCUDs. Even if they're loaded with chemical weapons,

unless they land on your head, the topography and geography of the Eastern Province is such that the small weight that the SCUD could throw, in those days, would just blow away in the desert. And would be so diluted before it hit any of us that we wouldn't have to worry. Of course, they didn't believe that either. They thought the U.S. Army, and I and Dunford were lying to them.

*Q: But the calculation was always there, that we wanted to keep the Americans... if risk wasn't too great, we wanted to keep the Americans there in order to keep the oil flowing. If the Americans went, the oil wouldn't flow.*

STAMMERMAN: That was my calculation. I don't know how explicit it was. I don't recall, for example, Chas Freeman ever saying that in so many words.

*Q: Well, I believe he said this...*

STAMMERMAN: I would say that to him in a staff meeting. But I don't know if we ever said that in any formal sense

*Q: No, it's not the sort of thing... Because it does begin to sound like, not a hostage situation, but of putting... people are in danger. But at the same time, if there is a situation, why not? It's a terrible thing to say. After all, everything's not just what can they do for me, but what can I do for them?*

STAMMERMAN: The Saudi management was very disappointed. They'd paid these people well. Princely sums, over years and years. And the Americans were ready to cut and run. The Saudis knew they were. So I kept good contact with the Saudi Arab management who, again, that was a source of concern among American employees of ARAMCO that I was playing games with the Saudis. As we move toward Desert Storm, there some interesting diplomatic and consular events going on. One was that the Irish came to see us. Yes. Remember, there were only two diplomatic groups in the Eastern Province. There was only one Consulate General, and one diplomatic presence. We had the Consulate General and there were the British. The Irish came in and said, look, if you are going to be evacuating people by American military transport, we'd like you to take our citizens as well. I said, really? Because, in general, the rule is we would take NATO and sort of divvy up with the British. We were in contact with the British diplomatic principal officer. The British would take the Aussies, we would take the Canadians. These are people working for ARAMCO. So the Irish came to me and I replied... well in the first place, my mother's name was O'Leary, in the second place, I'll pass the request up the line. So I called the ops [operations] center, I called the embassy and talked to the head of the consular section, I called the ops center to check with them, then CA, Consular Affairs in the State Department, and said, "Can we do it?" And they came back, "Sure, but we need one of their officers on our staff because we don't know what Irish passports look like. We don't want to be evacuating people that don't belong." So I called the Irish consul and said, "Okay, we can do it but you have to detail somebody to my staff." Which he did, along around January 15.

*Q: How many Irish were there, do you figure?*

STAMMERMAN: A couple hundred.



*Q: Oh, boy.*

STAMMERMAN: The nurses were all Irish.

*Q: Oh.*

STAMMERMAN: And some of the secretaries for ARAMCO. But the nurses were all Irish. They were always getting in trouble. Some of them were getting arrested for immoral behavior. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: Always when somebody got arrested, it was an Irish nurse. So I eventually had this Irish consular officer on my staff. And the same thing happened with the Canadians. Would we take the Canadians? Yes we would. Of course, after Teheran, sure we'd take Canadians. But I need a staffer, I don't know what a Canadian passport looks like. We did the same with the Japanese. We didn't need to with Japanese because what happened is, after the failure of the meeting in Geneva, the Japanese told their people to leave. So they left.

*Q: Well, they were right on the border anyway.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. The ones up on the border left. There were a few others, sort of contractor types for ARAMCO and they just left.

*Q: How about the Filipinos?*

STAMMERMAN: Ah, it varied. Actually their ambassador came down to talk to them. I met him because I'd been in Manila once upon a time. And they didn't offer their people any help. Sink or swim. That was it, it was too bad for them. And they didn't ask us, because the rule is, you pay your way out, and our flights are too expensive for Filipino laborers. We weren't flying anybody out for free. Even American citizens had to pay their way out. That's another sore spot by the way.

Also in early January, Pan Am, which was still in existence, announced that it was no longer flying to Saudi Arabia. Which made us rather unhappy, all the subsidies the U.S. government had given them over the years. And they backed out even before the war started. So at that point we knew we'd have to run an evacuation to get women and children out who wanted to get out. So we said, that's when we started working very seriously with ARAMCO on how to bring people on the compound, and setting up teams and everything. We also kept... There was this whole mess with the gas masks. Whole problem. Diplomatic exchange with the department, DOD, and everybody else about the gas masks.

The war started... I should keep going forward. I found out the war starts because I was called by the DCM, the 15<sup>th</sup> happens, and I was told I would get a message that would say when it starts because we wanted to make sure I was at the consulate in case people started calling in, instead

of being at the residence. I got a phone call at 2 o'clock in the morning or whenever it was on the 16<sup>th</sup>, because it was the 16<sup>th</sup> in Saudi Arabia when the war started, the 15<sup>th</sup> in the U.S.A. Of course, at that point, we kind of know something was up since every aircraft at Dhahran airbase had taken off and the place smelled of airplane fuel, kerosene, just everywhere. And I went up to the consulate. Nothing much happens, the war starts, everybody's watching TV, nothing happens at Dhahran.

Then, within the next few days, the Iraqi ambassador to Belgium says, we will react. At this point we were bombing the Iraqi positions, killing a lot of people, all on TV. Within a few days after the start of the air war, around the 19<sup>th</sup>, somewhere along there, of January, the Iraqis starting firing their SCUDs. One of the first ones went into Tel Aviv, actually Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv, and we had drills. The Saudis had set up sirens and everything. One came in to the Dhahran area. SCUD came in, met by Patriot missiles, after the SCUD had reentered the atmosphere.

One of my officers was out that the airbase, and she ran, so I hear... This is the strangest experience. She and one of the military press guys she was with ran toward the Dhahran airport hotel because there was a basement there. It was a shelter. They got there first, and there was a revolving door, and he was kind of making order and pushing people through. And two Saudi military ran up with their guns leveled at them, "Get out of the way." So he said they thought better of that and decided they better get inside. And they did. And the Saudis military apparently just broke the door in so people could walk through without revolving. Which was a good thing... they thought they were going to get shot though. So they went in and the sirens are going on and the Patriot missiles fired and they went down in the basement, and it was very weird because everybody else is wearing gas masks and she's not, because the American consulate doesn't have gas masks. She came back. She was pretty upset, arguing "What do you mean? Can't we get gas masks?"

What finally did it... we were holding off. We were fighting it. We said, "It's not going to get to the point that we need gas masks; this is crazy, if we need gas masks, we should evacuate." And then as I remember the sequence, the American ambassador to Bahrain somehow had access to American military stores. And he was under tremendous pressure same as we all were. So when the first SCUDs landed, he told the American civilian community in Bahrain that they could have U.S. military gas masks. And that left us in an impossible situation in Dhahran and in Riyadh.

So at that point, we went to the military and said we better get them. The State Department then went to DOD. The Defense Department sent out bunches of gas masks to us with the Political/Military part of State being the intermediaries. In the end, I thought the entire episode was amusing, since I knew, despite all the CNN-driven hysteria, that the Iraqis were not going to use chemical weapons against American civilians. I thought it was hilarious. Because I wasn't worried, I truly wasn't worried. Neither was Patty. We both... if something happens it happens. But I was not worried. I was convinced that I was God honest sure that there was not going to be any gas attack. I thought it was a silly, stupid, media-driven game going on, which, since nobody in the U.S. Government ever does a lessons-learned exercise, was played out again in the Gulf War of 2003. All this panic over weapons of mass destruction when the Iraqis, even if they had

them in 1990/1 or 2003, would not use them. But, to carry on the charade, the U.S. military in January 1991, then sent out a shipment of gas masks, care of the U.S. Consulate General in Dhahran. It was a big shipment of gas masks, hundreds of them. Enough to take care of American civilians who wanted them. We had an estimate that there were maybe 7,000 Americans still there... somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 Americans still there. There were 13,000 in the summer and we knew a lot of them had left.

Two days later, a senior guy at PM, a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Political/Military Bureau in the State Department, called me and said "Do you have your gas masks?" And I said, "I don't have any gas masks." He said, "Oh, we sent them." I said, "Where'd you send them?" He said, "We sent them to Dhahran to the Consulate General." I said, "How did you send them?" He said, "We sent them via the military transport system." I said, "Ahhh, you sent them via the military transport system. And where did you send them?" "To Dhahran airport." I said, "Ah." So I called up General Pagonis and said "What's the backup up out there in the unloading area?" He said, "Oh we've got a couple square miles of stuff stacked that's supposed to go to various units." Remember Desert Storm hadn't happened yet, only the air war. They were getting war materiel by the ton and deploying them to forward units. I said, "Somewhere out there, there is a shipment of gas masks for the American civilian population of the Eastern Province. Think you could find it?" He said, "I have no idea." [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: He said, "I'll detail somebody." So he sent out a lieutenant, to look at every shipment that had arrived in the last couple days trying to find these stupid gas masks. And it took a while. I called the guy from PM back and said, "We don't have the gas masks." He said, "What? You don't have the gas masks? We're under all kinds of pressure. Congressmen are calling, people are telling them to get gas masks out there." I said, "Let me tell you what the inventory looks like out at Dhahran airbase. We have square miles of stuff out there." He said, "Oh, no." [laughter] See, I was laughing, which really upset the DAS (generally, this is NOT a good career move, by the way). Because I wasn't that worried. I called up Chas Freeman and David Dunford. I said "You got a guy back at PM who is really upset. He started shouting at me, so I shouted back at him. He's some DAS, I don't know, I don't know who. So I shouted back, there's no way in the world I'd know where this stuff is." I called David Dunford who thought it was amusing. David was also fed up... my impression was that he was so completely fed up with American civilian population of the Eastern Province, that he shared my feeling that it sort of served them right in a way that their unneeded gas masks got lost.

So things went on for several days more with people screaming and panicking and finally I got a call from the airbase. They found our shipment. Not only did we have gas masks, we had capes, which you then make into a little tent to put over you if nerve gas falls on you. And so they shipped it over to us. I called ARAMCO and I also got hold of the military from the Civil Affairs Group to instruct civilians on how to put the masks on. I believed they had to set up a school, because of course you have to brief people on how to fit the masks; these are World War II vintage stuff. You got to put them together, they have little buttons, you got to fit them. Because if you don't fit them right, you'd suffocate. You got to be able to blow the filters out. Also you can't give them to kids. Kids will suffocate. As we found out. As the Israelis found out. Children

died out there. That's another thing we were worried about: people would die from the gas masks because it's not a riskless thing. It's like talking shots, a certain number of people are going to die because they can't blow the mask filter through.

So we set up a little school. A funny incident the night that this woman driver, God love her, she was an American military sergeant, delivered the masks and the capes. We were supposed to have two people in a truck if a U.S. military woman is driving, but she was driving herself, because they were really under tremendous personnel pressure in logistics, since their major push was to supply the front line units secretly deploying far to the west of the Iraqi army positions. She drove this big U.S. military truck to the consulate with crates of gas masks. Two of the crates for us. Gas masks and various other gear. They'd been bringing MREs to us all the while, by the way, we stored a LOT of MREs on the Consulate grounds just in case. When the driver arrived with her truck, we had people there, we had some of our FSNs in. We unloaded the crates. She had other crates. When she had her invoice out and I was signing off for our crates, she said, "You get those two crates." She's at the American Consulate General in Dhahran and she says, "This next crate's for the American Embassy in Qatar." Her next question was, "Where's that?" [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*

STAMMERMAN: She had planned to drive all the way to Qatar with her truck full of gas masks. She had her orders and she would have driven... If it had been ammunition, she would have driven up to the front lines. She was a very determined lady. [laughter] She was a wonderful lady. So I suggested that she better go back to her commanding officer and get directions. And she went back to the airbase.

*Q: Was there sort of a long panic line to get this?*

STAMMERMAN: Well, we announced it to ARAMCO, we said you could show up after you called in, we'd have these telephones manned on a 24-hour basis, and you'd get this appointment for a class. Because you had to take a class; we weren't handing them out unless you had a class. The odd thing was these guys all had gas masks by now, because they'd all gotten the Swedish stuff that ARAMCO was handing out. But they wanted, by gosh, American gas masks. The Swedish ones were these new-fangled kind with two filters in front and such. The American kind was very old, World War II things, that fit around your face, that you had to get adjusted, and punch buttons through the leather to make it tight, air tight. Then you had to screw the filter in and blow it out. Some of them were dirty as they'd been in storage for, maybe since World War II for all I knew. Mark II model which was really antiquated.

Once the masks arrived, we were ordered, the embassy said, "You will do it, you will carry gas masks. The State Department is now saying U.S. Foreign Service personnel will have gas masks at all times." I said, "Okay, we got orders." So we also had ours. At first there was this huge mob. Everybody wanted to be in the first class. Okay. Then after they got them and brought them back to ARAMCO and people were saying "Is THIS what you got?" And the numbers dropped off tremendously. They had to sign for them, though. And with a pledge that when the emergency was over that they'd give them back to the U.S. government. I've still got mine. As a

souvenir. Never did turn it back in. After the Department issued orders, I carried it around like I was supposed to.

*Q: During World War II, you could always tell which way the troops had been, because as soon as combat came, all the gas masks were thrown on the ground as they went in. They used for carrying...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: Well, rations and such.*

STAMMERMAN: Because they were convinced the other side was not going to use gas... In World War I, they didn't throw away their gas masks because the other side used it. Anyway, the air war starts. At this point the SCUDs start. Then we start evacuating American civilians. That is to say, we had it arranged, and we set the plan in motion. The plan was to evacuate dependents. Anybody who called in and said they wanted to go, anybody eligible for evacuation, and this would have included any American citizens, employee or not, we didn't turn them away. Or Canadians or Irish that showed up. And the evacuation assembly point was on our American Consulate General compound. The evacuees would assemble, in the end not at ARAMCO. They all assembled at the American Congen. If there were large numbers, we would have had different assembly points. Since there weren't, there were never more, the number of people we could get, in those days, on the kinds of American military transport we had, was around 100 daily. So as the planes would arrive with munitions, they'd be unloaded, and then the crew would turn them into passenger transports.

Okay, we're talking about the modalities, how we evacuated people from Dhahran. The military transport aircraft would arrive in the morning, we're talking about C-5As, C-140s, would arrive in the mornings. The munitions would be taken off, arms and munitions, materiel, whatever they were carrying, would be taken off. Then during the day, the U.S. military and Air Force would reconfigure the aircraft to take passengers out. Each plane could take about 100 people and we would have groups of one hundred. Never more than we could get out in a day. We never had to carry over anybody. They would arrive in the morning. The MPs, that was a unit deployed from General Pagonis' outfit, would search all their luggage. They were each allowed one bag, no pets. One lady came with a pet, that great line... the soldier said, "Lady, it's my way or the highway. The pet's got to go." So she gave the pet to somebody to take back to ARAMCO. The MPs searched the one bag allowed outside the compound, in our parking lot, before they passed the gate to get inside the grounds.

They would then come inside our compound and go into a gymnasium where they had Air Force personnel who would fill out the roster. Got to have a roster, got to know who's on the plane. They'd give us their U.S. documents, their passports. The consular officer was there to make sure there was indeed a U.S. passport. A Canadian was there to see if it was a Canadian passport, and an Irishman to see about the Irish passports. Whoever showed up, we would take their documents. We had one Saudi national on the staff, a Sunni by the way. We had one Saudi Sunni on the staff, and several Shia, GSO and drivers, but one Sunni who was a good contact with the Emir's office. All the while, by the way, I'd kept my contact with the Emir's office, my back

channel, fully informed of what we were up to. The Saudi FSN would take all the passports, and with an American consular officer, sometimes me... at this point, I worked as a consular officer... we didn't have many consular bodies, so we were all working all the time. One of us, me or somebody else, would go with the Saudi FSN to the Saudi immigration authority, a general who ran the Saudi immigration.

This was kind of sensitive. So, one of the American officers had to be there and get exit stamps. Because if you'd been in Saudi Arabia, you got to get an exit stamp or you can never come back again. After the war is over, it's not going to be an emergency situation, and we had to make sure the paperwork's right. And we had to make sure the Saudis understood that we were not smuggling out American/Saudi dual citizens. We had a large number of dual citizen cases, after all... Saudis married to American women and their children, many of whom had always been trying to get out of Saudi Arabia over their husbands' objections. The Saudis didn't want any of that going on. Luckily nothing ever came to push and shove. We never found one where we would have to contest getting an American woman out with her Saudi/American kids under evacuation procedures. But the Saudis were nervous about that, I think... because everybody knew the Saudis were carefully watching what was going on... maybe that's why the Americans who were in these contested cases did not attempt to flee via the evacuation planes.

So we would go, get the exit stamps... we would then bring the documents back to the school, line everybody up, have the rosters prepared. Meanwhile, by the way, my wife Patty and several of the ARAMCO ladies had set up a child care facility. They were keeping the children entertained while everybody's in this gymnasium, worried about nightfall. Because at nightfall, the Iraqis would fire the SCUDs. They did this many nights after the 19<sup>th</sup> of January. They were firing at the airbase, we were convinced, because the airbase was flat as a table, and even though there's not much of a SCUD payload at that distance, a full-loaded C-5 has got nothing but fuel at that point, to go back. If you just had a little shrapnel hit it, it would blow up. Some of our planes were within these so-called revetments, the fighter aircraft. But the transport aircraft were simply loaded with fuel out there on a runway. So if a SCUD hit near any one of them, they would go up in flames. We figured that's what the Iraqis were shooting at. They never did hit one, it turns out. And they fired lots of SCUDs. It's a matter of odds. And maybe the Patriots knocked some of them off course, nobody knows. Anyway, it's getting toward sundown.

*Q: Patriots being an anti-missile missile...*

STAMMERMAN: Anti-missile missile of somewhat doubtful providence. There's still some dispute as to what effect they had, if any. Anyway, as it got darker, we all got very nervous. We wanted to get these people on the planes and off the ground. It was a matter of you've got to do certain procedures, and that plane's got to be ready to take people. So once the plane was ready, once all the documents were done, we would get on the buses. Each bus would have an MP with a rifle, an automatic weapon, an Air Force officer, and a U.S. consulate officer. And it happened that all of us with consular commissions had to get involved. If there were four buses... we had political military people, we had admin people, we had this and that... but I think at the end we only had four true consular officers.. consuls and vice consuls, that's all we had. So one of us would be on each bus. Oh, yes, we had a lady, an FSO from CA (Consular Affairs at State) who had been sent out from Washington..

