LIBYA

COUNTRY READER
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NORMAN L. PRATT
Political Officer
Tripoli (1948-1952)

Norman L. Pratt was born in Buffalo, New York. He grew up in Cleveland, Ohio and Westfield, New Jersey. He received a bachelor's degree in economics from Dartmouth College and a master's degree in business administration from Harvard Business School. He immediately entered the U.S. Army after graduate school. Mr. Pratt's Foreign Service career included positions in Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Lebanon, and South Africa. He was interviewed by Dayton Mak on November 19, 1991.

PRATT: From Alexandria we were transferred to Tripoli in Libya. It was a new post being opened up. Our interests in Libya revolved around the air base there which at that time was merely a small

operation. It would have served, as I understand it, as a recovery field in the event of an air attack on the Soviet Union. A place where our planes could come back if need be for relief and repair.

Q: How did we manage to get a base in Libya?

PRATT: At that time the Libyan base was under the auspices of the British. You must remember that Libya had been occupied during the war by the British Forces Eighth Army. The Italian authorities had been thrown out. The British continued to hold that governing authority right up until the end in 1951 when they finally turned it over. But in 1948 when the field was opened it was almost the case of reopening a field we already had there.

Q: What was the attitude of the Libyans there at that time towards Americans and our presence?

PRATT: They had no problems with us as I recall. Our people were basically out of sight. They were out on the base and seldom came into town. So our people knew we were there, but there was very little opportunity for irritation. Some of our people, of course, lived in town in residential areas within the Italian Quarter...European Quarters.

Q: You mentioned the Italian Quarter. I believe it had been an Italian colony.

PRATT: It had been an Italian colony.

Q: What was the influence and the presence of Italians in Libya at that time?

PRATT: In Libya at that time the Italians were still very active in Tripolitania. However, in Cyrenaica the Italians basically had all left when the Italian forces withdrew in 1942. The Emir and the Cyrenaica did not let them back in except for a few at the Cathedral in Benghazi.

Q: Will you explain what the Emir of Cyrenaica?

PRATT: The Emir of Cyrenaica at that point in Greece had a long history. The Senussis started out as a religious order with strongholds in Libya going back into the 19th century. I have rather forgotten the history of it now. Evans Pritchard has written a long book on the Senussis. But basically in Cyrenaica, which was their stronghold, the Senussis represented and acted as the resistance to the Italian conquest of the country. In fact it was not until 1931 that the last part of the Cyrenaica, Kufra Oasis, was occupied by the Italians. There was a bloody period with concentration camps; local leaders being chucked out of airplanes without benefit of parachutes, etc.

Q: Were the Senussiss like the Wahhabis? Were they very puritanical?

PRATT: They were not puritanical in that respect. They traced their ancestry back to the Saudi Arabian peninsula. They were another one of the mystical orders, but quite orthodox in their views.

Q: Were they anti-Western?

PRATT: No, they weren't anti-Western. The Emir of Cyrenaica, himself, had gone back to Alexandria in exile after the Italians had come into the northern part of Cyrenaica. He had actually cooperated with the British during World War II in regaining Cyrenaica. He was the beneficiary of a promise by Anthony Eden in 1942 that the Italians would never be allowed to return to Cyrenaica, which became one of the cardinal principles eventually at trying to arrive at some settlement of the Italian colony question after the war.

Q: But that did not apply to Tripolitania?

PRATT: Tripolitania was outside that but it was not really Senussis territory.

Q: What sort of problems did you have at the Consulate that required your presence?

PRATT: Our primary object of being there, besides the odd visa, was as a listening post. To know what the local people were thinking, what the British government was doing with the territory and how this would affect the operations of our air base in Tripolitania. The whole question of Italian colonies stayed with us the entire time we were there.

First there was an attempt to bring the Italians into the UN which was defeated by one vote in the spring of 1949. This was followed by massive demonstrations in the streets of Tripoli.

Q: Anti-Italian?

PRATT: Anti-Italian and in front of the British for permitting this sort of thing to happen. The solution with the defeat of that resolution...we had actually made a recommendation for a US trusteeship to be considered for Tripolitania, but that was shot down up on the Hill as too much of a commitment that the United States just was not prepared to make.

The eventual development was that, after putting together all the speeches and the pros and cons in the UN, our position emerged that we would support eventual independence of Libya arrived at under UN auspices.

Q: Am I right that there was a UN presence there?

PRATT: The UN presence grew out of this decision which was taken by the Department in May/June 1949 and leading eventually to the General Assembly in November of that year creating the UN Council for Libya to be chaired by a neutral observer and with members from the two occupying powers, namely France, which had the southern part, the Fezzan, under their control and the Brits because of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica; ourselves because of our position in the Security Council and our interests in the air base; the Italians because of their interests in the minorities; and representatives of the local people from Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan and from the local Italian colony in Tripolitania which numbered about 40,000. Added to this to give it a proper third world flavor, we had representatives of Egypt and Pakistan.

Q: So it was rather an interesting time, wasn't it?

PRATT: It did become interesting after a while.

Q: How long were you in Libya?

PRATT: I was in Libya for about 3 and a half years. We left in late January, 1952. By that time the Libyan UN Council had done all the necessary...the Dutch High Commissioner, Adrian Pelt, shepherded constitutional deliberations to a conclusion. They were waiting, when I left, for the election of deputies to a Libyan parliament.

Q: Do you have anything more you want to say about Libya before you move on?

PRATT: You were there for the last year and a half. You know it as well as I do. You may want to fill in some details I have forgotten.

RICHARD M. CASHIN
USAID
Tripoli (1950-1951)

Richard M. Cashin was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University and a master's degree in government and public administration from Boston University. He served in the U.S. Air Force in the 14th Armored Division during World War II. Mr. Cashin's Foreign Service career included positions in Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Italy. He was interviewed by Paul D. McCusker on March 4, 1993.

Q: Then you somehow wound up subverted by AID because your first assignment abroad was in Libya with AID. Is that correct?

CASHIN: Yes. I was working in the Refugee office and happened to meet a gentleman that I had met when I was in the Management staff, who had gone off with what was then called the Point Four Program, the Technical Cooperation Administration. I met him on the street one morning and we shook hands and went our respective ways. Later in the day I got a telephone call and he said to me, "How would you like to go to Libya?" Not knowing any better, I said, "Yes."

Q: How long were you with the mission and what sort of work were you doing?

CASHIN: It was more or less development assistance work. The distinguishing feature with Libya was the fact that it had virtually no technically qualified government. It had only become independent a few years before in 1951 and they did not have any trained people. The Italians were not strong colonialists in the sense of building the human resources of the country. We, therefore, had to set up something like an independent administration which was largely staffed by Americans to work along side these very weak government ministries. The fuel for this machine, the money, was really a form of rent for Wheelus Airfield where the US maintained a very large air

base at that time.

It was not a typical technical assistance or development aid assignment because we had to do so much ourselves with the consent of the Libyan government but really without counterparts.

Q: How did you enjoy being in a Muslim Arab country? Did you get along all right?

CASHIN: Yes. Tripoli at the time I was there still had a strong Italian flavor. The Italians had been there for many years. Although the Libyans, I think, are very conservative in their religious observance, in their practice of their religion the edges had been rounded a bit by their long contact with the Italians.

Q: Then you returned to Washington for a year where they set you to studying.

CURTIS F. JONES
Political/Economic Officer
Tripoli (1950-1951)

Curtis F. Jones was born in Bangor, Maine in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from Bangor College in 1942 and served in the U.S. Army for the following three years. Mr. Jones' Foreign Service career included positions in Lebanon, Ethiopia, Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. He was interviewed by Thomas F. Conlon on March 29, 1994.

Q: *When your FSI course was over, what was your next assignment?*

JONES: I had no voice in the next assignment. I was sent to Tripoli, Libya, as a member of the staff of Ambassador Lewis Clark. He was an "old China hand," as you may know, and, by that time, was a member of the United Nations Commission for Libya. Libya had been under Italian control. The British took it during World War II, and it was going to become independent. The UN Commission's role was to shepherd Libya toward independence. For about a year -- roughly, during 1950 -- I served with that commission in Libya.

There was considerable rivalry at that time between Lewis Clark, as Ambassador, and the Consul General in Tripoli, Andrew Lynch, who was quick to tell people that he was the ranking American in Libya because he headed the American Mission in Libya. I made a very serious, tactical error. I was given the option, after the UN Commission "folded," to be transferred out of Libya or to stay on. Since I'd only been in Libya about a year and was learning the Libyan dialect, I took the option of staying at the Consulate General in Tripoli, under Andrew Lynch. This was a big mistake because it turned out that Lynch had not only resented Ambassador Clark but also resented everybody on his staff including me.

Q: *So you were part of the "enemy"?*

JONES: That's right.

Q: *What was your assignment in the Consulate General during this period?*

JONES: I was disbursing officer and did a certain amount of political reporting.

Q: *So that's when you first began political reporting -- in Libya?*

JONES: Yes.

Q: *When did Libya finally become independent?*

JONES: I couldn't tell you. It was probably 1952 because, while I was in Libya, Henry Villard arrived as the first American Ambassador to the independent Kingdom of Libya.

Q: *How did Consul General Lynch take this?*

JONES: The Consul General left. I think that he went as Ambassador to Somalia. Ambassador Henry Villard arrived, and there was immediately a very serious protocol problem because Ambassador Clark and his wife, as well as my wife and I, had gone to Benghazi to make a formal call on King Idriss and his wife. After Ambassador Villard arrived, the Queen came to Tripoli to be a patient at the American military hospital at Wheelus Air Force Base.

The question was, how would my wife and I deal with this, since Ambassador Villard had not made his call on King Idriss, and Mrs. Villard had not made her call on the Queen. The Palestinian lady who was an aide to the Queen, called Betty my wife. They were pretty good friends by that time. The aide said, "If you'd like to call on the Queen, she is at such and such an address," which was being kept very secret.

Q: *For security reasons.*

JONES: Yes. She was not accessible to the press or receiving any visitors. So Betty and I discussed this problem. The question was how would we deal with Ambassador and Mrs. Villard? So I told Ambassador Villard that Betty had been invited to go and call on the Queen, and she was planning to accept the invitation on such and such a day. The Ambassador later indicated that he had discussed this with his wife, who happened to be a lady who played a very "key" role in the decisions of the Embassy. As a matter of fact, she led him around by the nose. So I was told that, yes, my wife should probably accept the invitation as a "command performance." Ambassador Villard then left on a tour of the Fezzan area of southern Libya.

Then it occurred to us that Mrs. Villard should have more information about where the Queen was. So Betty called Mrs. Villard and said, "I just want to tell you that I'm making this call, and the Queen is at such and such an address. She can be reached through this telephone number." Apparently, Ambassador Villard hadn't fully cleared Betty's visit with his wife. She exploded and told my wife that she was getting above her station, didn't realize that she was married to a Third Secretary, and who did she think she was to make a call on the Queen of Libya before the

Ambassador's wife made her call? Finally, my wife was instructed, as I recall, not to make the call at all, although she could go with Mrs. Villard and sit in the corner, on condition that she not open her mouth. And this is the way it finally happened.

Q: *Well, there were those "dragon ladies" in the Foreign Service. Some of them exerted a very considerable influence, as you know very well, on all kinds of things that they should never have been involved in.*

JONES: Well, Mrs. Villard was of Russian origin, like Mrs. Loy Henderson [wife of the former Under Secretary for Political Affairs], who had the same kind of reputation. I don't know whether that proves anything or not.

Q: *I don't know. Certainly, Mrs. Loy Henderson was famous for insulting people from the Soviet Embassy in Washington.*

JONES: Loy Henderson, of course, had to be transferred to the Middle East. He is credited by old Middle East hands with having resisted more strenuously than anybody else in the State Department (except, of course, Secretary Marshall) the decision to support the partition of Palestine and then the precipitate recognition of Israel in 1948.

Q: *We'll be getting to that point later on, but it was certainly a key decision.*

JONES: Yes.

Q: *Well, at that time in Libya, how much contact could you have with Libyans? Leaving aside this problem with the Queen, were you able to move fairly freely in the society?*

JONES: Yes. The situation in Libya at that time was very open, insofar as contacts between Americans and Libyans were concerned. The only restraint was that imposed by the British, because the British were still in control of the country. I was in the process of writing a basic labor report. None had ever been done from the American point of view.

This was an effort for which I was not entirely qualified. I was a little naive and possibly a bit of a "bull in the China shop." I remember, for example, that I went into a shop in Libya where some kind of mechanical work was being done. I introduced myself and chatted with the personnel, the staff of the shop. I asked them various questions about their conditions of work, their wages, and so on. What I didn't realize was that I was opening up a feud between two competing factions of the labor movement. After I left, they got into a very serious conflict. So the British Director of Labor -- since the country, in effect, was a British colony -- called Consul General Lynch and wanted to know who the hell was this "inexperienced, callow" Foreign Service type who was going around, provoking riots in Tripoli? Lynch called me in and read me the riot act. So the result was that, as far as my recollection of Lynch's stewardship is concerned, I suffered severely.

Q: *So you got a rocket. Did this actually get into an efficiency report?*

JONES: I suspect so. You couldn't see your efficiency reports in those days. But all I can say is that

the labor report was received so well back in Washington that my next tour of duty was in Washington, in INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research].

Q: *That's when I met you.*

JONES: Yes, I think so. The attention of INR had been attracted to me because of that report.

Q: *Probably, it was the first labor report from Libya, too, so that always has a special impact.*

JONES: Right.

Q: *Did you have any impression of how Libya's concerns would affect other African countries? You remember that, later on, Libya under Colonel Qadhafi asserted sovereignty over a strip of Chad [Aozou Strip].*

JONES: Under King Idriss Libya stayed within the Western orbit -- the British, primarily, but increasingly the Americans, as time went on. The only experience that I had with Arabs outside of Libya was when some busloads of Algerians came through Libya on their way to Cairo to greet Colonel Nasser. They went through Libya. They weren't allowed to have any contact with the Libyans.

Q: *Were there any other aspects of your tour there in Tripoli which you would want to raise at this point? You had done some political work and you were a disbursing officer, once again. Did you get involved in consular work?*

JONES: No.

Q: *Then your tour in Tripoli covered the years...*

JONES: The tour in Tripoli ended when the UN Commission on Libya convened in Geneva for a month to prepare its final report. So I spent one month in Geneva, probably in late 1952.

Q: *Did you go up there with Ambassador Clark?*

JONES: Yes.

Q: *So you were on good enough terms with him and were obviously the person to bring along. Were there other political officers there?*

JONES: No, the Ambassador's staff consisted essentially of me and the secretary.

Q: *That narrows it down, somewhat. So you saw the end of the UN phase and then the entry into independence.*

JONES: Yes. I misspoke earlier. It was at that point that the Ambassador asked me whether I wanted a transfer from Libya. And I said, "No. I'll go back to Tripoli for another year," which I did.

Then, when I was away from Tripoli, I received a telegram saying that I had been proposed to open a post in Khartoum, Sudan.

WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS, JR.
Consular Assistant
Benghazi (1950-1952)

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: I was transferred to Benghazi, which was a Consulate that was just opening. And this was before Libyan independence, so we had our main post in Tripoli of course. But Bollard Moore was opening the Consulate in Benghazi. The town had been 85% destroyed in the desert campaign. That was the main focus of the desert campaign between the British and Rommel.

The whole place was just one big rubble except for the Catholic church and the British military installations including the club - the British Club. So we just did economic and consular work and a lot of traveling around, sort of putting the post together. I was there until 1952. Then I went back to the US.

So I was still staff during that time, FSS. I applied to the language area program. And when I was accepted into that, I went back to the States. And it was about a year I would say that I was at the FSI to study language area. Then I went to Beirut, to the FSI school in Beirut.

And that was where I met my wife, Janet. She had come out to be a teacher at Dad's college. She and I went around together and decided to get married. I was there in Beirut until I was assigned to Kuwait.

Q: *Go back to Benghazi. There was the Consul Bollard Moore?*

STOLTZFUS: Consul Bollard Moore, and there was another, Marion Rice...I can't believe I can remember that name. Marion Rice was his deputy. There were three of us Americans there, plus local staff.

Q: *Do you remember...I think it was in 1951 and at that time the independence of Libya was the big subject and it seems they had two capitals at that point. Benghazi and Tripoli. And it was moved.*

STOLTZFUS: Yes. Well, King Idriss, I think he used both as capitals. Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and Fezzan, those are the three provinces in Libya. And Fezzan didn't amount to much. I mean, of course it probably does now...but that's oil. At the time, and I may be wrong on this, I think King Idriss preferred to be in Tripoli. Wherever the king was...like in medieval times, wherever the king

was really was where the capital was.

Q: *Were there any people coming out of the UN about this?*

STOLTZFUS: No. It was a very quiet time. Benghazi was not on the main circuit. Tripoli was, I'm sure. We didn't get any business as I recall of any significance at all. I don't recall anybody of any significance coming while I was there.

I used to run around with the British officers. We used to go deep into the desert and do reports on the topography of the areas and roads you might use if you were evacuating and that sort of thing. I spent a lot of time with the British officers and we were always out in the desert doing one thing or another. We went down to the oases and so on.
But again, we were not on the political circuit at all. I don't remember anything about that at all.

Q: *In the UN they were talking about you but I guess they didn't come out and...did we have some American bases?*

STOLTZFUS: Wheelus is in Tripoli. I don't know when that started. It certainly wasn't there when the British were there, I don't think. Maybe the Americans took it...I don't remember.

Q: *I have a 1951 date but I don't know if that's...*

STOLTZFUS: Well, 1951 is when...

Q: *December of 1951 is the independence...*

STOLTZFUS: The end of 1951 because it was almost 1952 basically. It could have been December 1951 that the British pulled out of Wheelus and I think the Americans took over. Because the Americans wouldn't have been there if the British were there. I don't think they would have been there. Of course it became an American base after that until Qadhafi thought it was not a good idea.

Q: *And from there you went to the Arabic language school?*

STOLTZFUS: I went to Arabic language training as I said for about a year in the States and about a year in Beirut.

DAYTON S. MAK
Economic Officer
Tripoli (1951-1954)

Dayton S. Mak was born in South Dakota in 1917. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona in 1939 and served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1941-1945. Mr. Mak joined the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included

positions in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Libya, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, and Lebanon. He was interviewed on August 9, 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *On coming back, you went to Washington, where you were assigned to the Libyan -- no, you went to Tripoli?*

MAK: I went to Libya first, yes.

Q: *Where you served from 1951 to '54?*

MAK: Right.

Q: *What were you doing in Tripoli? This was a normal assignment, I assume.*

MAK: Yes. I was an FSO, and I was sent there as economic officer. There wasn't a lot to do. Libya became independent from the Italians and then from the British, French and so forth in December -- I think it was Christmas Day -- 1951.

Economic reporting consisted primarily of reporting on such things as the tuna industry, esparto grass and the reconstruction of their little railroad and a bit about the resurrection of the Italian farms out in the hinterland, but not much else. Shortly afterwards, I became political officer.

There we had as our main job the renegotiation of the Wheelus Air Base Agreement near Tripoli. Libya had two things on its mind at that time. One was establishing itself as a constitutional monarchy, which involved establishing a parliament, conducting elections in the various provinces (there were three provinces of Libya) deciding where the king was going to make his capital (King Idriss was chosen by sort of unanimous acclaim) where he was going to live, which was going to be the predominant province section: was it going to be Cyrenaica or was it going to be Tripolitania?; and, of course, how much the Americans and the British were going to contribute to the budget of the new Libyan nation. As the British were pretty threadbare after the war, it was up to the Americans then, to provide funds for the Libyans, and that amount would have to be negotiated.

Q: *Of course, we're speaking of a time when oil was just not there.*

MAK: No. There wasn't anything there, really. Esparto grass was their main export.

Q: *Esparto grass?*

MAK: Esparto grass is a grass that grows wild there. It's good for making bank notes. It was sold to the United States, Britain, and other places, primarily to make bank notes.

The British had been occupying the two provinces, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and the French were occupying and administering the Fezzan, the southern part, and all of them left troops there for several reasons. One is they didn't have anywhere else to go at the time; and two, the Russians were causing problems in the world and all of the Allies were alarmed by this and were taking

precautions.

Q: *The Korean War and the changeover in Czechoslovakia.*

MAK: And Berlin, and they were threatening Germany and Europe in general, rattling swords. So anyway, our job was to negotiate a base agreement since the British had relinquished control to the new Libyan government.

My job was to clear away the underbrush in the negotiations, which meant that I would get together with Suleiman Jerbi of the Libyan Foreign Office. I would have a draft of the agreement that Washington wanted, and Suleiman would have a draft of the agreement that Libya wanted.

Q: *Suleiman Jerbi was-*

MAK: He was the head of the foreign office there. He wasn't Minister of Foreign Affairs, but rather a sort of Director General. He was later ambassador here, and he became a very good friend.

But Suleiman and I would sit together at the foreign office and would go through the draft agreements line by line and knock out the portions that we agreed on, those that needed no more negotiation. We then would be left with those that were causing problems. We then would discuss these sections at our embassy and he with his people, and then we would meet again and try to come to some agreed language. Well, that was pretty easy, because there were only two sticking points really in the whole agreement. One was status of forces.

Q: *Which means whether Libya had jurisdiction over American soldiers if they got in trouble or not.*

MAK: Exactly. And the other was how much we'd give them in exchange for this agreement, and that had to be decided in Washington. State and Defense sent lawyers out to assist and advise. Eventually it was settled that we'd give Libya one million dollars a year, which seemed like an adequate sum at the time, in exchange for the right to use and expand Wheelus Air Force Base. But the thing had scarcely been signed when the Libyans thought better of it and negated the whole thing. However, I was soon transferred to London, so I didn't have anything more to do with it. Eventually the agreement was renegotiated, but that had nothing to do with me.

Q: *Libya just did not have importance to us, except for the base?*

MAK: I think basically two things. We, one, wanted to maintain our air base; and, two, we didn't want unfriendly foreign powers to have influence there.

Q: *Were you concerned about Egypt at the time?*

MAK: Egypt was not unfriendly to us at the time. Nasser was in power, but it was in a sort of honeymoon period in a way. There were problems, but they were not unmanageable problems. The appeal of Nasserism had not yet taken hold in Libya.

HENRY S. VILLARD
Minister
Libya (1952-1954)

Ambassador Henry S. Villard was born in New York, New York in 1900. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. He then did graduate work at Magdalen College at Oxford University. His Foreign service career included positions in Iran, Brazil, Venezuela, Norway, Libya, and Senegal. Ambassador Villard was interviewed by his son, Dimitri Villard on July 18, 1991.

Q: *In 1952 you were appointed minister to Libya which had just obtained its independence. How did that come about?*

VILLARD: That came about because the question of the disposition of the Italian colonies after the war occupied a great deal of attention in the State Department. For a long time there was no solution about what to do about Libya, in particular, Eritrea and Somaliland also. It was a subject that went into the hopper of the United Nations year after year. The Arabs of course pushed for an independent nation. I had been considerably involved in the question of trusteeship, which was part of the United Nations charter. The Italian colonies, the French colonies, all what they called the "dependent areas" of the world, which were in effect colonies of the great powers, were assumed to be headed for a different status. Trusteeship instead of what we used to call the mandate system, loomed high on the agenda. This was the outgrowth of considerable post-war planning that began at Dumbarton Oaks. I had been handling the Italian colonies and with the final decision to give independence to Libya the question arose, who should be our first envoy to that country? The choice fell rather naturally on me.

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

VILLARD: This was literally to be present at the birth of a nation. A charter had been drawn up for the Libyan government by Adrian Pelt, a Dutchman, a specialist at the United Nations who had devoted a long time to laying out a scheme for governing this country which had never known anything but subservience to its Turkish or Italian occupiers. It was literally a start from scratch. A ruler was found, King Idriss, who was a tribesman from the Senussi sect. He was one of the leaders of the resistance, in fact the leader of the resistance against the Italians and the only visible man whom the different parts of Libya could agree upon. There was Tripolitania, Cyrenaica and the Fezzan, all different areas with different interests. But with King Idriss they were united in the Kingdom of Libya. A prime minister was chosen named Mahmoud Muntasser, who had been trained in Italy -- an extremely able businessman -- a parliament was set up with a higher and a lower house and all the other adjuncts of a modern state. It was a question of working it out from the ground up.

Q: *How did you find your staff at the legation at that time?*

VILLARD: On the political side I had a very good staff but suffered the loss of the most valuable

officer in the course of the McCarthy attacks. My first secretary was a trained language officer who spoke Arabic fluently, knew the Arab world well -- he was removed thanks to McCarthy under suspicion of homosexual activities. The rest of the staff was qualified in every way, except that part of the administrative area was deficient in attitude and cooperation. My counselor had no experience in the field, but that was a result of combining the home and the field service in the so-called Wriston report.

Q: *How did you deal with the Libyan government?*

VILLARD: It was a matter largely of direct dealing. I dealt mainly with the prime minister with whom I developed a strong bond. He was a person whom one could rely upon to be straight, and dependable, more like a European than an Arab.

Q: *How was his English?*

VILLARD: His English was very poor, but his French was excellent; we managed mostly in French. The other ministers I dealt with individually as the subject matter came up.

Q: *Would you say that there was any hint of what Libya was to become in those days, a radical nation?*

VILLARD: I would say not the faintest hint that anything of the kind would happen. The main thing that the Libyans were interested in was the question of economic aid. The *per capita* income was about $100 per year. They desperately needed money to function as a state. I had the privilege of handing them a check for one million dollars at one point as a *quid pro quo* for the right to establish an air base at Wheelus Air Field, just outside Tripoli. Oil had not yet been discovered.

Q: *The negotiation for that air base was your principal concern?*

VILLARD: That was indeed our principal concern. It lasted for the entire two and a half years that I was there. It was a job that was of some importance. I would like to quote a letter that I received after the base agreement was signed from President Dwight Eisenhower.

> White House, September 25, 1954
> Dear Mr. Minister:
>
> In accepting your resignation as minister to the United Kingdom of Libya effective on a date to be established, I want to express my appreciation for the excellent services you have performed during the past two and one half years. Your successful conclusion of a military base agreement with the government of Libya is a major and important accomplishment. I wish you every success in your future assignments.
>
> Sincerely,

When Qadhafi came into power in 1969 he tore up that agreement in two minutes.

Q: *This marked the beginning of John Foster Dulles in the Department. How did his arrival affect the Department as it affects the Near East?*

VILLARD: Dulles kept under his hat most of his ideas and his policies. He was not a person to rely on his staff or experienced Foreign Service officers. He came to Libya on a visit. He came and saw and left and I don't know whether there was any result in the Department or not. His interest was on higher policy, dealing with the Soviet Union and so forth.

Q: *At the conclusion of your assignment to Libya you went to New York to the United Nations in 1954, what was your assignment there?*

VILLARD: At the United Nations I was a member of the United States delegation to the General Assembly, which was very instructive in multilateral diplomacy and a day to day experience of very considerable interest. Henry Cabot Lodge was our chief delegate at that time. He was not a person to suffer the Third World countries gladly, you might say. He was interested in higher policy agendas such as the Cold War. I remember in one instance he dismissed the Ethiopian ambassador with a rather curt statement that his time was too limited to give him a long interview.

DAVID G. NES
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tripoli (1954-1956)

David G. Nes was born in Pennsylvania. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Princeton University and completed a year of graduate work at Harvard University. He served in the U.S. Army. Mr. Nes' Foreign Service career included positions in England, Scotland, Libya, Morocco, Vietnam, and Egypt. He was interviewed by Dayton Mak on April 28, 1992.

Q: *Then in 1954, you went on from there as Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission in Libya...long before Qadhafi. What were the problems you had there, and what was your environment at that time in Tripoli?*

NES: That assignment really illustrates that it helps to be in the right place at the right time. After my short State Department experience, all of a sudden I was offered the DCM job in Tripoli and as a very junior officer -- I think I was class-4 at the time -- it looked like a tremendous opportunity, and it turned out to be just that.

Our primary interests in Libya revolved around Wheelus Field which was not only a mammoth US

air base but a training base for NATO. Libya provided the most wonderful training areas for aerial bombardment, close support, etc. because this could take place not only in the vast desert areas where nobody would be injured, but also in the Mediterranean, off the coast. Squadrons of NATO planes would come down from time to time and rotate through there for training.

It was also at this time that oil was discovered and the Libyan government very wisely formed a group of experts from the major oil companies to draft a petroleum treaty, or law, under which the major companies could apply for concessions. The Libyans were clever enough to realize that if the companies actually did this, they would end up not only squabbling among themselves, but the end result would probably be an arrangement fairly satisfactory for Libya -- which it turned out to be. Of course at that time King Idriss was king, and Ben Halim was Prime Minister. (Incidentally the latter still lives in considerable luxury in Paris.)

Q: *Did you have any other problems, other than the oil and Wheelus Field? Was the local population reasonably friendly at that particular point? There was a Palestinian oriented...*

NES: They were only Palestinian-oriented in that there were many well educated, intellectual Palestinians in Libya. In fact they formed the core, the basis, of the Libya Supreme Court because most of them were lawyers. But the Palestinian issue was virtually an unknown, or at least it didn't play a major part in Libyan thinking.

They were particularly worried at the time about Egypt which, of course, historically has always had some coveted eyes on Libya. They sent to Tripoli as ambassador their top intelligence officer who later became a very good friend of mine in Egypt when he was Foreign Minister. His name was Mahmoud Riad. We watched him very closely and he, of course, was a problem for our CIA as far as his activities were concerned.

I would say that we didn't really have any major problems in Libya at that time. It was a very friendly country.

CHARLOTTE LORIS
Secretary
Tripoli (1954-1959)

After graduation from high school, Charlotte Loris worked in California and Hawaii. Her career included positions in Korea, Japan, Congo, and Indonesia. Ms. Loris was interviewed by Max Kraus on June 8, 1989.

LORIS: Then I left Japan and was assigned to Libya, North Africa. I spent five years there, and I loved it.

Q: Did you go back to Libya on a DC-3?

LORIS: No, I flew -- no, but I flew to Libya, stopped in Rome to visit some friends. Maybe it was

a DC-3. In those days there were only two flights a week from Rome to Tripoli. This was before the discovery of Libyan oil. So I stopped to visit my friends and they took me to the airport. We had had lunch and, of course, good Italian wine. We got to the airport half an hour before the plane left, but Customs had already closed the gate and they wouldn't let me on, because they were taking their siesta after their luncheon wine. I said, well, what do you do? Go back. So I went back to my friends and we sent a telegram to Tripoli stating that I would not be on the plane that was due to arrive.

In the meantime, the man I was to work for in Tripoli, John Hamilton, who is now deceased, had gone to the airport to meet me. Of course I was not on the plane and it was one of those days in the Spring, April, again, where there was a hot Gibli wind blowing which can be horrible. But here is this female you didn't want -- a female in the Arab world -- and she was not on the plane. He goes back to the Embassy and there's a telegram stating I would be on a plane three days later. I had to go by Malta to get to Tripoli.

I finally get to Tripoli and this man again meets me. He's not too happy about a female but he didn't know me, yet. So we're going into town and he said, I thought I'd take you home for lunch. I said, I'm dying for a good martini. Well, his ears perked up at that because he loved martinis, and we were the greatest of friends ever since. And I'm still friends -- his wife lives in Santa Barbara. He's now deceased, but we get together and laugh over the old times in Libya, which became a very fun place for a single female because along with your work -- which was serious and I worked hard and did budgets and ran the library and exhibits and did everything else that secretaries were crawling out from under doing -- there were all these geologists and paleontologists, all these marvelous men to go out with. It was fabulous.

I spent five years there. I also handled the cultural affairs program. So, I was beginning to move up the ladder.

Q: You must have been at that time already -- when you were in Japan. In Kobe, you must have been one of the relatively few women in USIA Foreign Service.

LORIS: I think there were four or five of us. There were Tina Mayland and Joan Crowley, who later married Jim McGinley. There were four of us.[Editor's Note: There were actually seven besides Loris, including in addition to those named Joan Gibbons, Nancy Downing, Marge Smith, and one other.] That was because of Lew Schmidt, because we were all in Japan. Lew Schmidt I think gave us the impetus to take on additional activities and prove our ability. And he recognized our ability.

Q: Because technically you were all secretaries.

LORIS: We were all actually what you call clerk-typists.

Q: Clerk -- I thought you had advanced to a secretary already in Saigon.

LORIS: No, no. Still called clerk-typist. I just kept getting promoted so I went from a 13 to a 5. I got promoted every year, plus a double. My friends used to say, every year the promotion list

comes out and your name is on it. And it was. It was true.

So, anyway, I had five great years in North Africa. I loved the climate there. Then I was assigned to India.

Q: Before we go to India, in Tripoli, was -- did you run into any kind of discrimination on the part of the Libyans because you were a woman and Libya is a Muslim country?

LORIS: Negative. Because I think at that time women were beginning to feel this new move to come out from under purdah. I used to work with a group of Libyan women, through their schools. I was allowed to have them at my home, with the approval of the Minister of Education, which I did. And I got to know some of the Libyan police officials, Secret Service types, and Interpol, got to know them quite well, and I had great entree with them. I went to quite a number of meals with Libyan friends and I was allowed to communicate with the wives in the backroom, although they did not eat with us, but I did. At that time there was the beginning of a breakthrough, the emerging of the Libyan woman from purdah.

Q: Was that at the time when Idriss was king?

LORIS: Idriss was king. Qadhafi was no way near. But I like Libya, I love the climate. Too bad -- I was there when they first discovered oil, got to know quite a bit about that, did a big exhibit for the first bottle of oil out of the sand of Libya. And I made some marvelous desert trips with paleontologists and geologists into the desert, absolutely fascinating.

DONALD S. BROWN
Junior Management Intern, USOM
Tripoli, Cyrenaica (1956-1958)

Donald S. Brown was raised in Long Island, New York. He served in the U.S. Army. He received a bachelor's degree in economics from Antioch College. Mr. Brown's Foreign Service career included positions in Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Zaire. He was interviewed by W. Haven North on December 4, 1996.

BROWN: Four years after he had brought me into the organization as a Junior Management Intern, I finally got to work with Marc Gordon who had moved on to be Director in Libya. At that time, Libya was the quiet kingdom of Idriss, years before the Qadhafi revolution and turmoil.

While the USOM program was an active and interesting one, Libya was in many ways a disappointment after the excitement of Iran. The Government was largely without resources (this was the pre-oil period when the largest export was scrap metal left over from World War II) and trained staff. Most people we dealt with lacked the worldliness of many of the Iranians we had known. Women in particular had few educational opportunities and possibilities of meaningful exchange with them (even by Micheline and other caring wives) was difficult. Tripoli was a pleasant but unexciting and plain city and Cyrenaica was little different.

On the other hand, there were exceptionally well preserved Roman, Phoenician and Greek ruins scattered along the coastal areas and these made for interesting outings. Housing was certainly adequate if simple and the beaches were a pleasure.

There were really two USAID programs going on. One, the USOM, ran a modest range of rather useful programs, with heavy emphasis on training and on water resources. I have been pleased over the years to meet many very able Libyans who participated in USOM educational programs, both in Libya itself and in the US Major contributions to the agricultural education system endure to this day. Heavy emphasis on water conservation techniques still mark Libyan agricultural programs.

Q: In your discussion of the program in Libya, you made a comment about major contributions in agricultural education and so on. Could you elaborate a little more on what were the contributions you were talking about?

BROWN: We helped in the establishment of a structure of agricultural secondary schools. And while there was no agricultural university at that particular point in time, we did a lot of participant training of people intended to develop future capacity for university level teaching.

Q: Were there any agricultural schools before?

BROWN: There were no true agricultural schools. There were a couple of schools that professed to have some responsibilities for agriculture but they had no farms. They had very little in the way of practical agriculture. We were interested in introducing the concept of practical agriculture training for agricultural leadership. And I think we did something. I have met Libyans since then who have gone out of their way to talk about the fact that they had been to those agricultural schools and really benefited enormously from the system that we helped to establish. So I think that was important.

The second American aid program was organized as a form of compensation for the installation of a major US defense facility, Wheelus Air Force Base, which continued to exist until closed by the Qadhafi regime. This program was run by the Libyan American Commission and concentrated on building a wide range of infrastructure facilities-highways, urban improvements and the like. Nominally headed by a Libyan official, the program's Executive Director was Erv Hannum, a US official on secondment to the Libyan Government. Erv was a dynamic and able man, but many of us in the USOM were concerned at the heavy emphasis on infrastructure of a nature and capacity of questionable viability (although some of the Commission programs proved very useful once petroleum deposits were exploited).

The Commission programs certainly met their political objective, to assure continued access for Wheelus Air Base, at least up until the Qadhafi coup. While it can perhaps be argued that the coup was engendered in part as a reaction to the existence of the base, it is likely the base would have disappeared in time under even favorable circumstances as defense needs varied. As for USOM programs, their most important impact was that of exposure through training and education. Even in today's circumstances, one remains able to deal reasonably effectively with many senior Libyan

officials because of that earlier exposure.

Marc Gordon was normally an active and concerned leader but was weighed down in this period by two problems -certain family concerns plus the "support" of a very nice but extremely weak political appointee as Deputy. Dick Cashin provided very strong leadership as Program Officer and Lloyd (Doc) Jones' economic analysis were exceedingly thoughtful-he more than anyone else saw the potential role that petroleum might play. For my own part, I had far more opportunity to work directly with senior technical advisers than had been true in Iran. For someone like myself, with no technical training or background outside of economics, it was good to begin to work with education, agricultural, health technicians and the like and to understand better the kinds of issues with which one needed to be concerned. But I cannot deny I still approached these issues far too much as an outsider with too little appreciation for how our ideas should fit into local circumstances.

One thing I certainly learned was the ability of Roman builders. A large Bureau of Reclamation staff was doing useful work on water conservation. They located a large wadi where 2,000 years earlier the Romans had built a series of water retention dikes for several kilometers down the wadi which had obviously been successful in their time. The Reclamation team rebuilt the system using all the Roman foundations and following the overall Roman plan. The result was wonderful-the valley flourished once more and the project became an outstanding success. The Reclamation people decided to do the same on their own, so they went through a similar process in a nearby wadi - but using their own designs. It looked like the other-and cost even more. But when the first floods hit the valley, the entire reclamation effort ended as a huge pile of stones at the bottom of the system. After that it was back to basics! But the US was not alone. The British built a huge damming structure in the plains between the Jebel and Tripoli intended to control flooding in the city. The first real storm created rubble surpassed only by Libya's Roman ruins.

Libya produced another Brown, when our second son, Dean, was born at the hospital at Wheelus Air Base. While this was certainly a good hospital with some capable staff, there was a strong tendency among male doctors to look down on and act poorly with women patients, including unfortunately Micheline. In the end we regretted having relied upon it.

LLOYD JONNES
Economic Analyst, Economic Cooperation Administration
Tripoli (1957-1958)

Lloyd Jonnes was born in Ohio in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Antioch College in 1948 and served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1943-1945. Working for the Economic Cooperation Administration and USAID, Mr. Jonnes served in Switzerland, Austria, the United Kingdom, Libya, Turkey, Vietnam, and Indonesia. He was interviewed August 19, 1986 by W. Haven North.

JONNES: I was assigned to Libya and detailed to the Office of the Prime Minister to the Development Counsel of the National Government. My job there was to aid and counsel the

Libyan government on its development processes. Then most of us were foreigners. The Deputy Chief of the UN Technical Assistance Mission to Libya, a Brit, was the head of the Development Counsel and three of us made up the working staff, two Brits and myself. The Deputy Chief of the Development Counsel was a Libyan whose interest in this subject was definitely limited.

Q: Was it an ICA mission?

JONNES: Oh yes, there was a very large ICA mission, the director of which was Marc Gordon.

Q: You were a project so to speak?

JONNES: In a sense, yes, but as a project it was almost impossible. I spent a great deal of time in trying to work through all the economic data, such as there was, for them because this was of course an area the Libyans had not even started to work at. Libya had received its political independence in 1954 after centuries of Ottoman rule and then Italian colonialism from 1911 to 1941. Thereafter, the varying fortunes of war beset the land, and then the UK took it under its wing.

Q: What was the situation in Libya at that time?

JONNES: Well, the political situation was that they were in the early stages of independence and were trying to work out what sort of a place they were. The King was very much in power and their economic situation was in a word impossible They had not yet discovered oil nor did they believe for one second that they had oil. This was in 1957 when we were there and the first major oil was found in the spring of 1958, but I think the outside community realized that oil was coming in.

The real problem from the U.S. point of view was to make sure that our training facilities, the U.S. air base, remained in place. To this end, our AID mission had two functions: (a) transfer that volume of resources necessary to keep Wheelus airbase operating and secondarily, to see what could possibly be done to help this nation that had never been a nation as such begin its growth. Libya was characterized by a very rudimentary agricultural economy. Principal export items were scrap metal from the war -- that is to say, the old tanks that had been left in the desert and esparto grass which is used to make fine writing paper. My concern was what could one do to encourage the Libyans in power to prepare for the coming of oil. What kinds of rational economic policy can one espouse? In retrospect, it was how to prepare for oil. What sort of infrastructure do you put in place? What the Libyans had done up to that time had little or no relevance to what they needed if they were going to become an oil producer. And for practical purposes there was no one to whom one could speak of such matters.

Q: You were aware at that time…

JONNES: Certainly we were.

Q: So what were you recommending?

JONNES: Unhappily, very little. We had a small agricultural development bank, the function of

which was to get small loans out to farmers. As you know well, this is one of the toughest ventures in supporting primitive or traditional agriculture because inevitably in this type of society you run right into the local moneylender who not surprisingly has a great deal of political power and has little appetite for change. The problem is large in India as you know. In Libya, we were only a very small part of this.

Q: Were you able to get an agricultural development bank off the ground?

JONNES: We were able to in some small degree, and we put a small amount of American money into it. A major project that the Libyans wanted was the construction of a road to Fezzan, deep in the heart of the desert. This was apparently one of the king's favorite projects.

Q: Constructing the road?

JONNES: Constructing the road.

Q: A road the nowhere?

JONNES: In point of fact it turned out to be a road to somewhere, to the capital of the desert province, the Fezzan. As one of the principal investments that the royal family wanted to make, it was related to the regular moves of the capital around the country. The first year we were there the capital was in Tripoli and the next year we were in Benghazi and had we been there a third year, we might have been up in Behda -- we were becoming part of a nomadic society.

Q: You actually moved physically?

JONNES: Yes, we moved from Tripoli to Benghazi. Early on I saw there was no need for me to be with the Development Counsel. My British colleagues and I recognized that this was no purpose to our being there as there was no one on the Libyan side to commune with.

Q: Largely because of the King's attitude?

JONNES. No. Largely because the Libyan government simply did not function as the charts suggested it might. I moved back into the Mission and became the program officer for one year.

Q: Did you build that road?

JONNES: The road was built, and I believe we helped to finance it. As I recall, we had agreed with the Libyans on a structure consisting of two parts for administering aid, the Libyan American Reconstruction Commission that would plan the use of aid funds, and the Joint Services, staffed by Americans, Libyans, and numerous Palestinians, to carry out many of these projects.

Q: This is like the old Joint Fund?

JONNES: That's my understanding, that it came out of our experience in Latin America.

Q: Same thing in Ethiopia? And this was sort of a shadow government arrangement.

JONNES: That's right. But in the case of Libya I think it was more than shadow and that was the problem.

Q: Who was the Libyan counterpart? The Prime Minister?

JONNES: I believe it was the Minister of Finance.

Q: What kind of other projects other than those did you support….

JONNES: Reforestation. One of the principal problems along the southern littoral of the Mediterranean of course is that of the control of water. For example knock down, drag-out battles were fought among the foreign advisors as to how one should try to deal with the problem of the wadis (dry gulches that in the rainy season flooded).. One fought and lost and one fought and won and it probably made not too much difference in the long run because the true power of the government was just not interested in these affairs.

Q: How much money are we talking about?

JONNES: We're talking about 4-5 million dollars a year.

Q: And this was support?

JONNES: Budget support.

Q: Budget support. So it was like a direct transfer?

JONNES: Yes.

Q: We didn't have any say about its uses?

JONNES: The funds were channeled through the Libyan-American Reconstruction Commission where at least nominally decisions on the uses were made jointly. But the Libyan culture was, as I have been implying, an inscrutable society for many of us. I don't think we had anybody in the Mission who understood what Libya was and no more than two or three people spoke Arabic, Libya was a very strange place as I've said. It had been part of the Ottoman Empire until 1911. It had then been seized by the Italians and fought over. The Italians moved settlers, colonists, from Sicily into Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. They had their tiny farms right along the road and this was an Italian colony. Libya as such had never existed. In 1954, the UN said it exists as a nation. There was a king, Idriss of the Senussi family

Q: Did you ever meet the King?

JONNES: No, I met a couple of the princes. In fact we lived right around the corner from one branch of the royal family in Benghazi.

Q: Did you have any communication with them at all?

JONNES: Not any. In retrospect it's even more curious. We had nobody who could establish any sort of meaningful link with those people with whom we were supposed to be dealing with one exception, our link with the Ministry of Finance.

Q: How did you deal with the government……

JONNES: Our principal contact was The First Secretary of the Ministry of Finance, Shagalouf.

Q: Was he the King's representative?

JONNES: I had the strong impression that he was.

Q: Presumably he was able to negotiate the grants that somehow achieved our purposes

JONNES: On June 30 at 11:59 p.m. we would be signing agreements for the fiscal year, and fair questions existed as to how meaningfully our Libyan colleagues took these except perhaps in the aggregate.

Q: We helped create the university as one of our projects?

JONNES: Yes.

Q: Which university?

JONNES: In Benghazi.

Q: Which American university worked with it?

JONNES: I'm not sure which university was there. It might have been Michigan State, but I'm not sure.

Q: The university was one of our projects that still exists, I guess. Are there other institutions?

JONNES: I don't know.

Q: What were some of the ones you remember having started at least?

JONNES: One project that we financed certainly was not one that we had initiated, that of the Tripoli Power, perhaps an institution but one that created more problems than it solved in one respect. The Italians had residual claims to the ownership of Tripoli Power, and if we were going to provide aid to Tripoli Power, in some measure it was to the Italians to whom the benefits would flow. We had a number of soil and water projects. We had horticultural projects, livestock projects. We had a number of participants studying in the United States in general studies.

Q: The Libyans were not that much engaged in this.

JONNES: That's right. Absolutely. And as I say, there was a large number of Palestinian expatriates who staffed both the Libyan ministries and the joint operating bodies to which we were party.. One can't speak of them as expatriates, but exiles who were very good civil servants, very knowledgeable. The Libyans were not very happy with them, because they believed that they (the Palestinians) should be back in Israel worrying about getting rid of the Israelis.

Q: But they were part of the civil service.

JONNES: I would be very diffident about speaking of their status. We hired a number of them to work in the Joint Service.

Q: Then, there were very few Libyans, true Libyans, engaged in the program. Except for people working with us in the rural or farming areas, students in the university and like that.

JONNES: Yes. It was very discouraging.

Q: How would you judge the impact our efforts there?

JONNES: Well, it's difficult to tell. I put this questions to my older son after he had taught at the University of Benghazi in the late 1970's for two years, and he was hard put to it to give me an answer.

Q: But there were a few institutions that did remain?

JONNES: I would not be at all surprised if the Libyans went out of their way to ensure that these did not exist, with the possible exception of the university. But as you know our relations with Libya fell apart after Qadhafi took power in 1969.

Q: On the short term basis, the programs sort of served our purposes….

JONNES: Certainly in the aggregate. But, the dynamics of the Ambassador's relationship with the Prime Minister and King I can hardly speak to. And oil was becoming a major theme.

Q: But it hadn't entered the picture.

JONNES: They were exploring vigorously.

Q: Anything about the Mission itself in terms of the group you were working with?

JONNES: Not really. I think I was concerned always about how in heavens name one arrives at rational decisions about the use of resources in Libya. And I spent time trying to persuade our people on the spot and back in Washington that this was a question on which one should focus.

DAYTON S. MAK
Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1957-1959)

Dayton S. Mak was born in South Dakota in 1917. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona in 1939 and served overseas in the U.S. Army from 1941-1945. Mr. Mak joined the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Libya, the United Kingdom, Kuwait, and Lebanon. He was interviewed on August 9, 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

MAK: Went to Washington where I was scheduled to become the Libya desk officer, which I became.

Q: *How long did you have that job?*

MAK: I had that about two years. It was really a pretty uneventful tour. I didn't really feel that it was a very good use of my time or what few talents I had, and so I sort of angled to get out of it. What I succeeded in doing was made staff assistant to the assistant secretary for the Near East Bureau. It had been Near East and African Affairs. They divided that, made it a separate bureau out of African affairs -- the African part -- and another bureau out of the Near Eastern-South Asian part, and I was asked to be staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Near East-South Asia part.

Q: *William Rountree?*

MAK: Who at that point was William Rountree, right.

Q: *First, before we move to that, you were on the Libyan desk from '57 to-*

MAK: '59. Sometime in '59, as I recall.

Q: *'59. When you say that there really wasn't much to do, by that time, I mean, Qadhafi had not come on the scene.*

MAK: Right.

Q: *The Wheelus Air Base agreement had been more or less taken care of.*

MAK: More or less.

Q: *Or was this just a continuing series of arguments?*

MAK: Well, there were two matters of concern that I dealt with primarily. One was the formulation of a new petroleum law, because American companies were going out to Libya

searching for oil, which everyone had been assured there wasn't any at all before, but they were obviously proven dead wrong. So the various oil companies, in conjunction with the U.S. Government, were formulating a draft of a petroleum law for the state of Libya.

I can't say that I really had any hand in it, because I didn't. The only thing that I really considered a sort of constructive contribution was in trying to get aid approved from the U.S. Government to the country of Libya. The base agreement thing had gone awry, and we were still negotiating with the Libyans on how much they were to get for the base rights and so forth, although there was supposed to be no quid pro quo. It was just our "generosity" and their "self-interest" that were involved.

Someone in the government had dreamed up a new sort of document you had to prepare, getting the agreement of Defense, AID, White House, Bureau of the Budget, all sorts of people, to stipulate and prove that the granting of money to Libya by the U.S. Government was in the U.S. Government's vital interest. Well, that was my job, to prepare such a document and get it approved by the various departments and agencies. I can't even think of what they called it --

I think it was called a "216 determination." As none had ever been drawn up, or something like that. I, in effect, had to invent one, and I did. I invented one on paper and got everyone to sign it -- Defense, State, AID, everyone but the head of the Bureau of the Budget. He dug in his heels and said, "No, no, no."

I then had to take it up to Robert Murphy, who was then Under Secretary of State -- I think that's what he was called then, for political affairs -- and try to argue this case with him to get his willingness to urge the big guns -- the State Department -- to go to the President to have him approve the determination. We failed. Robert Murphy was not convinced and the thing didn't go through, and I don't remember how Libya ever got its money.

Q: *Another question, though, on this. Libya was working on oil affairs and you were the desk officer. How did it work? We're talking about in the late '50s in the Department of State when oil came in. Did the desk officer, or the country desk officer, was this the action officer? Or what about the economics side? Was there sort of a petroleum overlord within the Department who would sort of march in and take control when you're talking oil at that point, or was it pretty much left to the geographic desk?*

MAK: My recollection is that we had almost nothing to do with it. It was done entirely by either oil experts or people above or the economic bureau or somewhere else. As I mentioned, I really didn't have an awful lot to do; I was bored.

EVERETT L. HEADRICK
USAID
Cyrene (1957-1960)

Everett L. Headrick was born and raised in Moscow, Idaho. He received a

bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Idaho. His career included positions in Libya, Nigeria, and Zaire. Mr. Headrick was interviewed on September 23, 1996 by Sam Butterfield.

HEADRICK: I had been working part time with Equitable Life Insurance and they offered either Nampa or Caldwell, Idaho, which are major population areas, to me if I would quit teaching and join them full time. About the same time I had a response from the Director of Personnel accepting me, so I laid the letter in front of my wife and said "Which would you prefer to do, travel or stay in the States and work?" She said, "Let's travel." So I had her full cooperation and support in going into the foreign service. When we arrived in Libya, I can't remember the Deputy Director's name, (he was one of the dollar-a-year men,) called us in and there were six or seven of us. (These were Junior Overseas Officer Trainees.) He told us how the mission had anxiously been awaiting our arrival and what a contribution we could make to the mission and how we were badly needed by the mission. As a kind of an afterthought, his concluding remark was, "By the way, what are you here for?" We literally rolled in the aisle, he was dead serious with his question.

I would have to rate Libya as one of my most interesting assignments. I think most people in the foreign service believe their first assignment is always the most interesting. However, this was unique, in that to sidestep the inability of the Libyan government to provide support to development programs, we set up the Libyan-American Joint Services, which was a government within a government. While it was operating we had tremendous success with many projects. We had a lot of activity going on. Perhaps the most important aspect though was our training program, selecting trainees to send to American universities. Once we withdrew support from Libyan-American Joint Services, within a matter of six weeks all the vehicles that had been purchased and assigned to projects disappeared, or were in use (not that they were stolen) in other parts of the Libyan government. The Nazarates (Ministries) were jealous of the power of the Libyans we had trained and promoted. The Nazarates fired or demoted these personnel and an outstanding success story literally turned to ashes overnight.

This strengthened my position that we should never again be involved in a program that did not strengthen the whole government. Had we worked within the established government, trained Libyan personnel would have assisted in improving governmental functions and hopefully the LAJS projects would have become an integral component of the appropriate Nazarates.

Q: The Libyan-American Joint Services were from roughly what year?

HEADRICK: I don't know when they started. I arrived in 1957, about 1959 or '60 LAJS was terminated. The reason I said the training component was most important was that even though these people were out of favor with the Nazarates, they later rose to the top within the various ministries, organizations and private business. So I would rate much of our training program a success. This is to say we didn't have a lot of fun, feel a sense of accomplishment and pride in our projects. In the short term rapid mobilization of development resources was accomplished, we selected and trained competent local staff, and in bypassing an archaic governmental organization we were able to show immediate impact on the local economy. One of the most successful and labor intensive projects was the water spreading and cistern renovation project. In both areas we utilized ancient Grecian structures to renovate for improved water use for crop production and

water availability for human and livestock consumption. Other projects were livestock improvement programs, development of an agricultural extension service, horticultural programs, grain storage and handling, etc.

Q: After the Libyan-American Joint Services were abolished, did the mission function differently?

HEADRICK: They tried to function within the existing Nazarates (the equivalent of a ministry or department.) By the time LAJS was abolished I was living in Cyrene, working in Beyda as an Extension Advisor. My vehicle was the only vehicle available to the extension service in that area. One had been assigned under the LAJS system and that was pulled into another area. Extension worked directly with the Nazarate of Agriculture. Adequate funding from the Nazarate of Agriculture was provided to the Beyda extension office because of my strong friendly relationship with the senior staff of the Nazarate. At this time either I or my counterpart could call senior Nazarate staff and obtain appropriate levels of support. Other American advisors and their counterparts often did not have the ties to the Nazarate my counterpart and I had and therefore did not obtain the support I experienced.

One thing I did that was interesting, with Beyda as the new capital of Libya at that time, my project was to produce vegetables for the capital. The first year I worked with farmers and I don't think I increased vegetable availability in the local market by one kilogram. That winter I went around to many of the mosques and talked to the Mullahs. We developed a program based on the 4-H system, where I and my counterpart would provide technical education and within the Mullahs' areas we would provide time for Islamic religious education. We drew several of these men in, they were in their '50s and '60s and older and they were walking 5 or 6 miles at least once or twice a week to go out and check on children participating in the program. So we had a tremendous resource in local leaders. This I found very interesting, but many people in the mission raised their eyebrows at my having worked Islamic education into the program, so I never felt I really had much support from the mission and my immediate supervisor. My feeling was that we were there as agricultural technicians, not missionaries and Islam was the state religion so why not let use religion to support an agricultural production program.

Q: What was the effect of it?

HEADRICK: The effect of it was that we flooded the market in Beyda with vegetables. We looked at production and not the total economic picture of increased production and ended up driving the price of vegetables down. However, many of the children made more money from their vegetable projects than their parents did from wheat farming. So the next year we had even more vegetables in the market as adults switched from wheat to vegetable production.

Q: Big production increase and consequent, predictable effect on the price. Over the next couple of years did it begin to balance out, so that there was more production but also a better price?

HEADRICK: I can't tell you this because about that time we were transferred to Nigeria. However, at the time we were living in Cyrene, Ambassador John Jones had a summer home in Cyrene, just below our residence. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, he could not be there, the DCM could not come up to Beyda. Also the Prime Minister and I were friends. I went to work one

morning after having listened to the Voice of America and the Prime Minister's office called inviting me to have tea with the Prime Minister. I dashed home, changed out of work clothes and field boots into a suit, had tea with the Prime Minister. We discussed Cuba. Following that I called the Embassy and told them I'd had tea with the Prime Minister and the results of our conversation. I was ordered down to Benghazi to go through related files and hold discussions with the Political Officer and so on. For the next two weeks I wore a business suit to the office and did not go to the field, because various ministers were inviting me to have tea and discuss Cuba. Which for a twenty-seven year old kid was pretty heady stuff.

Also, I learned to speak Arabic well enough, I couldn't read it or write it, but I would take my extension personnel camping, along with blackboards and chalk, etc. This was one way to reduce interruptions by their families and local community, so we could do intensive training. My counterpart and I held some very effective training programs camped out. The men seemed to enjoy it and I could see a definite change in activity, as people with more confidence started going out, meeting farmers and working with them. My counterpart, Juma Diab, and I stood in back and provided support and advice to these men. This worked extremely well. This assignment also taught me a lot about working with counterparts. Which is a tremendously important factor in our development activities. In that, I always tried to leave my counterpart in a position of authority and if I had any criticism, we would meet privately following a meeting or a training session. I never publicly criticized him, although he needed a lot of it. We became very close friends. Our families visited back and forth. When I left Libya, I understand he left the extension service and became a multimillionaire businessman in trading and oil supplies for Libya. Maybe my efforts paid off in an unintended manner.

Q: A key thing here, was that when you first arrived, Libya was dirt poor in all respects. By the time you left, oil had been discovered and begun be exploited. So a great deal of money was then coming into the country.

HEADRICK: That's true. This had an impact too, in that there was a decreasing interest in agriculture. All the younger men were looking to the oil fields as the area in which they were interested because they could all see the wealth there and the possibilities. Agriculture took a very rapid demotion in the eyes of most people.

It was also here that another thing happened that was of interest. When Libya gained their independence, only a few people were college graduates. The Nazarate of Agriculture in Saranika, had only 6 graduates. They were all in a car coming back from Derna, they had a bottle of local liquor called Boka in the car and they had a car wreck. I didn't know about it until several days later when I received a call in my home in Cyrene, saying, "Mr. Headrick, you have to come to Benghazi immediately." So I went down. Here were all six in one room. They closed and locked the door and told me I had to help them or they were all facing prison, because they had alcohol in a government vehicle. So I asked who the judge would be, if he was one of their clique, and they said, "No." So I said, "OKAY, if they could change the judge to someone from their clique, I'll go to court and testify that I asked you to buy me some black market gin." Which I never told anybody in the mission about at the time. They changed the judge, I testified in court that I had asked these people to buy me some black market gin, but since they were good Moslems I assumed they didn't know the difference between gin and Boka. For people attending court, the judge gave me a

chewing out for corrupting young Moslem men and the case was thrown out. Thereafter, my supervisor, Frank Ernst and others could never understand why I got the support from the Nazarate that I did, whenever I needed help or money or vehicles I'd pick up the phone and call one of the six men and there was never any question. I had the support I needed. Obviously, I didn't tell anyone in the mission at the time.

Q: This may be the first time it's been revealed! Before we move past Libya, there were some other points you wanted to make, such as observations of the changes that were taking place.

HEADRICK: The one factor that I was really aggravated with in Libya was the fact that we would be told what our budget was and then try to design our activities to absorb the budget. It's far more frustrating and far less effective to have too much money to work with, as we did in Libya, than it is to be in a program where you have to fight for your funding and do detailed and careful planning with the host government in order to obtain and use the funds. This was another problem with Libya. We simply had more money in many of our activities than we knew what to do with.

Q: The reason for that was our strategic interest, the US strategic interest in the country, and specifically in Wheelus Airbase. I know this, I was the desk officer for Libya for about a year in ICA, and I know the time the oil just began to come in. You felt that compared to other countries you went to later, that it had been a disservice from a standpoint of project management and perhaps the development activities themselves, to have them awash in money.

HEADRICK: The government of Yugoslavia built a huge TB hospital in Cyrene. The head of the hospital was a communist party member who was very strict with the staff. I knew the staff very well and none of them liked the director of the Hospital. I told Ambassador Jones this story one day, and he said, "Well, let's make life easier for the staff." So he and I invited the director of the hospital to go out fishing with us and bird shooting. The Ambassador put him on all of his guest lists and then started telling all the other bloc ambassadors what a great man this director of the hospital was. Within eight months he was recalled to Yugoslavia and another person assigned that was far less demanding of the staff and more cooperative with them.

JOHN WESLEY JONES
Ambassador
Libya (1958-1962)

Ambassador John Wesley Jones was born in Sioux City, Iowa in 1911. He received a bachelor's degree from George Washington University in 1930 and joined the Foreign Service in the same year. His career included positions in Mexico, India, Italy, and Washington, DC, and was ambassador to Libya and Peru. Ambassador Jones was interviewed by Horace Torbert in 1988.

JONES: I was then, by the grace of God and thanks to President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles, in January of 1958, named American Ambassador to Libya. But by then I had been in the Department for four years, over four years, so I was due an assignment. There had been a political

appointee in Libya and President Eisenhower was persuaded that a career Officer would be a good idea, so I was named Ambassador to Libya, my first Ambassadorial post.

I left the Department in February of 1958, I believe, and traveled to Libya, arriving there -- we went by plane most of the way, yes, that's true, we did go by plane -- arriving in Tripoli in March of 1958.

Q: *At this time the King was still in Libya? Our revolutionary friend had not appeared on the horizon.*

JONES: Yes. And I wish I could recall --

Q: *Not for some years later.*

JONES: I was in Naples en route for quite a long while. The reason I didn't get there until March, I was in Naples for quite a long while waiting the word to move on to Tripoli. I remember now that the delay was because of the unfortunate illness of my predecessor who was confined to hospital in Wheelus Air Force Base. It was quite inappropriate, diplomatically, for an Ambassador to arrive in a country before the departure of his predecessor. So that's why I continued to be held up in Naples, which was delightful for me. My wife and daughters were there with me, (my son was in boarding school in Washington), and we lived in some style in the hotel in Naples, saw a lot of old friends and had a very delightful time there. But finally the Department decided that they couldn't hold me up any longer, that Ramadan was approaching and that I should get to Libya to present my credentials before the holy season of Ramadan had begun, during which period the King would not receive any Ambassadors.

So I was flown to Wheelus Air Force Base and moved into the Embassy residence in Tripoli. While there I did go and call on my predecessor Ambassador John L. Tappin, still in the hospital. Saw him and he was most apologetic about the delay his health had caused. Then I was told to proceed to Benghazi where we stayed with the Consul General and his wife, and then on up to Tobruk, where the King was in residence. I presented my credentials to His Majesty, King Idriss I in March of 1958. Because of the strict Moslem custom of women remaining in purdah, I had lunch separately with the King and my wife had lunch with the Queen. After lunch and after we had presented our credentials, we drove back down the mountain to Benghazi. I think we didn't even spend the night in Tobruk, I think we drove up and came back to Benghazi the same day. I was then fully accredited as the American Ambassador. We then went back to Tripoli, because the Libyan government in those days was stationed, at the time I arrived, in Tripoli, the capital of Tripolitania. Within a very short few months, by July of '58, it was time for the government to move to its Cyrenaica capital in Benghazi. So within three months, four months of my arrival in Libya, I transferred the major portion of the American Embassy from Tripoli to Benghazi and established the Embassy residence in Benghazi. Tripoli became the place where the Chargé d'Affaires lived, Paul Barringer. That's not quite true. Rodger Davies.

Q: *Was there before Paul?*

JONES: Yes. Rodger Davies was the Chargé d'Affaires, (number two in the Embassy) in Tripoli,

when I arrived and then stayed on in Libya with me as the Deputy Chief of Mission until Paul Barringer arrived. Rodger was then transferred and, as we know, later became Ambassador. He is one of the martyrs of our service; was assassinated later in his career.

Q: *At this time our principal problem there was Wheelus Air Base?*

JONES: That's right.

Q: *That was our principal interest, certainly.*

JONES: Yes.

Q: *What other kinds of relations did we have? And what was your time spent on?*

JONES: Really very little except for Wheelus Air Force Base and the large number of Americans who were stationed in and around Tripoli.