*Q: Bureau of Consular Affairs...*

STAMMERMAN: Sent out a female FSO. With a new-fangled device called a cellular phone. [laughter] A satellite phone, not a cellular phone... that when the war started that we could somehow keep in contact with the department in case all other communications failed. Also could be out in the field. So she could go too, although she knew nothing about Saudi Arabia, she was really a trooper. You needed a body, you need an American body with a consular commission on each of the busses.

So we would go out there. You'd drive right up on the tarmac, through Saudi and American lines, guard lines, since we had Saudi okay, they'd breeze us through. And we'd get the evacuees on the aircraft and hope that aircraft got off the ground before sundown, and we'd head back towards the consulate. By and large, it worked. But one of the early nights, my consul was out at the airport with a busload. There weren't a lot of them, so we weren't all out there, but he was out there, with a busload of American women and children.

When you got on the bus, they'd turned in their gas masks. The American Air Force officer wouldn't have his gas mask, I wouldn't have my gas mask with me, because they're traveling back to the States, you don't take gas masks. You take only, they want only the luggage, that was the Air Force rule, no gas masks, no weapons, no nothing. Again, a lot of people turned in their gas masks as they left. Night fell, the SCUDs starting coming in. They were already on the plane. The plane couldn't roll because it had not started rolling down the runway, had not gotten to a go/no-go point, when the SCUD alert went off. So everybody had to pile off.

They had 5 minutes warning, by the way. We'd get a phone call from somewhere in the United States, out in Colorado they'd call the op center who'd call me. At the same time they called the U.S. military and the Saudis and said you have five minutes because they'd spot the launch. You have five minutes from the launch of a SCUD near Basrah until it hits Dhahran. I think Tel Aviv had a longer notice, but we had about 5 minutes. They'd tell us and we'd say five minutes, great. The alarms would go off and flashing lights on the TV, put on your gas masks, get against the wall.

So everybody piled off the airplane out at the airbase and went to a shelter. They got in a U.S. military bus or truck or something and got to a shelter. Where of course they didn't any gas masks, but they all sat there with their backs against the wall. SCUDs hit. Of course the SCUDs missed. Then they said, "Okay, let's try this again." Got on the plane again. Got ready to roll again. Again, incoming SCUDs. Back to the shelter. People were crying, people were getting sick. The consul called and in the end I said, "Get them back to the consulate general." One of our floors is underground in the main building, it's safe, so unless something actually falls on top of you, you aren't going to get hit by shrapnel or anything. If you're out at the airbase, you're liable to get hit by shrapnel, if one of those planes went due to a SCUD hit or near-miss, we'd have a lot of people dead out there, if they were anywhere near that plane or that fuel. So, bring them back.

They came back to the consulate, and everybody's upset. Kids are crying, people are sick. We

got them into our underground floor, that long aisle in one building that's underground. We all went to the consulate building. Sure enough, another SCUD alert. The MPs were with them of course. Very interesting what happened. The MPs sort of looked around at each other, and their sergeant indicated to them, don't put on your gas masks, because the American civilians didn't have any. And they didn't. Even though they were trained to, their orders were, they stood there and didn't put their gas masks on. Afterwards, I wrote them up a commendation for their unit, to their commanding officer. They all got awards for that. Which I heard back through the system, which I was very happy to hear. Then after the third one, we waited a while, there were no more SCUDs. They got out and got going.

The only other incoming SCUD of interest was one afternoon when I was out there at the airbase. We had four busloads of evacuees. We got everybody on the C-5s, the sun was setting. I remember the scene, this sort of red sun is setting over the airbase, and I said, "Oh, no. Here we go," so I said, "Let's get back to the consulate, pronto." We waited until the plane started rolling, because we didn't want them getting offloaded. Once a plane started rolling to the go/no-go point, they're going to take off. We didn't want them to get offloaded. So, until a plane starts rolling, our orders were to stand and wait. They started rolling, I said let's get out of here. The consulate is about a five minute bus ride since there was no traffic. Got back to the consulate. As we're rolling in to the entrance of the consulate, going through the concrete barriers, I see our local guards start running. So, I told the driver, open the door, and you could hear the SCUD-alert siren. Oh, boy. I said, "Let's go." It would take too long to go through the barriers, so we piled off, four of us on one bus and started running for the consulate building. Including the lady from the State Department.

There's a plaza in front of the Congen; we were running across an open plaza, and before we started running across that plaza, the SCUD reentered the atmosphere, the Patriots fired, there were explosions overhead, and the plane had just taken off. The plane was taking off near us. It was one of these thing, bombs bursting in air things, you can imagine the poor people on the plane, SCUDs and Patriots are not heat-seekers, so the odds of them hitting a plane are very low, but nevertheless... Explosions in mid-air near their plane are going to shake people up.

Plus, by the time we were running across the open plaza, you could hear click click click click click, things falling. Pieces of SCUD, pieces of Patriots falling. Some windows got broken that day on the consulate compound, cars, pieces of SCUD fell and hit cars. We made it across... we got into the doorway of the consulate. I walked in, the Marine was still there, because the Marine stayed at his station, guarding the sort of the airlock security entrance at the main building. We looked back and the lady FSO had tripped, she was in low heels, her shoe broke or something. I said, "Oh, no." So I went back out and sort of carried her in. Put my arm around her and pulled her into the consulate. And then together, we got into our shelter. I got on the phone to the op center and said, "I'm too old for this. I can't take this running." I was out of breath. I'm too old for this stuff. It was nice... they wrote me up for that later on, for going back to get her. She'd wrote up something nice and it later went into my EER.

*Q: Now, when the SCUDs started falling, how did this affect the ARAMCO community? What happened?*



STAMMERMAN: Oddly enough, except they wanted to get their wives out... oddly enough, once it started falling, they went out and started taking pictures, not much panic at all once they saw what SCUDs were really like. In the daytime, they'd go out on the roof. They did a film with music in the background showing SCUDs coming in at night. And we heard very little after that at the consulate. When the spouses got out, but very few of the workers at that point... They were busy, and ARAMCO sent them up North to man oil installations in the north of Saudi Arabia. They wanted to make sure no damage was there. I should mention, that reminds me... Just before the war, like January 10, the American Secretary of Energy came to Dhahran, along with his staff. They set up a channel in which ARAMCO would report directly to DOE, and to us, if there was any damage to any ARAMCO facilities once the war started. He set this up with the senior people in ARAMCO. I went around with him too to meetings and all.

So as soon as the war started, we were also reporting... DOE make an announcement the day after the SCUDs, no the day after the air strikes, the day after the Americans started flying the air strikes, and then after the SCUDs started, we kept a steady flow, the DOE was making announcements, there has been no damage to Saudi oil facilities. And after the SCUDs, there has been no damage to American assets or to ARAMCO oil facilities, and the price of oil in two days fell from \$38 a barrel to \$22 a barrel, which dismayed a lot of Saudis, since the Saudi government of course saw their income drop precipitously. But the Saudi oil minister, who was, in fact it wasn't the Saudi oil minister who did it, it was the senior Al Saud within the oil ministry who agreed to it, it was a prince who agreed to it. He thought he did the right thing, probably to this day, he thinks he did the right thing, trying to prevent panic. But in terms of the price effect in fact it did the reverse of what the Saudis as sellers of oil would have preferred. It made pretty clear that the SCUDs were not that big a deal, that the Iraqis were not going to fire chemical weapons, that the payloads were small, so that there was no way the Iraqis, short of invading Saudi Arabia, could hurt Saudi oil production.

*Q: And by this time, the idea of the Iraqis doing anything offensive was completely out of the question, wasn't it?*

STAMMERMAN: Almost. There was still some concern I'd say for the first week or two weeks that there might be some Iraqi suicide attacks on Dhahran by what was left of the Iraqi air force. But shortly after that, people started figuring that that wasn't going to happen, that they wouldn't have an air force left. That's when the Iraqi air force fled to Iran, what was left of it. At that, people said, well the oil market's calmed down, the oil prices fell, the ARAMCO Americans went to work. And that was it.

*Q: It must have been hard, because back here again in the States, everybody was watching, in fact around the world with CNN, were watching this war, with essentially the American briefings of the war and watching these smart weapons and all that, which were somewhat exaggerated, considerably exaggerated, but at that time. But it became sort of the great worldwide show, and there you were in the middle of it. You didn't have time to look around.*

STAMMERMAN: No... But interestingly, one event still sticks in my mind. We had TV, AFRTS, Armed Forces Radio and TV Service, was on. This is real time. There's this guy, a CNN reporter, he was always called the SCUD Stud, I think, a handsome guy-

*Q: With a leather jacket on...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, leather jacket, whole bit. He was at the Dhahran airbase, the civilian side, that's how he got there. And he was on the roof, out there watching the things come in. We were watching, he was watching, we could see out the windows, we could hear the sirens and everything. And he would say, "Here comes a SCUD." And you'd look up and see this, because they light up as they reenter the atmosphere. And he'd say, "There's a SCUD and it's just fallen to the west of us." And we were screaming, "He's spotting for the Iraqis, the Iraqis know they just missed to the west." Next thing, they'd fire a little bit to the east. So, naturally, we all and the military and everybody said, "Shut that guy up. Or put him on half hour delay or do something, or don't let him say where." We said, "Hey you're spotting for those guys."

Which reminds me, just a week or two before the actual air war started, we had a delightful visit by the rest of the NBC news staff. I met them, and remember we had earlier on had a visit to Dhahran airbase by Bryant Gumble who was not helpful in the early parts of the deployment. Katie Curic who was then the Pentagon correspondent showed up with the weatherman, they showed up at Dhahran. I went over at one point to see the military information guy who I would see occasionally, and Patty was with me. She saw Katie Curic who we'd seen on TV and she said, Oh, where's the weather guy? And she said oh, let me show you. She took us and introduced us and Patty said, I remember when you were one of the Joy Boys on radio here in Washington, DC. He said, really. So he said where are you from, and she said she's the wife of the consul general. Well, we're going to do a radio show for AM630 in DC, so come on. So Patty went live with him on radio. The drive time was set for drive time Washington, DC. So we got some phone calls, hey I heard Patty on the radio. Which is nice, he's a very nice guy.

And they were very sympathetic to the U.S. military. They played by the rules. He went out to all the units and did weather shows. They were friendly, everybody liked their performance.

Then there was a SCUD hit just before the end of the war that hit American military.

*Q: Hit the barracks...*

STAMMERMAN: Hit the barracks, which was about a mile from the consulate general. It was just incredibly bad luck. If it had happened on the first day of the SCUDs, who knows what would have happened with ARAMCO, but it happened as the war was almost over. It was just one of these things, it was a barracks that had 50 yards of sand on every side. It was bad luck. Metal fell out of the sky and hit them. The hero of the encounter was the mayor of Dhahran, a Saudi. There is a mayor of Dhahran itself, which is a small town. Not al-Khobar, not Dammam, but Dhahran. He's a Saudi, and later, after the war, the American military gave him a medal. One of these commander's medal, and a plaque for his work in organizing the rescue effort. He came in and took charge and made sure our people got to the right hospitals, that all the medical personnel were called in. Great organizer, a good man.

*Q: As the air war went on, was it becoming pretty obvious that this was a pretty passive enemy?*

STAMMERMAN: I don't know if that was the feeling. Again, Dhahran, a lot of the information that people in general were getting was through TV, through AFRTS radio and TV. Passive in the sense we were... I never was worried about attacks. People became more convinced, I think, that we were not in danger of attacks. But people were still worried about what would happen when the American military goes to war. They were very worried that we would lose enormous numbers of people...

*Q: This is the conventional wisdom, too, which tends to exaggerate, which we've seen in Afghanistan as we speak.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: Playing it through again...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, playing it through again...

*Q: Playing back the commentary of our so-called experts...military... it would sound laughable today, but these are the people who two months ago who were pronouncing doom and disaster...*

STAMMERMAN: And there was this man, I forget his name...Heckworth or something like that, the most decorated officer in Vietnam or some... who was excellent on that war but was completely out-of-date when it came to Desert Storm. And he was predicting, he was writing for Newsweek I think, he was predicting we're going to lose a lot of people. And all these guys, all these former generals, who were saying, "You can't take the territory until the grunt gets down there with his bayonet, and face-to-face kills the other guy." They were fighting World War II.

*Q: Absolutely.*

STAMMERMAN: And I knew about some of these weapons, I went through all the briefings. I went with every the congressional delegation. They were describing what these fuel air explosives do, and I'd tell, I didn't talk to the military guys or correspondents, but I'd talk to the ARAMCO guys and said, "It takes the air out of everybody's lungs for two football fields and burns an inch and a half in the ground. You've got a poor little Iraqi Shia out there at the front lines for the Iraqis. They don't want to fight. These poor guys were almost sure to killed. I hope they surrender." But they couldn't surrender. This whole poison gas thing, the American civilians would say, "Well what are you doing with gas masks then?" I said, "Look, even though I have orders to carry the mask, I'm still convinced there will be no poison nerve gas or chemical weapons used against Dhahran. The American troops have to have gas masks because we are destroying Iraqi command and control and there may be stocks deployed near front line units that some colonel or major will use as his unit goes under. So yes our troops should have gas masks. I'm still convinced we don't need them." And we never did. So I knew forces were moving up north, I didn't know about the big end run General Schwarzkopf was doing. The war starts... One of the things that bothered me, I knew what was happening, these poor Iraqis, these guys in front, we killed... I don't know what the body count was, nobody ever told me officially.

*Q: It hasn't been played out, I don't think.*

STAMMERMAN: It had to be tens of thousands of dead up there. I heard what happened, I heard from unit commanders, we bulldozed trenches. We just buried people up there. We were killing people with those fuel air explosives. It's flat. Southern Kuwait is flat, so it's not like in Afghanistan where an explosive gets bottled up in a cave or canyon. It just takes away entire football-field-sized groups of people. I don't know how many people got killed. I am sure lots were killed.

*Q: Did the 3 or 4 days of ground invasion make much of a change in what you were doing?*

STAMMERMAN: Well as soon as the invasion started, there was hardly anybody wanting to be evacuated. We had evacuations up to probably close to when they had the invasion. As long as we had SCUDs people were nervous and were sending their families out. So we were focused on evacuations, focused on rumor control. There continued to be rumors about Iraqi sabotage. At foreigners' compounds in the Dhahran area, we heard that water's been poisoned. Stuff like that. All false rumors. Otherwise, our staff we kept on doing what we were doing. We really didn't have that many people. I think at maximum strength there were 34 people on the staff, up from maybe 18 or 19, and a lot of those were commo, support staff. We did end up, by the way with an MP unit on the compound. We'd let them sleep on the compound so they'd be there the next morning...

*Q: Well, for evacuation.*

STAMMERMAN: For evacuation. They were not considered to be defending the compound. I did find out later from one of the generals, that they had... again, the military is concerned about worst case scenarios. They've got the resources, and we don't. And one of the generals had a squad set up whose mission was to protect the consulate general in case the Iraqis sent a squad through to attack the consulate general and somehow overwhelmed the Saudis, that you'd have an American Army reaction squad ready to go in and protect the consulate. It would have helped the Marines.

*Q: Did you have a problem with the Marines, the Marine guard? Because I would have thought that they would have been so itching to get into this rather than standing around at the consulate?*

STAMMERMAN: Actually no. We had a very strong gunny sergeant, which is what you absolutely need. And luckily, we'd had one very errant corporal who'd been transferred just before the deployments. This guy did things like goof off on guard. He'd make phone calls he wasn't supposed to make, use long-distance phones, stuff that got him into trouble with the admin officer, disciplinary stuff. The funny thing was, the Marine guards at the consulate general became the only military unit in the entire area with access to alcohol. Of course, they weren't under General Order Number 1. Because they weren't deployed forces, they answered only to the MSG deployment commander in Marine security, their detachment commander in Morocco, I think. That was their chain of command. They didn't answer to the Marine general deployed up the coast. Although when he showed up, they of course snapped to, you betcha. But early on they invited some of their friends over and I early on caught wind of it and said, "No can do. That is,

you can't invite military personnel to your TGIFs. You'd get them in trouble."

*Q: TGIFs Thank God It's Friday, which is essentially low-cost drinks to Marines.*

STAMMERMAN: The Marines raise money for the annual Marine Ball, it's done everywhere. But no can do in that case. I should say there was one other incident, I think after Desert Storm... I think after the invasion, while the forces were still deployed. I think it was at least after the air war started. There was an incident where an American spouse of a Saudi, who had been divorced from the Saudi, but in those situations, it's very sad, the children are dual nationals. The Saudi court gives custody to the father, but they are in the mother's actual custody until the children become of age. So as long as the American spouse agrees to remain, then she will be there in a Saudi home, her mother-in-law's home, with the children, but she can't leave the country.

Now, we could not get her out through evacuation because the Saudis would see the papers, every passport. They didn't push it. The American spouses figured out this would not be a good way out. But this one American spouse befriended two U.S. military sergeants who had a pass to cross the bridge to, there's a bridge between Dhahran and Bahrain. She befriended them somehow and they agreed to smuggle her and her kids out. And they did, in an ammunition truck, which the Saudis would not inspect because it was American military ammunition. We found out about it when she turned up on Sally Jesse Raphael in the United States saying in effect, "Thanks to the U.S. Army, we escaped a life of slavery and wife abuse and child abuse in Saudi Arabia."

It's another one of those moments. She was one of our long-standing cases. She got out and of course that meant that every other spouse in that situation was put under close watch. It meant that the Saudis were unlikely to be flexible on other child-custody cases for a long time. These cases continue to be a major problem in Saudi-American relations

Another event, interesting... I know of one other sort of interesting... this is before the war started. I mentioned drinking, well there was a case in which an American colonel or major escorted some ARAMCO spouses, civilians, I think it was men and women, certainly some spouses were there, in Bahrain. The officers were deployed with U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia. It was one of these get to know a soldier thing, you know, take a soldier home for dinner; in return, the officers took some of them out to see U.S. Navy facilities in Bahrain.