Q: *Had the American oil companies started by that time? Or was that later?*

JONES: After I got there in 1958 American oil companies heard that there was a possibility of oil in Libya and came over and began their drilling. There were a great many dry holes struck at the beginning in '59. It was sometime in 1960 when I was at a diplomatic reception, I believe in Benghazi, I think the government was still in Cyrenaica, that someone came up to me and said, "Mr. Ambassador, did you know that Esso Standard has struck a gusher in its oil field near the coast?" And I said, "What is a gusher?" He said, "17,000 barrels a day." And I said, "How much is a good oil well in Texas?" He said, "About 600." So I knew that Libya was no longer on the U.S./U.K. dole. Because at that time the only external source of income for the Libyan government, except for its principal export of peanuts, was what the British paid for their base rights in Tobruk and what the American government paid for its base rights at Wheelus Air Force Base.

Q: *There was no significant tourist income, really, I suppose.*

JONES: No, there was not. I suddenly realized that Libya was going to be economically independent with this incredible news. And then of course between 1960 and the end of my tour there in 1962, other companies began striking incredible amounts of oil and Libya suddenly became the new great oil exporter of the world. This didn't happen overnight, but, by the time I left I think Libya was already getting something like $200,000 a year from its oil. Considering that we had paid them $10,000 a year for Wheelus and the British had paid them $8,000 a year for their bases.

Q: *I think you're talking millions, not thousands, probably.*

JONES: Well, no, at the beginning you see it was hundreds of thousands. Now perhaps it is in the millions. By the time I left at the end of '62, all this oil wealth seemed suddenly incredible for a country that had had no external source of income at all, except what the great foreign powers were

willing to pay for base rights.

Q: *What was your method of dealing there? Did everything have to be done with the King and his immediate advisors? Or was there an organized foreign office in the normal European sense that we're accustomed to that you dealt with while you were there?*

JONES: No. The new system, well, the old system -- the kingdom was only a few years old, established in 1952, and because Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, as you undoubtedly know, were two separate entities, they refused to agree to one capital. So therefore it was agreed that the government would spend two years in the capital of Tripolitania and two years in the capital of Cyrenaica. And during the summer when the King was in residence in Tobruk that they would move to Beyda for the summer months. It was during this period that I was the first foreign Ambassador to decide to move with the government. When I told my colleagues in the diplomatic corps that I was going to move my residence and the Embassy staff to Benghazi when the government moved to Cyrenaica in 1958, most of them were very unhappy indeed. And most of them refused to move. But I think later it became customary for most of the embassies to move back and forth. The British did the same thing that I did, established an Embassy in Benghazi for the next two years, that would be from 1958 to 1960. And then I think we moved back to Tripoli again for two years and then when the King established the new capital permanently at Beyda I moved my residence up to Cyrene (nearby) and spent the last year with the government at Beyda.

My last years there were spent renegotiating the base agreement. But in answer to your question, I did do practically all of my business with the Prime Minister and with the Foreign Minister who were representing the kingdom of Libya or the government of Libya in those days.

Q: *Was the King a constitutional ruler or was he more or less a tribal chief who dictated? Did he pick all the ministers or were they accountable to a parliament or how does it work?*

JONES: He picked the ministers, that's true. But the King was a constitutional monarch and interfered very little, perhaps not enough, in the conduct of government, so that when he appointed a prime minister and the prime minister then appointed his foreign minister and the other ministers, he ran the government on behalf of the King. And the visits to Tobruk where the King preferred to live, or to Beyda where he eventually established himself, were more ceremonial than businesslike.

Q: *Were the government people mostly all educated and trained by the Italians? Or had they developed a native training system of their own?*

JONES: Tribal politics I'm sure played a great deal in this and I was not terribly cognizant of it. But most of the ministers that I dealt with, in fact all of them, had been raised in Italian schools, had been raised during this Italian period of colonization. So I was able, with very little restudying, to get back to use my Italian.

Q: *Which was quite difficult.*

JONES: Yes, after four years in Spain. But I did find an Italian professor there who helped me a

great deal, and I soon came back and practically all of my negotiations, except the specific and serious base negotiations when we were dealing with articles and paragraphs, were done in Italian. And I think that the ministers were rather pleased to have an excuse to speak Italian, a language which they all spoke fluently and which they obviously couldn't speak to each other, to have an Ambassador, besides the Italian Ambassador, that they could speak Italian to. So really for that five years in Libya, back and forth, I conducted most of my official business in Italian.

When I went to see the King I had to take an interpreter with me because the King obviously spoke no Italian, spoke only Arabic. I had a wonderful Palestinian named Mohammed Salah who went with me and spoke beautiful Arabic and also, being a Palestinian, was raised in English schools and spoke beautiful English.

Q: *And that was --*

JONES: Mohammed Salah, S-a-l-a-h.

By the way, in 1988 he is now living in Washington and an American citizen, I'm happy to report.

Q: *Very interesting. Did you have usually two or three Arabists on your staff?*

JONES: Yes.

Q: *Rodger Davies of course was one.*

JONES: Rodger Davies was one. Another was Harrison Symmes. And the Libyan Desk Officer was Richard Parker, Dick Parker, who is now the president or chairman of the Association of Diplomatic Studies.

Q: *Right. I tell you, we are just about at the end of this tape. Do you want to just lead into how you left Libya. It's after 12 and I know you have to go. We haven't got more than two or three minutes.*

JONES: I think I'd just like to finish up by saying that I did have the great success, I consider one of my principal diplomatic successes, of renegotiating the base agreement with the government of Libya before I left, because it was about to run out in 1963, I've forgotten the exact date. And I was able to renegotiate with a higher payment, of course, but I was able to renegotiate the base agreement with Libya for Wheelus Air Force Base before I left.

Q: *So you left your successor no immediate serious problem.*

JONES: That's right. The base agreement had been renegotiated. And I learned a lot from that series of negotiations: patience, patience, patience. Negotiation over a period of a year or more.

Q: *I never had a big negotiation like that so I envy you the --*

JONES: When I look back on it, I must say quickly that Libya was one of the most successful and delightful and pleasant posts of my entire service. And it's interesting because now, given the

reaction of most people to Libya, it's hard to believe that Libya in the late '50s and early '60s was one of the most delightful posts. And of course with the Greco/Roman ruins along the northern Mediterranean shore --

Q: *I was going to say, and the Mediterranean.*

JONES: And the Mediterranean. And my wife's interest in archeology, she loved it as much as I did because she was constantly involved in some new archeological find or dig, which she would hear about and sometimes go and visit.

Q: *I wonder if there are any transition remarks you want to make about leaving Libya and your assignment to your next post, or anything else you want to add about Libya, as far as that's concerned. If you would go ahead on that.*

JONES: Yes. One interesting incident or event in my Libyan tour was the visit of the Crown Prince of Libya to Washington in the fall of 1962. It was not an official visit, or a state visit, because it was not the King that was coming but it was his heir, his nephew, the Crown Prince of Libya, and it was called a "Presidential" visit. I arrived on an Air Force plane from Libya with the Crown Prince in October of 1962. The Prince was in Washington for a three-day visit and then was taken by the Chief of Protocol on a tour of the United States before he returned to Libya.

The Crown Prince was received at the airport by the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk. On the way back the Prince went off with the Libyan Ambassador and I rode back from the airport to my quarters in Washington with the Secretary. He told me, on the way back, that I might find the President, who was John F. Kennedy, a bit preoccupied because we had just had some disturbing news about Russian activities in Cuba. I thought not much more about that, of course, and in the afternoon I believe the President had a meeting with the Crown Prince. In any event, the next day the Crown Prince was due at the White House for a luncheon and as we were there waiting to be ushered in, the President called and said that he wanted to speak to the Ambassador. We said, "Which Ambassador? Libyan or American?" He said, "The American Ambassador." So I went in and the President seemed to be rather flustered and pressed for time, but I didn't think anything about it particularly, it was part of his general busy schedule.

He said, "Tell me about this young man. I saw him at the Libyan Embassy last night and I found it rather difficult to communicate with him. I just don't understand him." I explained to the President that the Crown Prince had been raised in strictly Moslem society, that he had not gone to formal school but had been raised by a study of the Koran, that his marriage had been arranged by his family and that the Prince had never before been outside of Libya. This was part of his education and I felt that it was important for him, if he were going to be the next King of Libya, that it was important for him to have as his first foreign visit and first foreign contact the United States and a visit to the President and to our capital and to our country. That he was really a very provincial young man with no foreign experience, really very little national experience even in his own country.

I of course learned later that the President was under enormous pressure during the whole time of the Crown Prince's visit because he had learned about the missiles in

Cuba and was considering what position to take with Khrushchev on the Cuban missile crisis. My admiration for the President has always been enormous: during this very critical period in his political life and in the history of our country, that he was able to appear to the general public, whenever he was with the Crown Prince either in the White House or at the Libyan Embassy, that the Crown Prince's visit was the most important thing that he had to deal with that day.

It was only after the Crown Prince had left Washington and was taking his North American or United States tour that the President made his famous speech about the Soviet missiles in Cuba and the position that he had taken with Khrushchev.

Next subject: While I was on my visit in the United States waiting for the Crown Prince to complete his American visit, I was told by the Director General of the Foreign Service --

Q: *Tyler Thompson.*

JONES: Tyler Thompson, at that time, that I was going to soon receive official notice that the President wished to appoint me as his Ambassador to Peru. This came as a complete surprise, but of course I was delighted. I had been in Libya for five years and it was high time for a transfer.

SAMUEL H. BUTTERFIELD
USAID, Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1959-1960)

Mr. Butterfield was born in Moscow, Idaho and graduated from the University of Idaho. After serving in the US Army Air force in World War II, studied at Georgetown University, receiving Bachelor and Master degrees. Working first for the Bureau of the Budget, in 1958 he joined the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) as desk officer for Berlin. Subsequent assignments in ICA involved him in matters in Libya and East and South Africa. After the establishment of AID, Mr. Butterfield served as Mission Director in Tanzania, Sudan and Nepal. Mr. Butterfield was interviewed by Harry Missildine in 1996.

BUTTERFIELD: The second assignment was something else. Libya, at that time, was a monarchy under King Idriss. The country was of high strategic value because of Wheelus Air Base, which the Air Force considered important because it was rain-free, storm-free most of the year for US Air Force planes and personnel. With large parts of Europe then behind the Iron Curtain, this base on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea was important.

As a result of the what is known as the Richards' Mission of the mid-1950s, after Congressman or perhaps ex-Congressman Richards, which visited a number of Third World countries which appeared to be of immediate strategic value to the United States, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, foreign aid agreements were concluded to ward-off any tempting Soviet ties and confirm ties to the US

These aid agreements were not designed from the perspective of development needs, financial needs or anything like that. They were essentially based on providing support for what were then considered, and in many cases still are considered, valuable allies of the United States in the Middle East and North Africa, primarily in the Muslim world.

Libya was an absolute monarchy. It had Wheelus Air Base. We provided an annual grant-in-aid, really rental for the Air Base of, I believe, $10 million.

The Richards' Mission, by the way, had taken place early in Eisenhower's presidency, and at that time, Libya was a very poor country with a couple of major cities, a few towns, and a colorful Bedouin population. Throughout my relatively brief time I spent on the Libya desk I found the Bedouins to be of particular interest. A considerable amount of our program was addressed to them.

At the time that I became desk officer, which was in 1959, several international oil companies had, after years of exploration, struck oil in Libya. As a consequence, prospects for Libya's finances, governmental revenues and trade changed overnight and substantially. This caused ICA to review the bidding on Libya from the standpoint whether ICA could phase out the capital aid as soon as possible because it clearly was no longer needed. Of course the program never had been based on need and the effort failed. However, I think it's worth thinking about and we gave a good "college try." ICA had a legitimate interest in finding resources to use elsewhere, because ICA never felt that it had -- nor did USAID -- all the resources that it needed to do the job that it had been given.

The late Joel Bernstein and Richard Cashin were asked at that time to analyze the situation in Libya for ICA and to prepare some proposals for how we might proceed to disengage as an aid agency. They wrote a paper which proposed a $25 million Terminal Development Loan, a very interesting idea. It would have provided basically a cash transfer or at least a resource transfer in one way or another which, rather than a grant, would be a loan, which therefore eventually would return to the US Treasury and which would provide in one exchange two and a half times what they had ever received at one time before.

As the desk officer, I put this proposal forward in our budget plans -- that is, the Europe and Africa Bureau's budget plans -- for review by the Agency. There was quite a lot of discussion. I was the defender of the proposal at the oral review and it went quite well. People seemed to find it quite interesting. The proposal was then sent out to the mission and the mission put the proposition to the Embassy. This was before it was ever discussed with the Libyans because this was something that had to be sorted out carefully. I was sent out as desk officer to help with the discussions with the Embassy.

One point I should remember: We had changed the amount to $50 million -- we had put forward the proposal as a $50 million Terminal Development Loan. I may have misspoken when I said Bernstein and Cashin proposed $25 million. They may have proposed $50 million. This would be the equivalent of five years of grant aid all at once, but on a loan basis, withdrawing in effect as a major aid player in Libya to put our attention and resources elsewhere.

American Ambassador to Libya, John Jones, thought the idea had merit and thought the analysis was absolutely right on, but also thought that it probably wouldn't fly. He thought that it was possible that if it were made a grant, rather than a loan, that it might work. With that plan in mind I returned to Washington and the whole discussion took on a different tack, namely, to see whether it could be a Terminal Development grant instead of a loan. In any event, ultimately it did not make it. The plan never made it to the Libyans so far as I know. I believe that the State Department, which obviously had a substantial interest, as coordinator of aid, military and security interests, felt that it just ought not be put to the Libyans. But it was an creative idea which was worth considering.

Libya was an interesting country. I had an opportunity as desk officer in '59 and '60 to spend quite a few months in the country on several different occasions, including a few weeks, six weeks, perhaps two months, as the Acting Deputy Director of the aid mission. During those trips, one of which was really an assessment trip orienting myself and assessing the utility of our various aid projects, as Washington visitors are wont to do, on the basis of very little fundamental knowledge of the country.

I did travel about the country and found it fascinating. Several interesting projects tried to utilize some of the old techniques of water conservation which had fallen into disuse for reasons no one was quite sure of.

The projects' purpose was to maximize the benefits from Libya's infrequent rainfall:

- to spread it in ways that would increase agricultural production, particularly food grains
- to store it, in centuries-old cisterns that had simply been filled up with sand and various other things.

With this effort went attention to community development. US Community Development Officers in Libya worked with the rural communities, with the Bedouin and with other residents in or near the rural communities to increase agricultural production, educational opportunities and the like.

On my return to Washington from this orientation and inspection trip I remained impressed with what I had seen. It seemed to me contrary to the generally skeptical, verging into cynical, view of many Washington officers that this was, if not Operation Rathole, not of much value. My view was that the things that had been put together were imaginative, fundamentally well-reasoned and beginning to show success. I felt the brighter assessment ought to be known. So I put together a relatively brief paper on the subject and sent it up to our Assistant Administrator, Mark Gordon.

Mark had been the prior mission director in Libya. He'd not asked me to do the paper and was pleased with it's conclusion. He sent it on to Doctor FitzGerald (Doctor Fitz) ICA's Deputy Director for Operations. Dr. Fitz also found it interesting.

I think it was as a result of that paper that I was later sent out as Acting Deputy Director to the mission for a couple of months.

I also should mention that I had another major career benefit from the terminal development loan concept. In fact, it may turn out that I was the principal beneficiary of the whole proposal. I made

the presentation of the idea to the policy planning group under Jim Grant in the budget planning sessions. The Deputy Administrator of ICA, Len Saccio, was in attendance just to see how the process was going. When I had finished and the discussion had finished and I was leaving the witness' seat to go sit against the back wall as, my modest position called for, Len Saccio picked up the microphone and said, "Very nice presentation, Mr. Butterfield." That was pleasing to hear. Mark Gordon heard it also. I was told quite clearly a few months later when I moved on to take a more substantial position that Saccio's comment made me an almost sure bet to be promoted and to take over the position of Chief of the then new East and South Africa Division. So much for merit promotion and careful evaluation of personnel talents.

Before leaving Libya I want to mention a particularly memorable figure in the aid mission to Libya. He came in for a relatively short time, maybe a year and a half, a man named Robert Berenson. He was not a career man at all. Nephew of the celebrated art critic Bernard Berenson, he came from very wealthy connections in Europe, the Schiaparelli family, into which he had married. He was a bon vivant, a man with great talent for wheeling and dealing and for putting together agreements with people who were difficult to reach agreements with. I saw him in this latter role a number of times while he was director of the Libya mission and I was his acting deputy. He was extraordinarily effective. He was one of those sort of happy warriors. At a time when issues about the use of Wheelus by the military and the use of Wheelus' facilities for non-military civilians in Libya were being debated with the government and the military, Bob Berenson used this Happy Warrior capacity to keep people's spirits up and to bring about a satisfactory conclusion to the whole thing.

He came back to Washington for awhile after his stint in Libya. He'd been the Mission Director in Yugoslavia before, and then left the agency. Sadly, he developed leukemia and died within a few years. He was one of the fun leaders to work with.

RICHARD B. PARKER
Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1959-1961)

Richard B. Parker attended Kansas State University and served in the U.S. Army during World War II. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Australia, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Lebanon, Egypt, and Washington, DC. Mr. Parker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 21, 1989.

Q: *Moving from this area to your time as a desk officer for Libya, and we are talking about 1959 to '61.*

PARKER: Right.

Q: *What were our prime concerns in Libya at that time?*

PARKER: Well, this was also fortuitous. I had arranged a switch. Dayton Mak had been the

Libyan desk officer. He was going up to the NEA front office. A job he wanted up there. So I asked for and got his job. It was wonderful because nobody knew anything about Libya, and nobody cared very much. I was left very much on my own.

But almost at the same time that I took over, about a month before that, Esso brought in its first major well in Cyrenaica, Zelten 2, I believe it was called. I forget what it was - 25,000 barrels a day or 35,000. Anyway, it was a big well. And the oil rush was on, and it continued for many years thereafter.

We immediately had to consider what would be the consequences of this for the U.S. position in Libya. At that time, we had an air base, Wheelus Field, outside Tripoli which we had had since World War II, thanks to the then desk officer, whoever that was at the end of the war. The Air Force didn't have any interest in that base, and they were trying to turn it over to somebody, to the British I guess. The Department said, you know, you may want that later. Nobody is asking for it. Let's hold on to it for a while. And in time, it became an installation which the Air Force said was vital to our state of readiness in Europe. What it was used for was training. People would come down there from Europe. Planes would land and take off every minute, jets all day long. They would go out to bombing ranges in the desert and make all sorts of training flights. The weather there was sunny 360 days of the year. No place in Europe could you have that sort of weather. The Air Force continually said that they could not maintain the readiness of forces in Europe if they did not have Wheelus. So it was very important to us.

Now we were paying the Libyans something like six million dollars a year as a subsidy. We wouldn't call it rent for Wheelus, but that's what it was. And the question was: What was this oil discovery going to mean for our tenure at Wheelus?

Q: *It will raise the rent.*

PARKER: It will raise the rent. Well, in the Office of North African Affairs, we argued. The office was presided over by Bill Porter, William J. Porter, who died last year, who was the most skillful bureaucrat I ever knew. He was really wonderful at manipulating the bureaucracy. He would give me sort of general instructions as to what to do. But he agreed that we really had to get the Air Force to pay rent, to up the ante and really pay rent. We had to have some sort of contract for this base. We were going to have this base for X number of years, and we are going to pay you a million dollars for it.

This is back in the days of the Operations Coordinating Board and the Planning Council -- is it Planning Council or Planning Staff? The group that went up to the National Security Council. I had to have a paper. This is my second paper chase. It took a year to get a paper all the way through the bureaucracy up to the National Security Council setting forth the policy eventually approved by the President that we would pay rent for Wheelus, dragging the Air Force kicking and screaming all the way.

Q: *There is always a tendency to try to do it on the cheap.*

PARKER: That's right.

Q: *And for short term gains there.*

PARKER: Well, the Air Force position was this is Libya's contribution to the defense of the free world. And we are defending Libya and the rest of the free world, and they should do this for their own sake. We don't mind helping Libya, but we think it's a very bad precedent to establish that we pay rent for these places. It's a matter of principle.

I argued that if you don't agree to do this, you are going to lose your air base. They kept it for ten more years, largely because they finally agreed to pay rent. They would have lost it within five years.

In the course of this -- one of the things I would like to go back to. Another little success I had was in the second stage of this paper arguing before the planning staff just below the NSC. And that's as far as I could go in participation. After that, it had to be the assistant secretary who took the paper to the National Security Council.

Arguing with a man named Robert Amory with CIA, much senior to me and a very intelligent and capable man, who said in effect that my predictions as to what Libyan oil revenues would be was wildly inaccurate. It was not going to be any where near the six-hundred million that I was predicting. Well, the six-hundred million wasn't my figure. It was a figure I had gotten after talking to a lot of oil people, sort of averaging out their estimates. He said, "They won't get anything like that. They might get three-hundred million and that's all"., or something like that. I don't know that it would have made much difference to a people who up to that point had a GNP of maybe, if you were lucky, maybe they had fifty million dollars a year. Well, the thing is, of course, that my six-hundred million estimate was far short of the mark. I think that was at the end of five years. At the end of five years, I think they had something like a billion dollars a year. And it went on from there to twenty or thirty billion, I think, in 1980.

You know, there are not many times in a career when you can point to something where you have really been right, and the other fellow was wrong.

HARRISON M. SYMMES
Economic Officer
Tripoli (1959-1962)

Ambassador Harrison M. Symmes was born in North Carolina in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina in 1942, and a master's degree from George Washington University in 1948. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942-1946. Ambassador Symmes joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Libya, and Jordan, and an ambassadorship to Jordan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: *Moving to your next series of assignments -- you had two -- you were in Benghazi and then in Tripoli from 1959 to 1962. This seems to be a real backwater in the Arab world. You haven't mentioned Libya at all in the whole Arab matrix.*

SYMMES: That's right.

Q: *How was it? Was it a backwater at that time? What were you doing?*

SYMMES: Well, it was in some ways very much like Kuwait. Oil had just been discovered when I went there. This was an opportunity again for me to get a job with more responsibility than my actual rank would have allowed. I was, therefore, happy to be going there. Libya, because of the discovery of oil, was seen as a possibly potent force in helping to do something about North Africa. To help in Tunisia. We had the Algerian problem. We needed some other kind of . . .

Q: *At that point Algeria was still under French rule.*

SYMMES: Yes. And there was a great civil war going on. This was the height of the war between the French and the Algerian rebels. Libya was where the exiled Algerian government had many of its meetings and they kept a very strong representation there. And one of my jobs was to stay in touch with the chief Algerian representative. In fact, I did that. It was a lot of fun.

In a way, as you say, it was a backwater. It had very little to do with the Arab-Israeli problem. Palestinians were flocking in to get jobs in the oil fields and in the burgeoning contractor enterprises. And, of course, as they came in, more and more the Libyans began to appreciate the Arab-Israeli problem and Arab nationalism. By the time I was leaving there, we had in many respects a repeat of what I described in the Persian Gulf. In other words, the Libyans had become politicized in terms of Arab nationalism. And seeing this oil wealth coming in, for want of a better term, what you would call a middle class or the unestablished power group were concerned about what was going to be done with the oil money and what it meant for them.

Q: *What was our policy? Were we supporting the king or were we looking towards reaching out to what we hoped would be a more peaceful form of change of government, rather than what eventually came in with the Qadhafi situation?*

SYMMES: Well, I neglected to mention what was at that time our chief interest apart from oil, which was the Wheelus Air Force Base. When I went there that Base Agreement was just coming up for revision. One of the things that I worked on, particularly the first year or two, was a revision and a renegotiation of that treaty relationship. Wheelus Air Force Base was terribly important to us then in terms of the strategic relationship with the Soviet Union as well as -- and I meant the bomber deterrent, but it wasn't a bomber base. It was important for refueling and for support of the Strategic Air Force. It was primarily a training base for fighters that we used in this strategic organization we had for Europe. So we wanted very much to have that relationship preserved and we saw in the then existing political situation in Libya, support of the king as the best way to bring that about. Now, we were by no means oblivious as I say to burgeoning political forces. I spent a lot of my time developing contacts with so-called radicals at the time.

What's so funny about this is that I met a Libyan a few months ago, whom I'd known when in Libya. He came over here and a whole bunch of us got together with him. He was allowed to come to this country even though he's anti-Qadhafi. I was asking him about some of the so-called extremists I'd known at the time, what had happened to them. Well they were considered conservatives by Qadhafi when he came in. And Qadhafi, by using his military power, really established a personal dictatorship. There were very few political people who were involved in what he did, even today. So these so-called extremists at the time that we saw as potential challengers to the throne, in a very tame way simply because they wanted a parliament and a little bit more opportunity to express their views, those people fell by the wayside and would be considered reactionaries by Qadhafi.

Q: *Harry, you've pointed to, it seems to me, one of the problems that faces our political apparatus. I'm speaking of the political reporting apparatus. And that is, when we try to identify and to be on friendly terms with potential people who might take over when there's a movement, so often it comes to the military and the military -- our military, anybody's military- -they don't talk to anybody. They don't even talk to other military. I mean, it's a very enclosed society, and when they take over, it probably means that they haven't had much contact with the outside world. Even our attachés don't get very far in this. This seems to be true in every country I can think of probably.*

SYMMES: Well, you're quite correct. In some ways we have ourselves to blame for this because we have a self- denying ordinance when we have a military assistance advisory group. Those people are told, as part of the whole doctrine when you send out a MAAG mission, those people are told they are not to serve any intelligence function. In other words, they are not to spy on the local people. And many of them were very meticulous about this. You couldn't get a MAAG officer in Libya or other places to tell you certain kinds of things -- couldn't get them to write biographical data. They wouldn't tell you about inter-relationships and so on because they would consider it to be compromising their MAAG mission. Now that's a self-denying ordinance of some proportions. Now whether the people in the MAAG in Libya at the time knew Qadhafi, who had some training in the States -- in a lot of cases we had trained some of the most important junior to mid-grade officers in countries like Libya -- but whether they had ever reported anything or not I can't tell you. But I know at the time I was there, the head of the MAAG mission would just refuse to do anything that in his view compromised his MAAG instructions and relationships. So that's one of the reasons we didn't know anything about these people.

Q: *That's a very interesting thing, because this has been repeated again and again and again.*

SYMMES: Exactly. Yes.

Q: *Who is this lieutenant colonel who's suppressing most ambassadors after a coup? Ask, "Does anybody know him?" and the answer is usually a series of blank faces on the country team.*

SYMMES: Yes. And it is precisely for that reason. Now, obviously, intelligence people and political officers on embassy staffs try to find these things out. And, of course, sometimes they have so many other irons in the fire that perhaps they aren't as assiduous as they should be. But in many cases their MAAG colleagues simply won't tell them. They won't do anything about it. That's the way it used to be.

RICHARD ST. F. POST
Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1961-1963)

Richard St. F. Post was born in Spokane, Washington. He graduated from Harvard University and entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Somalia, Hong Kong, Swaziland, Lesotho, Angola, Canada, Portugal, Pakistan, and Washington, DC. Mr. Post was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: *You were on the Libyan desk for a couple of years. From 1961 to 63. Briefly what was your principal concern.*

POST: Wheelus Air Base. According to the Air Force it was important to us because it had unparalleled training capabilities that couldn't be found anywhere in that area. So we would bring down our pilots from all over Europe to train. We had a lot of nifty hunks of desert that they could bomb the hell out of and theoretically nobody would get hurt. In fact the occasional Bedouin did get hurt. Then we would have endless problems with the Air Force, trying to get them to come through with compensation. They were really very sticky about that. But Wheelus was virtually the whole name of the game at that point.

Q: *This was before Qadhafi?*

POST: Yes.

Q: *Then you were the Horn of Africa desk officer. Could you describe how the African bureau operated under Kennedy, Mennen Williams and Henry Tasca and Wayne Fredericks. How did they operate?*

POST: As a desk officer, I didn't have an awful lot of dealings directly with those people. I did but I am not sure I could provide the kind of insight I would have as an office director.

I think Mennen Williams was quite a sincere guy but in many ways rather unsophisticated. I think that it was a lack of sophistication that was rather helpful. He would do things that to the normal State Department official and his wife would be kind of rube-ish, such as square dances up on the seventh floor for the Africa diplomatic corps. The African diplomatic corps was ecstatic about this. Someone actually paying attention to them. Providing them with a native dance of our own. So I really respected that.

Incidentally, when I was the Libyan desk officer, I had an occasion to be in the room with the President with only one or two other people in it. This was Kennedy. The Libyan ambassador was going home for consultations and would be coming back and so he came to us and asked for an appointment to see the President. He said, "I saw him when I presented my credentials and I

haven't seen him since. Now I am going home to face my king who sees your ambassador practically every day for hours and he is going to want to know about my contacts with your president. So I have to see him."

It is kind of hard to get things like this done. We finally got an appointment which was to be for fifteen minutes. We stressed this over and over again. Mind you this ambassador, although Libya was almost a client state of ours at that point, he was very very influenced by his previous post which was Cairo. He was a real lover of Nasser. In addition to being Ambassador to Washington, he was their Permanent Representative in New York at the UN. Despite all of the representations that we would make through our ambassador in Tripoli to the Libyan government to vote this, that and the other way on resolutions, he'd go up there and vote with Nasser, with the Egyptians, every time, even though it was totally against what we thought to be our interests.

Well, we went over to the White House, and I accompanied the guy. (I don't think they do that anymore, but I did.) I took him upstairs. Meanwhile the office director, Bill Witman, went up into the bedroom to brief Kennedy. He described this to me afterwards. He went up there and Kennedy was changing his clothes for this meeting, and asked Bill, "Come on and give me a briefing on this guy. What do I say to him and so on," while he is changing his clothes. Then he saunters in. First of all I was struck at how tall he was. I hadn't realized that somehow. So he sat the ambassador down and he talked about this and that for a while and the ambassador kept looking at his watch as it got closer to the fifteen minutes. Then he put his arms on the armchair and made to rise and Kennedy said, "Just a minute, Mister Ambassador, please don't rush off. If you have the time, I'd like to get your views on some issues that we consider to be very important. We'd like to know what you have to say about this." Then he trotted out several major issues and in addition he said that one of the ones that he wanted to talk to the ambassador about was the fact that we had been trying to negotiate a treaty with the Soviets to have no atmospheric testing and it hadn't yet taken place, but we felt that we had to have one last blast in order to remain in the competitive ballpark as far as nuclear weapons were concerned. So Kennedy -- this was absolutely top secret, we were going to have this explosion the next day -- lost nothing by telling this ambassador this deepest of secrets, "Mr. Ambassador, I want you to know that we don't want to do this but we feel that we have to do it, and I wanted to have the understanding of you and your government of the reasons for doing this."

Well, we left there, I think after almost an hour with Kennedy. That ambassador floated on a pink cloud up to New York before going off to Libya, voted with us every time. That was a beautiful example of Presidential diplomacy. I was really very impressed.

WINIFRED S. WEISLOGEL
Personnel Officer
Tripoli (1961-1963)

Winifred S. Weislogel was born in New Jersey on August 8, 1927. She received a bachelor's degree from Barnard College and a master's degree from Otago University in New Zealand. She entered the Foreign Service in 1956. Ms.

Weislogel's career included positions in Geneva, Tripoli, Tangier, Rabat, and Lome, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 24, 1992.

Q: *Were you encouraged by the consulate general to take Arabic lessons?*

WEISLOGEL: Yes, I never had any problem in the consulate itself. I did this on my own so it was my own business, in fact I think they were rather intrigued by the fact that I had a few contacts with some interesting Arab people in Geneva. But of course I applied formally for the Arabic language training. I still have the letter. They turned me down cold. They said we do not think that women have any future in the Arab world because of the local attitude towards women and therefore your request is being turned down, but thank you for your interest.

Q: *This is used all over the place, almost everywhere you turn.*

WEISLOGEL: I wouldn't have argued with them for a place like Saudi Arabia, probably this is still not feasible, you're not going to get anywhere if the local people don't accept you. But as I went on to another assignment, I did get my Arabic assignment. I was sent to Libya next, of course, as personnel officer which I had no background for and no special interest in but I was also backup consular officer there and I did have to deal with local authorities on several occasions, many occasions. I never had any trouble at all because I was a woman, never. That was one of the more conservative countries.

Q: *Usually it's not the person, it's the country they're representing.*

WEISLOGEL: This is it. I probably have less of a problem, because, first of all, they look at me and they know I'm not a local woman. I don't look like an Arab. Secondly, they just simply put me into a neuter category. Whereas women who have been places in South America have said that they have had a lot more problems being accepted on professional grounds because they can be mistaken for local women and if they don't behave like local women then they are regarded as something else, but certainly not as professionals in the foreign service.