One of the officers was drinking. Apparently became quite inebriated, which upset some of the ARAMCO spouses. Word got back to his commander in Saudi Arabia and he was out of theater the next day. I don't know if it was a major or a colonel who got an Article 16, which effectively ended his career, just for taking a drink, more than one, it was stupid, but he did it. So that's the only incident I know about drinking. You hear rumors of others.

*Q: Well, Ken, I'm looking at the time. I think this might be a good place to... Your voice is beginning to go down. I think I've plumbed the depths... we've been going at this for about 4 hours now.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes.

*Q: We'll pick this up the next time when you're in town, it would be when our troops have successfully ousted... the end of the war, and you might talk about reaction about how the war ended and then what you were up to and all that. We'll pick that up at that point. You were going to mention an incident. You can just say what it was and then you can embellish it when the time comes.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, the incident was just after the war is over. American forces liberated Kuwait. Defense Secretary Cheney comes out to visit the forces. He's out at the American air base. He's seeing where we're now doing showers, washing off the American tanks. General Franks joins the scene. By this time there was quite a bit of gossip about General Franks actions during the war. The book was Commanders, by the way. In the Commanders, it describes how he was nearly relieved of his duty, of his station, during the war. General Schwarzkopf was on the verge of giving an order, of sending someone else to do his job. And it's interesting that then Franks showed up, somebody went and said it's okay for Franks now. And that point, he went over and said hello to Cheney. But people were pointing out, that by the way that's General Franks. I recognized him anyway. His role at the end of the war is the subject of some controversy. The Shia who know about it, some Shia really don't like the guy. We'll go into it.

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*Q: It is the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2002. Ken, we're picking this up. Immediately after the war, what was your overall reaction, and sort of the peace, and what was happening in the Eastern Province?*

STAMMERMAN: Our overall reaction was a great relief. The Kuwaitis were very, very happy, of course. The Kuwaitis in Dhahran had a spontaneous celebration when the TV pictures were showing American troops being mobbed in Kuwait with welcome open arms. The Kuwaitis had a spontaneous demonstration in downtown al-Khobar, which the Saudis broke up, because the Saudis do not permit parades on any occasion, for any reason. They always worry when people gather in large numbers. So, the Kuwaiti demonstration was broken up. I heard about that from some of my Kuwaiti friends who were just shaking their heads about the Saudis, saying how that was so typically Saudi. They were overjoyed, couldn't wait to leave Saudi Arabia and get back home.

At the embassy and consulate general, of course, we were all relieved. It was not really at the time a case of thinking what comes next, but more, just relieved that it was over. We didn't have to worry any more about SCUDs, about evacuations, we could get our breath a while. I'd have to say that the secretary in the consulate who'd been very concerned about her son, who was on the front lines, did come to me and say, Ken you were right. The Iraqis were not going to fight our people. They were no match. Earlier I'd mentioned that she'd become very upset when working with the White House visitors who told her that thousands of U.S. soldiers would be lost in the first assault. And I'd told her not to worry, that the main problem the American army would have would be to collect the prisoners.

Beyond that, the rest of us were just kind of happy it was over. Then shortly after that, we became focused on reopening Embassy Kuwait. Skip Gnehm, our Ambassador to Kuwait, was

over on the other side of the Saudi peninsula with the Kuwaiti government. The Kuwaitis flew back immediately after the liberation. Our embassy though, wasn't immediately open because the Army Rangers had to clear it first. Skip Gnehm and his people left, over on the Jeddah side, came to Dhahran, we're at the airport, I went out to see him. Skip was our ambassador to Kuwait, had been staying with Kuwaiti government in exile, meeting with them over in exile in Saudi Arabia. So Skip and his senior team came to Dhahran expecting to just change planes at the airport and go on into Kuwait. But they got a message that the embassy was not yet secure, even though Kuwait City was secure, that is, our troops had entered. The Army military command had not yet liberated the embassy and did not want him up there yet.

So Skip and his people came with me over to the consulate. I called Patty, my wife and asked her if we had any food left in the place. She'd been feeding our people around the clock. And she did have some food left in the freezer. So Skip came over with his country team, with some military people who were to go with him and be setting up some... to work with the Kuwaiti government in Kuwait to help reestablish some of their functions like the central bank and so on. So Skip came over to the house with his group of fifteen to twenty people. We ate a while, and I asked Skip if he brought along any music, any tapes. I knew that he would have a hard time with finding any music... Kuwait radio and TV wouldn't be back up for a while. He might want to go out and buy some tapes. So, he said, "That's a good idea. We ought to go out and buy some cassettes." So, I said, "Let's go," and we sort of walk out to the car. At which point, several of his security people ran after us and said, "You can't do that." We said, "Dhahran, we don't worry, just driving around." They said, "No, no," they insisted. It seems that elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, even on the other side of the Peninsula from Iraq, our SY people insisted on heavy protection for senior officers. I suppose Dhahran had different rules, especially since SY, State's Security Bureau, would not deploy any of their resources at our post. Fortunately, we had the Saudis covering our security needs, which did not include bodyguards.

So we ended up getting a follow car. Walked into a local cassette shop. Very cheap there because a lot of the music was pirated. So we walked in and the store was jammed with American soldiers also buying a lot of cheap cassettes. Pirated. Heavily armed American soldiers. So, we had nothing to worry about. I was telling him this place is one of the safest places in the Gulf. We've got all these American soldiers here all the time, including the women, well armed. So Skip stayed over, and the next day went out to the airport and flew up in a C-130.

*Q: Did he say anything while he was with you about dealing with the Kuwaitis back in Riyadh...?*

STAMMERMAN: He had not said... no... he did not talk to me about them. One other small incident while we were there... We were watching the TV as the TV was showing the Army Rangers entering the American Embassy in Kuwait. The helicopters, and climbing down off of ladder onto the embassy roof where they blasted their way in. Of course, Skip was saying, that's my embassy. They blew a hole in the roof. As Rangers do. It turned out that when they... I'll get to that because I visited that embassy a couple weeks later, but when they- (end of tape)

*Q: You were saying Skip called his mother...*

STAMMERMAN: Yes, Skip called his mother, his mother says, "Skip, I see you. I see they're

showing the film of how you entered the embassy.” He said, “No, no. [laughter] I’m in Dhahran. Those are the Rangers going in.”

So the next morning, we put everybody up, and by then we had so many people in the consulate general compound, the congen personnel, the residents, the rec building at the consulate, we had some military, MPs as I mentioned, on the compound. People were sleeping on the floors, wherever we could stack them, essentially. So the next morning, I took them all out to the air base and the Air Force flew them in a C-130 up to Kuwait.

Got back to the consulate... a couple of incidents immediately following that. Again, you were asking about the reaction how did we feel... we were still busy. Not quite the hectic kind of thing like before because we weren’t worried about SCUDs and evacuating any more American dependents. But there was always what to do. Right after that plane left, a military officer showed up at the consulate, I was over at the office. A military officer showed up at the congen from the Special Forces, and he said he had to see Ambassador Gnehm. He’d heard that he was at the consulate. I said, “He just left.” He said, “Oh, no.” And he walked in, I’d walked out to talk to him, and he was a locksmith. And I said, “I think the Rangers have already done your job anyway.” [laughter] Because they were worried that the Iraqis... See, we didn’t know, from what Skip had told me, we didn’t know whether the Iraqis had gone into the American Embassy compound in Kuwait City when Kuwait was under occupation. For all we knew they had occupied the building. We just didn’t know. So they were worried that the Iraqis had gone in and booby-trapped it, changed locks, who knows what. And he was the guy who could do locks. So I told him since he’d missed the plane, to hitch a ride with civil affairs guys... they were already going up there fairly regularly.

Then I was in touch with the Saudis and the Kuwaitis, of course, they were all overjoyed and very happy. Prince Mohammed’s people all decided they were all just going to relax for a couple of weeks. They’d had a hard time too. The governor’s office... they were very happy, of course. We, my wife Patty and I, thought it would be nice to have some kind of commemoration, some kind of celebration. I’d been talking to the U.S. military and knew that the Saudis were not going to allow a victory parade in Saudi Arabia. So, we decided to have our own parade inside the consulate general compound for the U.S. military, and for our people, who had been working very hard. We decided to call it the Peace in the Gulf Parade. I called up the U.S. military, called up the Air Force commander in the area, called the Army commander in the area, and said, “If you’d like to send some detachments over, give us some flags, give us some unit banners, we’re going to do a parade, and you’re welcome.” And the Air Force and Army showed up... not the senior commanders, but colonel level. We had people from the Air Force, from the Army Civil Affairs command, mainly. I think we had some from the 82<sup>nd</sup>, but almost all the 82<sup>nd</sup> was off on forward, so we may have had a few of their people who were liaison. Mostly U.S. Army Civil Affairs guys and Air Force, plus all of the consulate staff, American and FSNs. We had them decorate all the consulate vehicles as floats. They were so happy, our FSNs, because they really thought they were goners. They were the most stressed out of anybody, I think, aside from certain Americans. [laughter]

*Q: [laughter]*



STAMMERMAN: So we had this nice little parade. We had music, we had the CONGEN car in front, the consul general's car in front with a siren and the flashing lights. We had music blaring from loud speakers, and did a little parade all around the compound, and anyone who wanted to join in the parade or watch could come in. The school children who were in the international school on the compound, were let out of their classes, these were all international children... Americans, British, Indians, other foreigners. Primary grades, no high school. There was a British and American school there. The children were all allowed to sit out on the curb by the street, and they were waving American and British and Saudi flags, which the headmaster had passed out. Which was very nice. It was a nice touch.

And we all walked along. By then, I may have mentioned earlier, it was always cloudy because of the oil fires, had already started that pall over the Eastern Province. It was gray, it was always a gray day for months thereafter. But we had a good time. Everybody had fun. People dressed as they wanted and had big banners. One guy had an Ohio University flag that he was waving. It was great fun. And then afterwards, we had a big feast, what we called a goat grab. It's where they kill a sheep and we all had a big communal meal.

The next morning, I got a call from my friend on the provincial governor's staff. As I'd mentioned earlier, I had direct contact with him so we wouldn't have to go through protocol, I would just call the governor's assistant or he would call me. We got a call from the confidential assistant the next morning, "Ken, I hear you had a parade." "Yes, we had a parade...Peace in the Gulf." "Oh. Were any Saudis there?" "No, no Saudis." "I heard there were a lot of children watching..." "Well none of them were Saudis." "Oh. Okay. Bye." That's all they were concerned about. It was obvious they were letting us know that they knew everything that went on in the compound. And their only concerns were that there were no Saudi children or Saudi adults, but especially no Saudi children there, and there weren't.

*Q: Well, did you have any Saudi employees at the embassy?*

STAMMERMAN: We had one Saudi Sunni employee who I had to let go. I had to let him go just after the war, actually. The problem was the following. It's a side digression, but it's worth noting, because people should know about all these different things. For many years we had a Saudi employee who worked in the consulate section, worked with American citizen services, that side of things. And he was well connected and comes from a family that's got ties, and he had some ties with the governor's office as well. He would come in handy especially when American citizens were in trouble. He had access to just about everybody. He kept Saudi hours, but I'd always figured, counting the time he spent sitting, which I counted as a good investment, sitting in the governor's majlis, things like that, that was fine. However, not long before the Gulf war due to exchange of rotation of personnel, we had a junior officer and we also had an admin officer who became sticklers for time and attendance, and this caused us some serious problems. This man's attendance was not according to U.S. government specs. I was quite happy with his performance. During the Gulf War, I used him to get some passports run through of the American dependents who were evacuated; they had to get exit stamps on their passports or they could never get back in. And he arranged that and various other sundry things like that. After the war, I had to let him go. Which is too bad. It's one of those people filing... notes to the inspector general how this was all highly irregular...

*Q: Yes, this is the trouble when you try to mix cultures sometimes, because as we know, contact and actually sitting around the governor's palace and all this, or keep contacts, this is part of the job.*

STAMMERMAN: It all got mixed in with attitudes of some people that I thought were unhappy about being there under a lot of pressure. I think a lot of it spilled over into management issues in particular. Why do we treat the Saudi employee different from other employees? There was backbiting among the FSNs for the same reason...

*Q: Where were the FSNs from, mainly?*

STAMMERMAN: The FSNs were from all over, South Asia, we had a couple of Ethiopians... actually... not Ethiopians, what's the northern part of Ethiopia that broke off...

*Q: Eritreans...*

STAMMERMAN: Eritreans. Muslims.

*Q: I remember the consul general when I was there, '58 to '60, driver was Muhammad Noor was from Tigre.*

STAMMERMAN: Yes. Well Muhammad Noor left just before I or as I got there he was leaving. And his son is still there, who was a senior FSN in the consular section. We had one Bangladeshi. He was the only one that bailed out during the war even though I had promised the FSNs that you know, I'm not leaving, I hope you guys all stay, and they all stayed. There were Pakistanis, Indians, some Yemenis. Not many. But by and large, I'd say, South Asians.

*Q: Well, it shows what's happened in the Gulf area where essentially Saudis just would not do equivalent to clerical work.*

STAMMERMAN: Oh wait, I'm mixing this up. We did have some Saudis... we had Shia employees, I mean Saudi in the sense of Sunni, we had only the one. We also had some Shia who were laborers. We'd throw a Spring gathering every year, not an Easter party, but a Spring gathering, where one of the FSNs would dress up as an Easter bunny and the Shia would show up with their children. And of course, they had large numbers. These little Saudi kids, and the girls, the Shia children in the Eastern Province, the girls start covering up probably [around] nine or ten. With Sunni it's usually later, you know, puberty, but the Shia start covering girls up in abayas up at 8 or 9 or 10. So you had little girls running around covered up and their mothers would show up. Multiple wives, of course. We'd have a great time, all these little Saudi kids. Yes, we did have some Shia employees.

*Q: When you were there was there an adjustment of some of the people, both in the consulate and at ARAMCO, those who left and were starting to come back, or wanted to come back...*

STAMMERMAN: The way it worked with ARAMCO, it was very interesting, with ARAMCO,

for the dependents who left. That was sort of all understood. They could come back, because there was a lot of family pressure on everybody to leave. It was sort of understood. People were calling up, "Get my daughter out of there." At the consulate general, our spouses stayed. We had... mostly singles there, or else there was the admin officer's spouse who was my secretary, so we didn't have people who left in the consulate staff, particularly. We had people who had to go out for a short while, just to get away from the pressure, but nobody really evacuated from our staff. The FSNs, as I say, all except one stayed. But I wouldn't say there was this big thing about people leaving and coming back. For the employees of ARAMCO, if you left, you were fired. That was very easy. The Saudis made it very clear. You are welcome to go, don't think you'll ever come back, not here and anywhere else where we can have a say in your getting a job.

I don't know if I mentioned in a previous tape, but when I went back to Saudi Arabia in 1996 or so and went to the CONGEN'S home, he had a social gathering, ARAMCO people were there, and one of them recognized them and said, yes, you're the guy that kept us hostage... because they saw me as cooperating with the Saudis in not letting them go, at the risk of losing their jobs. They wanted us to weigh in and say, "That's not fair." I said, "Hey, that's your contract, and we were not going to call an evacuation because we didn't think the employees were in danger." And they weren't. In the end.

*Q: In a way, it was happy in your turf, but it wasn't your direct responsibility, but there must have been a feeling, ok the war is over now what are we going to do about all these troops here? I mean, before everybody wanted the troops, but once the war is over, ok fellas, back to the... the local people would get kind of...*

STAMMERMAN: Here's what happened. Let me do this a little chronologically. Immediately after, I was talking to the U.S. Army guys, logistics and so on. They told me early on, we're getting out of here. Our chief objective now is to move people and things home. And they told the Saudis that, and I also told the Saudis, "We're leaving." Because that was a big concern, as the buildup was going on, I didn't hear this from the governor's office, but there were Saudis who would say when the Americans come they aren't going. The military made it clear that they were leaving, except for a few stay-behinds that they'd worked out with the Saudis. Everybody wanted to go home as quickly as possible.

I'm not sure if it's a week and a half, maybe a little past that... we went up to Kuwait. Patty and I went with U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel, we took some care packages, because Embassy Kuwait was living off of MREs for the first couple of weeks. Meals Ready to Eat. Yes. Meals Rejected by Everybody, they had any number of acronyms for that. MREs. We drove up, the drive up was fascinating, because as you got towards the boarder... We went to Khafji first. I know the governor at Khafji. Patty was with me and we called on the governor. He's a very modest man. His office was modest by Saudi standards. He received us and he showed us the damage that had been done to his office and compound by the Iraqis. The Iraqis had occupied that part of Khafji in one of the early fights of the war. He was certainly happy to see us. They were all very grateful for the American presence and what the American Army had done.

As you got close to the Saudi-Kuwaiti border, it started getting very dark because of the oil fires. And not far north of the border, it was just dark, pitch-black. It looked like a darkness at noon as

they said. You might see the outline of the sun through the clouds overhead, but mainly it was just dark. Worse than a dust storm. We were in a small convoy that went north, Civil Affairs people, and we'd bought lots of food, fast food, canned food, all kinds of stuff. We had a little convoy, so we stopped at various places, and the military told us you have to stay on a hard surface because there was all kinds of unexploded munitions anywhere along either side of the road since the American military had been shooting Iraqi troops, tanks, anything on that road was getting hit by cluster bombs. They'd cleared the hard surface, but they had no idea what was off the road, so stay on the road.

We did stop to pose with one Iraqi tank; there was a burned out Iraqi tank right beside the road, in the dark. We pulled over and we all took pictures. It had American military written graffiti written all over it of course. We all took some pictures. I should say there was an American officer from CA, Consular Affairs, who was with us as well. We then went on into Kuwait City, and the smoke cleared as you got just south of Kuwait City, outside the last ring road in Kuwait City. The smoke cleared. It was just the atmospherics of the whole thing. We went up the embassy, brought lots of food, everybody was very happy to see us. People were staying either in the embassy rooms, or sacking out in the Hilton across the street. Skip put us up at the embassy, in the residence. I went around with Skip who was making his calls on the diwaniyyas, the majlis, especially some families I knew. Shia families. They were very, very happy to see us. They were already telling us, we were getting information. They were in contact with the Iranians and already via these extended family ties, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, they were all talking to each other about the new situation. The Shia were telling us immediately how we should re-establish ties with Iran, that this was a good occasion... I thought it was strange in Dhahran when we heard some of the perceived wisdom out of Washington was that some of our troops had to be worried as they were attacking Iraq, be worried about an Iranian attack on our troops. Which I thought was ludicrous as did anybody who knew the Iranians in the area. Afterwards, yes, Iran and Saudi Arabia have had a lot of problems, but the Iranians would love for us to rip up Saddam. They still would.