Q: *You went to Tripoli and Benghazi where you served from '61 to '63. Could you tell about what the situation was like there?*

WEISLOGEL: As far as the political situation that was BQ, before Qadhafi, and it was a kingdom, as you remember, there was King Idriss and his entourage of people. Actually, he was a sort of a remote figure in many ways. You didn't get the same feeling about King Idriss as you did about the King of Morocco, for instance. Later on when I was living in Morocco it was a totally different situation. There were people in the royal establishment, including somebody they called the Black Prince who was a bit of an evil character, who had made a tremendous amount of money out of scrap metal left over from the war and parlayed that into a great fortune. There was a lot of graft, a lot of corruption, but it was still a very small country. This was before oil, by the way. When I arrived in December 1961 the first barrel of oil had been shipped out of Libya just around that time, because I remember that the oil company gave the King a little hollowed out oil tanker in pure gold and inside were some drops of oil from the well. Then I think the next company gave him

a little oil barrel filled with some oil. So that was early in the game, we still had an aid mission, imagine, aid to Libya. That, and the Wheelus Air Force Base of course. Our big interest in Libya in those days was maintaining Wheelus Air Force Base. The British had bases in Benghazi and out in Tobruk and we were using the facilities for flight training because of the fine weather. It was a great place to train pilots but also it was a base on the Mediterranean - another place where we could keep a handle, we thought, on Russian encroachments into the Mediterranean or into the Arab world. As I said, that was our primary interest. My own work was personnel work at the embassy. I was made personnel officer. That was not my favorite assignment. I was quite vocal about it I'm afraid.

Q: *Were you able to work on your Arabic while you were there?*

WEISLOGEL: Oh, yes. I took Arabic at the embassy. They give regular classes and I continued my own studies. And then out of the clear blue sky one day in late 1960 I got a letter from the State Department saying they had decided to assign me to the Arabic language training program in Tangier.

Q: *This would have been '63*

WEISLOGEL: No, it would have been sometime in 1962 because that's why my assignment was shortened and in July '63 I moved on to Arabic.

Q: *Also, looking at your biographic register, you were in Benghazi. Is this part of the normal...*

WEISLOGEL: Every two years the capital moved. What was really happening was that the King's father had made a pilgrimage to Mecca and had stopped in a place called Beida along the way. Beida is up in what they call the Jebel Akhdar, the green mountain area. It's a very hilly and very beautiful area of Libya which at one time was the bread basket of the Roman empire. People don't realize that they had wonderful agricultural soil and they grew grains and all kinds of things up on the Jebel Akhdar. That's where it isn't so hot and the rainfall is better. But in those days because Libya was formed of three units, the lower part, the Frezzan, had been French and then of course you had the Italians there until the war. Well they lost it after the war and it had been the British who were administering it. There was always a lot of rivalry between Tripoli and Benghazi anyway. Even culturally the people are somewhat different. They decided in order to keep peace to move the capital at least back and forth every two years between Tripoli and Benghazi. Of course we're not nomads like many of them are so whenever we move it meant moving entire consulates and embassies and that was a pretty big job. Then, in the meantime, he was planning a capital in Beida up in the mountain in honor of his great granddaddy who had stopped there on the pilgrimage and it was beginning to grow. I remember the first thing they built was, I think, a stadium with mainland Chinese help. The Chinese always went in for rather large, flashy projects, so this was a big stadium. But I left just about that time so I never got to transfer to Beida but we had a few people stationed up there.

Q: *Just a little more about the embassy. John Wesley Jones was the ambassador.*

WEISLOGEL: He was there when I first arrived and for most of the time.

Q: *How did he operate, what did you think his..*

WEISLOGEL: J. Wesley Jones? Very low-key sort of person, but I think he had good contacts with the Libyan establishment for what it was worth. I was not doing political work, I wasn't doing economic work, so I don't even recall what kind of reports were going out of there but I don't think in those days it would have been looked upon with favor if he made a lot of contacts with the people who eventually came in to power. The military types. I don't even know whether our people at Wheelus had very good contacts with the Libyan military. It was living in a world apart. We really did live in a world apart there. It was very difficult to make contacts in the Libyan community. The women were very segregated in their own culture. You did not entertain and were not entertained by Libyans. In fact, women got to see homes and meet more people than the average man did because we could cross that barrier that they could not cross. But I would be very much surprised if someone were to tell me that, Oh yes, we had all sorts of good contacts, we knew that this was going to come sooner or later in Libya, that a Qadhafi would come to the forefront, and that he would...

Q: *This wasn't in the atmosphere.*

WEISLOGEL: It wasn't in the atmosphere at all. I think we thought that King Idriss wouldn't be there forever because at the time he was quite an elderly man. We were debating that it would be the Black Prince or one of his rivals who would succeed to the throne. This was the sort of thing they were talking about. We weren't talking about a Qadhafi.

Q: *Lets talk a bit about your language training. You were going to Tangier.*

WEISLOGEL: That's right.

Q: *Normally the language school is in Beirut.*

WEISLOGEL: Ah, but they had established one in Tangier and I guess by the time I got there it had been going on for...I think there had been one or two previous courses, meaning that it had been in operation for about a year, year and a half. They did that because they found they wanted speakers of the North African dialect and people familiar with the North African area as opposed to the old standard middle-east which included Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Q: *North African dialect would go from where to where?*

WEISLOGEL: Actually Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria are pretty interchangeable. There are some differences, but they're not major.

Q: *How about Libya?*

WEISLOGEL: Libya is kind of betwixt and between. I found that the dialect in Libya was more akin to what you would find in Southern Morocco and the Algerian desert areas. In other words the desert dialect seemed to cross and be fairly standardized in the more southerly parts and then of

course, the northern parts and the coastal regions were mutually understandable. There was no real problem, and with a background in classical you could always make out alright.

ANDREW STEIGMAN
Economic Officer
Benghazi (1962-1964)

Andrew Steigman became interested in foreign affairs while completing his undergraduate degree at Princeton University. He then studied for a year at the London School of Economics. Mr. Steigman entered the Foreign Service in April 1958. His overseas posts included Libya, Paris, Nigeria, and Gabon. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 1989.

Q: *Then we move to your next assignment, which was Benghazi in Libya. Now what was the situation because the capitals of Libya, particularly in those days, were rather obscure. Things moved back and forth there.*

STEIGMAN: Constitutionally Libya had two capitals, Tripoli and Benghazi, and the government was supposed to shift back and forth at two-year intervals. King Idriss had created a third capital at Baida up in the Jebel Akhdar, the Cyrenaican hills, which was originally called the "Summer Capital." But it was his favorite place because it was his homeland. He began shifting some of the government functions up to Baida which became de facto the alternate capital rather than Benghazi. So about 1964, when we left, the government functions were pretty much split between Baida and Benghazi. In fact, the U.S. recognized the de facto situation by downgrading the embassy office in Benghazi to a consulate and creating an embassy office in Baida.

Q: *Well, what were you doing then?*

STEIGMAN: I went out to Benghazi which, at the time, was the capital. It was the principal embassy office with the ambassador in residence when I arrived. I went out as economic officer in Benghazi. I was originally assigned to Tripoli. It was supposed to be sort of a reward after the Congo. It was a fairly modern place with good facilities, a big air base, a commissary, a PX and all the rest. But the senior economic officer who was supposed to stay and be with the embassy in Benghazi decided that he really wanted to be in Tripoli. That's where the oil headquarters were and that's where he ought to be. So my assignment got flip-flopped and suddenly it became Benghazi which was not nearly the same kind of reward because it's really a backwater. But it was a quiet place. It turned out professionally to be useful because when the post was downgraded to a consulate, most of the embassy staff moved off to Tripoli, and I wound up as principal officer. So I was economic officer for one year and principal officer for one year.

Q: *So what were your principal responsibilities?*

STEIGMAN: As economic officer the principal job was really keeping track of the developing oil industry. We got out there in 1962; Libya had pumped its first oil the year before. The major

discoveries in Zelten had come in 1959. They were just starting to pump, and we were trying to get some reasonable projections for the future growth of oil exports, how much oil was Libya going to be able to pump, what would this mean to the international oil market, what would it mean for Libya's own economy. The senior economic officer in Tripoli was getting official projections from the oil company officials with whom he played golf.

Whenever I went out in the fields or went down to the ports and talked to the guys on the rigs or who were setting up the pumping stations, I always came up with different numbers, much more optimistic numbers. The senior officials would tell the senior economic officer in Tripoli that they were going to double production in the next three years, and I would go down to the port and they were building separators capable of handling ten times the production. It was obvious that he was getting low figures. So I kept working out different figures, and it was very useful because the information I was getting out of the working level turned out to be much more accurate.

Q: *Was there any reason for giving low figures?*

STEIGMAN: I think they were just being terribly cautious. Maybe they were afraid their figures would get back to the Libyan government which would expect greater revenues from them. I don't know what their motivation was because these were people I didn't meet, he did. All I knew was that I was getting straight stories from guys in the field who didn't have political concerns and were just telling what they were building. It was a fascinating process. Other than that there was a limited amount of commercial-type work, market surveys, contacts and the like.

Q: *How about the contacts with the Libyans?*

STEIGMAN: They were pretty limited. I must say, after being in the Congo where the people were really great fun -- there weren't that many highly educated Congolese, but the Congolese we knew were alive at least -- we found the Libyans to be a very introverted group. One limitation was, of course, I didn't speak Arabic. I learned enough to get directions, but that was about the limit. But most of the Libyans we met we found generally a less interesting group with few exceptions -- an opposition parliamentarian, a couple of business people. They had very little sense of humor, took themselves very seriously, not our cup of tea.

GRANT V. MCCLANAHAN
Near Eastern Affairs, Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1962-1965)

Grant V. McClanahan was born in Egypt in 1919. He graduated from Muskingum College in 1941 and enlisted in the Navy in 1942. He began working for the Department of State in 1946 in INR until joining the Foreign Service in 1954. His overseas career included positions in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Iraq. The interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy January 1997.

Q: You were a Libyan desk officer from when to when?

MCCLANAHAN: I took it over from my predecessor Richard Post on September 10, 1962. My head of section was Bill Witman. His deputy was David Newsom.

Q: You stayed in that job from when to when?

MCCLANAHAN: I stayed there until the end of 1965.

Q: What were concerns when you took over the Libyan desk at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: We had no idea that we were heading into trouble, and no one foresaw a military coup leader such as Qadhafi. It was an interesting period, the mid-1960s, because oil had been found by exploration, but was not yet in production. Libya was not a rich Arab country and in fact was an aid recipient. Second, the U.S. had an air base there, Wheelus Air Base, from the end of the war. That was an important strategic asset to the Defense Department. In the Cold War, they wanted to have bomber bases in Libya and in Morocco. We had signed an agreement with Libya to have that base, and they were payed 10 million dollars of "rent" a year. It soon became obvious that that would not be enough rent when they became a wealthy landlord. On the other hand, it was also likely that the Libyans would become sensitive about a large foreign military base because those were going out of fashion in Egypt, Iraq, and Morocco. Libya would be likely to follow that broad regional trend.

So, that was the situation. I found it a very interesting and challenging assignment. One of the things I did after I had been on the desk for some months and gotten to know the situation was to draft a circular to be sent to the U.S. government agencies in Libya and in Washington on the importance of Libya. In one and a half pages, I spelled out the value of the oil in the American concessions. They were the largest single investment of the United States in any country in the whole continent of Africa.

Secondly, the Wheelus Air Base was extremely active and had more takeoffs and landings by military planes and far more training function use than most other air bases. Thirdly, I noted that Libya was a conservative monarchy, friendly to the U.S. and UK, and supported our somewhat unpopular China exclusion policy, dealt with Taiwan on technical matters and was a good asset in the Arab world and in Africa when we were getting criticism from many other countries.

Q: What was the rationale for sending that out?

MCCLANAHAN: It was to call attention to this little-known country, which had more significance in terms of the U.S. interests than most people realized. From the Pentagon, I got lots of appreciative phone calls, and some other agencies also expressed interest. Anyway, that was Libya.

Q: How did we view the government of King Idris at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: He was well accepted because he was not an Arab nationalist, and the Nasser phenomenon was still perturbing the British particularly and also the Americans. He was a contrast

to that radicalism in many other arab countries. He was old, which made you wonder about how long that could last. He was something of a difficulty communicationwise because he was partial to Cyrenaica, although Tripoli was the main center of commerce and population and was where we had our embassy. He liked to stay over on the eastern side of the country. And so he was resident mostly in Tobruk and Benghazi and even sought to move the government to Baida, inland in Cyrenaica. He probably used his absence from Tripoli as an excuse not to be bothered by foreign ambassadors or to do detailed government work, so that was something of a practical problem. Other than that, we appreciated him.

Then another question in Libya at that time was the succession, as it always is in a monarchy. The crown prince who had been designated as successor was weak, to put it mildly, in personality. He had not been given any responsibility as a man, I suppose in his late 30s, and didn't appear very promising. Earlier Libyan desk officers had sometimes in private referred to him as "His Royal Shyness."

So, one of the parts of our policy toward Libya was to do what we could to keep contact with the crown prince and try to build him up. But, on the other hand, if the King didn't want that done, you could not go very far, and this came to my attention very clearly. When I took over the desk, my predecessor told me, "A state visit by the crown prince of Libya is going to take place. We have got to handle it with the Protocol Office and you will go with him on his visit to the United States." I see from my date book that was in the week of September 17th. I met with the Libyan embassy and Protocol on the itinerary for the crown prince's visit. I had only been on the job for a week and it was a time when I still needed to get to know the people involved in the embassy.

We went out to Tripoli on October 7th on Air Force One, with the chief of protocol, Angier Biddle Duke, and his wife. I met Ambassador John Jones. I knew the DCM, John Dorman, for many years. The prince was supposed to come to Tripoli that week, so it was our time to brief the crown prince, and get reacquainted with the embassy. I remember it vividly. Mr. Duke was accompanied by a photographer from The National Geographic who was preparing an article on the Protocol Office's functions. The article would describe what the White House and the State Department do with all the foreign dignitaries. It could be an interesting article and favorable for the image of the Department.

We called on the Crown Prince, who was nervous, even a little hesitant. He mentioned that one of his wives was sick. Although that excuse might be alright for the Libyan government, it was not for us officials of the U.S. government. I helped convince him to go through with the visit as scheduled. He arrived at Andrews Air Force Base on October 15. Such a visit is a big job for any desk officer behind the scenes, because, for example, he went to the UN in New York to San Francisco, where he was driven across the Golden Gate bridge to see the scenery. People were interested in him because he was dressed in Libyan robes. He had been told not to give press conferences or talk about Libyan policy. He was accompanied by the minister of defense and a senior official of the army of Libya, a senior Customs officer, and a few other top Libyan officials.

I remember, at the end of the visit, which was quite smooth and successful, that USIA had a cameraman following us everywhere and taking photographs of the Prince. Later, USIA produced a nice color film documentary called "The Crown Prince Visits America." I don't think it was of

much interest to the American media, but in Libya it was shown repeatedly. And again, it was part of our policy to build up the image of the Crown Prince.

Q: What was the evaluation of King Idris' support to the crown prince? You know, sometimes crown princes are left out in the cold. Other times, they are moved right in the system and working. What was the feeling about this?

MCCLANAHAN: The feeling was that the King didn't want to share responsibility with him, and it was a little hard to see the wisdom of that. It may have been that the King assumed he himself was going to live long enough, so he wouldn't need to until later. At any rate, nothing could be done about that.

Q: What about Libya and Israel and Jews in particular?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, the Libyans were a part of the Arab solidarity on the issue. They certainly didn't have a numerous Jewish population in their country. Probably at most a few hundred individuals, who I expect had probably gotten out to Italy over the previous years and went on to Israel or America or somewhere else. So, fortunately, that was not a complication in our relations. I remember, it occurred once when an American film company got clearance to make a film using the Libyan desert. The story was about British wartime desert operations in World War II. They gave me an outline of the scenario. I saw that one of the scenes that they put in showed some of the soldiers in the desert in their tanks. One was saying something like, "You know we are Jewish, and we dream of establishing a state in Palestine. Now we are training with military equipment so that for a future state we would be prepared and have practical experience." Well, I said, "If you can avoid telling the Libyan crew, or any other Libyans about that scene, I think it would be wise on your part." They were surprised to hear this, and I don't know if they acted on it. I never saw the film.

Q: When you were on the plane talking to the head of the military, what was your impression of his competence?

MCCLANAHAN: He was an officer who had been trained in Britain. It was noted that he had bought souvenirs from a gun shop in the U.S., five very nice revolvers - partly silver-mounted - and our intelligence people said, "I wonder if there is a secret group of five officers that he is going to give these to as souvenirs." The minister of defense, I remember, in New York went out to a shop and bought a video. The title of it was, "The Most Famous Ride in History" and it was subtitled "Lady Godiva." I remember also that the head of Libyan customs told me, "I have some savings now, and in my position I want to invest the money. What do you suggest?" I told him he should consult one of our big brokerages, and that there were mutual funds for every purpose and some of them are very conservative, some of them not. That's what I would do with my savings. If I had 10 or 20 thousand dollars, I would have done that. He said, "What about if you have a million dollars?" So apparently, he was not just an ordinary customs official.

Q: How about relations with the British and Italians?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, the British had a military mission there at that time carried over from the

war. I think they used it for training their soldiers and some Libyans in desert warfare. It was under a UK-Libyan agreement, so there were consultations periodically between the Americans and the British about the status of our bases in Libya. U.S.-UK relations were good except that there was some competition between the two militaries because Libya obviously had to buy all of their arms from outside, and there was money to be made for the industries. The State Department had to watch that, but it didn't become a complication in U.S.-British relations. In London, I had been aware of how that same sort of thing was happening in Iran, where we were both supplying arms.

Q: Did the State Department, the desk, get involved in pushing American goods at all?

MCCLANAHAN: We wanted to encourage trade and there was a large AID mission. By the way, that was another problem for the State Department and, therefore, for the desk officer. AID was encountering criticism about Libya from the congressional committees. Congressmen asked why we should have an AID program for this country which was going to have oil income and already had some. AID couldn't use the arguments that they did for developing countries and so they were looking for ways to scale down. However, the AID program was going to be for some time a significant part of Libyan economic development, and if it got into education or trade policy, it could be an asset to U.S. interests and AID could actually have a positive influence, it seemed to me. I had a harder time adjusting to an AID downsizing than those higher up in the Department. So, when I would discuss this with my supervisors, tell David or my contact at the White House, they would listen to me but didn't feel that I should do any more than I had done. But, I do think that an opportunity was missed. It's one of those things a desk officer has to accept.

Q: Were there any issues that particulary engaged us with Libya during this three year period?

MCCLANAHAN: It was the future of the Wheelus Air Base that was the concern on our part, especially to the Defense Department. That was a long story, and eventually they came around to thinking the loss of Wheelus would not be too great a setback to them. There were several other interesting things about Libya. Our relations, for example. The ambassador in Washington was Fekini and his wife was an educated, liberated, Arab woman. She was head of the Libyan delegation to the United Nations in New York, which was to Libya's credit that they had a woman who was very well trained and qualified. On the other hand, it meant that ambassador Fekini liked to be in New York more than Washington. He was often in New York with his wife, and would leave the embassy here in the hands of the number two, who was a man named Ben Jaluud. I found myself dealing more with Ben Jaluud than with Fekini because Fekini was away so much of the time. But, I got along very well with Ben Jaluud. He even invited me to sit beside him as his interpreter with the diplomatic corps on the floor of the Representatives on the historic occasion when President Johnson first addressed a joint session after becoming President.

Q: How did the Wheelus Air Force Base situation play out during the time you were there?

MCCLANAHAN: It built up to what was much later the eventual closing of the base. There were criticisms that would appear from time to time in the Egyptian press, and a little bit in Libya. In August of 1964, the Libyan prime minister announced that the U.S. and Britain had agreed to give up their military bases in Libya. I remember that. What had happened was the Libyan Parliament was meeting in their new capital, Baida, so there was no officer from our embassy there. The

consul general from Benghazi had gone to Baida, which was a three hour drive from Benghazi, and attended the session. It was a session at night, and it went on a long time and there was not much happening, so he got in his car and started back to Benghazi. Then, later in the session, the prime minister had made this statement involving Wheelus. It must have been based on the talks that the British and American government had been having. Both the U.S. and UK didn't want a public statement, and they didn't want it announced by the Libyans, and they particularly did not want it without warning.

Q: But there had been no agreement to give up the bases?

MCCLANAHAN: No, there hadn't. The prime minister probably said something like, "This is a matter of concern to the government, but in general we see it as a problem which can be resolved, because they will both agree to go eventually," and that calmed the mood in the parliament. However, it was picked up as a significant statement, which it was. That whole issue had been smoldering. Now, perhaps the significant thing that happened was in 1963, on September 30th. Ambassador Fekini had returned to Libya and been appointed Prime Minister of Libya. He later visited Washington and met with President Kennedy on that day alone. Nobody from the State Department was present and the record was kept by a senior member of the White House staff who was a very good friend of Kennedy's. It was a long conversation in which Fekini made some complaints. The President was directly quoted in the memo that the White House prepared as saying something like, "Well, if you want us to leave, we will go." We in the Department had to take account of that remark.

Q: What about the relations between Libya and Nasser's Egypt at that time?

MCCLANAHAN: The Libyan regime was deferential to Egypt, because Nasser was a leader of the region in those years.

Q: Did Algeria spill over the trouble between the Algerians and the French or spill over into the Libyan context?

MCCLANAHAN: The French had accepted and recognized Algeria's independence. In 1962, De Gaulle, while I was in Paris in the NATO Defense College... I believe it was on July 3, 1962, that De Gaulle took that major step. That main issue in France-Algeria relations was out of the way. The Algerians had an embassy here in Washington. But even earlier, the tensions between Algeria and France did not affect Libya seriously.

The first ripple about the Wheelus air base question was that the U.S. forces had been periodically carrying out amphibious exercises off of the coast of Libya. They would come in from the Mediterranean and dash out into the desert for the maneuver. After Fekini became Prime Minister, when the routine request to do that was denied for the first time, that was an ominous sign. I remember one of the Defense Department liaison officers called me saying, "We're having trouble here with our military people because the Libyans have refused us. How serious is this?" I told him that Fekini was the prime minister and so that decision must have had the approval of the King, so I didn't see what could be done about it. Pentagon officials had phrased the situation to me as, "Our people said that we bought that sand lot and now we want to play in it."

Q: What was your experience of the U. S oil companies with the Libyans?

MCCLANAHAN: I think that in Libya, they had learned in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere to be careful in their relations with a sovereign government. As desk officer, I had the most attention from Mobile Oil because Mobile, although it is one of the companies that owns ARAMCO, was on its own in Libya and felt a need to consult to protect their interests. I think they did a prudent, wise job. They would often ask about the succession question and the stability of the country. The security of the petroleum concessions was obviously on their minds. They hedged their bets in various ways. I believe that they later maintained their interest by turning it over to non-American subsidiaries.

Q: During the period of '62 to '65, did any Americans get into trouble?

MCCLANAHAN: No, but one of the events that affected all of the State Department, of course, was the assassination of President Kennedy. Many governments sent important people. Therefore, it would have been was disappointing that Fekini did not come, especially since he had been ambassador in Washington and had met Kennedy. It would have been natural for him to come. Instead, he sent his minister of finance. The ambassador who replaced Fekini was Fathi Abidia. He was very friendly to the U.S. and to me personally. He spent almost all his time in Washington.

Q: Was there anything else that during that period that particularly hit you?

MCCLANAHAN: Let's see. At the end of my tour, I was very pleased that my chief, David Newsom, was designated to be ambassador to Libya. Therefore, I briefed him extensively. He took James Blake, who had been his deputy head in Washington, to be his DCM. So, they asked me if I wanted to be consul general in Benghazi. I did not want to do that.

As desk officer, I had once an unpleasant American entrepreneur who had got in touch with a Libyan of the royal family. I had to fend him off and warn the Libyans about him. I told Newsom that I was worried about this and he told me, "That's your problem. Every desk officer has such a person from time to time." At least he trusted me to cope, which I did. Ambassador Lightner (who had replaced Ambassador Jones and was before Newsom) had come from a career almost entirely in Germany, and specifically in Berlin. He needed a lot of briefing by me and the embassy in Libya on the Arab world and on Libya.

Q: Why was he appointed there?

MCCLANAHAN: It was a surprise to everyone in AFN, I think. Prior to Libya, he had never been an ambassador. It may be that it was a kind of reward for good work in Berlin. There wasn't any apparent reason for it.

Q: Often to reward people who have worked in Europe most of there careers, who have been outstanding are sent to Africa or especially the Middle East and elsewhere, but they don't bring anything to the position other than their previous experience. How did this one work out?

MCCLANAHAN: Well, what I've observed is a frequent arrangement is to send the post a particularly experienced DCM. That means that the ambassador has an expert advisor right next to him, someone who can help. I liked Lightner and his wife personally, and the Department had already sent a very qualified DCM, Herman Eilts. I talked to him, whom I knew very well. Later, I saw that he ended up having to do a lot more than what DCMs normally do in an embassy.

The desk officer is the most interesting job in the Department, I believe, because you deal with more substance and have fewer administrative chores than other positions. The fact is, almost everything that comes to the Department concerning your country comes to you first. When anything needs to be written, you write the first draft. Everyone else just gets to clear or comment on it. You have to know the personalities of the post and most of them are interested in your views. You don't have to spend much time in committees. Your work is often drafting instructions, questions, and statements and getting them cleared and sent promptly. Sometimes you draft "suggested remarks" for the Secretary or even the President, drafts which go through their staffs, of course.

WILLIAM E. HUTCHINSON
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tripoli (1963-1966)

William E. Hutchinson was born in Iowa and raised in Arkansas. He received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Arkansas at Fayetville. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Mr. Hutchinson's career with USIS included positions in Libya, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, and New Zealand. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1998.

Q: And your next assignment was?

HUTCHINSON: In Libya.

Q: This would have been what year?

HUTCHINSON: This was in 1963 I went to Libya....'59 to '63 in Pakistan; '63 to '66 in Libya. Well, Libya was of course not Qadhafi country in those days; it was run by a saintly old man, King Idriss, who had a modern young wife and a rather corrupt court, although the old man was almost a genuine saint.

Q: I-d-r-i-s-s, isn't it?

HUTCHINSON: I-d-r-i-s-s. And that was not an interesting place to be. Physically conditions were fairly tough because we had a capital in Tripoli; we had an old capital in Benghazi and we had another capital in Al Beyda in the eastern hills.

Q: Spell that last one for me?

HUTCHINSON: B-e-y-d-a. And I had a nice little villa on the sea, the Mediterranean. It was an interesting, challenging job. I had to learn Arabic enough to cope with the situation. We were really, we did a good job I think on the cultural side. We had a pretty good cultural program and had very good relations with most of the leading intellectuals of Libya. In the countryside, in the Fezzan, which is 5-600 miles to the south in the desert, one of the three provinces of Libya, our USIS center was so much regarded as their own center by the Libyans, that at the time of Qadhafi's revolution it continued to stay open while everything else was closed up because the Libyans thought it was their center. They didn't recognize it as an American center, it was simply the cultural center in Sebhah.

But in many ways it was one of the most enjoyable posts that I was ever at, partly because the diplomatic colony was very small and very thoroughly integrated. Our friends were Yugoslavs, Burmese, Pakistanis, Italians, everybody but the Russians. Chinese were quite prominent there. And it was a small, cohesive and intimate group. And we had good relations with the Libyans.

Q: Now when the transfer of power took place you were there?

HUTCHINSON: No. I was out of that. The Nigerian war had broken out in 1966 and the Agency sent me there.

HERMANN FREDERICK EILTS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tripoli (1964-1965)

Ambassador Hermann Frederick Eilts was born in Germany in 1922. He received a bachelor's degree from Ursinus College and a master's degree from the John's Hopkin's School for Advanced International Studies. Ambassador Eilts was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army from 1942-1945. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, England, Libya, and Egypt, and an ambassadorship to Egypt. Ambassador Eilts was interviewed by William Brewer in 1988.

Q: After this assignment in London, you had a brief tour in Tripoli as Deputy Chief of Mission and then you were assigned at a relatively early age as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in the fall of 1965. Did that come as a surprise? How did that eventuate?

EILTS: Yes, it came as a surprise. When I was named to Libya a year earlier, as you mentioned, I didn't want to go to Libya. I had wanted to go from London to our embassy in Tel Aviv as Deputy Chief of Mission. The Near Eastern Bureau had endorsed this, but the administrative people in the Department had someone else in mind for that DCM-ship in Tel Aviv. Just before I was to leave London, the man who was to go as DCM to Tel Aviv was given an Embassy in Africa and the Tel Aviv post opened, was vacated, and I was named to it. I was delighted. It was Governor Harriman, however, who was Under Secretary at the time, who broke my Tel Aviv assignment and insisted

that I go to Tripoli. He did so because we were having problems with the Wheelus Air Force Base negotiations, and he wanted me to get involved. This was the result of our mutual friend Dave Newsom, who headed African affairs at that time.

I was very unhappy when I left London in order to go to Tripoli, very unhappy. And I remember expressing to David Bruce my unhappiness. He said, "Don't worry about it, you won't be there more than a year." I, of course, thought he was only being felicitous.

About a year after I had arrived in Tripoli, David Newsom was named Ambassador to Libya and there was clearly no longer any need for me to be there. At that particular time I received a message from the State Department, from the Director General, saying that President Johnson wanted me to go as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

HUME A. HORAN
Principle Officer
Baida (1964-1966)

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

Q: In your class and other people you talked to about where when you are getting ready to go, was there sort of an understood pecking order where the best places to go and all?

HORAN: Good question. I can't really say that was the case. Cairo? Maybe Damascus - the true heart of Arabism. I always wanted to serve in Syria - they speak the best Arabic anywhere - but it never worked out. I don't think, though, I even applied to any particular places. In those days personnel mostly told you where to go. So I was assigned to Aden. I liked the idea. It sounded very radical, the Hadramaut, dramatic. Then well into my preparation for Aden, I got assigned to Baida, Libya. I thought Baida, Libya! I'd been assigned to a place in the Arab world which I, an Arabist, had never even heard of! It almost got worse. I wrote my "Happy to join your Team," letter to Ambassador E. Alan Lightner. At the last minute my good angel jogged me memory. Was Libya spelled "Lybia" or "Libya?" The dictionary helped, and I wrote a new letter.

We had a branch office, a branch embassy in Baida, Libya, staffed by one officer and an American secretary and a code clerk, who was also the administrative assistant. For a time, we also had a very excellent USIS officer his wife - George and Marion Naifeh. Nice, precocious children. Great arguments for home schooling! To my sorrow (maybe not theirs), they got transferred to Benghazi in the middle of my tour. I was to be the Principal Officer and Political Officer at this one officer post. We had a post in Baida because it was the birthplace of King Idris. Baida was a small mountain village, that the King was pumping lots and lots of money into. He meant eventually to

turn it into the capital of Libya - a would-be Brasilia that in the end never happened, thanks to Qadhafi. Idris did not like western Libya where Tripoli was. He stayed at his palace in Tobruk most of the time. So if people wanted to see the King, they had to fly to the WWII landing strip near Baida and drive 3 hours to Tobruk. I got the Baida job, because the Principal Officer had to be able to interpret for the Ambassador when he saw the King.

Tripolitanians hated Baida. If they were sent there, they felt they were in exile. But the MFA people had no choice but to go because the King said the Foreign Ministry would be in Baida, the Army headquarters, too. The Parliament, likewise met in Baida. But apart from the Libyan government offices, Baida was surrounded by a lot of goat pastures. The climate was nice. The entire American community - all six of us, including two small children - could get into my little Ford Falcon. We'd drive to Cyrene, site of some of the greatest Classical archaeological sites anywhere in North Africa. The earliest Doric marble temple was there. Then we'd continue down the escarpment to Apollonia - more fine ruins and some lovely beaches, but watch out for the mazut [oil]. Other diplomats? There were two: Nationalist Chinese counselor, and a Belgian Commercial Officer. There might have been one or two other westerners doing mining or engineering. Not far way was the Yugoslav T.B. hospital. Our contacts with the Yugoslavs were not close, but they were - medically - always there if we needed them. They cured me of a nasty throat infection.

Q: You were there what this would be '64?

HORAN: '64-'66. I came in the summer, September of '64 and was there until June or July of '66.

Q: How about your wife? Did she speak Arabic by this time?

HORAN: She studied Arabic and was one of the better students. She was good. If she had been a full time student, she would have been one of the best people in the program.

Q: I was thinking, going to a place like this it would be pretty rough to have a family unless both could get along in Arabic. How did she react to the Arab world?