Anyway, so we saw all the families. I went around with Skip. Skip had unbelievable security, and he had American guards, Kuwaiti guards, he'd moved in this massive entourage. It's like I've heard of our people moving around Beirut. They were worried about Iraqi stay-behinds. The Kuwaitis loved us. Still do. So we called on various diwaniyyas. And then we went back to Dhahran. The Saudis were watching the U.S. Army leave by then. As I drove back, again this was a couple of weeks after the war... the roads were jammed with American military equipment. Bumper to bumper. APCs, tanks on trucks, as far as the eye could see. Getting back was very difficult because from Khafji til you get to the first major intersection south, it's just one lane on each side. So it was kind of dangerous, people were traveling in both directions with the military equipment moving very, very slowly of course everybody's passing and there are no shoulders.

We eventually made it back. All over Dhahran there were tanks and APCs parked all over the place waiting for their turn to go through the world's largest car wash. The military had put together a "shipments home..." an area where the returning troops would dock out. They had a barrel as they went through the checkout line where they'd dump any weapons they'd seized, especially if they were live. They had quite a few Iraqi grenades. The only incident that happened on the way out... some American military officer got caught... he broke the law

somehow. He was embezzling or something. It involved a Saudi, so we had to deal with the Saudis on that one. The Saudis weren't shocked at all. They'd expected a lot of this, and as far as I knew this was the only case that we had of an officer getting involved in something. Afterwards, the relationship, everybody was very cheery and happy to see what we were doing. We had a few more congressional and senatorial visits, but we were just closing everything down.

*Q: I can't remember if we asked on the last tape when we covered, because you'd mentioned off mike, could you talk about during the war was there anything that came up about how to end the war? Was this a topic of conversation? And then we'll talk about after the end of the war, what was the feeling?*

STAMMERMAN: Sure. Very interesting. Before the ground war started, after the air war started... Remember there was some arguing of how the war would be waged. The American military really did think we would take heavy casualties. They were worried about chemical warfare, but also just worried about battle hardened troops and the fourth largest tank army in the world and so on.

*Q: They'd been waging a war so these were supposedly trained troops.*

STAMMERMAN: The Iraqis had fought a war since 1980 against Iran, so... a lot of the thinking was very short term. How do we win the war? Where do we stop if we have to fight our way into Kuwait City? What constitutes victory? There was a lot of talk that went on. The only message that I saw that talked about after the war was a message that Chas Freeman sent out, with some thoughts of his own on what the region would look like after the war, and some speculation. He invited comments from all the other posts. Now, I didn't see all the other comments. The one place that I differed with Chas was on the stability of the Kuwaiti regime. Having been in Kuwait I saw the Al Sabah as being national symbols, that yes, the Emir, even though... The Kuwaitis, to outsiders, the Kuwaiti leadership was seen as having done poorly. I didn't get that feeling from Kuwaitis that I knew, and then the fact that they fled. The Kuwaitis were very happy that the senior Al Sabah got out so that they could not be used as hostages or captured symbols or whatever.

And I figured that things would return more or less to the same structure in Kuwait which would be the Emir in charge, national figure, a Parliament dominated by the Sunni merchant families who were not Sabahis, and the other families of the elite. You have the Nejd Sunnis, you have the other Sunnis, you have the Shia, and the people without citizenship in Kuwait. I thought they'd more or less all return to where they'd been, but that was not a major difference to Chas' analysis. The question was what happens in Iraq? Would there be changes in Saudi Arabia? Having people seeing, especially the Eastern Province, all these American women driving about, lot of interchange between American soldiers and Saudis. Maybe there would be social change. We might see some changes inside Saudi Arabia in the region... how would things fall out? Jordan, Palestinians? What would happen to the Palestinian population of Kuwait after the war? My thoughts were they'd be kicked out, and they were.

This thing...

*Q: I was wondering what was making that noise...*

STAMMERMAN: That was feedback on my, sorry about that, I just turned it off. I just realized that. Sorry, we just had a little feedback on the cell phone. Just came up.

So there was a lot of speculation. And as far as I know, Chas was the first one to raise that question. I don't know if back in Washington anybody ever really got around to addressing that issue.

*Q: After, were you picking up any signs of disquiet? There was this suppression of the Shia wasn't it, in the south of Iraq?*

STAMMERMAN: You mean after the war?

*Q: Yes.*

STAMMERMAN: Immediately after the war? That came a little bit later. And I should say a little bit more about Saudi Arabia. There had been concern, remember, you had the Saudi women who demonstrated in Riyadh by driving. A number of them were from the Eastern Province. They all lost their jobs, those who had jobs, in the Eastern Province some Saudi women had jobs. They all lost their jobs, and the Saudi regime essentially called the patriarchs of their families and told them keep these women quiet. And they did. Essentially, they rescued them, they made sure they didn't go to jail and security forces wouldn't deal with them on condition that the families took them out of circulation. But you didn't have any groundswell of democratic feeling in Saudi Arabia.

I did have a conversation with some senior Saudis in the Eastern Province who were concerned about Kuwait that they were worried that Kuwait might become more democratic as it was liberated. With the American troops there, with the family not being in charge when they went back, all this, that Kuwait might become more democratic. That bothered the Saudis a lot. They did not want a truly democratic state up there. It would be too much of an example they thought. So they were happy for the Americans to leave Kuwait.

Then not long after that, there was the Shia uprising in the south of Iraq. The U.S. government assessment at the time, and I'd say this was anybody I knew, anything I read, was that Saddam did not have long, would not be long in power. That the collapse of his forces, with the few remaining forces he had would not be enough to preserve him against unrest in the south, the north, and even among his Tikriti clansmen whom he had led into disaster. The Shia uprising, I'm not sure of the dates there, the Shia uprising took place not long after the end of the war. We were pulling out, so we were not involved. Our troops were getting out as quickly as we could.

I didn't mention, when I'd been in Kuwait after the war, I'd been asked by Skip and his econ guy if I wanted to see the oil fires. It might be a good idea. After all that was my background, oil economics. I said yes, so the American military flew me and a couple of the other embassy people up to the northern oil fields which were then still burning. It was an unbelievable sight to

see these oil fires. Remember at that time, people thought those oil fires would burn for years. So we flew over them, low over them, unbelievable what the Iraqis had done. They just blew out every 'Christmas tree,' a kind of oil cap. And we were flying up there and the aircraft needed to refuel, so he headed north. Interesting.

We landed at a U.S.-occupied Iraqi air field. We waited around there for a little while, there was a little village next to it. I don't think it was Safwan, but it was up near Safwan. We stayed there a while, took a few pictures, and flew back. When I got back, I called Riyadh and gave my report about where we had been, and said, "Oh, by the way, we flew into Iraq, and got some pictures and do you want to see them?" The DCM said, "Oh, no, you didn't do that." I said, "Yes. He said, "Well forget that, don't put that in any reports. You aren't supposed to go there."

But the Shia in that region... we were pulling out. We pulled our troops out of Iraq as quickly as we could. We had no intention of occupying the place. As we pulled out, and this is what I'd heard from various Shia afterwards, as we pulled out, the Shia, lot of Shia soldiers and students decided that enough was enough, they now could take the south if they wanted. So they launched their rebellion, they took Basrah, they took the Shia holy cities, and killed every Baath Party (Saddam's political base) man they could find. There was a bloodbath against the Baath Party. There were very few Iraqi senior military commanders in the area, so the military wasn't hurt that much, but the Baath Party apparatus was destroyed. They killed them all. But the Shia were not terribly well organized. Students and low ranking soldiers, there were no senior Shia commanders.

They weren't terribly well organized and when the Republican Guard that had survived the American assault, the ones who we let escape, got themselves organized after the Shia had gone through their bloodletting... they came back in force, with armor, which the Shia didn't have. And killed everybody in sight. They killed all the fighters, of course, who they could find. I heard this from some of the Shia who got out. They went into the Shia holy places, the mosque of the Imams, and hanged people in the mosques, and then turned their attention to the Shia villages in the south, just north of the Saudi border. They were very careful to stay away from our forces and to stay away from Kuwait. And just drove straight through those villages, killing women, children, everybody. Those who could escape, fled...the Shia who were on that drive that track that the Iraqis took. Those who could escape did, they went across the Saudi border. The only place they had to run. Our forces watched. They knew it was happening, and we watched. So we would get reports back of what was happening, but that's it. The refugees fled across the Saudi border by the thousands. The Saudis put up a camp, due north of Riyadh, up by the border, and kept them there, since they were Shia, they were not going to let them into Saudi Arabia proper. I've heard that we leaned on the Saudis to allow the Shia to cross the border. If up to the Saudis, they would have left them on the other side of the border, many Saudis would have anyway. So, we watched it happen, and there was TV of course, we heard what was happening, saw the reports, and it was over fairly soon.

The interesting incident at the time... Saddam arrested the head of the Iraqi Shia in the south, an Ayatollah. A Shia, they have the same setup as Iranian Shia. He was an Ayatollah, I can't remember his name any more. I was doing one of my regular soundings in the Shia villages north of Dhahran and I talked to a community leader there. We did the usual talking about what was

going with the Shia community in Saudi Arabia and the usual complaints about discrimination and so on. And he said, "Ken, Saddam has arrested our Ayatollah." The Saudi Shia were very close to the Iraqi Shia, same kind of Shia. There had always been some contact across the border because of the Shia holy places. He said, "We have a request." We, I guess was the Saudi Shia. "We would like the Americans to get our Ayatollah out of Saddam's custody." I said, "Well, we don't have a lot of influence in Baghdad, to say the least." He said, "Ken, Ken, you must understand, Saddam does not fear God, he does not fear man. He fears the Americans. If you make it a point of insisting on this man's release, Saddam will release him." Well, I reported the conversation. That's all I could do. Eventually, Saddam executed this guy. If we did anything, it was nothing much.

Essentially, for the Shia rebellion, we watched it happen. The Saudis were not too disturbed. The Saudis would have been very upset about a Shia state north of Kuwait, so they didn't say...

*Q: Pulling out, was there any second thoughts about the mess we left behind?*

STAMMERMAN: I would say no. Whenever there were any questions, the general comeback was we could have done things differently, but it would have cost the lives of American soldiers and it wasn't worth it. At the time, everybody, military, any State Department people I knew, we all figured Saddam would last another three months at most. So the fact that Saddam survived was not that big a thing because we figured he could only survive through a repressive government, and he didn't have that many people left, that if the opposition would be organized at all, they could overthrow him. We were wrong.

*Q: Were the people who were knowledgeable about the area concerned too that Iraq in a way is, unlike almost any of the other states around there, such a divided, it's not really a state... it's a glued together entity that has fractures that have not healed since the end of World War I. Was there any concern that if that place really fell apart it would be quite destabilizing to the area?*

STAMMERMAN: On the American side, the only person I knew who serious addressed that issue was Chas Freeman. Perhaps other people did, but I didn't see it and I didn't hear it. But the military wasn't that much concerned about it. That wasn't their mission. Again, they were happy to leave. The Saudis were very concerned, but they thought essentially that Iraq would hold together. They were just worried that the Shia might succeed, and it concerned them. At the time, everybody's top priority on their minds, as well as ours, was that Saddam should go. Among the people who were dealing with the war, sort of the everyday tactical, it was all tactical, there was very little strategic thinking as near as I could tell. There was not a big sense of history. I had people in the State Department Near East bureau who really thought Kuwait was once part of Iraq or who thought Iraq existed before World War I, that sort of thing. There was no feeling of how fragile the Iraqi state might be, so they had not thought of the consequences of breaking up. I didn't see much strategic thinking at all.

*Q: How long were you there after the war was over?*

STAMMERMAN: I stayed until the summer of '92. I was there a whole year afterwards and saw the American drawdown. The major part of the troops got out right away. Then the stay-behinds



took a while. The Marines were pulling out of a port north of Port Jubail, north of Dhahran. Slowly, slowly. A lot of the things we'd get involved in were because of Saudi businessmen and contractors, and winding up the last supply contracts and the last commercial disputes. I remember going up there. When I'd been up there before, this would probably have been summer of '91, it was a base port with troops everywhere, and jeeps going everywhere, and tanks being moved out on trucks. In 1992, I drove in and all you had was one small building occupied by Marine officers. The last Marine colonel was there and he was trying to finish off some commercial disputes, of claims essentially. The big parking lot at the port had trash blowing across it. The Saudis had not reoccupied it yet. It was kind of sad really, sad and empty.

So, I saw all this drawdown happening everywhere. Except the one place that stayed busy was Dhahran Towers. That's the place where the U.S. military quartered their troops, right next to Dhahran airbase. Within a few months of the end of the war, we established a policy that we'd have U.S. Air Force personnel quartered there, but they would only have six-month tours. That makes them temporary. The Saudis were very insistent on that. They did not want a permanent U.S. presence in the Eastern Province. So it was a rolling six-month redeployment. It wasn't the same personnel, they'd move people in and out. So the Saudis could say that they were training personnel, support personnel for Southern Watch, we were watching the Southern No-Fly Zone, southern Iraq.

One of the nicer events after the war was an awards ceremony given by the American military command to the Emir of Dhahran. There really is an Emir of Dhahran, who I had only met once before. He's a very junior official because Dhahran itself is really a small town. Dammam is the city where Prince Mohammed bin Fahd the governor resides. Dhahran is simply ARAMCO and the consulate general, and a small residential suburb. The governor of Dhahran had played a key role in helping when our troops were killed and wounded in the SCUD attack in Dhahran, which was the largest loss of life in the Gulf War for the American military. He had played a key role in getting the survivors to hospital. The U.S. Army gave him an award, which was very, very nice. And shortly afterwards, we had a ceremony at the consulate general where he and I together planted a tree. I'm glad to say that as of 1997, that tree was still there. I'd also put up another monument before I left. I had talked to the head of the logistics command. I remember how VFW halls in the United States always had a cannon out front. I wanted a howitzer, or the equivalent, on the consulate general grounds. We put up some kind of a plaque, Gulf War Memorial, or something. We got one. It was a Chinese made Iraqi howitzer, and kids loved to play on these things. Kids climb over them, and we made sure it was plugged with concrete and all the usual. It was nice, and the Saudis thought it was fine. And nobody had a problem, we all thought it was fine. And when I arrived back, I visited Dhahran twice since then, once in '95, and once in '96 or '97... and the last time I arrived back there, the cannon was gone. It seems one of my successors as consul general thought it was inappropriate to have a weapon like that on the consulate grounds.

*Q: Ah, yes.*

STAMMERMAN: What a jerk. What can I say? The Saudis didn't care, and I thought it was appropriate, and fun for the kids.

*Q: Was there anything else that you were dealing with before you left?*

STAMMERMAN: Well, let's think. After the war a lot of it had to do with the drawdown and the stay-behind American forces. We went back to doing a lot of ordinary things like issuing visas and reporting on the oil economy, rebuilding the contracts. Very interesting, there was one occasion where I went over and visited a senior Saudi family that one of the in-laws was a Kuwaiti, a friend of mine. By this time, I'd heard that the Kuwaitis were sort of getting overwhelmed with our insistence on buying American, especially our defense contractors. So, it was getting more and more difficult for the Embassy to access the Kuwaiti defense minister, or so I was told at the time. After the war, the defense minister was replaced, and the new one had real power, was a sharp man. I think he was just tired of being asked to buy this and that American weapon system, or whatever. I went over to one of these afternoon gatherings, business people, and my Kuwaiti friend, Kuwaiti-Saudi... married into a Saudi family. And we were good friends, and he said, "Ken, stay around after the party's over." I said, "Okay, fine." I did. There were a couple of consulate people there and I told them, "You guys can go home."

I stayed around. He said, "Come on back." They had a desert camp out there. The occasion had been a cocktail party, with the usual drinks and everything else. And this was more than your typical big Saudi mansion, it had acres of, it's not a backyard it's grounds, and he had a desert encampment set up out there, Bedouin tents. He said, "Ken, come on out, I've got somebody you've got to meet." I walked out and the Kuwaiti defense minister was out there. I know the man because he'd been a watcher up at the Kuwait border. He was in charge of the Kuwait, I may have mentioned this earlier, he was in charge of the Kuwait watching station at Khafji, so when I visited Khafji I'd called on him. I'd known him before very slightly in Kuwait, and during Desert Shield, I had called on him near the border.

So I walked out and saw him. We did the usual embraces, and "long time no see" and we had a long talk about what was going on in Kuwait. Sort of informally, I mean I wasn't after info on Kuwait government policy, but how was so-and-so, and what's happened to so-and-so because already there were some rumblings, as the families took a larger position in Kuwait, rumblings against the people in charge of the Kuwaiti oil ministry especially. That's where the money was, and the major Kuwaiti families wanted to get back into influencing where the money was. That's so important in Kuwait. Kuwait runs on money. So we had a lot of discussions. We talked about people we both knew and how everybody was, and how people survived the war. So that was nice. I remember that incident. A little affair. After that, the following year was just constant drawdown and working our way out.

Another nice event before we left for the States...I paid a farewell call in Kuwait, went up to see Ambassador Skip Gnehm and some Kuwaitis after all we had gone through. The Kuwaitis gave me a plaque, a sort of trophy-shaped token. They inscribed 'we shall never forget' on it. We found it touching...

**DOUGLAS R. KEENE**  
**Director, Arab Peninsula Affairs**

## Washington, DC (1989-1990)

*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.*

KEENE: Back to Washington to become director of Arab Peninsular Affairs.

*Q: You got there at a good time, didn't you?*

KEENE: I got there at a really bad time.

*Q: You were doing that from '89*

KEENE: Yes, only for a year: '89-90, through the war.

*Q: Just in time.*

KEENE: Yes, I had just reported for duty about two weeks before the invasion.

*Q: What were you picking up on this at that time? I mean, you're the brand new guy on the block, and all of a sudden there were noises that Saddam Hussein was stirring things up. What was the feeling you were getting from your people who'd been following this report?*

KEENE: Well, there was a lot of uncertainty, and then we had the now infamous April Glaspie report of her meeting with Hussein, which made it look like maybe something could be worked out. I had reported directly to work, and I had put off my home leave; so right about then, I got two weeks off! And then the invasion took place while I was on vacation. It was a shock, really, and, you know, it was very intense. We really, really worked incredible hours as the buildup to our invasion took place. Very intense diplomatic effort worldwide to build the coalition, to get the UN resolutions approved, to get the money.

*Q: Because there was such a concentration on that, did you have a particular piece of the action?*

KEENE: Well, no, I guess I'd have to say. I was trying to run the office. I was doing the overall pieces, the memo for the Baker trips, the memo for the president's trips, the memo for the coalition trip and the "tin cup" tour.

*Q: The "tin cup" tour, you were going around collecting money.*

KEENE: Right. The secretary did a lot of that himself, and the undersecretary.

*Q: What was your impression of the Saudi response?*

KEENE: It was really pretty forthcoming, for them. They had always resisted too visible a presence on their soil: and they gave us pretty good access to their facilities, and let us stage things through there. I mean, particularly after they themselves were attacked, they were happy to. You remember briefly that incursion out of Kuwait? So, for them, they were quite forthcoming, I thought, because the Kuwaitis were totally desperate. We had the Kuwaiti ambassador living in our office there for about a month, and willing to pony up really vast amounts

*Q: Their money was basically in Iraq ...*

KEENE: Yes, and some of it here, outside, Switzerland probably, too, for all I know. Yes, they had billions. As always, other people were trying to use this crisis to... I remember the Turkish desk, in particular, was "Ah well, now's our chance to get some Saudi money to bolster the Turks. Even Uruguay, to join the coalition, they wanted the U.S. Army to buy their meat for rations, and it just went on and on, and everybody wanted something. So, we spent some time beating that sort of thing off.

*Q: What was your impression being back there; was this a pretty experienced, well-oiled machine that was dealing with the problem?*

KEENE: Yes, it really was. Pretty soon we had the task force, but then we had a group that would gather daily to coordinate moves that was interagency, and the bureaus. We'd go over really all the issues with the assistant secretary everyday. This meeting was soon dubbed "vespers."

*Q: Who was that?*

KEENE: It was John Kelly. We'd have a morning meeting and an afternoon meeting, and the morning meeting was with Deputy Assistant Secretary David Mack and the afternoon meeting with Kelly. And then the task force was always there, so there was good coordination with the task force.

*Q: Were you there during the actual war?*

KEENE: Yes.

*Q: What was the feeling before the war started; what were you getting? You know, you all were looking at this; how did you think this was going to go?*

KEENE: We had moved massive forces into the area, and I don't know; most people couldn't seem to read those military cables, but I could, because I had all that PM time. I had to explain to them how much stuff was out there. I was pretty confident we were going to win the war; I didn't have much doubt about that. And I didn't have any doubt that it was going to happen. But once it

started, in some ways we had less to do. Control passed to DOD much more than during the intense period of diplomacy leading up to it. And then we shifted into preparing for reconstruction of Kuwait, primarily.

*Q: Before you get to that point, was anybody talking about, I mean I realize that it had more to do with Iraq—well, it had everything to do with Iraq. But talk about the end game, because it does seem that we put Schwarzkopf into the...said, "You go settle this." I mean, after all, we knew that it was going to come to an end. Was anybody working on what we should do?*

KEENE: Not so much in my office as the area, whatever they were called then, Iraq-Iran affairs or something, but they had the primary responsibility for that. How much actual planning they did down there, I don't know; whether that was planned or they made it up as the circumstances dictated.

*Q: Well, I've interviewed Chas Freeman, who was at one point our ambassador to Saudi Arabia.*

KEENE: Yes, I know him very well.

*Q: He at one point, he said in an equivalent to a cable, saying, not really to you, but to the Iran-Iraq...I mean, "What is the end game?" I mean, all of this struck me as being a—I don't know what you call it—a blunder or a lack, or something—not to say exactly what wanted, because we left a general there who made a deal about allowing helicopters to fly and all that, which turned out to be counterproductive and has had great consequences as of we speak today.*

KEENE: Yes. That's right. I didn't get involved. We did a lot of work on Kuwait, but not on Iraq.

*Q: How much were you picking up, even before hand, because a lot of Palestinians had gone to Kuwait and then were in the gulf area? What had you, over your time, before this all happened, picked up about the Kuwaitis?*

KEENE: Arrogant, unlikable, too rich for their own good, not well liked.

*Q: Was this a problem as you moved into reconstruction and all that; were you finding the UAE and the Saudis and others were getting involved in this? They didn't want to do much for the Kuwaitis.*

KEENE: No, they didn't. But Kuwait had their own money. We set up a whole organization, the Kuwait Reconstruction Organization, to deal with that. The Corps of Engineers got involved, and we sent a guy out to live with the Kuwait government in exile; that was Skip Gnehm, and he had a few assistants with him. There was just a lot of thought: what to do with the oil wells, what to do with the infrastructure. I think we were pretty well ready to do that job. Like everything, there were some problems, but it went okay.

**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: In fact, once I got to Ankara, I found it very difficult to gain the attention of the Seventh Floor, not to mention the White House, to Turkish issues. I couldn't even entice an assistant secretary to visit Turkey. The Turks had gained a reputation for always asking for assistance; Washington senior officials did not want to be the target for such requests.

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.

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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.

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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.

**PAUL H. TYSON**  
**Economic Officer**  
**London, England (1989-1993)**

*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.*

*Q: Well you were there '89 to '93, so you were there when Iraq invaded Kuwait. How did that play when you were there? Did this come as a shock to everybody or what?*

TYSON: Actually yes. To back up, my daughter had been born in February of 1990, and we're there and my job is going along. The summer of '90 there's a rattling of sabers with Iraq and I think a lot of "knowledgeable Middle Eastern observers" just basically figured that this was another effort to shake the piggy bank to get some cash out. There was a feeling that, "Well maybe Iraq might do something like take Warba and Bubiyan, the two islands, and/or a little bit of a strip," or, you know, "It could be difficult, but basically bottom-line, Saddam wanted cash." I mean, he had a river of money, the war ended, and the river ended, and he didn't like it. So this is all fine and good. The saber rattling is going on and one particular evening my new daughter - she was just a baby, was up and cranky so my wife and I were juggling this back and forth. I don't look at a paper, don't look at anything, get to work, and Walt Lockwood, my boss, says, "What do you think?" I said, "About what?" He said, "Iraq invaded Kuwait last night," and I said, "I think my work requirements have just changed." In fairly short order, this is just shocking and of course a lot of the Kuwaitis are in Europe. What does it all mean? Are the Iraqis going to go into Saudi Arabia?" You know, we've got friends in ARAMCO and stuff like this. So everybody is very spun up. It's an adrenaline rush at the embassy.

Also in fairly rapid order - I don't know whether we were between Middle East watchers or not, but it was the sort of, "You've done the Arabs; you go do them," because we were getting a lot of inquiries. So suddenly I was doing liaison with the Kuwaitis in exile, in particular. I remember

one American working for Kuwait Petroleum International – Ralph Brown, a good friend, who called up with the ever typical designed-to-endorse-yourself-to-FSOs comment, “Well we’ve got a problem because all of the Kuwaiti and Iraqi assets have been frozen. We’re actually selling jet fuel in Hong Kong. Here’s who we are. Who’s this. I’m being forced to call you even though I know that U.S. Embassies are totally ineffectual on this. No good will come of this.” “Thank you very much for calling,” and I said I’ll look into it. Basically we were all sort of cutting and pasting; this was very ad hoc. And I basically said, “Okay, we’ll need copies of the transactions. The transactions can go forward. No money can be transferred to Iraq or back to occupied Kuwait. Here’s who you’ll need to contact at the Treasury.” You know it’s like Casablanca; it was the beginning of a great relationship. And fairly rapidly, I was getting a lot of calls because you’re seen as responsive.

The Assets Control Office at Treasury was trying to do every five pound or hundred franc transaction without additional staff and it rapidly became clear that they were going to get overwhelmed. We’re talking with the Bank of England about the freeze and the Kuwaitis are beginning to stabilize because they’ve got this huge operation overseas. They’ve got the Kuwait Investment Office in London; they’ve got a major oil company in Europe with refineries in downstream assets, and a whole bunch of other things. So I just start dealing with them. Of course there are many sources of information. People calling up, “Well, what is the state of their industry? What did they have in the country?” What does that mean if the Iraqis take the additives the Kuwaitis had and use it for military fuel, and so on and so forth. So there was a wide series of reporting requirements, or things that you could get into, that were of interest to many people. I just felt as though I was feeding this maw; that it all went in and very little came out.

They started getting people out and we started giving block grants of their own money to Kuwaiti Embassies to handle their people in exile. We always retained the right to go in and look at it, but I don’t think we ever did. They really started getting Kuwait, Incorporated in exile up and running again, and I was very, very involved in this. In October two Kuwaitis from the oil company came in who needed visas. They were going off to hire Red Adair, Boots and Coots, and other firefighters. Texana Stubbin Papworth, my secretary - God love her, just did absolutely Herculean efforts. She had stacks of these applications and just knew the Kuwaitis, dealt with them, was always very civil to them at a time when they’d lost their country, and they’re feeling shattered and oppressed. She was really just a sweetheart in dealing with them.

What also happened is various committees started evolving to publicize the Kuwaiti cause because we lived in an Arab neighborhood and in the first week there was a pro-Iraqi demonstration on one side of Edgware Road and a pro-Kuwaiti on the other, with the Bobbies in between. So this was getting interesting. The Palestinians were getting involved. But I started working this, and one day I was over at Kuwait Petroleum International and they’d gotten a batch of “Long live free Kuwait” t-shirts in. They said, “Do you want some?” and I said, “Oh sure,” so they handed me some and I said, “Actually can I have, oh, about twenty?” They said, “Fine,” so I took them back to the embassy, walked in, dropped them off at the Front Office, had them in my office, and it rapidly became, “Where did you get those?” “I got it from Kuwait Petroleum.” “Can you get more?” So I called them up and said, “I think you’ve got a winner here, guys,” and what started to happen was a Mercedes would pull up behind the American



Embassy in London and 1000 t-shirts in boxes would come out. I would be there with my little loading cart, our people would x-ray it and scan it, and I'd bring the t-shirts in. It was all free; the Kuwaitis were donating it. One of the most astute things they ever did. And I just had a sign up saying, "Send it to whoever you want, but please, whoever gets it, send a thank-you note to the Kuwait Investment Authority in Kuwait Petroleum International, 80 New Bond Street in London." This is becoming like this perpetual motion machine. The Kuwaitis are thrilled that it's going to Pocatello, Idaho and the middle of Kansas, so whenever I want t-shirts I can have them. And they started branching out to baseball caps, umbrellas, sweatshirts. We gave Marilyn Quayle a "Free Kuwait" sweatshirt and umbrella.

The baseball hats were particularly popular and at this point I had friends in the Gulf in Riyadh, and elsewhere, and I just took a box of the baseball hats and sent it out in the APO (Army Post Office), and apparently Schwarzkopf was walking through the embassy in Riyadh one day and saw one and said, "I want one, where did this come from?" So I came back and had four yellow slips on my desk, "Call the following military people," and it was basically, "Norm wants." So I called the Kuwaitis and got about 100 hats and handed them to the Air Force and they were packed off to Riyadh. I think when it was all said and done, we went through 8000 t-shirts.

*Q: Good God.*

TYSON: It was some of the best publicity that the Kuwaitis ever did. All free, and as I said, "Send a thank-you letter."

*Q: Were the British pretty much aghast at this whole thing? I keep thinking of that small little boy – Saddam Hussein tousling his hair, a British boy and hostages, and it just turned your stomach.*

TYSON: For you who have been in the Middle East, that was a very interesting one. Of course I understand exactly what you're saying, and yet, from his cultural context he is trying to show that he is protective of children and cares for them and would not do harm them, while the rest of the western world looks at it and sees it almost as a sexual assault or something like that. And, no, that had a lot of impact there and getting the hostages out and then the build-up and everything else.

*Q: Did you find as the build-up went on that whatever problems there might be, there was a drawing together of the Americans and the British?*

TYSON: Oh my God. Problems - hardly. "Excuse me, let me bring my bag of state secrets over to you and you can hand me your bag of state secrets." The cooperation with the UK – the Bank of England, the Treasury, FCO, and State - was just phenomenal, this was really the special relationship in war. I remember being the duty officer and having to go over to FCO one Saturday morning...

*Q: FCO would be?*

TYSON: Foreign Commonwealth Office. ...to see the duty officers there and I'm sort of

American weekend casual; boat shoes, blue jeans, work shirt, baseball hat. They're in sort of tattered corduroys and a jumper and stuff like that. It's these cultural moments. I mean, literally, it was hauling out some of our classified stuff and then reading theirs, taking notes, taking our stuff back, "Thank you very much." It was actually an interesting incident because they looked at me, the two duty officers, and said, "What are you doing about Jews in your forces?" and I said, "We're sending them and the women, too." "Oh, are you sure about that?" and I looked at them and said, "I was one of the tokens who has already done Saudi Arabia. We're sure about it and this is what we're doing." I think that had some influence on some of their decisions, too.

The cooperation with the British was just phenomenal on the freeze. Indeed, later, after Kuwait was liberated and the freeze was lifted, Kuwait Investment Office hosted a dinner for a number of the people who had worked with them in London. I mean, it's extraordinary that you're thanking the two countries that have basically slammed a hold on a hundred billion of your assets. A hundred billion. Just a huge amount of money.

I think it was handled in a very civilized and a remarkably sensitive and respectful basis. And that's paid out down the line.

*Q: Paul, you mentioned that there is something else you might want to add onto before we leave London.*

TYSON: Right, it's the oil spills in the Gulf just before Desert Storm went in and liberated Kuwait. The Iraqis were pumping millions of barrels of oil out into the Gulf from their facilities in Al Ahmadi in Kuwait and this was obviously becoming something of a problem and one of the things that I did – was asked to do – was I went to Kuwait Petroleum in London; walked over there one day through the square, down the streets and all, met with them, and they pulled out a facilities map, schematic and marked, and basically said, "Bomb here, and bomb here." I put it in my briefcase, walked it back to the embassy, handed it to the Air Force. And a few days later the bombing did occur. Later on when I was in Kuwait I talked to some of the people, the Kuwaitis who were involved in the resistance there, about their side of that, but we can get into that later.

I ended up doing an awful lot after the liberation. For some reason or another, my phone and my fax, or the fax in the econ section, became the contact point and we were dealing with what we called the "purple death ray people," and that would be, you know, someone calls up and says, "I have a purple death ray that can solve the fire fighting. If you give me a million dollars (or whatever), this will go on." We toasted about four fax machines just overloaded with stuff coming in; engineering drawings and everything else. But it was an interesting process, once again involving Bechtel and Kuwait Petroleum. It was the type of thing that everybody was rushing to get into Kuwait and there was no particular reason for me to go there. There were problems getting equipment in and at one point Kuwait Petroleum came and basically asked to charter a C-5A in order to bring in a whole work over rig from Houston, which I helped arrange. It was one of the more bizarre moments of go and rent an Air Force plane.

*Q: The C-5 is the biggest plane in our inventory.*

TYSON: Right. It's a huge cargo plane.

*Q: Who was making the decisions of who knows what they're talking about and who doesn't, on this fire-fighting thing?*

TYSON: There really weren't all that many decisions. First of all, a lot of it was experience. On the fire-fighting in the past, what had happened is that basically it came down to the difference between a one-off construction or making a custom-made suit versus an assembly line. This was one of the few situations in the world. There was something in, I think '47, in Borneo or whatever, where there was a field on fire, but most of the time fire-fighting involved one, perhaps two, wells going out. Red Adair or Boots and Coots or one of the well-known people comes out, handles it, and it's very specific to that. In Kuwait you had close to 500 wells on fire and a number of them gushing oil, but not on fire. There were different problems. There were the ones gushing, but not on fire, the ones on fire, and then a subset of that - about 60 of them were extremely high pressure with hydrogen sulfide, and extremely dangerous. So there was a basic effort to first get water pumped in, and then gradually an assembly line sort of development to handle the well-killing and the fire-fighting. And it went along surprisingly fast. There had been predictions that it might take as long as five years and ultimately it was done in somewhere between nine and ten months. As it went on, there were a whole lot of different groups wanting to get involved in it - the Hungarians and others, and some of them were very good at it.

The Kuwaitis had a lot of their own indigenous engineers involved in this, including one woman. So with the support of Bechtel and a number of other things, Red Adair, Boots and Coots, and the fire fighters - I think there were four groups, the fire fighters specifically, it went remarkably well. A lot of it was cutting red tape; getting stuff to move and doing things like that. I don't think there was any one real set decision making process; there was an awful lot of autonomy and by working and coordinating with the Kuwaitis we just got a lot of stuff done, and frankly didn't ask Washington in many instances.

*Q: Just for the record, these fires were started by the Iraqis to be beastly, was that it?*

TYSON: Pretty much. They wired the well heads and exploded them on the way out. It was truly one of the great crimes, and ecological crimes, of all time. I guess eventually the Kuwaitis will have an estimate on how much oil they lost, but at the initial stages I seem to recall that six million barrels a day was either going up in flames or just flowing out onto the desert. So it was a huge loss.

*Q: Well then, this would be what - '81?*

TYSON: It would be '91. Kuwait would've been liberated by about May, so it would basically be the end of '91, early '92.

**HOWARD B. SCHAFFER**  
**Kuwait Task Force**  
**Washington, DC (1990)**

*Ambassador Howard B. Schaffer was born in New York in 1929. He graduated from Harvard University and then served overseas in the US Army before joining the Foreign Service in 1955. Overseas, Schaffer served in Malaysia, India, Korea, Pakistan, Cyprus, and as Ambassador to Bangladesh. In Washington DC, he served in the Office of Personnel, as the Country Director for Nepal, India, and Sri Lanka, and as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Asia. Ambassador Schaffer was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1997.*

*Q: By 1990, your year at the Center was completed. You then served briefly on the Kuwait Task Force. How did that come about?*

SCHAFFER: That was essentially a temporary assignment, which I felt obliged to take on. At that point, there were no policy-making positions available. The Kuwait Task Force focused primarily on disseminating information it received from the Operations Center; it had no policy-making function. At the end of each "watch" it put out a report summarizing events, but it was in no way a player in the foreign policy development process.