HORAN: She not only got along in Arabic, she got along with the Arabs. She had a baby in Beirut and we had another baby when we were in Baida, Libya. Life there was totally primitive. Diapers were hanging up and down the corridors - just above the space heaters. She did a heroically wonderful job. This is an appropriate place to say in a loud voice that no praise is sufficient for her work, not only in Libya, but all the other disagreeable places we lived and where she raised three really nice children. Son Alex, was a much-decorated Major-select when he left the USMC, after commanding a unit of First Force Reckon and seeing action in Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and then chasing warlords in Somalia. He then joined the F.B.I., and as head of a Bureau SWAT team, personally arrested Robert Hansen. Daughter Margy went to Harvard, got an A.M. from Georgetown, spent two years in the Peace Corps in Zaire, and is now a Political Officer in Mexico City. Son Ted, is a happy-go-lucky banker in Boston. A good athlete, and a very cheerful, decent, friendly person. I'm privileged to be their Dad. Enough. But one can't speak about one's life in the Foreign Service, and not mention the people who were with you - and especially the wife who helped mightily to get you wherever you got.

Q: Well then, Libya, 1964, what was the situation?

HORAN: King Idris was old, ailing, and somewhat bored with day-to-day politics - but quickly jealous of anybody who presumed to encroach upon his authority. His Palace in Tobruk, was hard by a British military base at el-Adem. El-Adem was a few miles south of Tobruk, the scene of great WWII sieges where the Australians and the Germans traded places a couple of times.

Q: Who was our Ambassador while you were there?

HORAN: I mentioned him briefly. E. Allan Lightner. His wife was Dottie Lightner. He had been the head of our office in Berlin when the Wall went up in August 1961. Good God, he was a real stand up type. Admired him. He could be choleric in the right way when DOD pushed dumb ideas and people on him. It didn't help him with the higher-ups in Foggy Bottom, of course. The big issue for most Americans in Libya was oil, but the oil companies take care of their own things pretty well. The other big issue was Wheelus airbase. Wheelus airbase was one of the largest U.S. bases in the world. It was site of 80-90% of tactical NATO fighter training. Great bombing ranges, on land and over the Mediterranean. Clear skies. State and Pentagon thinking was, "If we lose Wheelus, the communists will take a big step forward."

The Embassy brainstormed about how to seemingly Libyanize Wheelus so it would not be rejected by the antibodies in the Arab political system. Ambassador Lightner was always focused on,"How can we save Wheelus airbase? How lower the profile? a Libyan flag at the gate? Let some Libyans shop at the PX?" And other flim flannery.

Q: Did you sense a problem within the Libyan body politic, because later obviously we ended up with Qadhafi. Was that apparent at all?

HORAN: Yes. You didn't have to have two brains to figure out that underneath their smiles, a lot of Libyans did not like Wheelus or American policy in the Middle East. Our problems with the Libyans were all the greater, because there was so little positive content to "Libyan nationalism." To other Arabs, Libya was the god-forsaken wasteland between Tunis and Egypt. It was a country which no one had deemed worthy of colonizing - until Italy moved in in the 1930s, a sort of nothing country which for years lived off of WWII scrap metal sales and the export of esparto grass! The Turkish charge (a woman, making it worse) once dismissed the notion of "Libyanness." Speaking to an MFA representative, she said "Why, we Turks governed all of your country with only a few dozen jannissaries." Libyans had an inferiority complex and a lack of identity about themselves. So Arab nationalism was an especially powerful force among the ever increasing number of young semi-literate Libyans. Egyptian teachers coming from Egypt would stoke those fires.

On one occasion, the P.M. gave a fiery speech, calling Wheelus into question. The people loved it. Later, in private the P.M. reassured the Ambassador: "The speech? Yes, well you know...those ignorant mobs. From time to time I have to throw them a bone to gnaw on. But you can tell your government to have no fear. Wheelus will be safe and sound in our joint care." I remember afterwards, Ambassador Lightner saying to me: "Embassy people must never let their egos

mislead them when - during a crisis - the Big Man privately doles out the soothing syrup. What the man on the balcony says to the cheering multitudes from the balcony is worth a hundred times what he might tell you "*unter vier Augen*" afterwards. Remember Hitler? Mussolini? Always remember the Balcony Speech!" Later events proved how completely correct Lightner was.

Q: How about Nasser? Was he stirring the pot?

HORAN: And how! The students jumping about in the streets, chanting, " Gamal, Gamal, Gamal!" The King did not like Nasser. He would smile broadly while passing on to us his latest info about Nasser's health. "You know, I must tell you that poor Gamal is in the last stages of syphilis of the brain. He's dying a slow, agonizing death! What a tragedy!" More smiles.

Q: Well did we have any contact with the Libyan military?

HORAN: Yes, contacts were pretty good. Quite a few Libyan officers had studied at our Service schools. We knew that a couple of pretty glitzy, fast moving officers, were up to no good. We were following them step by step, especially Colonels. `Awn Rahuma and Abdul Aziz Shalhi. Shalhi had a connection to the King through his Uncle, a one-time confidant of Idris's and Royal Chamberlain. My own opinion is that the King and the Uncle had a relationship when they were both younger. I couldn't figure out any other reason for the King's paroxysm of mourning and grief when his Chamberlain died. Shalhi and Rahuma did, in fact, have something up their sleeves, and the King - who loathed his Crown Prince, seemed not totally opposed to what they had in mind.

Qadhafi, however, pre-empted them. Afterwards, some Libyans said Shalhi and Rahuma were planning to "give a dinner," but Qadhafi decided on a "lunch" instead. We were focusing on the colonels and a few majors. No one knew much about a First Lieutenant in the Signal Corps, just back from a personally bad training experience somewhere in the Middle West. He made Captain only three weeks before he did his coup. Mohammar Qadhafi flew at the treetops, below our radar.

Q: In a way, about this time, '63, we were waiting for the generals in Greece to coup and the colonels couped instead. This happens.

HORAN: Yes, well said. Qadhafi did his coup.

Q: Did it happen on your watch?

HORAN: I was the Libyan desk officer at that point.

Q: Okay, well, we will come to that later. What was the feeling about a king that was somewhat disconnected from the main part of the population?

HORAN: What can you do with an aged, crotchety ruler who would fade in and out of our meetings. We were never sure of Idris's age. Probably in his upper '70s. Our poor Ambassador would go and see him with me. The Ambassador would have the usual interminable Washington laundry list. You know, "Three shirts, no starch, two suits for dry cleaning, please not the "ink spot

on these trousers, etc." Once Ambassador Lightner had a really long list. Every DC Agency must have gotten their two cents in. Looking it over, the Ambassador told me, "Hume, we have just two points that matter. I will hit those before lunch, while the King is fresh. Then we will cover the others as best we can." During the morning audience, the two big points were taken care of. Then after lunch, the Ambassador asked if he might touch on a few more issues. When he began to read his litany, and I turned to him and said, I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I think we have lost the King." Idris was a good eater, and had fallen into arms of Orpheus. sleeping soundly. Lightner just speeded up his reading. Sounded like the Philip Morris tobacco auction ad. When he stopped talking, the King sort of gave a start, opened his eyes. The Ambassador said, "Your Majesty, it was wonderful to have had again the privilege of your wisdom." Later we reported on the minor points - simply that "the King had taken due note of the Ambassador's points but had not chosen to commit himself to an immediate response."

Afterwards, Lightner said to me, "In a senior level meeting, your points lose impact in algebraic proportion to their ordering. Point No. 1, may get 70 percent of your interlocutor's attention. Point No. 2, 28 percent. The others? You can forget them unless you just want to help Washington check off its "Things to be done" list.

Q: As an Arabist, did you think your language skills, helped the King to focus on you as a person?

HORAN: I'd have to say "Yes." I felt privileged that when it came time for us to be transferred back to Washington, the King and his wife, Queen Fatimah, invited my wife and me and our little Alex to lunch. Just the five of us. Alex was only about a year and a half. He was very good, but at one point, my wife had to leave the table. It was all too clear that Alex's diapers needed to be changed!.

Q: What was your impression of the British military base in your area. How was that going?

HORAN: They had quite a large base at el-Adem. Everybody figured it for a "coup stopper." The King liked the British; he felt more comfortable with them than perhaps with us. But he liked us alright, and could see where the power balance lay. The American oil companies were putting lots of money into the economy. I had good ties with British at el-Adem. They had a very fine base commander, Brigadier Jack Frost. I once asked him how he'd gotten into the military? Had it been his original profession? He replied, "No, I'd been a salesman of fine porcelain." "Then how did you get from there to here?" I asked. He replied, "Folly led me in, and the war led me out."

Q: You were a political officer there, what possible political reporting and activity?

HORAN: A lot of spot work. Ambassador Lightner, and then later, Ambassador David Newsom, would come up to Baida on business. They'd fly on an old DC-4 that had once been Eisenhower's plane. There were no avionics in Baida. Not even a windsock. We'd set the brush on fire, so that the pilot could see which way the wind was tending. But a lot of the routine work between the Embassy and the Foreign Ministry was hand delivered and followed up by me. I'd often be the person who knocked on the door and sought approval. For fun, I reported a little bit on Cyrenaican tribal politics. That topic was very low, non-existent, even, on the Washington list of priorities, but it was "coloristic." I'd enjoy getting out of the office and seeing the Sheikhs." I also spent a good

deal of time at the Islamic University working on Arabic and Arabic literature. Some thought I perhaps spent too much time on Arabic. But I'd reply, "What else is there to do here in the winter, up in the mountains? If you don't do Arabic, boy, you'll start beating your head against the wall."

Q: How about as you were at the university; were you able to monitor the students? With this being a traditional university, were the students a volatile bunch or not?

HORAN: No, they were not volatile. They had mostly all finished memorizing the Koran by the time they were eleven or twelve. At the University, they'd study the main ways of reciting the Koran, study famous commentaries, and go deeper into grammar and syntax. For fun, they'd read al-Tabari, and al-Mas`udi and other great historians. Of course, whoever showed any perkiness in politics, that would be the end of their scholarship. The university wanted nothing but true-blue, non-agitating divinity students.

Q: Were all the perky students gravitating toward the University of Cairo and other places like that?

HORAN: We didn't see any of them in Islamic University, but you could see some of them in Cairo, absolutely, and how. You could see others at the secular universities in Benghazi and Tripoli.

Q: What was the relationship on the ground between Egyptians and Libyans?

HORAN: The Egyptians condescended and the Libyans looked up resentfully. The Egyptians presumed on their big brother relationship and the Libyans with their long history of flawed identity had to grin and bear it. But they did not like the airs the Egyptians gave themselves.

Q: Libya was a great battleground of WWII and prior to that, you had the Italian occupation. Were you getting any resonance from these two events?

HORAN: Yes. The Italian occupation was vividly and very badly remembered. People usually think of the Italians as, you know, good times, pasta, vino, and Il Trovatore. Let me tell you, when Marshall Graziani, "the Lion of Cyrenaica," came on the scene, no more "Il Trovatore"! The Italians were almost fought to a standstill by the Libyan guerillas. Their leader was finally captured and killed, and the resistance petered out. The Emir Idris (later King) fled to Egypt. The Italians were scorched earth, bloody minded eradicators of Libyan resistance. The French against the FLN, or the Germans against the Herreros, had nothing on the Italians in Libya. Even to throwing religious leaders out of airplanes...shades of the Argentine Colonels! It was a brutal operation. But before they could settle down and begin to enjoy their conquests, along came WWII. It brought a different type of opponent, the British. Alan Moorehead did a wonderful book on the war in North Africa. He told how in '42 or '43, a small British regimental combat team surprised and totally defeated the huge Italian garrison in Derna. The British "Desert Rats" stumbled into Derna with their eyes round, like saucers. They could hardly believe the luxury in which the Italians had been living. Moorehead, who had been with the unit, wrote, "It was clear that with the Italians, everything that should be first rate - you know, weapons, communications, transport - was second rate, and everything that could be second-rate was first-rate. Barrels of wine, wheels of Parmesan

cheese, fantastic, theatrical cloaks and swords for officers."

Q: During WWII, did the Libyans basically feel "Let the other guys fight this out?"

HORAN: The Libyans were pretty much beat down by the time the Italians had finished their pacification. It's no wonder, really, the Libyans are so *complexe.* First, a no-man's land in the Arab world. Then came the Italians, then came WWII - Allied and German armies washing back and forth. The poor Libyan persona was beaten and pummeled, as these forces came at them. Libyans just put their heads down and tried not to be blown away by the hurricane. It was obviously a profoundly disorienting experience starting with a group of people who were not very well oriented to begin with. Then you have this titanic wealth of oil poured on them.

Q: I might add that in American diplomatic history, the former U.S. counselor led a small group of marines who took over Derna. This was about 1813. I can't think of his name right now. It was the shores of Tripoli. We could go on but anyway it's a little side note. Eaton, William Eaton, The U.S.. consul there and went off and raised during the Barbary Wars and came back and took Derna in your consular district.

HORAN: There was a plaque on a building in Derna that commemorated the exploit of "General" William Eaton, and his 15 or so Marines. Of course, that's where the U.S.M.C. gets its "To the shores of Tripoli..."After the Qadhafi coup, we recovered the plaque. I think it was sent to the Historian's office.

Q: It is an interesting sidelight for those who are interested in American diplomatic history. Well, you were there until '66.

HORAN: '66.

DAVID D. NEWSOM
Ambassador
Libya (1965-1969)

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

Q*: We left you before you were in North African affairs, and we'd reached the point where you were appointed as Ambassador to Libya where you served from '65 to '69. How did this appointment come about?*

NEWSOM: I had completed four years in the Office of North African Affairs and was familiar with the issues involving Libya. It seemed a logical assignment.

Q: This I take it was not a political plum. This was one that was more or less going...we're talking about early in the Lyndon Johnson administration.

NEWSOM: No, I was very pleased to get the assignment. At that time it was a very interesting one for an American ambassador. We still had the Wheelus airfield there. It was a country where there was a growing American presence because of the discovery of oil. So it was a good post.

Q: When you went there did you have, sort of in your hip pocket, a list of things you wanted to accomplish, or problems you wanted to try to work on?

NEWSOM: As I recall there was some uncertainty at the time about where the Libyan government stood on the duration of the agreement on Wheelus airbase. That was one matter to be worked out. And secondly, I wanted to be sure that the embassy was in tune with the growing American presence and whatever problems that might involve the US officially as the result of that presence.

Q: We're talking about the oil.

NEWSOM: Oil, yes. Both oil and the base issues became very active in the first two years I was there. I don't recall the exact dates but a bitter dispute arose between the major oil companies and the so-called independent oil companies. The major companies, the so-called Seven Sisters, had interests throughout the Middle East and had come into Libya. But the Libyans, unlike other oil producing countries, had not given concessions only to the major companies, but had also distributed concessions to a number of companies that were new to the area. And when OPEC (The Organization of Producing and Exporting Countries) declared a new policy on how royalties would be treated in tax calculations, it was a move that was favorable to the majors, but not to the independents. There was a strong move by the major companies to force the Libyan government to require the independent companies to go along with this OPEC arrangement. It created a very bitter division within the American private sector community, not something that perhaps fell normally in the embassy's preview, but major American interests were involved. So I became involved in that. Ultimately a compromise between these two groups of companies was worked out in a session attended by their respective lawyers in my residence in Libya.

Q: *By the way, you had Occidental as one of the leaders of the independents - Armand Hammer and company.*

NEWSOM: That's right. But the Oasis group of Marathon and one or two other smaller companies was really more of a spearhead than Occidental. Armand Hammer acted pretty well independently in Libya, benefiting from his access to the King, and various other favors distributed in the Libyan political world.

How did you find the Libyan petroleum expertise? Because at this time ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia was dominant but Arab countries were beginning to challenge the power of the companies. They were beginning to produce leaders who were knowledgeable in the field. But how about in Libya

at that time?

NEWSOM: Ibrahim Moussa was minister of petroleum. He was supported by a pretty sophisticated oil ministry. As a matter of fact, the whole Libyan approach to the concession was, as I said before, a radical departure from the way the Gulf countries had handled it. Libya divided up the country into squares and determined that no company would have more than a certain proportion of the total territory. Squares were put out to bids which opened up the Libyan oil much more widely than had been the case of Saudi Arabia.

Q: *Were you getting any instructions from Washington on how to handle these negotiations - to stay out of them, or to get into them?*

NEWSOM: If I learned one thing in Libya, it was that the fewer questions you posed to Washington, the more chance you have of resolving problems. I had a general idea of the limits of my maneuver. I also felt that there were some unusual problems about which Washington would probably prefer not to be bothered. I was introduced in Libya to the whole complex of dilemmas in the US government's relationship with the private sector. The private sector, in general, doesn't want the US government meddling in its business. And at that time, unlike today, embassies were not encouraged to get into commercial promotion to any great extent. But on the question of the oil company problem, I don't recall they were getting any specific instructions. I worked on the basis that when major US interests were involved, it was quite appropriate for the ambassador to offer good offices, and neutral meeting places for the working out of private sector problems. But the decisions would have to be theirs. Had I been questioned about my role, I think I could have defended it on the basis of the threat to the broader image of the United States in Libya, and in the Middle East, of an open, unresolved battle between two groups of American companies.

The only time I got rapped on the knuckles was when Libya was in the market for new aircraft, and the only salesman on the block at that point was from Boeing. Boeing was in heavy competition with British Aircraft, which was getting strong support from the British embassy. I met with the Boeing representative and told him that his agent had the wrong political connections. He was not very receptive at first, but as he did more investigating he found out that I was right. And then I did make some quiet representations of behalf of Boeing - the only US company with an active proposal. Boeing then wrote a letter to the Department, and also, I guess, to the Department of Commerce, expressing appreciation for the help of the American ambassador. That resulted in a telegram saying that it was inappropriate to be representing one company without encouraging other American companies to come in. But I survived that.

Q: It was an exciting period to be there. What were some of the other developments that you had to deal with?

NEWSOM: When I got there the government was agitating for, or at least there were some in Libya that were agitating for the withdrawal of Wheelus airbase. It was seen as a vestige of a past period. As Libyan oil brought more and more revenue, the aid from the United States was less and less relevant and therefore Wheelus, which was associated with aid as a quid pro quo, was less and less popular. So I had to deal with that. I negotiated an agreement with the King which accepted the "principle of withdrawal," but without setting any date. At first Washington didn't like this

approach very much, but, ultimately, I think they understood what I had done and why. The agreement finessed the issue of ultimate withdrawal and reduced the pressure for immediate action.

The most difficult period was during the 1967 war...

Q: We're talking about the six day war in June between Israel, Egypt and Syria.

NEWSOM: Right. Libya was not an active participant in the war but Libya is a country that has very fierce feelings about its relationship with the rest of the Arab world. Gamal Abdel Nasser, the president of Egypt, was very popular in Libya. There were a lot of Libyans who felt Libya should have joined in the war in support of Egypt. There were actually some Libyans who tried to cross the border into Egypt to fight, and, as I recall, the King stopped them. But when the war broke out, you may recall, that was the so-called "big lie," perpetrated by Nasser and others, that the US had flown air cover for the Israelis when they bombed Cairo. This was widely accepted in Libya. So not being quite sure of the security of the American community, we evacuated all of the American dependents and non-essential personnel, and shut down operations at Wheelus. And for about two or three months after the war, Libya was in a traumatic state, and we had nothing but the most basic contacts with Libyan officials and very little contact with the rest of Libyan society.

I will tell a story to illustrate the feeling at the time. The governor of the Bank of Libya was an Italian-trained economist whom I had come to know. About two months or so after the war I passed him on the street, greeted him and that I'd like to come and visit him. He said, "No, I'll come to you," and he fixed the time. He came by and we sat in the garden. I'll always remember his saying to me, "I know that this is a difficult time for you Americans, and I'm fairly well convinced that the big lie is wrong." "But," he said, "you have to understand that it's difficult for me and for most Libyans to accept the fact that two million people, whom we always considered second class citizens, could whip 80 million Arabs. So in my head, I know that you didn't help the Israelis, but in my heart that's the only explanation that gives me satisfaction." Well, there we are, that's the Middle East.

As another illustration, a newspaper publisher told me later that the power of Nasser's message was such in Libya that when he took a ticker item out to his composing room to be set in type saying that Nasser had accepted a cease-fire, and, in effect, surrendered, his typesetters refused to set it in type. He had to get a tape of Nasser's actually making that statement before they would put into type.

We did get Wheelus back in operation. That was also an adventure. The Air Force in Washington didn't quite understand why we were so leery about Air Force operations. One had to appreciate that Wheelus was right in the center of a growing suburban area of Tripoli so that the aircraft taking off were a major annoyance to the population that lived around the base, and there was no way to disguise their operations. So after a couple of months I suggested that the head of the 16th Air Force, a major general, come down and we work together to get the base back into operation. We took two planes off one day to see if there was any reaction, and four planes the next day, and we gradually got it back into operation. The general told me later that he'd had a query from Air Force Headquarters about why he was letting the ambassador run Air Force operations. He said he

waited until the base was back in normal operations, and then sent in a brief message saying, "I didn't want to argue with success."

Q: I might add, and correct me if I'm wrong, but Wheelus was being used for rotating our combat aircraft which are rather noisy.

NEWSOM: It was a training base for aircraft (primarily F-4s at that time) based in Europe. They would come down and take off from Wheelus, and fly down the coast to a bombing range where they did their principal training.

Q: To continue with Wheelus, was Wheelus in operation the whole time you were there?

NEWSOM: Yes.

Q: The Brits, they had troops there, hadn't they, at one point?

NEWSOM: The British had a base at Al Adam, which was over in eastern Libya near Tobruk. They had troops in Tripoli at one time, but they were gone by the time I was there. They still had troops in Cyrenaica, in the eastern part of the country. And we were grateful that they did have because when the '67 war came the most threatening demonstrations were in Benghazi. Our consulate staff was trapped in the vault by an angry mob and was rescued by British troops.

Q: How did you find dealing with King Idriss. What was your evaluation at that time with him and his government?

NEWSOM: King Idriss was a man who clearly did not want to be King, and did not like Libya. Born in Algeria, he'd lived 40 years of his life in Cairo. His personal entourage consisted of Palestinians and Italians. As far as I could observe, he had no Libyans in his immediate service. He would really only take an interest in governing the country when there was a crisis and he was forced to make some decisions. I guess he fairly shrewdly manipulated the political elite of the time to put together governments that had some possibility of effective support, but he was not popular. The revolution in '69, I think, came about as much because of a vacuum of power as it was an excess of power.
The King had been out of the country, in Turkey, for some time before the revolution.

Q: How did you find the government - the foreign ministry and all - that you had to deal with?

NEWSOM: There were some excellent people among the Libyan ministers, and there were some that were difficult. There was an undercurrent of xenophobia in Libya, an undercurrent of what we would today call Islamic, maybe not militancy, but at least a strong Islamic strain. One has to remember that countries have been fighting their wars across Libyan territory since the days of the Roman Empire and through World War II. So there's a long history of hatred of foreigners who have crossed and criss-crossed Libyan territory. Qadhafi came to power after I left, but some of his ideas that seem somewhat strange to the outsider are not strange to someone who understood these kinds of tendencies in the Libyan society.

So when you were dealing with the Libyan government, you needed to be conscious of these sensitivities, and to some extent of the vulnerabilities of those who chose to work in the King's government because they encountered criticism, if not outright hostility, on the part of some of their fellow countrymen. There was one Libyan Prime Minister there much of the time that I was there, by the name Hussein Mazziq, who was the most impenetrable of the officials I dealt with. He had a technique I had never encountered then or since. If you asked him a question he didn't want to answer, he just sat there, mute, and left you to pick up the conversation.

Q: How did you find the embassy staff.

NEWSOM: I had a good staff. It was not a large staff. With one exception, they worked well during the crisis period of '67. We had a couple of excellent Arabists. I look back on the staff very favorably, including the Agency personnel with whom I worked closely.

Q: We're talking about the CIA.

NEWSOM: Including the CIA, yes. We had a small office up in Beyda, which was the alternate capital, a small town up in the hills of Cyrenaica, where the King liked to spend more time than in Tripoli. During the '67 war, there was an officer, who shall remain nameless, who sent word that he felt uncomfortable in the current atmosphere, and announced that he was closing the office and leaving for Benghazi. So in the middle of the crisis I had to fly up in an air force jet, landing in a very small airfield, to put another officer up there because Beyda was a critical post at that point. But, other than that incident, the staff was very good.

Q: Did you find the CIA, or the military attachés were giving you any forebodings of the Qadhafi coup. Or were you waiting for a shoe to drop?

NEWSOM: The agency had reports of a group that was forming, called the Black Boots, probably a group that was centered around an officer by the name of Abdul Aziz Shalhi. But that group, if they had any intention of trying to seize power, was preempted by the Qadhafi group on which we had no information.

Q: Did the situation in Algeria spill over into Libya?

NEWSOM: No, Algeria got its independence in '62. There were no events there as I remember that had an impact on Libya.

One other problem that I should mention in connection with Libya was the problem of corruption. Either the existence of corruption, or the belief in corruption, has been a factor in most of the Middle Eastern revolutions that I have observed. One of the almost Shakespearean parts of the Libyan scene was the position held by a family named Shalhi. Those of the family who were there when I was there were children to Ibrahim Shalhi. Ibrahim Shalhi had been assigned as a companion to Idriss when Idriss was nine and Shalhi was eleven. Idriss was the successor to the leadership of a movement called the Senousi movement, a religious movement that extended throughout North Africa. These two men grew up together. Ibrahim Shalhi was assassinated very shortly after Libyan independence. The king, who had no living issue of his own, adopted the

Shalhi family. There were two members of that family to whom the King gave virtual carte blanche to profiteer from the awarding of the oil concessions. I grew used to complaints from Libyan ministers that their decisions were sometimes overridden by the influence of the Shalhi family. How much a contributing factor this was to the undermining of the King, I don't know, but it certainly was a factor.

Q: On the technicalities of how diplomacy is done. You see a bad corruption problem. How does one report this? Just a report may leak in the US, setting off all sorts of reactions that are detrimental to other policies. How do you as ambassador see this problem? How do you deal with it?

NEWSOM: Well, as I remember, we reported the reports of corruption. We couldn't name names, particularly names of Americans who might have been involved because we didn't have the evidence, and embassies have no statutory responsibility, even under the Corrupt Practices Act, to investigate allegations of corruption. But because rumors of corruption were a political fact, this was quite legitimate to report. I took it upon myself on a couple of occasions in talking to the King, to raise questions about the reports of the activities of the Shalhi family. But it was very clear that this was a subject that the old king did not want to discuss. A kind of mask would come over his face and that was it. Indirectly, the Libyan experience led to the enactment of the Corrupt Practices Act.

Q: You're talking about USCPA?

NEWSOM: Yes, the US Corrupt Practices Act. After I returned from Libya and was appointed assistant secretary for African affairs, I was called up to a congressional hearing on charges laid against the Occidental Petroleum Company by a disgruntled accountant. A staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had encountered this man and gained from him a lot of details about payoffs. I remember being asked by Senators at the time, "Did you know about this?" I remember telling them I had heard rumors, but this was not a matter in which the US government had any role or authority. This was a matter between the US companies and the Libyans, and, therefore, I had no basis for inquiring into this. A couple of the Senators were quite taken aback by that, and I think this led to an enactment of legislation.

Q: While you were there, as you say, Nasser was a major figure in Libya. And here you have this King -- was it the feeling that Nasser or his agents were trying to overthrow the King? How were things going?

NEWSOM: There was no doubt about Nasser's popularity as I mentioned in the context of the '67 war. There may have been Egyptian activities. I don't recall any direct attacks by Nasser on Libya although I'm sure there were undercurrents that emanated from Egypt against Wheelus and against the American presence. But the Libyan elite with whom I was dealing mostly were at least, even after '67, somewhat contemptuous of Nasser, and loved to tell Nasser jokes that they'd picked up in Cairo. There was no doubt but what, under the surface, Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism was making great headway. I might add that after the King was overthrown, Nasser, very shrewdly, gave Idriss asylum in Cairo and provided him with one of Farouk's old palaces. I think Nasser, not being quite sure about Qadhafi, felt that he would have a card to play.

Q: When did you leave Libya?

NEWSOM: July of 1969.

Q: Just before the coup.

NEWSOM: Yes.

Q: When you left Libya how did you feel about whither Libya?

NEWSOM: I wrote an airgram after going around and meeting with a number of prominent Libyans and said basically, I can't predict how things are going to turn out in this country, but there is definitely a malaise that could lead to major political developments. We shouldn't be surprised if such developments take place -- something along that line.

HOLSEY G. HANDYSIDE
Political Officer
Tripoli (1965-1970)

Ambassador Holsey G. Handyside was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1927. He received a bachelor's degree in French and political science from Amherst College in 1950 and studied at the University of Grenoble on a Fulbright Fellowship. He then attended the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton University for two years. He received a master's degree in public administration in 1953. Ambassador Handyside entered the Foreign Service in 1955. His career included positions in Cairo, Egypt; Beirut, Lebanon; Baghdad, Iraq; and Mauritania, where he was ambassador. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 19, 1993.

Q: Okay, so now we move back into your own world again from 1965-70.

HANDYSIDE: Yes that is right. From 1965-70 I was stationed in Libya. It was a most interesting assignment. I saw a range of problems. As the chief of the political section we not only had to be directly aware of and worried about the extensive kinds of political problems that continued to agitate the Middle East, but I also had the responsibility of the primary troubleshooter for the Embassy on the problems that were caused in the bilateral relationship as a result of having an enormous air base seven miles down the road, Wheelus Field, with all the problems that went along with a major military installation, with a whole lot of high performance aircraft and two thousand Air Force personnel. (Wheelus Field was the primary training and gunnery qualification center for all of the US Air Force in Europe. Every plane and every pilot assigned to one of the US Air Force units came to Wheelus twice a year to practice and then to fly judged test runs on the range. The permanent personnel at the base had to put the pilots and the aircraft through all their paces. The flight crews who didn't rack up appropriate test scores were either docked their flyboy pay or were in some instances grounded and taken off combat ready assignments. The functioning

at Wheelus was terribly important to the combat readiness of the U.S. Air Force in Europe.)

The problem was that whenever this kind of high performance equipment is involved, there are inevitably mechanical problems of one kind or another. One of the things that was almost always happening was some piece of the airplane would drop off, either an empty gas tank or some other piece of apparatus, particularly in landing and takeoffs. So all the farmers who lived in the immediate area extending out five or six miles from the walls of Wheelus Field, were continually subjected to these mechanical indiscretions of Air Force fighter planes. That meant that not only somebody from the Air Base had to go out on a damage control mission, but there almost always had to be someone from the Embassy involved as well, because almost automatically and immediately these things became political problems between the US Embassy and the host government.

Or there would be automobile accidents caused by untethered animals suddenly dashing across the road, or an Air Force vehicle would strike a camel. I learned immediately that every camel that got hit by an American Air Force vehicle was always pregnant because the US government then had to pay not only for the death of the mother, but for the death of the incipient camel that otherwise would have produced such and such an amount of income during its natural life, etc.

A fascinating period for a number of reasons. We were dealing with a government that was only at the very beginning of its self-discovery of its governmental competence. There were first class people in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but...

Q: Could you describe what the government was like at that time?

HANDYSIDE: It was a government that consisted of a king who was remote, both physically and intellectually, from the rest of the government. He was both a temporal and a religious leader.

Q: This was King Idriss.

HANDYSIDE: Yes. His family was one of the theologically important families in the spread of Islam westward across north Africa. The family had been centered primarily in the desert areas that ultimately became southern Libya and southern Algeria. He was revered not simply as a temporal ruler, but also as a religious leader. By the time I arrived on the scene he was well over 75; had a long white beard and moved with a certain amount of frail stolidity. He had a very attractive and quite modern wife, as the queen. They had never had any offspring so he had no heir. There was a crown prince who was from another branch of the family who wasn't terribly bright and had no real competence in terms of government. The King also had a nephew from another part of the family who had just graduated from one of the British private schools in Jerusalem. He went off, midway through my five years in Libya, to his first year at either Oxford or Cambridge in England. He was the real saving grace of the family. He had the smarts, the personal attractiveness, the political sensitivities, that had he been made the heir apparent, might have enabled the royal family to survive. It is not clear whether the young man was interested in taking on this burden or not. What was clear was that the king was not interested in placing the leadership burden on his favorite nephew, so he remained locked into this very stolid, unimaginative family member who was already the crown prince.