**LAWRENCE H. HYDLE**  
**Kuwait Task Force**  
**Washington, DC (1990-1991)**

*Lawrence H. Hydle was born in Indiana in 1940. He graduated from Occidental College in 1960 and also attended Columbia University. Mr. Hydle entered the Foreign Service in 1965. In addition to serving in Ghana, he held positions in Vietnam, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, and Kuwait. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 21, 1994.*

*Q: Then you left there and you got caught up in the Kuwait task force, what was that all about?*

HYDLE: The Kuwait task force was formed after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. It was just an operations center, 24 hours a day monitoring messages and writing situation reports, one day situation reports, and working a lot of odd hours like the operations center people themselves do. I did that from about October 90 to July 91, encompassing the period of the war, Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Nothing in particular sticks to my mind. I followed events like everybody else did.

Then in January, when the air war started, we had pulled a lot of people back from our posts overseas, especially the Near East post. They were given jobs on the task force so all of a sudden I was out of an assignment. So I went back to say, "Now what?"

They said that they wanted somebody to go to Bahrain to be a political/military officer. This was kind of a strange deal but one that gave me the opportunity to go to Bahrain and watch the war from a ring side seat. They had asked for a political/military officer because there were a lot of

agreements that had to be reached with the Bahrainis to support our efforts in Desert Shield. But by the time they had a way of responding to that, all the agreements had been reached.

So it turned out that what Ambassador Hosler wanted me to do was to write a sort of history of US-Bahrain cooperation which would support stronger relationships after the war. Bahrain, as you know, is a very small country in the Persian Gulf. There's a causeway that links it to Saudi Arabia. It's always been more pro-American than the other sheikdoms in the area but it can't get too far out in front of them. So there's always a lot of sensitivity. They want a strong relationship with the US to protect their independence against the Saudis, the Iranians who at one time claimed Bahrain as part of Iran, and other sheikdoms. But they can't overdo it.

So basically what I did was write; miscellaneous things--I did some congressional delegations, people that were coming through. I did this history of relations, bringing it up through Desert Shield and Desert Storm. As I recall, the ambassador and the DCM were rewriting my stuff, it was a matter of tone mostly, they were going for a much more boosterish tone which I think really undercut them. You know how these things are when people write back saying that the Bahrainis are simply wonderful. You think that the guy is taking leave of his senses and it undercuts what you're really trying to accomplish.

I also had some reservations about relations that would be all that close afterwards. I thought, and I may be wrong, that if the US had extremely close relations with any country people would start looking more closely at that country's human rights practices, at various things. They would say, "Why are we supporting these guys and why don't we pressure them." So it could backfire to some extent.

I think eventually the problem has been managed. The fact that it's not in the news means we're getting, more or less, what we need from them.

**MARY A. RYAN**  
**Kuwait Task Force**  
**Washington, DC (1990-1991)**

*Mary A. Ryan was born in New York in 1940. She received both her bachelor's and master's degrees from St. John's University. Her career in the Foreign Service include positions in Italy, Honduras, Mexico, Ivory Coast, Sudan, and an ambassadorship to Swaziland. She was also a member of the Kuwaiti Task Force during the Gulf War. Ambassador Ryan was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2003.*

RYAN: I worked on the Kuwait Task Force from the start of the process – from the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in August 1990 as the PDAS in consular affairs. And mercifully, the assistant secretary was on a trip at that time, and she would call back periodically and ask if she should return. And I always lied and said, "No, you shouldn't return," because I could not possibly face what we were facing with the Task Force and the American citizens' relatives in the States so

upset and the whole crisis of the moment – all the Americans in Iraq and Kuwait – and having to take care of the assistant secretary at the same time. And so I was, “Oh, no, Betty, better if you stay out and go wherever you were going and doing whatever you were doing.” And then one day Mr. Selin called me and Mr. Selin told me that Betty had spoken to him and asked him if she should return. And he said, “She told me that you had said that no, she didn’t need to.” And I thought to myself, “It’s all up now, because of course she should come back, and he’s going to know that and he’s going to have told her to come back.” And he said, “I told her too that she didn’t need to return.” And we never spoke of it. I never went to him and said, “Thank you so much.” We never spoke of it, but we both knew that we both couldn’t deal with this if she were there, because it was just too awful. Well, it was always awful, but it was so awful in the beginning. Because we really did not know that people were going to be saved. Then, of course, when she did come back, I’m sure people told her that she should have come back earlier. And she was upset, and anyway, that was when she let me go, and John Kelly rescued me. And then I went to replace Ryan Crocker – a very sorry replacement, I always thought, because I never knew, or could never know, NEA the way Ryan Crocker knew NEA.

*Q: Where is he now, do you know?*

RYAN: Ryan is at the War College, I think, at NDU [National Defense University]. He would be a very good person to talk to; he’s just a superb officer. I remember saying to Jock Covey, who was the PDAS in NEA at that time, and Jock came about something and I said, “This is a different Ryan that you’re dealing with, Jock. This is not Ryan Crocker. I don’t know all of these things.”

We were totally consumed by what was going on. And then all of a sudden, in December of 1990, Saddam Hussein let them all go – from Kuwait. I mean, it was just unbelievable. And I don’t know to this minute why he did that. And I wonder if he even knows why he did that. I always thought it was the power of prayer, because believe me, there were an awful lot of people praying for that embassy in Kuwait particularly, because they were trapped on a compound.

*Q: Well, I’ve interviewed Joe Wilson, and he said that he and others (he didn’t take full credit) were talking to the Arabic press who was around and all, and saying that taking hostages and all this, if you’re a leader, it’s a cowardly thing to do, and this is not the way Saladin would have done it, and this type of thing, which, you know, dealing with a megalomaniac like Saddam Hussein, this may have been the seed that had something to do with it.*

RYAN: Yes, that’s probably right, that’s why he always got so involved with weapons of mass destruction, because he he’d look like a very strong leader, confronting the United States, defying us to do our worst, when he didn’t have them. He could have told us that, and everything would have been all right, but he couldn’t do that.

So, then they were all released. It was like December 17<sup>th</sup>. It was like the most wonderful Christmas present that you could possibly have. And we, of course, went to meet with them. We knew these people so well from being on the phone with them all the time and their spouses, wives mostly. And we went to a number of reception areas where they were flown in, and we could finally put names and faces together of people that we had been speaking to deeply. And

that was just tremendously rewarding for me. And I remember having that cell phone at the time and finally finding that I had been on the phone with this woman from Texas whose daughter was married to an Arab, and she was trapped – I can't remember if it was Iraq or Kuwait – and finally getting her, and finally finding her in this crowd of people, and putting her on the phone with her mother. I mean, it was just so rewarding. And even all of the people that we had spoken to so much...in fact, I'm still in touch with one couple; he's gone back to Kuwait, if you can believe that. He does oil, oil exploration or something. He's back there now, and his family is again here – not here, but in the States – the same way they were 10 years ago, 12 years ago. But that went on, that was for me as director, from October of 1990 until May of 1991.

I knew what I really wanted to do when the Task Force ended, or when it was winding down. The Seventh Floor liked having the Task Force far longer than it should have had the Task Force in operation. They used people up terribly, you know – three shifts, 24 hours-a-day; it was really awful. But Mr. Kimmitt the undersecretary for political affairs liked being able to call at 2:00 in the morning and get a status report on anything. Why he would do that, I don't know. So it went on longer than it really needed to. But it was very much winding down by May.

And what I wanted to do was go someplace dark and lie down for, like a year, because I was so tired. I mean, it was just grueling work. Because I thought it was important that I see, you know, every shift. I didn't want to miss a shift. I didn't stay 24 hours a day, I don't mean that, but being there when they came on or when they went off, I thought, was very important, because people were giving up their time. In many cases, they were doing 16 hours a day – certainly in the beginning they were – before we got things going, and a lot of evacuations of the post and I got to know a lot of the NEA hands through that.

But they were setting up the first UN special commission to eliminate the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, and I was asked to go to New York, to the UN, and help them set up their operations; that really was their administrative operation within the special commission. And my job was to find – it was so interesting, because I'd never done anything like this before – try to find people who did explosives – ordnance – demolition work to go to Iraq to explode the mines; to find the weapons of mass destruction then; to do all of that. And I even got a trip with the UN to Kuwait and to Baghdad; I was only there a few months – three, four, something like that. But it was just fascinating. Bob Gallucci was the deputy director of the special commission and Rolf Ekeus from Sweden was the director. It was just a whole new world to me, the way the UN operated. We were in the Directorate for Disarmament, and I was very impressed with the international civil servants that I met in that directorate, and the people that we were able to recruit for the special commission – very talented, very committed, very dedicated people. Having been on the Task Force for so long, it was a great privilege to be able to travel with them to Kuwait and to Iraq.

And my memories of that trip – we stopped first in Bahrain; we had some meetings there with Bahraini leaders, and then we went to Kuwait – and really you would have thought that Kuwait had lost the war – the state of Kuwait city at that time, in May/June 1991. Fires were still burning, there was this terrible smell of gasoline all over – it made you sick, actually – and anything nice in that city had been defaced by the Iraqis or destroyed by the Iraqis. They set fires in the lobbies of hotels. They broke through the ceiling to let the smoke out. It was almost like

the barbarians.

*Q: It sounds almost like vandals, doesn't it?*

RYAN: It really was like that. Everything, everything was defaced. Signs were ripped down or defaced. Roads were torn up. Hotels were destroyed. It was horrible, absolutely horrible. And then we went to Baghdad, where I had my first experience with precision bombing, or the results of precision bombing, which of course, we had heard about on the Task Force and had watched on CNN. But it was amazing. We flew into a military airport outside of Baghdad. And there were all these hangars, and inside the hangars were all destroyed planes. Somehow the bombs had gone through – they hadn't dropped on top of the hangars, they had gone through the hangars; it was like a giant had gone through just ripping up the planes. And then we got to Baghdad, and there would be buildings there with this hole in the middle; the buildings would be standing, and the communications center, or ministry, was gone. It was absolutely amazing. And we went to the UN headquarters in Baghdad, where we found – as we would have found had we gone, I'm sure, to the American Embassy, but we didn't – their FSNs who had stayed and protected and tried to work as best they could during this whole terrible experience when the United States, well the coalition, and Iraq were at war.

But what I remember one of the Iraqi FSNs telling us was that when people were asking – people knew him – people were asking how it was during the war, and he said that the thing that he couldn't stand about it all was the screaming of the children when the bombs dropped. It cut me to the heart, because it was our bombing that was making the children scream.

And we stayed at the, I guess it was the Rasheed Hotel, and we knew everything was bugged, and so we never...we always went outside – it was like Moscow in the old days – we went outside to talk about everything. I remember one time going back to my room, and when I traveled, I always had all of my cosmetics and lotions and things like that in plastic bags, and of course, when we got to the hotel, they had been taken out of the plastic bags. All of the plastic bags had disappeared. And so I was telling one of my colleagues about this afterwards that, you know, all of these bags had disappeared, isn't that funny? And he said, "Well, why don't you go back to your room at the hotel and say that out loud", you know, "Gee, I wonder where all the bags went?" I felt like a fool, but I did, and the next day, back they were. And then I felt bad because probably the Iraqis needed these plastic bags more than I needed them, and I should have let them have them. But it was so funny, because everything was bugged. But the hotel was lovely; there was plenty of food. I remember telling one of NEA people back in the bureau that there was a lot of food that was really awful food, and he said, "That's Iraq. That's no different than before the war." But it was just a revelation to me, traveling with the UN.

We met with Nizar Hamdoun who is now dead. Of course, I remember talking about what the UN was going to do, what the special commission was going to do, and leaving him absolutely no room to object at all. And then the commission went in – well, we brought in a lot of people with us – but after we left, the UN went about their work of looking for the weapons of mass destruction.

*Q: Well, and this, of course, is almost the issue today, we're talking about in 2004 whether*



*weapons of mass destruction – this is before our war with Iraq last year. But at that time, what was the feeling from the UN side of what were weapons of mass destruction and what was the status?*

RYAN: Well, we were very confident then that he certainly had biological and chemical weapons, because we knew he had those; he had used them on his own people. The Israelis had bombed their nuclear reactor – whatever they were doing to build nuclear weapons – so there was some question about whether they had been able to put that back together. That was well before the war. I don't remember when that happened, but I do remember that the Israelis did that, thank God. But there was tremendous confidence – well, almost certainty, it was certainty – that he did have weapons of mass destruction, at least in terms of chemical and biological weapons; that was then the responsibility for UNSCOM [the UN Special Commission on the Elimination of Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction] to find and destroy. And, in fact, they did find and destroy chemical stores, as I remember it, but I was gone from the UN by then, but that's what I remember.

*Q: What was your impression of the UN operation that you saw?*

RYAN: I was impressed with the UN operation as I saw it. The directorate for disarmament, I thought, was staffed by very professional international civil servants, and I thought that the people that were recruited from various countries – Sweden, Russia, U.S. – were very, very able. Bob Gallucci, I mean, you couldn't do much better than Bob Gallucci. I don't remember all the names of the others from all the countries. But there was an American of British origin who had been in the British army and then had been in the U.S. Marines, Alister Livingston, who was very knowledgeable about military operations and weapons. He was there; somehow somebody found him and recruited him. And then the people that we found to do the demolition work were really impressive. I didn't know anything about people like that, or how they worked, but they just went in and destroyed.

*Q: How did you find – you were there shortly after the end of the war – how did you find the Iraqis you all were dealing with?*

RYAN: Well, the Iraqis that we were dealing with officially – that we called on – were hostile and unfriendly, but the people who were doing the – it wasn't the negotiation, it was telling them what was going to happen – were extremely strong and didn't "pull any punches"; they didn't leave any room for the Iraqis to squirm around and get out of things. That's what I remember being impressed with, because I didn't know what the UN was like really and how they would behave. And then the Iraqis that we met in the hotel – like the staff of the hotel – were very friendly. The Iraqis who followed us around were very unfriendly and hostile, and I thought, looked like they had just come out of the basement, where they had tortured children. They were just the most horrible men – just very rough and hostile would be the only word that I can use, and very controlling. Because we were only allowed to go within the perimeter of the grounds of the hotel; we couldn't go outside of that. I didn't know if you would want to or not. I didn't know what the Iraqi population would be like towards us. And then when we went in cars places, we always had them as an escort, and so we couldn't deviate from the route that they let you have. They would take you. And they would always hang around the lobby of the hotel, so if you

ever thought of trying to get out to see what Baghdad was like, you couldn't, because they would stop you.

**JOHN T. MCCARTHY**  
**Ambassador**  
**Tunis, Tunisia (1990-1994)**

*John T. McCarthy was born in New York, New York in 1939. He received a bachelor's degree from Manhattan College in 1961 and entered the Foreign Service in 1962. His career included positions in Belgium, Thailand, Pakistan, Lebanon, and Washington, DC. Mr. McCarthy was interviewed in 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.*

MCCARTHY: It's right around the corner from the embassy. A very nondescript little street but, nonetheless, it's there.

The Tunisians, for a variety of reasons, didn't go along with the moderate Arab consensus in backing Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Pretty early on to come on board with us in terms of the need to resist the Iraqi takeover of Kuwait.

What they say is that they were opposed to a military solution. They thought that there was always a possibility to negotiate a compromise outcome. I think that's nonsense. I don't think that's really what happened in the event.

There was a new president in Tunisia, relatively new, he'd taken over in 87 from the guy who'd been around from the very beginning, from the Second World War, Habib Bourguiba. Zine Ben Ali is a very solid plodding kind of individual. He's got lots of good points, he's got some bad points as well. I think he saw the Gulf war as a chance to get out of Bourguiba's shadow and to establish his own somewhat more pro-Arab, pro-nationalist foreign policy. He glommed on to this one as a way to make his mark. But he's a smart man. And, within a couple of months, as I say this was happening in I guess the really tense period was after we started the air war.

Q: *This would be in...*

MCCARTHY: In January, February of 1991. There were some demonstrations in the streets of Tunis. There was some sitting on the fence in the Arab league discussions by the Tunisian delegates. Careers got broken in the process. A couple of people moved pretty quickly through the foreign ministry and at the Tunisian embassy in Washington at that time. But being smart, the Tunisians figured out pretty quickly that they picked the wrong horse in this race. Right away, by which I mean in a couple of months, they were looking for ways to rebuild the relationship with the US. They guessed wrongly at a poor time.

Their military and economic assistance programs were cut that year out of pique maybe, maybe not, because there wasn't much money to go around anymore. This was the beginning of

cutbacks in congress of the foreign assistance program in general. Once Tunisia was off the list, it was very hard to get them back on. So, in a way, this was the death knell of the military and economic assistance program that had delivered over a billion American dollars to Tunisia in the course of three decades.

*Q: I want to get when you went there and how long you were there.*

MCCARTHY: Sorry, these are all preliminaries.

Through the spring of 1991, when Bob Pelletreau was still the ambassador, we had probably the worst period. There had been other incidents when Israel went in, for instance, and took out a couple of PLO people in the mid-80s. This was certainly one of the worst periods in US-Tunisian relations. We were quite angry with them. I think the rest of the moderate Arab world was also annoyed. When there was a crunch period and we were counting on the moderate states to align with us, this one whom everybody anticipated would do the right thing, just sat around and fiddled for a couple of months.

So, a real falling out period. Bob Pelletreau was due to leave. Bob must have left in May. I didn't get confirmed, nobody got confirmed that summer as early as we had anticipated. I was prepared to go at any stage through the late Spring, early Summer. But, in fact, it turned out that by the time I got confirmed it was July, I'm trying to tie this in with my son's wedding. But I must have been confirmed around the 4th of July, just before the Senate went on their break.