There was a parliamentary form of government. Libya had started out as a federal state, each of the three provinces being represented equally in various parts of the government. It had subsequently become a unitary state. But the people who ran the government were people who were the tribal movers and shakers. This meant that while there were a certain number of very bright and quite competent tribal types, their management style was very old fashioned. It also meant that there were some of the sons of tribal types who were not very bright and didn't have very much ambition or much acuity, but who turned out to be terribly important people in the society and the economy because of who their fathers and grandfathers were. The corollary of that proposition was that there was a fairly substantial number of young men in the community plus a handful of young women who were very bright and very competent and who had enormous career aspirations, but who because their families were run-of-the-mill and their parents were nobodies would never in traditional Libyan society ever amount to anything. We keep referring to this in the United States as the glass ceiling. Women, in particular, come up against the glass ceiling, especially in the private sector, and discover they can't go any further. The equivalent was true in Libya for men and women. There were numbers of people who had very real skills and significant intelligence who were relegated to unimportant jobs in the society because of family background. This became enormously important after the 1967 war...

Q: This is the Six-Day War in which Israel really clobbered the Egyptians.

HANDYSIDE: ...because the Libyan government found itself under enormous pressure and it became necessary for the king to consciously make some changes of regime. There was a period of time in either late 1967 or early 1968 that the king appointed a very bright young lawyer whose father had been a bottom level religious figure of some kind as the Prime Minister, Abdal-Hamidal-Bakkush. This was a sop to the youth of the country who had reacted adversely to the previous way of doing things. At the outset the king did not permit the new prime minister to name the rest of his cabinet. So for the first three or four months, the prime minister had to try and make do with the old tribal sticks-in-the-mud who were the primary cause of the political unrest. Finally the king came under sufficient pressure that he finally permitted the new prime minister to appoint his own choices to his cabinet. So sometime in the spring or summer of 1968, there was a new cabinet full of these bright new technocrats, all of whom had been educated abroad, some in the United States.

There suddenly developed in Libya the same kind of excitement about the government that existed in Washington during the administration of President Kennedy. All kinds of fascinating new things were going on. One of the results was that the academic year that began in the fall of 1968 was the first academic year in a decade where there were no strikes or political upsets at the couple of universities or of the secondary schools. The reason for it was very clearly articulated. The student leaders at both high school and university level said very publicly on their campuses that our guy is the prime minister; he is going in the direction that we want to go; he is going as fast as he can; and the last thing he needs is problems on the campuses of this country. And the students of Libya during that exciting period of Camelot in Libya, kept order on their own campuses. The student radicals continued to agitate, but the problems were handled, and the situations were defused by the student leadership. The potential crises were defused on the basis of the insistence of the leaders that we cannot afford to be the prime minister's next problem.

Q: Now, you were the chief of the political section there. How did you operate as far as making contacts? What were American interests?

HANDYSIDE: Well, the air base was a major interest, obviously, but we also had some sense of what was going on generally. The number two slot in the political section explicitly went to a language officer and during the time I was there I had two absolutely first class Foreign Service language officers assigned to that job. Both have now gone on and have been chiefs of mission and principal deputy assistant secretaries, and have continued to work in the Near East Bureau. Very able young guys.

They and I also had the responsibility of getting out into the community. One of the things that we were lucky to have...some of the young men in this society, young fellows who had some foreign education and some real aspiration about evolving Libya from an authoritarian government that had the trappings of a constitutional monarchy into a real constitutional monarchy where the royal family was a figurehead and the prime minister was really the head of government...

At some point in the early 60's these young fellows in the western end of the country, in the province that had previously been called Tripolitania, had organized a group called the Intellectual Society. The meetings of the Intellectual Society were open to the general public and they took place usually every three or four weeks. They typically involved a speaker and then a discussion. I made it my business to call on all the guys who were leaders of this group to obtain their permission to start coming to their meetings as an observer. I would go not religiously and faithfully to every meeting, but I got to as many of the meetings that I possibly could. I got involved in as many discussions and problems as I could usefully and with some sense of diplomatic dignity. Over a period of time I became known as somebody that was interested in what they thought, and was a reasonably friendly and warm, interlocutor.

I hadn't realized the impact of this. I thought this was benefiting me because it certainly helped me understand what was going on in society. But at a subsequent time, and I don't remember exactly when this happened, but somewhere prior to the 1967 War, in late 1966 or early 1967. My counterpart in the British Embassy was a young British Arabist by the name of Goulding, whose name you may recognize as the current Under Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs at the United Nations and who has been involved in troubleshooting all kinds of crises around the world for the UN Secretary General of late. Mig Goulding said to me at one point, "You know, I had the most interesting comment from one of these young fellows about you and the American Embassy that I think you ought to hear. One of them volunteered the following to me a couple of days ago. He said, 'You know, we always used to consider the American Embassy as a very unfriendly place insofar as the younger generation in Libya is concerned. We viewed the American Embassy has being slavish supporters of the royal family and of the status quo. It is fascinating and wonderfully satisfying now that there is one guy in the American Embassy who listens to what we say. He makes it his business to understand what we say and while we recognize that the attitude of the American Embassy hasn't really changed in any significant way, at least we now have somebody in the American Embassy that we can go talk to and who will talk to us in a way that indicates he understands what we are doing.'" I must say that was one of the best fitness reports I ever got during my time in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well why don't we call it off at this point. Next time I will pick up some things about what happened up through 1970...your impression of our ambassadors there, more dealing with the Wheelus Air Base and dealing with the US military, the Libyan military, etc.

HANDYSIDE: One of the things you may want to cover was the political crisis in Libya that accompanied the 1967 war.

Q: Starting all over again. Today is May 20, 1993. Handy, do you want to start. We are talking about the 1967 war. This would be the June 1967 war in which Israel beat the hell out of the Egyptians after an initial scare.

HANDYSIDE: It might be useful to record a couple of general observations about what was going on in Libya at that stage of the game, particularly in terms of the US relationship and then begin to point to some of the precursors of the coup d'etat against the King that occurred a little over two years later.

By way of background on the '67 war: You recall that the Israeli Air Force cleaned up on the Egyptian Air Force in literally a matter of hours in the first day of hostilities. At the same time the authorities of the US Air Force made a decision (I assume at 16th Air Force Headquarters in Europe) to get the collection of fighter planes and crews which had been at Wheelus Air Force Base on one of their periodic cycles through the gunnery range, out of the Libyan area and in effect the Middle Eastern war theater as quickly as possible. So early on the morning of the Israeli attack on Egypt, emergency orders were issued and the two fighter squadrons temporarily at Wheelus were instructed to take off just as quickly as they could and return to their bases in Europe. The result: (1) there were two hundred aircraft taking off in typical combat takeoff formation (where pairs of airplanes go charging down the runway simultaneously) in a period of a couple of hours, and (2) all the Libyans who lived around the Air Base were very soon aware of the fact that tens of American fighter planes were leaving Wheelus.

A few hours later, after the reports began to come in that the Israeli Air Force had literally destroyed the Egyptian Air Force by attacking all the air bases in Egypt and knocking out the Air Force while it was still on the ground, the typical Libyan military and civilian observer, led by one of the U.S.-trained Libyan Air Force pilots, immediately put these two things together and came to the conclusion that the U.S. fighters had taken off from Wheelus and flown to Egypt to hit the Egyptian Air Force. It was patently obvious to Libyans that the Israeli Air Force couldn't beat the Egyptian Air Force by itself. Therefore his astounding victory of the Israeli Air Force over the Egyptian Air Force had been made possible only because American pilots and American planes had been involved.. This interpretation of events, originally a supposition, later became rumor, and still later became absolute fact. I dare say there are people in Libya and indeed throughout the Arab world, who 25-30 years later, are still absolutely convinced that it was American air power which wiped out the Egyptian Air Force.

A few days later, the Libyan Government halted the loading of Libyan oil in tankers bound for American ports. The Government took this action to reestablish its control over its own people and to strengthen its shaky position vis a vis its Arab neighbors. This Libyan action was the first Arab

oil embargo imposed against the U.S.. The Embassy was faced with an enormous problem of trying to rebuild its position in the community and trying to get people to be willing to talk to official Americans again. There were times, for example, when I and other Embassy officers, including Ambassador and Mrs. Newsom, found that Libyans we had known quite well in the preceding couple of years would go so far as to cross over onto the other side of the street in order to avoid meeting us and having to speak to us. These kinds of reactions posed some very serious, very difficult problems as far as the Embassy was concerned. It took perhaps five or six months before we were back somewhere to some semblance of where we had been before the war.

But more important were some of the things which did not involve us but involved the internal politics of Libya. Almost immediately after the total defeat of Egypt and the other Arab states by Israeli forces, there was an immediate reaction on the part of the younger generation in the western part of Libya, Tripolitania. Very quickly, literally within four or five days after the hostilities were over, a group of some 28 young Libyan males, all of whom had been trained in the west, most of them in the United States, many of whom were working for American oil companies, simply displaced the Libyan government. They took over and began to run the western part of the country. It was a kind of committee of young professionals. There was not very much publicity about this. They didn't go on the radio and try to make the point that they had taken over the government. They just did in fact. There were enough of them who were key people in government agencies and coupled with those who were fairly senior in the various oil companies that they occupied a sufficient number of political pressure points to enable them, in effect, to do this. For the next six or eight weeks Tripolitania was run by this rump group of mostly US trained technicians.

This situation caused the king to face up to the fact that he would have to make some changes in the way that he and others had been governing Libya. One of the first things that the King did to reestablish the power of the Libyan government in Tripolitania, was to appoint one of the previous Ministers of Interior, who was a tough old tribal leader, as Prime Minister. Moreover, the King gave him the responsibility of reestablishing law and order and more importantly reestablishing the run of the writ of the Libyan government throughout the country as well as in Tripolitania. The upshot of this Royal decision was a lot of knocking together during July and August of the heads of the young men who had previously stepped out of line from the point of view of the royal family. The couple of dozen people who had been running the government in the western part of the country were systematically shuffled off. As far as I know they were never overtly punished in any way, but their authority over the operation of the port and the government agencies, etc. in Tripoli and the surrounding area was very quietly and systematically turned off.

By the end of the summer with the tough guy Prime Minister having reestablished law and order, the King apparently came to realize that he had to do more to be responsive to the desires of the young intellectual generation to make Libya a more responsive society and polity; that he at least had to pay lip service to their intense desire to modernize the state and modernize the society. The result was that towards the end of August or early in September, the King appointed Abdal-Hamid al-Bakkush, a young Libyan lawyer as Prime Minister. He kept him on a very tight rein at first; he forced Bakkush to accept all of the old timers who had been members of the tribal leader's cabinet. For the first couple of months the new Prime Minister was in fact little more than a younger generation front man.

Nevertheless this was terribly important because Bakkush was the first Prime Minister of Libya who had not come out of the ancient tribal structure and whose family was a nothing family in terms of Libyan politics and Libyan society. Bakkush's father had been a religious figure of some very low importance on the Mediterranean coast about half way between Tripoli and Benghazi. While the Prime Minister was a bright, well-educated young lawyer, he certainly had no claim on any position of power or responsibility in Libya since those positions were granted only by birth.

Part of the problem that the King was responding to was the inability of able young men to rise to the top of either the government or the private sector. The glass ceiling was becoming remarked upon increasingly and as a result was becoming a very serious problem. Government agencies and private businesses were run by the sons of the powerful whether they had enough brains to come in out of the rain or not. Other men, perhaps, in effect ran the government agency or ran the private business, but they did so as the assistant to the president or the third assistant vice president or something like that. The titular responsibility was accorded only to the sons of the traditionally powerful. So the appointment of Bakkush was an enormously significant departure from standard Libyan tradition and practice.

After a period of two or three more months the King finally relented and permitted Bakkush to select the other members of his cabinet. While Bakkush was sensible enough to retain two or three of the typical old-timers, he loaded up his cabinet with a group of very bright, very competent, reasonably well-experienced, young technical and intellectual types. I am not sure that any of them had been individually involved in the rump government of the early summer. I can't recall that right off hand. But there were some very, very important young fellows with enormous competence, including Ali Amiga, the former Under Secretary of Planning . All of a sudden, Atiga, who had been beating his head against the glass ceiling, broke through and became the Minister of Planning. There were similar kinds of people scattered throughout the government. Very quickly there developed in Libya a sense of real change, of excitement, of fundamental revisions going on in the society and the polity. It was very, very much akin to the kind of excitement that existed in Washington at the beginning of the Kennedy administration. All sorts of things began to happen and changes were being made. Whenever one looked around there was something going on that hadn't been going on before.

As all of these changes were taking place, those of us who had some previous association with one or more of the new cabinet members had an occasional opportunity to discuss what was going on with them. I had a fascinating experience of spending the better part of a day in the country with the Minister of Planning. During the course of our conversation I asked Dr. Atiga whether or not he had done any thinking about political development. I knew he had done a great deal of thinking about economic development, since he had his economic training in the U.S. at about the time the Rostows were talking and writing about the concept of economic takeoff. I was sure Atiga was familiar with that literature.

To follow up on my original query, I asked Mr. Atiga during the course of this very informal conversation whether he was aware of the fact that there were scholars in the United States who were beginning to think about political development in the same way the economic fraternity had been thinking about economic development for the preceding decade or so. He replied he was unaware of any of this and began to question me about it. I was able to tell him at least a little bit

about the literature. More important, I was able to suggest to him that there were certain kinds of things that had to be done in any society before the society and its members were prepared to take on the responsibility of running their affairs in some more or less democratic fashion. I told him about the fact that in elementary, junior and senior high schools in the United States each home room class is organized in democratic fashion. I also noted that very early on, usually about the third or fourth grade, the youngsters are given instruction in the democratic process by virtue of the fact that they are called upon to organize nominations and elections for class officers. Then, and part of the process, the youngsters are called upon to recognize that for a period of time this group of four or five kids had been elected to president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, etc. of the class, that they were in office and everybody had to do what they decided was to be done. At the same time, the youngsters came to recognize that at the end of the particular time period for which they had been elected, they could elect different officers if they didn't like the way things had been run. Moreover, each youngster learns he or she has the opportunity to campaign against the incumbents at the next scheduled election and to throw them out. It was this kind of slow, careful, learn by making the democratic process work, which prepared people in the United States for the ultimate democratic government which is the way we govern ourselves at the local, state and national levels.

As a result, I observed to Atiga, it seems to me that a country such as Libya is going to have to devise and put in place an equivalent educational program of instruction in the process and procedures of democracy. Only by doing this can a developing nation make sure that its people began to accept and internalize decision making by majority vote. I declared that I didn't know enough about Libyan society to suggest specifics as to how this might be done. But I was able to identify for the Minister a series of places such as the educational system where these kinds of things could be undertaken, and probably should be undertaken by way of preparation for where clearly this group of young cabinet ministers seemed to be headed in their attempts to modernize Libyan society and the Libyan political system.

I was enormously gratified about three or four months later during the opening reception of the American Pavilion at the Tripoli Trade Fair. As the Ministers began to drift in to look at our Pavilion, one of the earlier arrivals was the Minister of Planning. After talking to the Ambassador and the Economic Counselor for a little bit, Atiga spotted me and came over. He said, "I am sorry I don't have very much time to talk to you because I really have to get on to the next exhibit, but I wanted you to know that the long conversation we had out in the country back in early September has had some very specific results. We have had several cabinet meetings in which we have talked about organizing some systematic program of political development. We haven't make any final decisions yet, but we are beginning to think very seriously about it and we are beginning to address at least some of the areas you suggested as possible places to begin the process."

The next stage in this political evolution was somewhat less happy. As the young men began to bring to fruition some of their plans for changing the Libyan political system and for changing Libyan society, as they pushed along down this track, they inevitably began stepping on toes. While they attempted to be as gentle as possible and attempted to take care of at least the most obvious wheel horses who were going to be either inconvenienced or maybe economically and certainly politically injured by some of the changes that were made, they were unable to prepare the way sufficiently. So by late spring, early summer of 1968, car loads of unhappy old-timers

were beginning to make the trek eastward across the country to Tobruk to call upon the King and to complain about these young whippersnappers that were ruining the country. And since the King had responded to the political realities against his better judgment, clearly he was very receptive and responsive to the complaints of the old-timers whose interests at least were being displaced and, in addition, they themselves had been displaced by the nomination of the young technicians to the cabinet.

By the end of the summer, the King had apparently decided that he simply was unwilling and unable to continue the reformist experiment any further. Partly, I suspect, in response to all of his old cronies who had been the backbone of his support over the year and partly because I think he personally probably felt that indeed these young whippersnappers were ruining the country. They were making it unrecognizable to what his Libya had been. So sometime in early September the entire country, including the people in the American Embassy suddenly woke up to the fact that without any forewarning the King had sacked Abdal-Hamidal-Bakkush and his cabinet of young intellectual technocrats, and had replaced the Prime Minister and the other members of the cabinet with a prime minister and other cabinet members chosen from the old guard of the tribal hierarchy.

One of the fascinating things that resulted from the King's action was that it became quite clear that as far as the young men in Libya were concerned, his action constituted their final argument: they were never going to be able to modernize their society by means of the democratic process and by means of evolution. As a result of this episode, I concluded that indeed by his actions the King had brought the specter of extra- constitutional change much closer to reality than it had been certainly in my time in Libya and for, I suspect, any time during the preceding two decades.

In preparation for a country team meeting that was held probably in the first half of October...I'm a little fuzzy after these many years about the precise date...various members of the staff were forewarned that they were to be ready to give an appreciation of what the most recent prime minister and cabinet reshuffle was going to mean so far as Libya was concerned and so far as the US-Libyan relationship was concerned. So I began to reflect on this shift in a more systematic way. At the country team meeting, I was called upon by Ambassador Newsom for my contribution to the discussion. I outlined in a presentation that lasted perhaps ten minutes the steps that had led up to the recent shift and the kinds of conclusions that I had drawn from it. In part these were my own conclusions independently arrived at, in part they were the views of the younger generation of Libyans because I had in the meantime had an opportunity to probe certain of the young fellows that had been involved both in the Intellectual Society and in the rump government that ran Tripolitania during the early part of the post-war period. I found out that what I had assumed they must be thinking, at least a half a dozen of them were indeed thinking moreover, it was the manner of the firing of the Prime Minister that really was the clincher in their conclusion. If there had been an altercation between the King and the Prime Minister that had become public or if there had been a specific issue where clearly the Prime Minister had disagreed with the King and there had been some public reflection of this disagreement, and the King had then sacked the Prime Minister, I think these young men probably would have taken that in stride. They would have said, "Well, okay, this was not a crisis of the regime, it was merely a butting of heads on a particular issue." But it was the very fact that from one day to the next Bakkush was the Prime Minister and then he was out. Not only was he out, he had been replaced by one of the old-timers, one of the not very bright, rigid-minded tribal leaders. This reversion to the old politics forced them to the conclusion that

their long range objective of reforming Libyan society and of rearranging the Libyan economy and polity had been absolutely stopped. Therefore any attempt at reform, any attempt at evolution had been stopped in its tracks. As a result, it was clear that any kind of change, such as the kind of change that they were determined to produce, had been stopped at least for the foreseeable future.

I set forth this conclusion in my presentation to the country team. Then I added that while I couldn't predict the future, it did seem to me that the scene was now set for some kind of an extra-constitutional change of the government. The members of the country team were fascinated by this analysis; a consensus was reached that I should elaborate on my analysis, put it all down on paper, and send it off to Washington because these events possibly constituted an important turning point, not only for Libya, but for the US-Libyan relationship. So over the next three or four days I spent a fair amount of time and effort writing and ended up with an airgram of some 12 or 15 pages in which I laid out my thesis, leading up to the conclusion that by his actions the King had lowered the threshold to extra-constitutional change. In the fullness of time the airgram was typed up properly and sent in to the front office for approval. Within a week or so I got the airgram back from the Deputy Chief of Mission, Mr. James Blake, with a note saying that the Ambassador was somewhat troubled by my analysis and that he wanted me to make a whole series of changes. As I looked through the changes, it became quickly apparent that the changes that Ambassador Newsom wanted me to make would fundamentally alter the analysis and the conclusion. I saw no way that I could square the circle. I could not make the changes that the Ambassador wanted made and still uphold the professional analysis and professional expression of opinion that I had committed to paper. Not knowing quite how to square that circle, I temporized. I simply took the whole package and slid it into the bottom of the in-box to sit.

About six weeks later, Jim Blake called me in to ask what we were going to do about the airgram that I had written on the impact of the King's redesignation of the cabinet. And I said, "Well, Jim, I really don't know because what the Ambassador apparently believes and what he wants me to write, I don't believe and I will not write. If the Ambassador wants me to write an airgram that articulates his view of the situation and his analysis of this set of problems, I would be delighted to be his amanuensis with one proviso, that my name does not appear on the bottom of the airgram. If on the other hand he wants my analysis to go in, then I cannot accept the kinds of changes which I think are fundamental and fundamentally erosive of the thrust of my argument. Therefore we are at loggerheads as far as I am concerned. Since I am at loggerheads with the Ambassador, and since I am not in the habit of fighting with ambassadors, why don't we just finesse it." Jim said, "No, no. We have to get this in. It is an important set of concepts."

The upshot of it was that Ambassador Newsom wrote a couple of paragraphs by way of introduction and a couple of paragraphs by way of conclusion and we tinkered a little bit in ways that didn't do violence to my thought process with some of the stuff in the middle. We had it typed up and sent it in. The crux of the introductory paragraphs was, in effect, "What follows is the view of some of the members of his staff. They are important, intellectually defensible views and Washington should have the advantage of them." But the Ambassador made it quite clear that he didn't share the analysis. The final concluding paragraphs which he added said, in effect, "I don't believe this; this is what I think are the results of what happened....."

Although these introductory and concluding paragraphs were not identified as having been written

by the Ambassador, his writing style was so different from mine that anybody that picked up the airgram and started to read it would immediately see that there had been two authors: that the center section had been written by one person and that the lead-in and the concluding paragraphs had been written by another.

Soon after the airgram went back to Washington, I was quickly appraised via an official-informal from the Libyan Desk Officer that my analysis had stirred up an enormous amount of interest and thought. He reported that it had required people to start thinking seriously about the whole problem of political development and what the recent political actions of the King had brought about.

The airgram was sent to Washington somewhere around September 10, 1968. I had very carefully said that there was no way to predict how soon something might happen. But on the night of August 31 -- the morning of the first of September 1969 -- the military Revolutionary Command Council, lead by Captain Muammar al-Qadhafi, threw out the King, took over the government and began a process of modernization of the society and economy. My analysis of the lowered threshold of extra-constitutional change in effect was borne out by a coup d'etat overthrowing the King in less than 365 days.

The final word arrived a couple of weeks after the military coup when I received another official-informal letter from the Libyan Desk Officer. It was about a four-liner that said, "Dear Handy, I just wanted to let you know that there are some of us back here in Washington who remember that you called this about 12 months ago."

Q: You know, Handy, before we move on, what I am getting from you is an impression...I have never dealt in Libyan affairs, but just from the outside...King Idriss has always been played up as a fumbling old-timer who was kind of out of it, yet what you are saying really is that he was wrong but he was much more of an active player rather than just a tribal chief whose time had gone.

HANDYSIDE: He was an active player but only on the largest, broadest kind of spectrum. He wasn't the slightest bit interested in the day-to-day running of the government. What particular ministers did or didn't decide to do, I don't think really concerned him the slightest. He obviously kept tabs on his prime minister, but for the most part his prime ministers were mirror images of his intellect and his political approach so he really didn't have to worry about them too terribly much. There was a limited number of topics that the King was interested in. The two foremost were his absolute conviction that there was no future for Libya except in association with the British and American governments. The base agreement that the British had for the army installations they had around Tobruk and the base agreement the United States had for Wheelus Air Force base were absolute essentials as far as he was concerned. The occasional times Idriss would become very active and directly and personally involved in what was going on and in the running of the government came at times when these basic associations with these two foreign governments were called into question, or worse, were threatened. The rest of the time, from my vantage point, and I must hastily add that I rarely saw the King...the Ambassador saw him very frequently and he usually took one of the five Arabists in the political section off to Tobruk to be his interpreter...so my experience with being in the room when the American Ambassador was dealing with the King was very limited. Certainly much more limited than a couple of young Arabists who successively worked for me in the political section. But certainly judging from everything that was going on,

Idriss was not interested in these kinds of things.

In contrast, his wife was. One of the incredible bits of social engineering that I have come across anywhere and certainly one of the rare occasions in Libya was obviously engineered and organized by the Queen. She apparently decided that the time had come to eliminate some of the dead hand of Libyan society generally and of certain specific traditions on young women in Libya. I am not quite sure how this started, but at one stage of the game, this I think was probably the summer of 1966, the Queen decided that she wanted to open up the society a little bit and make it possible for young female teenagers in Libya to follow a path that was somewhat more open and somewhat more free than the traditional path that was prescribed for Libyan girls. At the age of about 12 Libyan girls were bundled into an abaya, their movements outside the house were sharply curtailed. If they walked through the streets on their way to school, they had to have the abaya across their faces so that they couldn't be seen. They became subject at this point to all the actions and regulations that relegated half the population to second class citizenship. The Queen designated herself the primary hostess for the Arab Girl Scout Jamboree that was held in roughly June 1966 at Sabratha. Girl scouts and their leaders from all over the Arab world poured into Libya for this period of four or five days. The Queen traveled to Sabratha two or three days running, and took with her a series of her ladies in waiting. She surprised everybody by appearing at the Jamboree without a veil on. She also saw to it that all her ladies in waiting were willing to take the veil off or were disinvited.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this blow for female liberation was that it was obviously laid on in advance. The photographers and writers of a magazine that was published monthly by the Libyan Ministry of Information, called the "Libyan Woman" were cranked up to cover the Sabrath event and prepare an article for publication. The August issue of "Libyan Woman" was a cover story on the Queen's presiding over the Girl Scout Jamboree. There was a picture of her Majesty without a veil on the cover of the magazine. And then there was a five or six page photo article showing the Queen moving around the Jamboree and talking to groups of girl scouts from various Arab countries, participating in the kind of mass activities, etc. It was a very good pictorial job of the Queen's patronage and her participation in this five day jamboree.

The impact on Libyan society was almost immediate and it was palpable. Suddenly young girls, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, were able to say to their fathers and grandfathers, "No, I will not wear the veil." I know from one of my counterparts in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the cover story had an impact on his family. His daughter, who had lived the first five or six years of her life in Italy where he was posted at the Libyan Embassy in Rome, and had been brought back to Tripoli at that prepubescent age. She and her father and her mother had decided that she would not be forced to wear the veil. They left the choice up to her. She decided she would not. As a result, every time she went to visit either one of her sets of grandparents, her grandfather, first on one side and then on the other side, began harassing this youngster, complaining that she was now thirteen years old and should be wearing an abaya. Finally she said to her parents, "Look, I simply am not going to go through this hassle anymore. To the extent that Libyan tradition requires us to pay all these calls on our relatives and grandparents, I will not subject myself to the constant nagging by my two grandfathers. Therefore I am not going to go with you anymore." The parents agreed to this. The grandfathers began to get very agitated after the first couple of months and began asking questions. They were told that as long as they were going to harass the oldest granddaughter about

wearing an abaya, she was not going to visit them.

After the cover story on the Queen came out, the daughter confronted one of her grandfathers. He had always advanced the traditional male argument in Libya, that any woman who appeared in public without a veil was a prostitute. Clutching the August issue of the "Libyan Woman" in her hand, the daughter went off to beard her grandfather in his den. He gave her the standard prostitute argument. She flourished the magazine and demanded, "Are you then grandfather calling our Queen a whore?" Grandfather very quickly backpedaled...

This sequence of argumentation and confrontation apparently went on in household after household. Within a matter of two or three months the streets, at least in Tripoli, appeared very different. The number of school girls who on their way back and forth to their girls school in the morning and at noon time who had always before been wrapped in abayas gradually grew smaller and smaller. Within another three or four months, virtually none of the girls were wearing abayas.

This was obviously a very self-conscious, very carefully planned out, very carefully executed instance of social engineering. The King had nothing to do with it at all, apparently. It had been entirely designed and engineered by the Queen. I gathered at one stage of the game that she had consulted with him about doing her plan, and he in effect had washed his hands of it. "If you think this would be a useful thing to do you go right ahead and do it." I suspect that neither the King nor the Queen anticipated the amazing impact her actions would have on what had been a very separated society up to that point.

Q: Well, Handy, in the period particularly before the September, 1969 takeover by Qadhafi, were there any warning bells or were we doing anything? Was it pretty much business as usual?

HANDYSIDE: Well as far as we were concerned we had a range of interactions going on with the Libyans. In addition to our political and military presence, we had lots going on in the economic area. A couple of the producing oil companies were American corporations. So there were periodically questions or problems the Embassy needed to know about, and on some occasions there were things that we needed to intervene on. We had a continuing relationship with the political part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs simply in order to manage the myriad kinds of problems that were generated by the very presence of American airplanes and American Air Force personnel in what was one of the largest air bases in the whole Western European area. So the Embassy and the Libyan government were constantly doing business with one another.

On the military side we had a kind of three way agreement between the British, the Libyans and the Americans, that the Americans would have the responsibility for developing the Libyan Air Force, for providing the equipment, and for training the Libyan flight personnel and maintenance personnel. The British military would continue their role of supplying and training the navy forces and the land forces. The British had supplied some four torpedo boats to the Libyan navy and had a very substantial training program. Officers were taken to England and trained at Dartmouth and other places and then brought back. There was a British naval mission and a British army mission. The only place where the neat dividing line between British and Americans was breached was in the area of communications. In this area there was a combination of joint responsibility and an informal “ of you do this and we will do that”. So part of the US Military Advisory Assistance

group agenda in Libya prior to the coup dealt with the communications area, the signal corps people. We had in country perhaps five, maybe six, young company grade officers, first lieutenants and captains, who were communications technicians out of the US Signal Corps. They were detailed to the Libyan army for the purpose of training officers and men in the esoterics of modern day electronic communication.

There was no indication of anything building up other than the analysis that I have already outlined. Indeed the night of August 31, I drove out to Sabratha, a Roman ruin, for a theatrical performance, and saw nothing out of the ordinary.

During the course of the summer, there was a series of cultural presentations at the Sabrath Roman theater. I don't remember what the August 31st show was, but it was something musical. I had driven out early with two or three friends so we would have a chance to look around the Roman ruins before the concert started. After the concert we got into my car and started back to Tripoli. We were totally oblivious of anything going on. We later learned that the movement of the troops had already begun while we were on the road. But the coup leaders had been very careful in their planning. They recognized that there was going to be this crowd of about 800 people at Sabratha, and so very carefully postponed any military movements in that area until after the theater crowd had gone home.

I got back to my apartment in Tripoli sometime after midnight. For some reason or other, I happened to wake up at the usual time despite the fact that the first of September was a holiday and I strolled out on my balcony which overlooked the Corniche port. I looked down at the Corniche drive along the port and suddenly realized that coming up perhaps 500 yards from me, there was a squad of soldiers obviously being marched along by some NCO. He had a detachment of maybe ten or twelve troopers. I watched as they moved down into the port area and he dropped them off at various places where they were taking up guard posts. I said, "This is very strange, What is going on?" And then I also realized that there was no traffic on this Corniche in front of my apartment building. Even though this was a holiday, normally on a holiday there would be an occasional car or truck, but there was nothing.

Having finally realized that something strange was going on, I tried to make some telephone calls and discovered that my telephone didn't work. That was the clue that finally penetrated my early morning fog. I quickly got dressed, got into my car and started down to the Embassy. In a distance of maybe seven or eight blocks, I had to talk my way through three or four military road blocks. I was able to do so only because I had diplomatic license plates on the car and a Ministry of Foreign Affairs ID card. Fortunately for me the corporal or the sergeant in charge of each one of these roadblocks was literate so he could read the ID card. I made it to the Embassy by a little after eight in the morning, one of the first members of the staff to get there. I literally didn't leave the Embassy for another six weeks. I simply lived there, going home to take a shower once in a while and get a clean set of clothes.

But we had no indication. Most importantly, neither did Gamal Abdel Nasser, the leader of Egypt. Although Nasser was viewed as the leader of the entire Arab world, he was suddenly shocked, according to later reports to discover there had been a coup d'etat in his next door neighbor with whom he shared a frontier, by a group of unknown military officers. Nasser was very disturbed we

subsequently discovered, to discover that he not only didn't know that there was a coup being planned or that the coup was underway, but that he didn't know any of the people who were involved. He immediately dispatched Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, the editor of one of the big newspapers in Cairo, who very frequently was called upon by Nasser to undertake personal missions of this kind. He put Heikal on one of the presidential airplanes and sent him to Benghazi to find out what the hell had happened and who was in charge.

So it was hardly a surprise that the American Embassy was unaware of this coup. Yet there was a part of the United States government that was very unhappy with this fact, and over the next ten days or so sent a series of nasty-grams...

Q: You are talking about CIA?

HANDYSIDE: ...yes, to the chief of the station, the tenor of which (although I never saw them I was briefed on them by the chief of station) was so demanding and so critical of him for not having known about this coup that it was only a matter of time before we invalided the chief of station out of the country back to Washington with a heart attack. He fortunately recovered, but he was so beaten around the ears by the Washington bureaucrats who were furious they had not been forewarned of the coup, that they took it out on the station chief.