I went out there in early July of 91 against this backdrop of falling relations or a falling off in relations. By the time I got there, the Tunisians had obviously decided that they were going to cultivate the new American ambassador. That they were going to cozy up to us again. This was one of the ways that the relationship would get back up to an even keel. No problem with that because George Bush who was then the president, our president, had this very nice custom of receiving outgoing ambassadors and their families.

We had a couple of pictures. But then he did take me aside for 10, 15 minutes for a conversation about the country. He said to me, and I was very impressed with the president's knowledge of the intimate details I would say, of one relatively small bilateral relationship. He said, "Look, I know we've had a falling out with the Tunisians. That being said, they've been around for a long time. We've been around for a long time. They had accepted the PLO in Tunis, they've been very helpful with us on Middle East peace issues. I think we have to let bygones be bygones. Your job is to go out there and rebuild the relationship."

So, I had in a very clear sense, direct marching orders from the president to go back and to rebuild the relationship. He was one of the first here in town. I think maybe the state department was ready for that kind of approach as well. But, it was quite clear that some of the other agencies, particularly DOD, felt that the Tunisians should be kept stewing a little while longer. They hadn't helped us when we needed them so "damn them" kind of. This reverberated around the mid-echelons of various Washington agencies for some time.

*Q: Very interesting because often you get what amounts to the middle level people, particularly at the National Security Council or something like that, take these things very personally. Particularly if it's a country that's kind of small and not too important. Somehow it's a nice place to show you're macho and throw your weight around. You have a president, of course, who was intimately, I mean, he was the guy who put that alliance. One can never forget that he really, personally, put that alliance together. Yet, he didn't have an enemies list. Although the Nixon-Kissinger period where I'm sure it would have been: Let them rot.*

MCCARTHY: No, I think it was quite clear that he had already moved on to the next stage. That he and Baker had already in mind the idea of making a new stab at getting an overall peace in the Middle East. That Tunisia had been helpful in the past, might very well be helpful again. And that I should go back there and rebuild the relationship.

He also had a couple of quite ribald stories to tell about Habib Bourguiba having met him over the years a number of times. Bourguiba was famous for trying to seduce anything in a skirt, no matter what the occasion. Bush had a couple of stories about that. He'd been to Tunisia a couple of times. Both as vice president and probably also out-of-office, just in a private capacity. He liked the place. He really wished me very well in a very warm and also specific kind of way. I left the Oval Office thinking, this is clear. I know what I'm suppose to do now.

As I said, when I got to Tunis it was quite clear that Ben Ali had taken aside his 3 or 4 top ministers and said, "Seduce this guy if you can, really woo him. Spend a lot of time with him." Because I got there and there had been a period of fairly cold relations for a few months. Bob Pelletreau had been gone a couple of months.

No sooner was I off the plane and I had been invited to go to a circumcision party for the son of no one in the government but a very close personal friend of the president. While I was there, I was sat at the table with the Minister of the Interior who was a very close friend of the president. He sort of took me under his wing and he became a good friend over the next 3 years. His name is Abdela Kaller. Kaller and a man named Zuwari, who was then, I guess, the Minister of Justice, and foreign minister Ben Yania, and this very close friend of the president's whose name was Kamelel Taif, not the man whose party I had been to but his brother, and a guy whose name was Maooui, who was the president's political advisor in the palace.

These guys, over the next 4 or 5 months, every several weeks one of them would invite me sometimes alone, sometimes with my wife, to a very small dinner party. Where there would be 6 or 8 or 10 of us and just the 2 of us as outsiders, or just me at a lunch as an outsider, and these very top Tunisians. Not the president. The president of Tunisia is a fairly aloof guy. You didn't get to see him all that often but these guys would make it clear, they would, in fact, tell you what he had mentioned. They would say, "I told the president I was dining with you tonight. He told me to tell you this." And then, I would sort of tell them what was on my mind. The next time we spoke or saw each other they would say, "I told the president what you told me and this is what he said in exchange."

It was a fairly intense wooing by these guys who were closest to the president. Since, as I said, my president had told me to go back and rebuild the relationship, within a couple of months I think the Gulf War after effects were very much gone.

In fact, the other thing that happened. I got there, as I said in early-July or mid-July, it seems to me it was on the 4th of August that Jim Baker, the secretary of state, came to Tunis. We had word about a week or so before that that he was going to come. I called up these several friends of mine and said, "The secretary of state is going to come. I haven't presented my credentials yet. It certainly would be personally and professionally and officially, from the US government's point of view, better if the ambassador on the ground had presented his credentials so that I could take a full part in the secretary's visit."

They didn't normally move people up in terms of presenting credentials. They had a system, it was always Thursday morning, blah blah blah. But they obviously put their heads together and said, "It's probably in our interest to get this thing over with." So, in fact, I had been on the ground, from the point of view of my fellow ambassadors, an enviously short period of time before I did present my credentials. I think I even got, somehow the way they did it because of timing, I got to present my credentials just before a very lovely Jordanian poet, who was the new Jordanian ambassador, I must say he never made the slightest fuss about it, therefore I was ahead of him in precedence for the next several years. Again, some of the ambassadors who count on things like this, always pointed out how unfair that was to the poor Jordanian who was a very sweet guy, it obviously rolled right off his back.

**DAVID E. REUTHER**  
**Political Officer (TDY)**  
**Kuwait City (1991-1992)**

*David E. Reuther was born in Washington in 1942. He received a BA from Occidental College in 1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1970. His assignments abroad include Udorn, Bangkok, Songkhla, Taipei, Beijing, Khartoum, and Kuwait. Mr. Reuther was interviewed by Raymond C. Ewing in 1996.*

REUTHER: In preparation for that assignment I was sent to Kuwait to help reestablish the embassy's Political Section. The war rather inconveniently ended before the State Department's summer transfer cycle, so the Department was assigning temporary duty personnel as an interim measure.

*Q: How long had the embassy been reopened then when you got there?*

REUTHER: The embassy opened shortly after Desert Storm end in late February. Part of the symbolism of the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty.

*Q: So, you were there five or six months after that.*

REUTHER: About three or four months after the end of the war. I arrived the last week in May. There was nothing ordinary about the work at post-war Embassy Kuwait. Newly appointed Ambassador Gnehm arrived on the heels of the military. We heard stories that he and a Special Forces unit entered the embassy, kicked down the door to the ambassador's office, and looked for booby traps.

Kuwait was a very interesting experience on a couple of ways. First, I had never seen a battlefield before. Secondly, Kuwait must have looked like Rome after the Visigoths visited. The Iraqis absolutely vacuumed up everything in the city. There wasn't a screwdriver. We were put into a hotel across the street from the embassy. Iraqi troops had kicked in all the doors, stole the doorknobs, stole the TV, and stole the sheets. They burned the Sheraton Hotel in another section of town because they couldn't loot it fast enough, damaging the top four floors. The looting was total and it was not all part of the panic of a quick departure. Looting was Iraq's occupation policy.

Obviously it was difficult to operate; there were absolutely no supplies in Kuwait. You had to bring in absolutely everything you needed. Before I arrived I didn't understand is that Kuwait city is built like Los Angeles – its geography presumes automobiles. Well, there were no automobiles. The Iraq's took them. Iraqi looting and Kuwait geography contributed on one of the rancid journalist pieces of the time. The wire services carried a story that one of the first ships to come into liberated Kuwait had automobiles on it. The underlying message was look how selfish the Kuwaitis. In fact, the cars were desperately needed because of the desert heat and a city laid out like Los Angeles.

*Q: All spread out you mean?*

REUTHER: All spread out with no public transportation and no sidewalks, but beautiful freeways. So, if you understood that the city was totally dependent on the automobile and the Iraqis had stolen absolutely everything with wheels, you would not have been surprised that one of the first shiploads of material into this looted city was automobiles, otherwise nothing could be accomplished. Of course, the Kuwaitis got a great black eye for that.

Then there were the oil well fires. I had seen the pictures of black clouds and oil mist on the white desert sand, but wasn't prepared for the constant noise, the roar. It was like sticking your ear into a jet engine. There was an incredibly deafening noise. I was prepared for the dark skies and the fire and the smell, but it was the noise took me unawares as we traveled through Kuwait.

As an officer in the Political Section I had some internal reporting responsibilities, but was primarily recruited to work with the United Nations organization and the NGOs who were trying to cope with the refugee problems and the restoration of infrastructure services. Work similar to my Khartoum duties.

*Q: Were you doing some reporting?*

REUTHER: We were doing some reporting, but primarily coordinating with the UN. The

Department wanted someone who understood the issues, who knew the UN, what its offices were capable of doing and what we should expect of them.

*Q: How long were you in Kuwait?*

REUTHER: Not very long, six weeks, through the 4th of July -- a memorable Fourth of July to be in liberated Kuwait. I know this assignment was six weeks, because more than that and the regulations require the Department to pay TDY. I returned to the States on July 15.

**RICHARD MCKEE**  
**Office Director, Arabian Peninsula**  
**Washington, DC (1991-1993)**

*Richard McKee was born in Pennsylvania in 1941. He attended Cornell University for a BA, the University of Virginia for a MA and then joined the Foreign Service in 1965. McKee served overseas in Bolivia, India, Pakistan, Tunis, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. McKee also served as the Office Director for the Arab Peninsula and on the Board of Examiners. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.*

MCKEE: I got a reassignment to go back to Washington, where I hadn't worked in since 1977, to be the office director for the Arabian Peninsula. It was a position that I wanted. I did it for two years. It was undoubtedly the most difficult position I ever held in the Foreign Service. I'm not a particularly good bureaucrat. I didn't like Washington. I did well enough at it that at the end of it David Mack, my boss and good friend who saved my posterior on many occasions, asked me if I wanted to do it for another year. I said no, I didn't want to do it.

*Q: What does the Arabian Peninsula encompass?*

MCKEE: Well, that was one of the problems, in a way, with the desk, it's the Saudis, but it's also, we used to call them Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs if the Saudis were Snow White, then you've got the Seven Dwarfs - Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, and then there were two Yemens, only one of which we recognized. So you had out there six American Ambassadors all thinking they were very important people and demanding service from the desk, and then there were also six Arab Ambassadors in Washington. Now Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador, didn't even operate at the State Department level, by the way. He operated at the White House level. But the rest of these guys were fairly small fish. And they often had difficulties seeing Assistant Secretaries or one of the deputies for NEA, so they would come visit me.

*Q: Well, wasn't there a carry over of globalism arms, particularly after the Gulf War with Bahrain?*

MCKEE: Oh, absolutely. Oh, yes. Relations were very, very good, particularly with Kuwait, but also with the others. Other countries, except Yemen, the two halves of which were united was,

soon after I left as office director. Our relations were very good, in that sense it was all very close.

*Q: How about Kuwait? What, this is sort of the aftermath of the war.*

MCKEE: The flames were still burning when I became Office Director so there was a whole series of efforts literally of putting out the flames. The Kuwaiti Ambassador, Dr. Muhammed, was a nice guy. Skip Gnehm was the Ambassador in Kuwait and he was, it's not the Islamic thing so say, but he was a demigod there. So that relationship was really very good. But that said, you know, we urged the Kuwaitis for example to hold elections and liberalize their treatment of women, because we had to justify our intervention on some basis in addition to defending sovereignty and keeping Saddam from the oil wells.

*Q: How did that go in your time?*

MCKEE: I don't know. The Kuwaitis, as I recall, were members of Parliament, they certainly did hold elections, there were women members of Parliament I think. But they, you know, they said yes and did nothing. Americans, they have a very short attention span, everyone knows.

*Q: How about Qatar and the UAE, did they...*

MCKEE: Well one of the interesting things I did was to take a trip out to the region with Dick Clarke, who was then the head of the whole pol-mil bureau, who was then looking for places where we could pre-position materiel, but not soldiers, in the event of another crisis in the Gulf. I chuckle now, because we persuaded the Qataris to accept a very austere kind of depot. Now, Qatar has become kind of the spear of our efforts to move into Iraq.

*Q: Well, Oman had, was also a place where we had a lot of stuff in there.*

MCKEE: Yes, we had base rights that we could use on Masirah Island. The Omanis I really liked, they were really quite different from the other Gulf Arabs. For one thing they had had an empire of their own, including a port on the Baluchi coast of Pakistan and Zanzibar. Also in terms of Islamic strictures, they were different from the others. I liked the Omanis.

*Q: Talk about Saudi Arabia, or Yemen, before we get to talk- (end of tape)*

*I think it was, when the Gulf War started, it was practically the only country around that supported Saddam Hussein. What happened after the war?*

MCKEE: Well, the Yemeni economy was in pretty rotten shape because the Saudis had expelled hundreds of thousands of Yemeni workers and wouldn't let them back into the country. Our relations were thin, but not sort of actively antagonistic. One of the key points was that there had been since time immemorial a Jewish presence in Yemen, and there were some very, informal is a nice way to put it, arrangements whereby these folks could leave Yemen and end up in Israel. And keeping that conduit open and out of newspapers took some doing.



*Q: Saudi Arabia, again, this would be the aftermath of the war. What were our issues with them and all?*

MCKEE: Well there were some lingering disputes over who would pay how much for the cost of the war. I didn't get directly involved in those battles, that was mostly in the Pentagon. Other questions were things like maintaining the Patriot missile presence in Saudi Arabia, and, for that matter, Kuwait and Bahrain. Now it's all been largely discredited, but in the immediate wake of the liberation of Kuwait, the Patriot missiles were seen as just crucially important to maintaining the security and independence of the Gulf states. The Gulf states were quite willing to pay for these crews. Reflecting the desire to have a good political relationship, the State Department would endorse their requests that these crews stay on, but the Pentagon was quite opposed. These unaccompanied postings to the Gulf resulted in a lot of refusals to reenlist among these very highly trained technicians, so that was of course a source of tension with the Pentagon.

*Q: Were we trusting the Saudis to do something about the role of Yemen and all that?*

MCKEE: No. I could elaborate, but the answer is really no.

*Q: Really no. Was there any effort on any part within our government or outside forces to do something about this?*

MCKEE: Not that I recall. You don't want to know.

*Q: Did, was anybody looking again at the religious teachings, because this later became important ten years later. But what was going on in Saudi schools and Saudi society?*

MCKEE: In that period, '91 to '93, by that time there were very few Saudis in American universities. Twenty years earlier there had been as many as twelve thousand. But the Saudis had built up these local universities, some departments staffed by Western expatriates, but most departments staffed by Palestinians and Egyptians and Sudanese and what have you. The curriculum and all was very heavily Islamic, and Islamic precepts even influenced other areas, science for example, English literature, if you were teaching that. We certainly had the sense that these were lousy universities, really, but I don't think we had the sense that they were schools for fundamentalism. I was conscious, that, in the aftermath of the Gulf war, the social situation in Saudi Arabia was, incredibly enough, even more restrictive than it had been when I lived there from '81 to '86. The religious police paid for by the state were much more intrusive than they had been earlier. We, of course, made sure that everybody understood that the basis of the legitimacy of the Saudi princely family was the perception that they were faithful guardians of the two holy shrines. But no, I really don't recall concerns that either the Saudi government, directly or indirectly or individual Saudis were funding what were seen to be fundamentalist groups.

*Q: You mention that, you know, after your time there you wanted to get out of the bureaucratic battles, ins and outs didn't suit you, how did this manifest itself?*

MCKEE: Well I thought of the endless production of briefing memos. It was often just

regurgitating the same information. I found that frankly extremely unsatisfactory. I thought - maybe this is a confession of my own relative ineffectiveness or simple lack of interest - I don't know. But I found that, like when I had been Pakistani desk officer fifteen years earlier, the really sexy issues were taken up by somebody else, one of the functional bureaus or somebody on the sixth floor. The desk officers and the desk were sort of left with the routine, boring stuff, and you know that's not particularly good for morale. It wasn't good for my morale, anyway.

**PAUL H. TYSON**  
**Economic Counselor**  
**Kuwait City, Kuwait (1993-1996)**

*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.*

TYSON: I stayed on in London and I actually got paneled very early on to become economic counselor in Kuwait. So my tour ended in July of '93. We came back home and did home leave and consultations and we flew into Kuwait City on September 1<sup>st</sup> of 1993.

*Q: And you were there until when?*

TYSON: I was there until June of 1996, so it was a three year tour.

*Q: What was the situation in Kuwait when you got there in '93?*

TYSON: The situation in Kuwait was surprisingly good in many ways. Of course there was the invasion/occupation damage, but there had been very little fighting in the city itself; a lot of the major infrastructure had been brought back up so you had electricity, water, air conditioning. The shops were operating. There was a lot of wreckage on the "highway of death" towards Basra, and out in the desert. There was some damage in the city, but you sort of had to look for it. In many ways, the damage to buildings and stuff, including hotels, was somewhat cosmetic; they'd need to redo the exterior and interior walls, but it's not as though they took the structural steel down. So in many ways it was a return to more normalcy.

It was also a big transition for the embassy because there had been the group that had come in right at liberation, reopened the embassy under difficult and adverse circumstances, and now they were being transferred out. It was more of a return to a normal Foreign Service type of post. Ambassador Edward "Skip" Gnehm was there; he had been there since liberation and he stayed until 1994. So I was there for the last year of his term of office out there. He was much admired; very, very active in Kuwait and quite the personality. Very much the right man, at the right

place, at the right time. Not everybody's cup of tea, but a hell of an ambassador. Really knew a lot of people in the country and really pushed the embassy to be out and active, and if anything, I think that the Kuwaitis or certain elements of Kuwaiti society, said that the U.S. Embassy was too active, but so be it.

*Q: How about your view of the Kuwaiti government at that time; were they like the Bourbons – forgot nothing and learned nothing, or was there a change from what you were able to gather?*

TYSON: I think it remains to be seen. There were certainly changes. The parliament had been suspended and it was agreed that it would be restored. There were elections to parliament that occurred shortly before I got there, so you had a new fairly activist parliament. There was a perception that unlike previously, the royal family could not capriciously just dismiss it. It had been suspended for a long time; there had obviously been the invasion, the liberation, and everything else, so there was a large process of the government sorting itself out and a lot of internal political jockeying going on. Frankly as to the long-term political acumen of the Al Sabah family, I think it still remains to be seen. They've learned some things though perhaps not as much as they should have.

*Q: Was there a group of those that stayed behind, and were active in the resistance, who had become a different breed of cat than those who had been taking their vacation in London and just hadn't gone through that? You know, because this often becomes a real divide.*

TYSON: There were some very interesting splits, and in a sense I played an interesting role in that. There were different groups. First of all, as is often the case in that part of the world, you had a lot of the Kuwaitis out of the country on vacation when it was invaded on August 2. So there were any number of people who were not in Kuwait. So right at the beginning, August 2, you've got those who are in, those who are out.

Within the next few months you had a number who found that it not always easy, but there were ways to get out – either over desert tracks, bribing the Iraqis, or any number of other things. So you had a group who left at that point. Some who just took a look and made the choice to do it. Certain specialists, I don't have the whole story – there was no reason I needed it; were ordered out; some of the oil company experts and others. Others stayed behind; others got family members out, that type of thing. I think if there was any dissension between those who stayed and those who left; it would be that group who left Kuwait after the Iraqi occupation. You have that group. Then there's the subset of the actual resistance, including those who were very active in the oil fields in Ahmadi. The Kuwaiti group which was out of the country took a lot of flak; some of which was deserved for the playboy warriors of the discos. Certainly there was a lot of that, I think probably more on the European continent than in London itself. There was a large Kuwaiti community in London. Kuwait had a lot of its assets and financial operations there, including the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Kuwait Petroleum International, their European subsidiary, and the Kuwait Investment Office. My take on the Kuwaitis in London was that I've rarely seen a harder-working bunch of people in my life. If I needed them anytime, seven days a week, I'd call the office and someone was there. There were very, very effective. In fact, some of the Kuwaitis used to joke about certain of their own, that, "My God, we never knew he could work until he had to," and a lot of them were really throwing their backs into the effort. I found

later on when I was in Kuwait and when I would meet many of the people that I had dealt with in London at some of the “diwanis” or the meeting places where the men would sit and talk; I would make a point of saying that I had known them in London and I had certainly appreciated the extraordinary amount of work that they had done for their country and their people.

Obviously this works out very well for other reasons, but it was very easy to do because it was true. And with certain families you could just basically say, “I worked with your brother, your cousin, your nephew,” and I basically said, “I of course know what you went through in terms of the excesses of the occupation, the brutality of the Iraqis, but I gotta tell you, much like the Dutch resistance in exile,” or something like this, “these people played a part in the ultimate liberation of your country.” A few, maybe one or two of the minor Al Sabah who were seen in the discos, but I think the more astute people recognized the publicity problems with that. But from my perspective, the people that I was dealing with were working very, very hard.

Sheik Ali Jabar Al Sabah, who is an Al Sabah married to one of the emir’s daughters, came by for a little Christmas open house that we had; driving a ten-year-old Mercedes, extremely understated - no flash or glitz, and some of the other guests, actually some Iranians that I dealt with because of the oil business, apparently looked at Anwar and said, “Well, how are you related to the emir?” and she said, “He’s my father.” But, I mean, there were some very, very hard-working Kuwaitis.

There’s a whole other story going on with the Spanish investments, which went south to the tune of about five to six billion dollars. But London, in many ways, was really quite the nucleus of Kuwait in exile.

*Q: Did you have any handle on the Spanish connection?*

TYSON: I knew it was going on, but our embassies around Europe were dealing with different aspects of Kuwait. I realize that there was something involving the Kuwait Investment Office, but that didn’t particularly concern me. It would be our embassy in Madrid or the Brits in Madrid. There was a certain compartmentalization. Of course the corporate structures, the expensive lawyers that the Kuwaitis had hired to set up all of this was Grupo Torras in Spain. It was a very different thing. I later got involved with aspects of it in Kuwait when I was there, but there was no particular reason for me to get involved in it in London.

*Q: What was your take on the effect of the expulsion of the Palestinians, and was it a real expulsion of the Palestinians?*

TYSON: It was. First of all, it was rather interesting. I ended up butting heads about this with Ambassador Gnehm. I was working with the Kuwaitis on the return; the fire-fighting, the reconstruction.

*Q: This is when you’re in London?*

TYSON: In London. So, you start with, “Well, what happens?” I mean, it’s sort of like a Berlin airlift type of thing. How do you supply a city or a country with “x” million people, and the number was approximately 2.2 million previously. It became rapidly clear that the math of most

of the Kuwaitis was 2.2 minus 400,000 Palestinians equals 1.8. In some of the cable reporting that I was doing I was mentioning that there were definite statements that there would be no role for the Palestinians in a liberated Kuwait. Ambassador Gnehm came through, and of course he had been named, and he was dealing with the government in Taif and he sort of said to me, "Well you don't need to say that anymore," and I said, "Well, I continue to hear it." "Well you don't need to say that anymore," and I finally said, "\$20 says that a year after liberation there'll be less than 50,000 Palestinians in a liberated Kuwait," and he didn't take the bet, but the numbers were pretty accurate. There were 400,000 at the time of the Iraqi occupation; by the time of Desert Storm, something like 200,000 either had been forced out, had chosen to leave; any number of other things, and then I think in fairly short order after that, many left. Now a few Palestinians who were extremely well-connected managed to get back in or stay on, but it was generally with the royal family acquiescence. And sometimes it was a shell game; they had to get another passport, like a British passport or something, but those numbers were very, very limited. There are also a number of instances of particularly Palestinian women married to Kuwaitis who ended up staying on, too.

*Q: What was the effect of taking this entrepreneurial group out of Kuwait when you were economic officer there?*

TYSON: It opened up opportunities for others. First of all, I think the next generation – the younger generation of Kuwaitis – suddenly had to put their back into it as opposed to basically throwing a bunch of papers at the Palestinian clerk. Kuwaitis are also sophisticated consumers of labor; they got Filipinos in, Indians, and others, to fill in on some of those jobs.

The most striking change was probably in the neighborhood just over from us. We lived in a district called Jabria. Hawali was one district over and the joke was that it was the capital city of Palestine. I remember I used to get my electronics and stuff repaired at Palestine T.V. in Hawali. And that had been quite the neighborhood and obviously the population was much less, and other groups and so forth had moved in. I think it was an absolutely wrenching blow to the Palestinians and a lot of work that I did involved aid to the Palestinians – not exactly the most popular thing with the Kuwaitis. I dealt with Palestinian monies and reparations.

*Q: Well what were you getting from accounts? I mean, after sorting it through, how have essentially the Palestinian population behaved when the Iraqis came in?*

TYSON: Gnehm disagrees with it. It's oil. It's always been oil. There's a hundred billion barrels worth of reserves in Kuwait; on field, Berghan has got about fifty. Iraq, with Iraq and Kuwait, is still not Saudi Arabia, but it's a major world power...

*Q: In this immediate post-war period, did we have any real leverage as far as getting what we could out of our economic relationship with the Kuwaitis?*

TYSON: Oh, we got a huge amount out of it. The anecdotal statement was that we made money on the war, given their transfer payments to us, which were huge. We certainly got in there with huge amounts of weapon sales; U.S. contractors and so forth had the ability, at least for a time, to come in without local sponsors. No, I think there was certainly money to be made and the

Kuwaitis needed things and I think we provided them. We were certainly very, very concerned about the commercial opportunities and the economic aspects. Of course much of this was done at extremely high levels, but other countries were also getting payments, too. The Russians got a billion dollar loan which I doubt that the Kuwaitis ever collected on. Turkey had a commitment for a total of a billion dollars over five years; 200 million a year. I think Syria, the Egyptians, any number of others, got debt forgiveness, actual grants, low-concession loans. The Kuwaitis were passing out the daj and it bought them support.

*Q: Did you find when you went there that economic ministries, with whom I imagine you dealt, were pretty much back and running?*

TYSON: They were very much back and running, and in many cases like at the Kuwait Investment Authority; it was people I had dealt with in London. The key officials were people I had known in London. I think the economists who are always more tuned in to a world economy, and the Kuwaitis are as sophisticated as the day is long, were always easier to deal with. At the top level, they're pros. You'd get visitors in from Washington and the Kuwaitis at the upper tier are extremely impressive. So in terms of that, professionally it was a great deal of fun.

*Q: Was there any Iranian factor while you were there?*

TYSON: There certainly is. The Shia population in Kuwait tends to be of Iranian origin. There have always been ties to Iran. I just think that there was always an undercurrent of potential unrest or hostility, but people other than myself are probably better qualified to comment on that.

*Q: Saudi Arabia; how were ties there? Have they improved?*

TYSON: The Kuwaitis understood the importance of Saudi Arabia, and of course the Saudi viewpoint is important. But they're very different societies in some ways. It's sort of like Mississippi attempting to dictate to New York state, or California. The Kuwaitis were not always in tune with the more conservative aspects of Saudi society. There's always been a certain amount of backbiting and rivalry there, which I think continued at lower levels or sotto voice. Clearly the Kuwaitis understood that the support of their GCC [Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf] neighbors was very important, so they were going to have to work at it.

*Q: Prior to the Gulf War the Kuwaitis had kept most of their Arab neighbors at arm's length, saying, "We know how to handle this," and "We can take care of it," and "Don't bother us." The Kuwaitis, let's say, were not beloved by its Arab people including Egypt and Saudi Arabia.*

TYSON: Oh I think that was true then, and to some degree it probably continues to this day. They were seen as difficult, distant, arrogant, and any number of other things. I think there was a sentiment that, well it was a pity that it had to happen, in terms of the Iraqi invasion, but if it had to happen to someone, it was just as well that it happened to the Kuwaitis.

Talking with Kuwaitis, both then and later, you get another Arab saying something pretty hateful and the Kuwaitis would be shocked, and I think you get a bunch of ex-pats there, including the Brits or the Americans, who would say, "Haven't you heard that before? We certainly have."

*Q: When I asked you what was the major economic thing, you said it was oil, and you implied that Skip Gnehm, the ambassador, didn't think so.*

TYSON: Well, he basically said that the reasons we did it was the defense of liberty and the repelling regression, and any number of other things, which were all, I think, fairly true in some ways, but there are other ways who've pointed out that we would not exactly have done it in the same situation if it were, say, Mauritania. This was striking much closer at U.S. vital interests, and certainly the oil focused everybody's attention.

*Q: I must say that I personally had no problem at all with doing, in fact I think it was absolutely justified because we're not only talking about Kuwaiti oil, but really the eastern province, and to having probably as nasty a dictator as has come down the pike sitting on...*

TYSON: 400 billion barrels of oil.

*Q: It just wasn't in the cards. I mean, it was nothing to be ashamed of to say, "We're not going to let this happen."*

TYSON: I think that was basically true and I honestly think that in the period from about August 2 to August 11, if Saddam had rolled further down, he probably could've gotten to the causeway to Bahrain without undue problems. His supply lines and stuff would've been stretched, but he probably could've gotten further into the eastern province.

*Q: I've talked to people who've dealt with the Iraqis, and who were in Baghdad, and said the Iraqis had terrible supply problems. This is during the Iran-Iraq War; they just couldn't deliver. They'd get something going and they just couldn't support it.*

TYSON: There were stories, in the later stages of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, of Iraqi soldiers begging food from the Kuwaitis because they weren't being supplied. Now obviously, this had its advantages in that, if you've got a soldier there who needs food, he's quite susceptible to bribery on any number of levels - and I think a great deal of that did occur. There were clearly supply problems.

I think in that first week afterwards there was little standing in their way in the eastern province.

*Q: How did you find it; did you have any old, sort of, Kuwait hands working at our embassy?*

TYSON: Not really. It was pretty much Skip Gnehm with very much of a hand-picked team.

*Q: Who was the DCM?*

TYSON: When I got there Mary Jeanne Kennedy had just left and Georgia DeBell came in, so she was the DCM, and actually she was the DCM my entire time there. Political counselor my first year was Matt Tueller, a reasonably junior officer that Skip had picked up and really elevated to quite a senior level. My predecessor was Paul Daly, and Tueller was eventually

replaced by Margaret Scobey. So I mean Skip had gone through, and where I give him credit, he is less concerned about rank and protocol, and more about particular talents of an officer; and he's willing to give you a lot of leeway until you prove otherwise.

*Q: What sort of tasks were you getting assigned from Washington, on the economic thing particularly?*

TYSON: I think Washington was terribly interested in the Kuwait economics and some of their foreign investments; the whole structure of the oil industry and the refurbishment of it. The returning of Kuwait to being a player in the world oil market and in OPEC. Some major investment projects like petrochemical plants and a number of other things. Pretty much a wide range of economic and commercial things, worked with my commercial counterpart. It would depend. We were starting to get a lot more on copyright infringements, bootlegs, tapes and software, IPR [Intellectual Property Rights], and trademark stuff.

*Q: Where would this come from, because this sounds like real third-world stuff?*

TYSON: Oh it is.

*Q: You know, China or India or that sort of thing.*

TYSON: Well it was, or it was coming out of places like Indonesia or Jebel Ali down in the UAE [United Arab Emirates], and anybody with a tape duplicator can buy masters in Amsterdam and run twenty copies. The cassette shops were all over the place. People were doing bootleg software. For a wealthy country, the Kuwaitis can be cheap about things. So there's an interesting market; you get really high-end designer goods, and absolute crap out of the factories of China. For many people the difference between buying the trademark stuff versus a good bootleg that you got from your cousin more than outweighed the ability to have servicing. It's a tough issue, and in that sense Kuwait was a Third World country.

What's interesting though is they were a member of GATT [General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade]; it was sort of like Grandpa had bought them a membership to the country club that they'd sort of forgotten about. So they don't face the issues that Saudi Arabia and others do now. They don't have to join; they're already members.

*Q: I would imagine, speaking of Kuwait with these tremendous sums of money, that there was a whole area way above your pay grade that was taking place between say in London or Washington Treasury and all that or not. Reinvestments and things like that.*

TYSON: The investments were being pretty much done on a commercial basis. There was some government to government stuff. The things that came up more than anything else, the bane of my existence, was foreign military sales payments - because the Kuwaitis were purchasing a lot and it's sort of like a revolving charge card; the more you buy, the larger your quarterly payments get. More often than not, it was just a question of getting the paperwork through the Kuwaiti bureaucracy. The money would be there, but I'd be working a program and then the head of the Office of Military Cooperation, a U.S. general, would run into problems. And he



generally had an officer on his staff doing FMS (Foreign Military Sales) payments. Such officers varied in quality. The last one there who's a friend of mine, Jim Dursow, was much more thorough and systematic, and easier to work with. But a lot of our military guys were in and out of the country and something would happen; the payment would be due, it wouldn't be made, the finance center back in the States would go ballistic, the officer who was supposed to do it wasn't around, so the general goes to the ambassador and suddenly the vital project that I'm working on is not so vital, and I get to pursue money through the Kuwaiti bureaucracy. I literally had a card in my file-o-fax of the five numbers to call asking, "Okay, where's the money?" because once it moved from the Ministry of Defense, it would take anywhere from three to seven days to get the requisite approvals. And it's almost like tracking a satellite; it's at the Finance Ministry, it's about to go to the central bank, the wire transfer will be done. That was typical inter-agency stuff at an embassy. You know, let me drop everything to do your work for you. More often than not, when we actually had a U.S. officer there prompting the Kuwaitis, "Hey, it's coming up in fifteen days. What have you guys done about it?" it was done on a somewhat more timely basis. It was more just bureaucratic ineptitude as opposed to lack of money.

*Q: Well you mentioned military equipment and I sort of have the impression that here's a very small country with a bunch of people who really don't want a – not military type people - and you can get all the equipment you want. You know, upper-end stuff, but who's going to fly it, or drive it, or shoot it?*

TYSON: What an interesting question, and I think many are still asking it. Interestingly enough, fighter pilots were less of a problem. Where we had problems was with the backbone of the army; you know, your NCO (Non-Commissioned Officer) level: your technicians. For example with the Abrams tank, trying to train tank crews up to operate this incredibly sophisticated piece of equipment was a real challenge. I don't know whether anything more has been done on it; I know the training aspect of it and building the personnel side of a modern military force has been one of the most challenging things our advisers have faced.

*Q: Did you get the usual push and pull; our military says, "Oh hell, let's sell them this," because then you begin to make in savings and having large orders and all of that, and then we have to worry about this from sort of a diplomatic side of who's going to use it and all of that.*

TYSON: I think there was less of a concern about that. A lot of the big arms deals had been pretty much consummated, if not delivered, by the time I got there. Stuff would come up for other bits of equipment: helicopters, or howitzers, or artillery, or stuff like that. The big deals, in a sense, had been done.

One of the problem areas in terms of sales, and you asked about it, was more commercial aircraft. Boeing, in particular, I think felt that while they didn't have a written commitment, there was a moral obligation to buy, and I think the Kuwaitis felt that they are buying U.S. tanks so a lot of the commercial aircraft actually went to Airbus, and of course the Europeans. So that wasn't particularly popular.

The whole question of what you're selling, and their ability to field it, and absorb it, and maintain it, I think, is a valid one. I can't say that I have any definitive answers to that; I defer to

my military colleagues.

*Q: How open did you find, socially which spills into professional, Kuwaiti society? You know - entertaining, getting out, meeting the folks, and all of that.*

TYSON: It is very interesting; my wife basically says that in a sense we have closer Saudi friends than we do Kuwaitis, and I think in a sense that's true. There's a bit of standoffishness about aspects of Kuwaiti society, although we did come to know a number of them. There was an active expat community there; we had some British friends and other friends. One did not want for company. There were a lot of receptions done for business reasons; someone's coming in. I remember meeting now Vice President Cheney at a reception because I knew the local agent for Halliburton. You know, so you'll show up, it'll be a nice hotel, there'll be decent food, the usual assortment of soft drinks or fruit juices, and it's a small town so you meet the usual suspects. One had access, could meet people, do things.

There are a number of Kuwaiti families, actually, who did some very nice things about hosting the troops who were being rotated through Camp Doha; on Thanksgiving and Christmas, and some of the other holidays, which was very, very nice. I've always sort of said that it's interesting that in the United States the Kuwaitis among the Arabs are like Bostonians, and I think there's a certain affinity, in terms of the styles of people, in that there's perhaps a bit more of a distance and a reserve. I came out of the country with friends, but there have been countries that have been friendlier. But from my standpoint, no complaints.

*Q: Well you left there in 1996?*

TYSON: '96.

*End of reader*