But I subsequently discovered, Stu, that if the various parts of the American Embassy had been pulling together in some reasonable fashion, we almost certainly would have known that something was about to happen, and we might even have had a pretty good idea of when it was going to happen. Early on, as we got farther and farther into the period following the sacking of the young prime minister, I had once again gone to the Army Colonel who was commander of the MAAG mission and had asked for arrangements to be made for me, as the chief of the political section, to interview some of the young communications officers who were stationed in Benghazi whenever they were in the Embassy building in Tripoli on MAAG business. I was able to talk to the fellows who were out at the air base with or without the MAAG chief's permission. I would simply go out to the airbase and engage these guys in conversation. They apparently never told they were talking to me, and I never told the Colonel that they were talking. But I couldn't do this with the MAAG officers who were in Benghazi because I didn't go back and forth to Benghazi that frequently. I couldn't see them when they occasionally came into Tripoli without his knowledge. So I asked his permission to talk to these guys and was summarily refused. I was refused on the grounds that their role was to be helpful trainers and mentors of their counterparts in the Libyan signal corps and that if the Libyans ever found out that they were coming back to Tripoli and talking to political officers in the American Embassy, it would really screw up the wonderful relationship of older brother/younger brother," we are all in this thing together" kind of thing. To no avail I argued with the Colonel that the Libyans had concluded that this was going on anyhow, this was the way they would automatically interpret the process whether it was British, American, or Italian. Therefore since they had already concluded that we were doing this, why the hell didn't we. No, no, it was absolutely out of the question.

After the military coup I went back to the Colonel again and said, "Now that school is out and you all have been instructed to shut down your MAAG program, and that over the next three or four weeks, everyone of these officers who has been stationed in Benghazi is going to be coming back

to Tripoli to process out and return to the United States, I want an opportunity to talk to each one of these young officers for at least an hour. I want to find out what they knew and when they knew it". He said, "Absolutely no, you can't do that."

So I went to the Ambassador and said, "I objected to this decision prior to the coup. I think we unnecessarily tied one of our hands behind our back. But at that time I didn't make a fuss about it because I couldn't argue that a military coup was in the planning stage. Now that our Military Assistance Advisory Group is being kicked out of the country anyhow, I simply can't understand that there would be any objection to our interviewing these people in a post mortem attempt to find out why we missed this." The upshot of it was the Ambassador intervened with the MAAG Colonel and I was given permission to talk to these fellows.

There were some four or five of these young officers. It became very clear after I had talked to about the third one, and it was absolutely confirmed by the time I had talked to all of them, that had either I or the station chief or members of our staffs been permitted to talk to this group of young American Army officers prior to the 31st of August, we could have called the coup. Two of these fellows were directly involved with Muammar al-Qadhafi, who was after all a signal corps officer. They knew him exceedingly well. They knew his people exceedingly well. One of the keys was on about the 29th of August, maybe it was the 30th of August, two of these young American Army boys had been invited to a stag party given by their Libyan communications counterparts. During the course of the evening three or four of their counterparts had been called out of the party and disappeared. There were various other signs the officers were aware of. They didn't know what the signs meant because they only saw one little piece of the elephant. But if we had an opportunity to debrief them in advance, when these things started to happen, they would have known to report them to the Embassy in Tripoli. Then a combination of the station chief and the political, economic and MAAG sections could have put the pieces together fitting them with some of the pieces we had, but which didn't mean anything because we didn't have the key pieces. I am personally convinced intellectually that had we had access to this group of young American captains we would have been able to call the coup in advance. We certainly would have been able to identify the people who were involved. Actually on the morning of the coup we had no idea.

I was the first American and one of the first diplomats who went over to the radio station, where the coup headquarters had been set up. The reason I as chief of the political section sought out the new military rulers of Libya was a consular protection and welfare problem. We had some Americans who were out somewhere between Sabratha and the Tunisian border who had been caught up in the coup. We didn't know where they were; we had completely lost track of them. I was sent over to talk to whoever I could talk to in the Revolutionary Command Council at the radio station to make a pitch for welfare and whereabouts information about this group of Americans and to say, "Hey, we don't want to interfere with your revolution, but we have a responsibility to these American citizens." As it turned out, the person that I ended up talking to was Abdal-Moneim al-Honi. I didn't learn that for another week because he had no insignia on and he was referred to by everybody in the room only as "Abdul al-Moneim", which is like calling somebody "Walter" or "Joe." The name meant absolutely nothing to anybody. So it was with a certain amount of fascination that I discovered subsequently who this guy was. He was in effect one of the brain trusters of Qadhafi. There were two, and interestingly enough both al-Honi and Abdas-Salaam Saluud, who still is Qadhafi's number two lo these many years later, were trained at

Fort Belvoir. I came to the conclusion, I don't have any real proof for this, that a certain amount of the planning of the military coup in Libya was in fact done in a barracks in Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

A final comment about RCC connections. During the two or three years of my presence in Libya leading up to this time(I had arrived in 1965), I had stumbled on the older brother who was a boat builder. I discovered that his boat yard was in the harbor directly in front of my apartment house terrace. I could look down over the edge of the Corniche and see his traditional boat building operation. I wandered down there one day and struck up an acquaintance with this fellow who looked as if he were about 25 years old. Periodically I would go down and shoot the breeze, learn a little about boat building, and just practice Arabic. At one stage of the game I met his younger brother, a youngster about sixteen at that point, who was struggling to get through secondary school. At one point he was very unhappy about having to take his final examinations at secondary school because all he really wanted to do was go off to the military academy that was in Benghazi. He was unloading on me one morning about how he didn't like school and wasn't going to take the final exams. I said, "Hey, wait a minute. You know you have done all the work. You have been going to school faithfully every day this year. Even though you say it is all set for you to go to the military academy this fall, I think it would be the height of foolishness if you would intentionally fail to take the examinations after you have done all the work. That is just dumb. Why don't you go ahead and take the examinations and pass them. Then you have the ticket in your pocket. If something should happen later on that you should decide you don't like the military academy or something happens and they close the military academy down, or whatever, if you want to continue your education by going on to university you have your basic ticket. You can do it. If you cut the exam, you go to the military school and something happens and you are dumped and want to go to the university, you won't be able to because you will not have completed your secondary school. And that is dumb." We argued about this for a better part of the morning. I learned a few months later that this youngster had indeed gone off and taken the exams and managed to pass, not very well, but he passed.

Fast forward to about three weeks after the coup. Again I was at home, this being a Sunday morning. I happened to wander out onto my terrace overlooking the Corniche and I saw a couple of guys walking towards my apartment house. One of them was in uniform. I didn't recognize them at first but as they got closer and closer I finally realized that the one in civilian clothes was the boat builder. When they got a little bit closer, I finally realized that the one in uniform was the younger brother whom I hadn't seen since he had gone off to Benghazi two years earlier to go to military school. I was fascinated because I hadn't seen either of these guys for quite some time, certainly not for the last six weeks, or whatever it had been since the coup. My interest peaked when they came to the main drive of my apartment building, turned in, and started to come towards my building. It was then that I realized they were coming to see me. I lived on the top floor. They climbed up the three flights of stairs and the doorbell rang. I went to the door and greeted them warmly. They came in and sat down. I got the maid organized and she quickly had some coffee for us and we started to talk. I said how delighted I was to see this youngster in his uniform, etc. Finally he turned to me and said, "I am sorry I really can't stay here much longer." I said, "Oh?" He kind of looked at me and said, "You still don't know who I am do you?" And I said, "No. I know your name, your brother, but I don't know who you are." He said, "I am one of the members of the Revolutionary Command Council and the reason I am here is to make sure that you are okay. I have been hearing tales that some of the diplomats here in Tripoli have run into difficulty, I am on

a mission for the boss. I came down here by special plane from Benghazi. He agreed to let me stay a couple of extra hours to see my family. I stole 30 minutes from the time he allotted me so that I could come by to see you. I just want you to know that you are very special as far as I am concerned and I want you to know that if anything should happen that involves you personally that all you have to do is tell them to come find me and I will get it fixed. And now I have to go." So off he went.

I must say that this came as a total surprise. I had no idea that this youngster was involved in the military takeover. If somebody had suggested this to me a week before I would have said, "You don't know what you are talking about. He had nothing to do with the coup." I still don't know quite what the connection was or how he had come into the circle around Muammar al-Qadhafi. There were two circles within the RCC. There was a small group that had about 15 or 20 officers in it and then there was a larger group of which there were all together some 65, including the 15 or 20. My young friend was part of the 15 or 20. I was absolutely nonplused. The more I thought about it after they left, the more I could hardly believe that this had happened.

Q: The coup was at the end of September?

HANDYSIDE: No, September 1.

Q: September 1969. When did you leave?

HANDYSIDE: I finally left in June, 1970.

Q: Well now, had Ambassador Palmer arrived by then?

HANDYSIDE: Ambassador Newsom had left in late July or early August. Jim Blake was the Chargé. Joe Palmer was supposed to come out the first week of September. As it turned out, the decision was apparently made that the Ambassador should stay in Washington at least until things began to settle out a little bit. My recollection is that Ambassador Palmer finally arrived the third week of September. The first time he came out without Mrs. Palmer and went back to Washington a couple of times on consultation between then and the middle of November.

We Americans finally managed to recognize that there was no way that the United States government was going to be able to hang on to Wheelus Air Base without the consent and approval of the military government. I have always believed that if we, as the official American presence in Libya, at that stage of the game had behaved ourselves properly , the Libyan military group was prepared to allow us to live out the remaining 12 months of the base agreement. They didn't like the idea, but they were afraid of the United States and felt that if they stuck their thumb in our eye we would react in some vigorous way which would really complicate their lives. I am not sure that they really figured out what they thought we were going to do, but I think they really feared that somehow or other we would use military force to hang on to the Air Base. I have no documented proof of this, but my impression from various conversations tells me that they had arrived at this decision. They were not going to poke the animals as far as the Americans were concerned. They were, however, going to hold us to the fact that the Air Base agreement was scheduled to run out in either August or September of the following year. They were just going to say that we could

continue there for the length of the agreement but there would be no renewal.

Q: Here we have officers who have been trained in England and the United States in the military. Did they come with such an ideological set that there was no way that we could maintain close relationships or did we screw up?

HANDYSIDE: We screwed up.

Q: What happened?

HANDYSIDE: Well, a couple of things happened. The first thing that happened was that the person who was the superintendent of the dependents school at the Air Base had come to know a person who was the representative in Libya of one of the foreign automobile manufacturers, who was interested in horseback riding. This American school principal had gotten to know this particular Libyan very well. Soon after the coup the Libyan somehow encountered the school superintendent and gave him a long song and dance about how his life was in danger, that given what had happened there was no question that it was just a matter of time before the new military began to purge people and that he was sure that he was going to be at the top of the list. When the American asked him why he thought he might be at the top of the list, the man said, "Well, it is because I am a member of the Jewish community." Arrangements were made by the school superintendent and the man was smuggled on to the Air Base and into the unused bedroom of the Air Force house occupied by the superintendent of schools. The auto dealer lived in the spare bedroom for perhaps three weeks.

Sometime in October the Libyans permitted us to resume our C-54 transport flights to Malta and to Italy. These were flights for procurement, to get various pieces of equipment repaired, etc. One of the flights was getting ready to go out to Malta. The school superintendent said that in anticipation of the reopening of school, which had been delayed by the coup, the band instruments needed repair and he would like to take them to Valletta to be worked on. This seemed to be a perfectly logical operation as far as the Air Force was concerned. They let the superintendent pack up all the instruments, including some big ones. All the boxes were duly loaded on the C-54 and flown off to Malta. The superintendent had arranged in advance for a truck to pick up the crates of instruments. The crates were loaded aboard and the driver and the superintendent started down into Valletta. Once in town they discovered that both the instrument repair shops he thought he was going to patronize were closed, perhaps it was a holiday or perhaps it was just the middle of the day. The superintendent realized he was going to have to go kill some time, so he had the Maltese truck driver drive him out a country road. Once out in the country, the superintendent told the driver to walk down the road for half a mile and then walk back and then they would start on again.

The upshot of it was the truck driver, being no fool, went a few steps down the road and then stood there transfixed while the school superintendent climbed up into the body of the truck and opened up one of the large crates. Out came the auto dealer who jumped down and hot footed it down the road in the other direction. The truck driver came charging up shouting what are you doing, who is this guy you let out of the crate? He forced the school superintendent back into the truck and then drove immediately to the nearest downtown police station.

In the fullness of time, the newspapers picked up this story. The Embassy was informed that the "Washington Post" had the story and that the Post was going to run it in the Sunday paper. This high powered Top Secret, NODIS telegram came in to Joe Palmer, he immediately called me down to his office and said, "What do we do about this?" I responded, " The first thing we do is try to get the "Washington Post" to hold the story." He said, "The Department has already tried that and they are unwilling to do it." (I think they may have held it for a week to give us some time.) I said, "Well, if that is the case, if you are convinced that any further approach to the editor of the "Washington Post" is going to be of no avail, then I think it is patently obvious that we have to go tell the Libyans. It is going to be bad enough when the Libyans find this out. If they find it out from the Associated Press it is going to be three times worse for the American Embassy than if we go down and tell them." He agreed and he did whatever negotiating with Washington was required.

Either the next day or maybe two days later...this was like a Tuesday and the story was to appear the following Sunday...we had the go ahead, and Ambassador Palmer and I called on the Foreign Minister. We told him our incredible story. (The reason this particular gentleman was Foreign Minister was because he was vigorously anti-British and anti-American and had a long record of having been so. Indeed he had been informally at least exiled by the King on a couple of occasions. So as soon as the coup had taken place, this guy came back to Libya. And because he had previously been both a politician and a senior person in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he was designated by these not very sophisticated military officers as their foreign affairs advisor and Minister of Foreign Affairs. So our interlocutor was predisposed to be unhappy about the story.) The minister was indeed unhappy about this story. He immediately said that this was terribly serious and very upsetting. He announced, "I will have to report this to Colonel Qadhafi and to the other members of the RCC. I have no way of knowing how they will react to this, but you can be sure that the response is going to be very negative. I will be back in touch with you as soon as I find out what it is."

It wasn't until the following morning, but the response was as expected: Immediately all flying training was to be permanently stopped; never again would a combat airplane take off to go shoot at the gunnery range. We were told that the logistics transport flights to places like Malta and Rome, would not take place unless the airplane was inspected by a representative of the RCC. We were told that the gates to the air base would be manned by a detachment of Libyan soldiers and that while we could have our own MPs on the gate if we wanted to, the people in command were going to be the Libyans. They would judge who would be permitted to enter the air base and those who would be permitted to leave the air base. The decision that I believe the RCC had made earlier to allow us to operate the Air Base for the remaining eleven or twelve months of the Agreement had obviously been superseded as a result of this new affair.

As if we hadn't learned our lesson, we subsequently discovered much to our consternation that a couple of Air Force officers had dirtied the water even further by issuing Air Force identification and Air Force travel orders to two Libyans. One was a former police officer and the other was the brother of the former military chief of staff. During the eight months immediately prior to the coup when Libya as a society and a government had degenerated into almost a caricature of a third world country. The younger brother of the military chief of staff, who with his brother were the King's “adopted sons”(these two boys were the sons of one of the King's old friends, and with the death of their father, had become in effect the King's wards) had become the bagman for the

corrupt politicians. In the last eight months of the Idriss regime, anybody who wanted to get anything from the government could get whatever it was that he wanted if he paid enough. I have never seen a society disintegrate as rapidly as Libya disintegrated in those last nine or ten months. The bagman was one of the Libyans that the Air Force officers decided they were going to smuggle out of the country.

Q: Were they paid?

HANDYSIDE: No, I don't think so. They were just good friends. There may have been some other arrangement, but I don't know. Just like the naivete of the school superintendent, I think there was a level of naivete on the part of the two colonels about these two guys, so they proceeded to help them escape. The Libyans were absolutely furious that the King's bagman had been ex-filtrated from Libya by the United States Air Force. Any further clamping down that they hadn't yet done, they did after that.

I must say at this point the United States Air Force made every effort to discipline the two officers involved. General McConnell, who was the Chief of Staff of the Air Force at the time, literally turned the Judge Advocates Office upside down. The upshot was that he was finally forced to conclude, albeit very reluctantly, there wasn't a damn thing he could do to prosecute these two officers; he could only retire them. If they are still alive they are still drawing their Air Force retirement from the United States government. So in a sense we polluted the well. It is hardly surprising things got a little rough after we did.

Q: But the Qadhafi government was predisposed to get rid of us. Was it an ideological dislike, or anti-colonial, or what?

HANDYSIDE: All of the above. These young fellows had been intellectually weaned on the broadcasts of the Voice of the Arabs from Cairo. They all fancied themselves as protégés of Nasser. They had accepted wholeheartedly all of his rhetoric about the need for independence, the need for dignity, the need for getting rid of the colonial overlords, etc. Quite clearly as far as these young fellows were concerned the worst kind of colonialism was military colonialism. The British were unceremoniously kicked out of Tobruk. The British military were sent packing out of the military installation at Tobruk. They got dumped out just about the time our MAAG was ordered out.

But the fact that we had been enormously helpful to the Libyan Air Force, and I think also, one can't measure the impact of this, there can be no question that the senior Air Force officer at Wheelus Air Base, one Colonel Chappy James(who stood 6' 6" and was black), was one of the reasons that we were able to stay as long as we were permitted to stay. Chappy was just an enormously wonderful guy. They were fascinated by him and by the fact...they had all heard the terrible stories about what was going on between blacks and whites in the United States...and they were fascinated by the fact that the United States Air Force reposed enough confidence in this enormous hulking black man that they would pin a colonel's eagles on his shoulders and then make him the senior officer at the Air Base. The Libyans concluded they could do business with him. Chappy was just a perfectly wonderful guy. He was awfully good at this kind of human interchange with all kinds of foreigners, but particularly with the Libyans.

I remember the day after Ambassador Palmer and I had our interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, one of the young black Libyan Air Force officers, who had been trained in the US and who had been designated as the personal representative of the Revolutionary Command Council on the Air Base and therefore had constant involvement with Colonel James, came into Chappy's office. Chappy told me later that this young officer was weeping, with tears running down his face. He had been instructed at...(RCC meetings were always at midnight and always lasted five or six hours) so this guy had been instructed at about 6:00 in the morning to go to the Air Base and immediately get in to see Colonel James to enumerate the kinds of restrictions that were going to be placed on the Air Base. The young officer told Colonel James the steps had been taken because of that awful story your Ambassador and Mr. Handyside told the Foreign Minister yesterday. The payoff was the young Libyan Air Force officer then said , "Colonel, my orders yesterday, before the conversation between the Ambassador and the Foreign Minister, were to come tell you today that you were going to be permitted to resume flying training next week. We were going to let you start the Air Base up again. But as a result of what your Ambassador told the Foreign Minister yesterday morning, that decision was immediately rescinded and these are the kinds of things that you are now going to have to agree to."

Q: At that time were we talking about Soviet influence there or not?

HANDYSIDE: No. Mr. Nasser provided the biggest and darkest bogeyman that anybody needed.

Q: How were you able to operate? You were there six, nine months afterwards. As a political officer you are supposed to go out and talk to people.

HANDYSIDE: I had a particularly difficult time because within three or four weeks after the coup, some of the senior people in charge responded to the Egyptian importunings about helping to organize various things. So it was only a matter of five or six weeks before the Egyptians and some of their East German friends were in Libya training the Libyans to be somewhat better on intelligence collection and on secret police operations. Toward the end of October, the secret police in almost a kind of Keystone Cops fashion, began moving against foreigners. The first people they targeted were the foreign Arabic speakers who were employed by the oil companies. Their residence permits were revoked. Very quickly after this process started, all of the Arabic speaking Americans, who were employees of Mobil, Esso, etc., were forced to leave the country. They and their families were put through the hurry up business of packing their household belongings and getting the hell out.

Those of us who were Arabic speaking on the staffs of embassies could not be thrown out, at least they decided they didn't want to take that risk, but they immediately started to keep very close track of us. Because my Arabic at that point was reasonably good and because I had been in Libya for four and a half years and had gotten to know an awful lot of people around Libya as a result of my Arabic, they were very suspicious of me. Then the station chief was invalided out on his back. Sometime later, we concluded on the basis of some information that we had, that the Libyans with the help of their Egyptian advisors had decided that I was both the chief of the political section and the station chief. And so, beginning seven or eight weeks after the coup until I left the country nine months later, I was never by myself. I always had a couple of "secret" police in a little blue

Volkswagen wherever I went and that followed me home at night. I never was certain whether they parked outside all night or just returned when they thought I would be getting up in the morning and be on my way back to the Embassy. But during the day time, whenever I moved around the city, I had my friends with me. My constant tail meant I had to be very careful about what I did, what people I saw, etc.

So for all practical purposes the kind of political reporting that would have ordinarily been done by me had to be done by one of the fellows who worked for me in the section. I obviously could go talk to people in the government, that was no problem. They expected that, figuring probably they would get debriefed by the guy I talked to anyway. Whenever I would be invited to an American community home, I would always caution them and say, "Are you sure you want me, because once I arrive my acolytes will be only a few steps behind. If you have any problem with that, disinvite me."

This became a crucial issue at one point. I was driving by myself down the main drag along the seafront and on towards the famous Tripoli castle. All of a sudden I became aware there was a car behind me that seemed to be full of a bunch of young men, and the driver was honking his horn at me. I couldn't figure out why. I looked in the mirror and didn't recognize the car at all. So I kept going, but very carefully and very slowly and as far over to the right curb as possible so if the car was honking because he wanted to pass me could do so. At one point the traffic opened up a little bit and the car came abreast of me, cut in front of me and stopped at the curb. Obviously I had to stop. Then it finally dawned on me; they were honking because they wanted me to stop. The left rear door of this sedan with the four young male passengers opened up and a fellow got out. He sprinted the 20 yards to my car. It was the older boat builder. (This was after the interview at my house.) I rolled down the window and called him by name and begged him to go away. I said, "Please, I am being followed, look back there and you will see a little Volkswagen that has two flat feet in it. Please don't expose yourself to any problem. I am like the plague." He said, "Oh, no. Our new government wouldn't do anything like that." I said, "Hey look Muhammed, I really fear for you. I am delighted to see you but please go away." He finally did. The car started up and I started along. By this time we were approaching the Tripoli castle where one branch of the road goes left and the other branch goes through a tunnel through the castle and continues on the other side. I wanted to throw my police tails off, so I waited until the car with the four men aboard turned to the left; I speeded up through the tunnel to the other side hoping to draw my cops with me. It didn't work. They immediately followed the other car. So I went a little bit further and aimlessly drove around a little bit. I finally returned to the Embassy with a very large measure of fear and trepidation.

Another three or four weeks went by before I found out what had happened. I learned what had transpired not from the boat builder, I never saw him again, but from another, younger brother who was perhaps fifteen years old. I ran into him in the street one day down around the Castle; the family lived somewhere in that neighborhood. I had not known the third brother as well as the other two, but I knew him well enough. So I stopped him on the street. For some reason or other my “friends” were not there so I could engage this kid in conversation. I asked him how his older brother was. The response I got was, "Fine, no thanks to you." And I said, "What does that mean?" He proceeded to tell me that his brother and the other three young men had been picked up by the local police and taken off to military intelligence headquarters where they had been grilled. The

three unknown young men had been able to convince their interrogators that they didn't know me and didn't know why the boat builder had insisted that they stop the car so he could talk to a foreigner. It was all his doing. We were out joy riding together; he asked us to stop, so we stopped. So the three kids were released.

During the course of the next 12 hours or so, the secret police periodically beat the stuffing out of Muhammed. The thing that intrigued me as I reflected on this narrative, was that only at the very end did Muhammed finally evoke the name of his next younger brother, at which point the beating stopped. But apparently the arrangement between the brothers was, "You only use my name in extreme situations." I never saw the older fellow again, so I was never able to verify the story the third brother told me.

The final paragraph of this saga involves the day I finally left in June 1970. Mrs. Palmer, the Ambassador's wife, and Mrs. Joseph, the DCM's wife, insisted on taking me to the airport. I protested that this was all very nice and much appreciated, but there was really no need for it. They said, "No, we really wanted to do this because neither the Ambassador nor the DCM can come down with you, but we think we should." Well, the Volkswagen beetle with the two flat feet in it followed the Ambassador's limousine the twenty miles to the airport. We went into the transit lounge and for some reason or other we had to wait several hours before the aircraft showed up...I think there was a sand storm and the aircraft was stuck in Benghazi; the scheduled route was Benghazi, Tripoli, and then Rome. I had been aware as Mrs. Palmer and Mrs. Joseph and I were seated in the transit lounge having endless cups of coffee and trying to find new things to talk about, that one or another of my flat foot friends would walk by the window checking from the outside to make sure I was still there.

Finally the airplane arrived and was called. We all streamed out the door. It was parked quite a ways out on the tarmac so it took quite a while to get out to it. I was in no hurry because I knew they wouldn't leave until I got on the airplane, they wouldn't leave me behind. I let everyone else go first to be able to watch what was happening. Sure enough as I got to the ramp that let down from the tail and started to climb up, I saw the two guys who had been on foot outside the transit lounge walk over and get into the Volkswagen. They drove part way out onto the tarmac and waited until they saw me climb up the last of the steps into the cabin of the airplane.

RICHARD L. JACKSON
Political Officer
Tripoli (1966-1968)

Richard L. Jackson was born in New York in 1939. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Princeton University in 1962 and his Master's Degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1964. His career has included assignments in Mogadiscio, Tripoli, Thessaloniki, Athens, Rabat and Casablanca. Mr. Jackson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 17, 1998.

Q: (Laughter) Oh, yes. I knew Alex Johnpoll in Belgrade. Well, you went to Libya. You were in

Libya from 1966 to when?

JACKSON: I was in Libya from 1966-68. They had earlier tried to transfer me to Asmara, but for some reason that fell through. I was transferred quite late in '66--in November--a direct transfer to Tripoli, Libya.

Q: Libya in late '66. What was the situation then?

JACKSON: Libya was a big scene relative to Somalia, in terms of U.S. interests. We had a lot going on. We had Wheelus Air Base, which was a vast base with sophisticated jets training in and out of there from bases in Germany. Libya had gone from being the poorest country in the world, with a per capita income of about $48 at independence in the early 1950s to being a major oil producer. The great surge of Libyan oil discovery was from 1960-62, so that all of the major oil companies were in there. By the time I got there in '66, they had reached daily per barrel production of about three million barrels. This was staggering wealth for a country of then 1.4 million people many of them bedouins. They didn't know what to do with this money and were awash in it. Corruption was rampant. They were under a very benign, but ascetic and elderly king who basically lived as a recluse with a succession of palaces in one of the four de facto capitals of that country (Tripoli, Benghazi, Baida, and Tobruk).

Q: What was your job?

JACKSON: I was assigned to the Political Section. We were a section of four. The Section Chief was Holsey Handyside. Rocky Suddarth was in it. John Billings was the Political/Military officer, and I was the junior.

Q: Who was the Ambassador?

JACKSON: The Ambassador was a superb professional diplomat, from whom I learned a great amount--David Newsom.

Q: A very strong embassy.

JACKSON: The DCM was Jim Blake.

Q: Looking at it as basically a kingdom with a reclusive ruler with a sparse population spread over a large territory, what the hell does a political section of four do?

JACKSON: Well, it seemed as if we had enough to do, at least relative to the small or more informal setting I had come from. Perhaps, in retrospect, some of it was make work. Personally, I devoted a lot of time to biographic reporting, building a big data base on the Libyans. That was rather interesting work, in the sense that many of the Libyan officials were so venal and had so many things in their past, which with a little bit of scratching one could uncover. We had also a fair amount of work with Wheelus Air Base. There was always the question of which privileged Libyans would get access to the Base medical and dental facilities. The King, I believe, was one of the prime clients. It was said, that during World War II, he had gone to an Italian dentist who was

so nervous he had stitched up and down his tongue with an electric drill and, as a result, the King required only wooden instruments from an earlier era of dentistry, which ambitious Air Force dentists always balked at using.

Q: I believe it!

JACKSON: Ultimately, I think they got a high speed water drill in his mouth.

Q: (Laughter) Well now, looking at it, you're looking at the political situation there, where at that particular time did you feel the political power lay?

JACKSON: Libya was a kind of vacuum. One heard a lot about pan-Maghreb aspirations, but political power? Libya was still in the process of finding itself as a nation. They weren't really a nation. People thought of themselves as Cyrenaicans or Tripolitanians, or Fezzanis. Libya, after all, was a country over which many of the major invasions of history have trodden--Greeks, Romans, Phoenicians, Turks, to name a few. Many of the major tank battles of World War II were fought on Libyan territory. The Italian colonial period was particularly exploitive and led to fierce resistance against the Italians among the tribes throughout the Jebel Akhdar Mountains of Cyrenaica. In general, Libyans were, it seemed to me, a very downtrodden group of people, suddenly rich beyond belief and with very little sense of self and with all of the arrogance and corruption that seemed to go with that. I can remember typically stopping to let pedestrians pass in the street and they would pass the car and, rather than thank you, they would thumb their nose at you. They'd gotten the better of a foreigner in a car. It was an interesting, but peculiar atmosphere. One was able to make Libyan contacts, but it took a lot of work. There was certainly not the pleasure in debate and discussion for its own sake that there was in Somalia. It was much more seen as an opportunity, I think, for a young Libyan businessman on the make to have access to liquor and maybe to meet single Western women at embassy diplomatic functions.

Q: You were there in 1967. How about what was known as the Six-Day War and the massive defeat of particularly the Egyptian Army at that point. How did that hit?

JACKSON: Before coming to that, I'd note that the sheer opulence and conspicuous consumption, even garish taste of some of the Libyans who tapped into sudden oil money, had to be seen to be believed. There was also venality, if not outright cruelty and prejudice. There was still a very small Jewish community in Libya at that time who were extremely badly treated. There was a man at Wheelus Base, in fact, who smuggled some members of the community out in a bass fiddle case from the orchestra which created a diplomatic incident when discovered..

But coming back to the Six-Day War, I had been with my wife on a brief leave in Egypt just before and in fact at the Red Sea at Hurghada, which was in an Egyptian strategic area. Flying into Hurghada, since we were the only foreigners on the plane, the Egyptian pilot asked us to come and sit with him in the cockpit. We saw all military areas, as well, and this was only a few days before the attack, showing that the Egyptians were totally without advance warning and unprepared. In any case, we were back in Libya at the time that war broke out.

As you know, all of the F-4s and other jets at Wheelus Air Base took off in formation at the outset

of that conflict to return to Germany and ensure their security. They couldn't be protected there in Libya. That fed rumors in Libya that they had taken off to bomb Cairo, and so there was very extreme anti-American feeling. We evacuated dependents and some embassy personnel. There was a good deal of rioting at the time. I remember there were some quite valuable things, if memory serves, gold and papers that were in the embassy. I and the Budget and Fiscal Officer, Byron Walker, were asked to escort them by truck to Wheelus Air Base; leaving the embassy one morning at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. We drove the truck along the Wheelus Highway, and there were giant trucks and cars burning along the road, many roadblocks and nervous Libyan soldiers with machine guns. It was a tense thing, but we got to Wheelus okay.

We were then in a period of several months with the evacuees out of the country, many of them, including my family, in a holding pattern in Italy. Gradually, through adept diplomacy by David Newsom, the situation began to right itself. He, very wisely, opened up negotiations with the Libyans on the future of Wheelus to accommodate pressures that the King and the Libyan leaders were under. He drew it out and drew it out until the passions and tensions subsided. It was a masterful performance that ensured that the base continued to exist there until well into the Qadhafi era. I was fortunate to be the notetaker for those negotiations and learned a great deal watching Ambassador Newsom patiently engage the Libyan negotiators and draw the thing out until finally the negotiations collapsed amicably and the base remained.

Q: What was the initial assertion of the Libyans? They were saying, "You gotta get out!"?

JACKSON: Yes. It was about the closure of the bases. They certainly didn't need any money, goodness knows, with their oil revenues. The king was very hard put to spend existing oil revenues. He would put money into things like the vast Idris housing scheme, giant apartment buildings that stood empty for years when the bedouins had no intention of settling in permanent housing.

Q: One of the big things that came later was the military takeover. You were doing biographic reporting. Were we making any headway with the Libyan military at that time? This seemed to be the pattern, you know, looking at Syria and Egypt and with a king who was not very visible. Were we targeting the military as being the possible inheritors of this kingdom?

JACKSON: I would have to say frankly the Libyan military was very, very circumscribed. Access to them, as to many groups in the society, was not an easy thing. They were traditional. But, yes, the embassy had ties to them, but certainly not at the level of junior lieutenants like Qadhafi and Jaluud and the others that formed the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). There has been a lot of talk over the years about who knew Qadhafi, but in fact few, if any, foreigners did. This was a young person in his mid-20's, in the Signal Corps in Benghazi, and I don't think people were paying attention to that. There was conventional wisdom that it would be an impossibility for the military to take over this vast complex of territory with virtually four capitals. I remember, when I came back to Washington after the assignment, the new Ambassador-designate, Joe Palmer, who had just survived the draining experience of being the AF Assistant Secretary during the Biafran War and was probably looking for a quiet last post, called me in and asked, "Now, could there be anything like this?" I said, "Mr. Ambassador, Libya has a very limited military, and you have to understand there are, in effect, four capitals. There's Tripoli, there's Benghazi, there's the new

artificial capital that King Idris founded at Baida in Cyrenaica, and then there's Tobruk, where he also has a palace. They are far removed, one from the other, and there's no way that anybody could pull off such a complex coup." (Laughter) He went out there and whammo! So much for conventional wisdom in the Foreign Service or my own perspicacity. I think that what I told him was fairly typical of the consensus--I don't think it was just me that was clueless.

The distances were truly great. The Ambassador during my time had a plane at his disposal which he used very effectively. The Foreign Ministry was located in Baida, that I mentioned. The embassy would typically go up to Baida at least once a month, and if you got on the plane you would attempt to schedule as many calls as you could in the Ministry. It was a very rough f light in a small plane over the Green Mountains, about a three hour flight, if I recall. There was an unvarying protocol requiring that with each call you would have the obligatory three cups of bilious Libyan green tea. After, say nine calls and 27 cups, the return flight was sometimes disagreeable.

Q: Did we have any particular issues with Libya at that time? I mean, did the Cold War intrude on the fact that we had this base? It was not just Americans, it was NATO planes that worked there too. Or was it just American planes?

JACKSON: My impression, Stu, is that it was basically American, but there was occasional use by other NATO members. Certainly the major focus was the U.S. This was the peak of the Vietnam years, of course. Vietnam was the moon, I think, as far as the Libyans were concerned. I can remember an anecdote told about a demarche, perhaps apocryphal, that the Ambassador made on the King in Tobruk to explain the defoliation program. The King is reported to have said, "Mr. Ambassador, let's have lunch first." After the lunch, he stretched out on his divan and said, "You may begin the demarche." He promptly went to sleep and the Ambassador supposedly went through a very detailed defoliation message, after which the King woke up and they had tea. That was the level of Libyan interest in some of these things. Our major interests were protecting access for American oil companies, ensuring that the agreements were fair ones, and maintaining Wheelus as a vital training base for U.S. aircraft from Europe. It was an unparalleled area to practice all forms of air warfare, bombing, and strafing runs against desert targets. There were occasions that Bedouins wandered into the target areas. Some were killed, requiring fairly intricate diplomacy and compensation.

Q: Did Algeria as a neighbor intrude into Libya at all?

JACKSON: Truly not, to my recollection. I think the emotional concept of Pan- Maghreb unity was a very vocal one in Libya at that time. There were rallies; the press was dominated by that, but in actual fact, I don't think that Algeria played that much of a role.

Q: How about with Egypt, with Nasser at that time?

JACKSON: My impression was that relations were not that close. Nasser, of course, was the formative ideal for Qadhafi and his generation. Qadhafi viewed Nasser as his model. Idris, however, was a different generation, far more conservative, aloof and stand-offish, although he spent many of his final years in Egypt in exile. He was outside of Libya at the time of the Qadhafi

coup on Labor Day, 1969, taking the waters at the Kammena Vourla spa in Greece, I believe.

Q: Were there any particular problems with Tunisia?

JACKSON: There were quite sophisticated countries on both sides that essentially looked down on the Libyans and didn't have much to do with them, treating them instead as bumpkins and country cousins. You could drive over to Tunisia and the difference at the border crossing point was remarkable in both the efficiency of border posts and the general appearance. To get out of Libya, it was a real change just reaching Tunisia and you felt, by comparison, in the developed world.

JOHN G. KORMANN
Principal Officer
Benghazi (1966-1968)

John G. Kormann became interested in foreign affairs during his service in the U.S. Army during World War II. His career included positions in Liberia, the Philippines, and Germany. Mr. Kormann was interviewed by Moncrieff J. Spear on February 7, 1996.

Q: *I take it you had quite a change in the next "go round."*

KORMANN: I was transferred to North Africa, to Libya, an Arabic-speaking country and I thought that rather strange. I'd had no experience in the area, but I was prepared to accept whatever I was asked to do. On the plus side, it was my own post, Benghazi, which was in effect an Embassy. Libya was a bifurcated country: Cyrenaica in the east, Tripolitania in the west. The capital rotated every two years between Benghazi and Tripoli. However, most of the important ministries, foreign affairs, defense, etc., were located in Benghazi. Ambassador David Newsom during this biennium was in Tripoli and I was principal officer and consul in Benghazi. Newsom was a superb ambassador. He would travel the 700 miles from Tripoli to Benghazi regularly to cover his area. I finally set up a bedroom with bath in the residence for him, because he would stay for periods of time. I don't know how many FSOs end up living with the ambassador, but I certainly enjoyed him. He loved being with Arabs and conversing with them. I can still see us sitting on the ground deep in the Sahara Desert eating with them under conditions that would make many squeamish.

Ambassador Newsom called me one day saying that the 25th anniversary of the loss of "Lady Be Good," was approaching and that he wanted to see the plane far south in the desert. It was a WW II B-24 bomber, which on the return from a raid over Naples overflew its airfield and crash-landed largely intact on automatic pilot. The nine-member crew bailed out and all perished in the desert. The plane and the bodies were undiscovered for more than 15 years. The trip was a fascinating adventure. Proceeding with two Land Rovers, a Jeep and a light Dodge truck, we had a difficult time finding the plane 400 miles into the Sahara and at one point became lost, almost wandering over the border into Egypt. The temperatures during the day were 120-130 degrees and at night dropped to around 40. We traveled for days without seeing a single living thing. Finding the plane

was difficult. When we did, I was amazed at its state of preservation. Earlier when it was first found, the radio still worked and there was water in the canteens. I kicked one of the motor cowlings and fresh-looking oil dripped down. Had the crew stayed with the plane, they might have been rescued. As it was, there was not a prayer that they would have been able to traverse the Great Calanscio Sand Sea to the north, with its 100-200 foot high sand dunes. From the plane we proceeded another 350 miles farther south to the desert oasis village of Kufra, which was reminiscent of a scene out of Beaugeste and the French Foreign Legion. Incidentally, I took a number of slides of Kufra and surroundings. A few years ago my son, who was working at the time for Naval Intelligence, asked to borrow them for an analyst in his office interested in seeing them. I never got them back. The analyst was Jonathan Pollard, who was jailed for spying for Israel.

The most harrowing experience of my Foreign Service career occurred in Benghazi at the outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Convinced by propaganda broadcasts that U.S. Navy planes were attacking Cairo, Libyan mobs spurred on by 2000 Egyptian workers building a pan-Arab Olympic stadium in Benghazi, attacked the Embassy. The streets were being repaired and there were piles of rocks everywhere, which the mob put to use. A detachment of soldiers provided by the Libyan Government to protect us was overwhelmed. The Embassy file room was full of highly classified material, which we desperately tried to burn. The Embassy had been a former bank building, with a heavy safe-type front door and barred windows. The mob finally battered its way in. They pushed themselves in through broken windows and came at us cut and bleeding. We were well armed, but I gave orders that there be no shooting, so we met them with axe handles and rifle butts. Dropping tear gas grenades, we fought our way up the stairs and locked ourselves in the second floor communications vault. We were able to continue burning files in 50 gallon drums on an inner courtyard balcony using Thermite grenades. There were 10 of us in the vault, including two women. The mobs set fire to the building. The heat, smoke and tear gas were intense, which while terrible for us, blessedly forced the mob from the building. We only had 5 gas masks for 10 people and shared them while we worked. We came out of the vault several times during the day to use fire extinguishers to control blazes and spray down walls. Our own destruction of files using Thermite sent up huge clouds of black smoke from the center of the building, probably adding to the impression that those of us inside were dying. With no power, we managed to send sporadic messages throughout the day using an emergency generator. Efforts by British troops to come to our aid were called off several times. A British armored car was destroyed by the mob in the vicinity of the Embassy, by pouring gasoline down the hatch and setting it afire with an officer and four soldiers inside. The British Embassy and British Council offices had been attacked and set afire, as were the USIS center and my former residence.

I might mention something here, because many people asked me about it afterward. At one point the mob used a ladder to drop from an adjoining building on to our roof, catching us trying to burn files there. After a struggle they drove us back into the Embassy. They cut the ropes on the tall roof flag pole, leaving the flag, itself, hanging down the front of the building. An Army MAAG captain, who was with us, requested permission to go up on the roof and raise the flag. I dismissed his request, saying it would be counterproductive. Later when things looked very bleak and our spirits were waning, he came to me again in front of the others. I told him I would think about it. I had been a combat paratrooper in WW II and had seen what defiance and a bit of bravura could do for soldiers under mortal stress. Afterward I said, "Go ahead, raise the flag!" He did so with considerable daring, the mob going crazy below and the rocks flying. The reaction among my

people was profound. I could see it in their eyes, as they worked on with grim determination under those conditions to burn files and render cryptographic equipment inoperable. When late in the day (remember the attack began in the morning), we received word that a British rescue attempt had again been postponed for fear that lives might be lost, I took a photograph of President and Mrs. Johnson off the wall, broke it out of the frame and wrote a message on the back to the President saying something to the effect that we have tried our best to do our duty. Everyone signed it. When an inspector subsequently asked me about that, I could tell him that people will respond to the call of duty given the chance.

We sent our last message at about 6 p.m. I learned later from a friend, who was in the Operations Center in Washington, that it came in garbled, leading to the impression that we were burning alive. At that Secretary Rusk called the British Foreign Secretary with a further plea to get us out. At 8 p.m. a British armored column arrived and took us by truck to D'Aosta Barracks, their base on the outskirts of town. Libya had been a British protectorate after WW II and they still maintained a small military contingent outside of Benghazi under an agreement with King Idriss. The British were magnificent, rescuing us and then helping us bring hundreds of Americans to their camp, where they fed us and gave us shelter.

The night of our escape from the vault, I asked for a volunteer to go with me into the center of Benghazi at 2 a.m. to bring out Americans most in danger. The city was in flames, Jewish and foreign shops and properties having been set to the torch. Driving through the city we were repeatedly stopped by roadblocks manned by nervous, trigger-happy Libyan soldiers. The streets were full of debris. I remember pulling up to an apartment house lit only by fires from nearby burning shops. Going up the darkened stairs knocking on doors I asked for an American family. On the fourth floor, I heard a small voice say, "Who's there?" In English, I answered, "It's the American Consul." An American woman cautiously opened the door. She must have known me, because she called me by name and said, "We knew you'd come, we are all packed." What a wonderful tribute, I thought, to our Foreign Service. During that night and the next day we brought out other Americans under very trying circumstances.

We had problems in evacuating Americans from Benghazi. Arrangements were made for U.S. Air Force planes to pick up about 250 of them at the airport. At the last moment, I received word that Russian-built Algerian troop transports with paratroopers and Egyptian MiG fighters had landed at the airport. I didn't want our planes shot at. I didn't want a serious incident. Calling Tripoli, I talked with Ambassador Newsom. After listening to me, he said, "Well, John, you're the man on the spot. This is your decision to make." I made the decision to bring the planes in all right, but I must say really I wished that I hadn't had to, for I was truly worried. My wife and children were going to be aboard those planes, as well as a lot of other Americans, who could pay with their lives, should my decision be a bad one. The British provided trucks and a bus for the evacuees. They were taken on to the airport through an opening away from the terminal and driven right past the parked MiGs and Algerian transports. With the connivance of an English civilian air controller in the tower, contact was made with the incoming Air Force planes using a British Army field radio. They were instructed to land on the grass along the fence at the most distant part of the field away from the terminal. Three planes, two C-130's and a C-124, came in and made a fast turn around. They were loaded and back in the air in minutes. The operation was carried out with such speed and audacity that there was no reaction from anyone until much later. All of us will be forever grateful to

Colonel Alistair Martin and his British troops for their role in all of these actions; without them, none of that would have been possible.

Q: *You mentioned something about an award?*

KORMANN: Yes. Our office, after this was concluded, was given a staff Superior Service Award. I received the Award for Heroism. At the ceremony that year, it topped the awards list for a living recipient. There were three others given posthumously.

I might say something here about Qadhafi. I returned to the U.S. in 1968 and a number of months later there was a coup in Libya. We were expecting one, because leading elements in the country were becoming exasperated with King Idriss, who was out of keeping with the times and too old to function properly. Libya was an oil-rich country and there were many underlying currents at work. We expected the coup to come from someone like Colonel Shalhi, the Army Chief of Staff and others in his group. Instead it came from junior officers like Qadhafi, who preempted them. Although I am not sure, I probably saw Lieutenant Qadhafi a number of times when he was the aide to the Chief of Signals, Colonel Mahdfi. Either Lt. Colonel Campbell, who headed the Army MAAG, or I would have Mahdfi and other senior officers as guests in our homes periodically. (We had a substantial MAAG operation in the communications field.) On those occasions, an aide would wait in Mahdfi's car with the driver; I believe it was Qadhafi. The question of course arises, why didn't we have contacts with the junior officers. The answer is that the situation simply did not permit it. A number of times I tried to invite officers at the captain or major level. They never accepted, feeling I am sure that it would be frowned on by their superiors. To invite lieutenants was simply out of the question in that structured society. I was told that Colonel Mahdfi was arrested and disappeared, after Qadhafi came to power.

HOWELL S. TEEPLE
Information Officer, USIS
Tripoli (1966-1969)

Howell S. Teeple was born in Texas in 1921. He received his BA from Louisiana State University in 1943 and served in the US Army from 1943 to 1945 overseas. His assignments abroad include Seoul, Manila, New York, New Delhi, Adana, Tripoli, Monrovia and Cebu. Mr. Teeple was interviewed by Earl W. Sherman in 1999.

Q: *What did you look forward to after you had completed your tour there as your next post?*

TEEPLE: After Turkey, I got an assignment to Vietnam, which I really wasn't looking forward to. But while I on home leave, I had to maintain contact with Personnel in Washington, and I called, and they said, "Well, we've got good news and bad news. The good news is you're not going to Vietnam. The bad news is you're going to North Africa." I said, "Well, that's not too bad." Then they said, "Well, you're going to Tripoli, Libya." And I didn't know anything about Tripoli, Libya. It was an Arab country, but I was to go there as the information officer. After home leave, we went

to Tripoli, Libya.

Q: *This was 1965?*

TEEPLE: 1966 to 1969. We spent three years in Libya. It was before Qadhafi, I'm glad to say. They had a king on the throne, King Idriss. The British always put a king in charge after they leave a country. It turned out to be an interesting post. We had a lovely bungalow, as they called them, right on the Mediterranean Sea. It was nice living. Here again there was a large Air Force base outside of Tripoli, Wheelus Air Base, which at that time, I think, was the largest overseas American Air Force base in the world. There were 15,000 U.S. Air Force personnel at Wheelus and we had a large oil company community there. They discovered oil in Libya in the early '60s - I think it was ESSO, or Exxon, as it's now called - and the American oil companies came into Libya in droves. We had a community of 18,000 American oil company families in Libya. Almost every major American oil company was represented there drilling oil or doing some kind of oil business. Again we had an outstanding American ambassador. I really got some of the best. We had David Newsom my whole tour, David Dunlap Newsom, from 1966 to '69. He went on to be ambassador to Indonesia and to the Philippines and then to the University of Virginia as a diplomat in residence after retirement. Our DCM was Jim Blake, who later became ambassador to Iceland. The first PAO was Bill Hutchinson, an outstanding USIA officer who later went to the highest heights of the agency as area director for Africa. John Hogan came next as PAO, a humorous man with a lot of charm.

This very large American community was in a large country, geographically, with a small population. There were less than two million Libyans in the country at the time. I worked with Wheelus Air Base closely. In fact, I had a desk at the base Public Information Office to work on community relations. Our big crisis in Libya was during the Six Day War when the Egyptians marched into the Sinai and then supposedly into Israel, according to their own propaganda. There was a community of Sephardic Jews living in Tripoli, as they did all over North Africa, running most of the commerce. The Libyans, listening to Nasser's emotional propaganda on the radio, which came into Libya like a ton of bricks, took to the streets demonstrating and tearing into the Jewish shops and businesses. Also, it was a problem for us in the USIS library building and at the embassy. We closed up the USIS library and the USIS offices and put the metal shutters down, and went over to the embassy, where they had the Marines, of course. Then the American women and children were ordered out to Wheelus Air Base to be evacuated, because there was a breakdown of law and order. My wife and children were at the base overnight and were evacuated, as were most of the embassy dependents. I stayed with a core of other officers.

Q: *What was it that precipitated that?*

TEEPLE: This was the Six Day War, which broke out between the Arabs and the Israelis in June 1967. All embassy officers, staff, and dependents did move out to Wheelus Air Base for security measures. As events settled down after a couple of days, I went back to our house. We had a wonderful houseboy there, Omar. I remember he put a sign on our house saying "No Americans here" in Arabic, and he fed our dog. I went back and stayed in the house, and the women and children, my wife and two children, were sent to Rome. I got up there once for a visit with them, and then we decided to move my wife and children to Malta, which had good English schools. So

they went to Malta and rented an apartment, and we were ready to send the boys to Malta schools (which were based on English public schools), but things calmed down in Tripoli and my wife and children were the first to come back to Libya. They got on the first plane that was available when women and children were allowed to return. Several dependents stayed on in Rome, and some even went to the States.

Q: *The children got back into school there at Wheelus?*

TEEPLE: Yes.

Q: *And you moved from Tripoli then to?*

TEEPLE: Being 10 years continuously overseas, I was transferred to Washington in 1969.

HUME HORAN
Near Eastern Affairs, Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1967-1969)

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

Q: In 1968, you were on the Libyan desk from when to when?

HORAN: '67-'68. '67-'69, pardon me.

Q: What was the situation in Libya at that time when you arrived?

HORAN: Having served in Libya, I was familiar with the issues and the personalities, and I was very happy to move from African personnel, which I enjoyed, over to the Libyan desk. Sure enough, the issues I had been aware of while I was in Libya were all there waiting for me. The principal one was how to retain Wheelus airbase. Our marvelous, humongous bombing range!

Q: Idris was still president or king.

HORAN: Yes, Idris was King, Muntasser was still Prime Minister. There were a number of *enrages* in Parliament. They'd get up and deliver speeches, probably written for them in Cairo. Or maybe they put their minds on autopilot, and out came a variation of the anti-American "Ur-speech." There were actually a few Libyans who'd say to us, "Don't worry, we remember the great sacrifices of the allies during WWII and how you freed us from the Italians. We are with you through thick and thin." Well, most Libyans were born after WWII! Meanwhile, Radio Cairo was

beaming THE MESSAGE. Radio Cairo rolled over Libya like a sonic boom - totally overwhelming puny VOA (inaudible in most parts of Africa and the Middle East). Muhammad Hasanayn Haikal was writing his excellent, but discomfiting editorials in al-Ahram. He was an kind of Arab Tom Paine.

Q: So, the war broke out in 1967. How did that affect you?

HORAN: Oh, I was still in African personnel when the war broke out.

Q: This was the June war.

HORAN: Right. It was on a Monday. I was driving up from Virginia listening to the news and then...! In quick succession many Arab countries broke relations with us. They believed Nasser's canard about U.S.-Israeli collusion. All the lemmings rushed into the sea. Too predictable! Even Mauritania, which gave Bill Eagleton 24 hours to leave the country! They thought this would make them heroes in the Arab world. Maybe get some oil money? Wrong on both counts. Mauritania scores even lower than Libya in Arab rankings! Some years later they crawled back...scratched at our door. We kept them waiting. As a personnel officer, though, the war had its silver lining. Suddenly we had good people galore to fill every gap.

Q: Okay. So the June war had already taken place, but what was going on about Wheelus?

HORAN: There was frenzied brainstorming. We knew how thin the ice was becoming under us. What sleight-of-hand tricks could throw Libyans off the scent? Call on David Copperfield. And "PRESTO!" This titanic American base remains - just hidden from sight. We put up a Libyan flag in front, changed the name to al-Mallaha (the salt-lick), staffed the entrance gate with Libyan policemen. But none of these optics could diminish the steady roar of jets coming in and going out over what had become a large Libyan suburb.

Q: Who was the Chief of Mission?

HORAN: David Newsom had taken over from Alan Lightner in late 1964 - maybe? David had been Director of AFN. He brought with him one of the best DCMs ever - the formidable Jim Blake. Because Tripoli had been seen as safe, comfortable posting, it had attracted its share of "wounded eagles." Jim Blake put these to flight in record time.

Q: Well then, when you took over the Libyan desk, what was sort of the hierarchy in it was still AF wasn't it?

HORAN: AF, yes.

Q: And who was...

HORAN: So nice that you asked. We had a wonderful human being, and a brilliant officer as AFN Office Director, John F. Root. John later became Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire. Humane and soft spoken, incisive, a superb drafter, always supportive. The best sort of cheerful Catholic layman.

John led a really good group of desk officers, Frank Wisner was doing Tunis, Peter Sebastian did Algeria, Wingate Lloyd did Morocco, and Charlie Bray, was Deputy Country Director. So it was a privilege to be led by John Root and to serve with such colleagues.

Q: Where was Ambassador Lightner?

HORAN: When Ambassador Lightner came back to DC he was put in charge of a new office, "Water for Peace." The idea of the office sprang from one of LBJ's speeches. I don't think the job really amounted to much. Too much ahead of its time! David Newsom remained in Libya until the spring or summer of 1969. He then came back to be Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. My dates are frankly a little shaky.

Q: What did you do as a desk officer, I mean one, as a desk officer and two, as Libyan desk officer so somebody gets the feel for this type of job.

HORAN: It is the best job you can have in Washington. You have a hunting license to poke your nose into everybody's business, from the National Park Service, to DOD, to Commerce, and intelligence community. Your "need to know" is by definition total and inclusive regarding the country you're charged with. You are the focal point through which everything coming into or going out of Washington has to pass. You had to watch your territory, guard your perimeter all the time. You didn't want people start sending things out to the Embassy without your clearance. In time, you can even expand the radius of your job. Get people in the habit of deferring. Return phone calls fast, do the first draft of agendas, don't be a pain to others who need your clearance. etc. Soon, people find you can give good advice, maybe even speed things up, actually.

I wonder, though, if the communications revolution has made it harder for Desk Officers to hold the center of the stage?

As Libyan Desk Officer I spent a good deal of time with the oil companies, and of course, DOD. I turned down a job offer from an oil company to join its negotiating department. Good money, but I wasn't really tempted. I had a good contact at the Israeli Embassy - Yosi ben Aharon, a Likudnik. Very smart, originally from Egypt. I was the only real Arabist in AFN - a Directorate that dealt entirely with Arab countries. Frank Wisner had some North African Arabic, but that hardly counts. John Root used me as liaison with the Near East Bureau. I think knowing the language and being pretty familiar with Arab issues, was an advantage.

I even on one occasion got to use my Arabic! The leader of the conservative Moroccan opposition came to the U.S. to give a series of speeches. Allal al-Fasi. He was scheduled for a lecture at SAIS, but in the event...

Q: SAIS being the School of Advanced International Studies

HORAN: That's right. In the event, no interpreter showed up. John Root was there and I was there, so was the rest of AFN. The auditorium was full. John said, "Hume, will you interpret?" My Arabic was pretty good, but wow! Anyway I got up there and afterwards John said, "You did a really good job." He wrote a wonderful letter for my file.

Q: What about the Libyan embassy? How did you relate with them?

HORAN: Frankly, they were like most Arab embassies. Uninformed, lazy, feckless, interested in importing cars, abusing their nannies. Mostly, though, passive and inoffensive. That's a good question, though. Because as a Desk Officer you find yourself looking in two directions. You work with and for the U.S. Embassy. But you'll also get calls from the local Embassy - especially once they come to see you as solid - to help them out in all sorts of issues, small or large. I remember the Libyan Ambassador, Fathi Abadia, was gentle, soft spoken, and almost invisible in DC. Maybe this was the way the King wanted it?

Q: Did you find as some desk officers do that sometimes, "Oh, perhaps say you might want to read this article in the newspaper or you might want to talk to this Congressman," or something like that?

HORAN: I tried sometimes but I thought I might in the end just screw things up. I spoke to John Root about this once. He said, "Hume I'll tell you a story." He had met with the Moroccan ambassador after one of the big foreign embassies had hosted a three-ring reception. All over the "Style" section of the Post. The Ambassador asked John: "Look at the guest list! All kinds of very important people, you know, from the Senate and Defense Department, and captains of industry!" Then he asked, "How much do you think I'd have to pay these people to get them to come to MY next reception?" John tried to explain the importance of outreach, developing contacts, etc. But to us it showed that many Arab diplomats did not know how to work the DC scene. They were, in a sense, lousy "Desk Officers" for their country.

Q: This is always the thing. Some countries knew how to play the Washington game which is a complicated game. It is not an easy one. Congress, the media, the NSC, the Pentagon and the State Department probably ranks about fourth or fifth there.

HORAN: The Tunisians were about the best of the Arabs, and the Jordanians. But the Tunisians did their own little dance. They were able to avoid the anti-Israeli shuffle.

Q: Were there any sort of issues that came up during this time?

HORAN: Military sales, base negotiations. Base negotiations went on and on and on. I'd draft position papers, clear them with the Pentagon and all around. We'd authorize the Embassy to propose a bi-national committee to review the Wheelus question. Prolonging the agony, I sometimes felt.

Q: But also the King was still alive.

HORAN: The King was still there. He was our ace-in-the-hole.

Q: But some bad indicators were there.

HORAN: You bet! Libya, we saw, could not remain immune from Arab nationalist currents - but

we hoped that with our good footwork, they might just wash over our heads. I once said to John, "As Country Director, you're like the man who with a broom handle, holds a glass water against the ceiling. You're a success if that glass is still there when your replacement shows up. You solved nothing, but the glass at least didn't fall." John was lucky. I was less so, because the glass came down September 1, 1969.

Q: Were you still on the desk in September, `69?

HORAN: Yes. I still had about a month to serve as Desk Officer. I'll not forget the day. It was Labor Day. I was visiting my parents in Gloucester, Virginia. They had a nice house on the Ware River. I was standing on the dock, about to dive into the water, when Mother called: "Hume, you have a phone call from Washington." It was one of the desk officers. He asked: "Hume, you've heard about the coup in Libya?" I had not. He said, "You had better come back to Washington." That was the beginning of three or four weeks of scrambling to explain why we REALLY had seen the coup coming all along, and why we didn't know squat about the coup leader. As I've mentioned, we knew of some coup plotting, but had no info at all on Qadhafi and his co-plotters. That month, I often spent the night on my office couch.

Q: During the time you were there, how about the reporting from the embassy?

HORAN: The best - except that the coup surprised us! Alan Lightner had produced good reporting, but put together David Newsom as Ambassador, Hermann Eilts as DCM - to be succeeded by Jim Blake, you had one hell of a combination of leaders! Hermann was to Foreign Service reporting, what the Caterpillar tractor is to earth movers. I remember going to Tripoli to fill in for the Political chief. Hermann came into my office and said, "Our monthly political summary is about due. I know you're busy, so I'll jot something down and you take a look at it." In less than two hours, he returned with a dozen beautifully dictated pages, perfectly summarizing everything political that had happened in the last month. I personally felt that kind of reporting was a waste of our time, and Washington's too. But it was an amazing tour de force. Was the reporting, though, perhaps, too copious? Might the Embassy have done better to flood the streets and cafe's with curious young Arabists?

Q: When the coup came, was there the thought of there goes the airbase? I mean was that pretty much how everybody's reaction?

HORAN: Yes. And yes again. There was a lot of interest all the way up to the top of the ladder as to "Who lost Libya?" "Here we have a huge U.S. base in the West of Libya, a huge British base in the East, agents galore, and then some Company-grade officer pulls this kind of a stunt!" Whenever it emerges from FOIA, the Information Memorandum from AFN will be seen as a minor classic. It almost made the overthrow of Idris sound like one of our successes! I worked hard all one night on the first draft. It got some very professional editing in the AF front office. It was a very fine apologia - an explanation why even the best policies cannot preclude the unforseen.

Q: You say it was not just your work.

HORAN: No. In the final product, maybe 40% was Hume Horan. The State Department was

mopping up after itself.

Q: I would imagine that and obviously it would be a major reaction because Libya was two things, one was oil, which probably would keep coming anyway, but the base was the major thing. How did the Pentagon take this, and prior to this, I mean were the powers that be at the Pentagon seeing the handwriting on the wall?

HORAN: DOD was more shocked than State. What you might expect. Then there were some bad surprises. Qadhafi's coup kicked over a log, that had been reposing undisturbed for 25 years. Lots of things crawled out from under. A senior Air Force officer flew a treasure of jewels to Europe for the Royal family. Some members of the Palace crowd also got out of Libya the same way. A civilian employee of Wheelus got caught trying to smuggle some Libyan Jews out on U.S. aircraft as "Musical instruments." The Arab media were delirious at these revelations.

Note: but there is one point that must be emphasized. Qadhafi had the advantage of speed and surprise. But his greatest asset was King Idris's passivity. For several days after the coup, the final outcome was uncertain. People were watching to see what the king - vacationing in Turkey - would do. I'm convinced that if he had said straight out, "I'm on my way home and you can be sure I'll deal with that whippersnapper Qadhafi..." many of Qadhafi's supporters would have deserted him. The King had many potential assets - but he was passive. Qadhafi had few assets - but he was active. After two or three days of royal indecision, you could feel the wind shifting. Afterwards, as a general principle, I decided U.S. interests were safer with someone in a weak position - who was a fighter, than someone in a strong position - who was not. You can't fight something with nothing.

The King was tired and old and somewhat bored with power. Maybe he thought of the kalila wa dimna story about the frogs and the stork? "My ungrateful people don't find king flog very exciting? Okay, let them try King stork..."

Q: This is also the tail end of the Administration, wasn't it? I mean the beginning of a new administration.

HORAN: Yes, '68. That's correct, LBJ perhaps.

Q: Well did Libya enter at all into the Washington concentration on Israel and all that?

HORAN: You always tried to keep the Libyan issue separate from the mis-named "Middle East Peace Process." We just wanted Libya to keep out of the headlines, pump oil, and allowing our NATO training flights out of Wheelus. The *Zeitgeist*, though, was not helping! We were lucky to hold on as we did.

Q: Well when you left there in '69 with this, there was still, Wheelus was still...

HORAN: It was all over but the shouting. The airbase was closed. We were at the stage of "Women and children first...do we have enough life vests to go around?"

Q: What was our reading of the Qadhafi group?

HORAN: We knew practically nothing about them. They had never been our contacts. The Agency and the British, same thing. The British had their base and contacts up to the eyebrows. We couldn't even find the training record of Qadhafi when he was in Michigan or Wisconsin someplace. Qadhafi was a sort of mystery, but with his obsession with Nasser, a father-figure, we knew we were in for serious trouble. They threw Charlie Dunbar, our Political Counselor, out of the country. They arrested our wonderful senior FSN, Mohammed Salah, and kept him in jail for months. Later David Newsom brought him to the U.S., and found a job for him with USIA. About that time I turned the job over to Rocky Suddarth, who was coming in from Mali, perhaps.

Q: Did we feel at the beginning that this, I mean Qadhafi was not necessarily at that point seen as being necessarily the top dog was he?

HORAN: That's right, yes.

Q: I mean we were looking at this as sort of an Egyptian thing where you know Naguib or whoever it was, was sort of the general in charge and pretty soon Nasser rolls.

HORAN: Yes. Yes. Everyone wondered if this signals officer could really pull something like this off. It must be the Egyptians behind the scenes. I think the Egyptians were as surprised as we were. I think it was just a group of local *illumines* who just said "What the hell! Go for it!" They were a small group but they made up in organization and speed and decisiveness what they lacked in tanks, airborne all that stuff.

ROSCOE S. SUDDARTH
Political Officer
Tripoli (1967-1969)

Ambassador Suddarth was born in Kentucky and raised primarily in Tennessee. He was educated at Yale and Oxford Universities and Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served in the US Air Force before joining the Foreign Service in 1961. Primarily a Middle East specialist the Ambassador served as Political Officer and Counselor in Yemen, Libya, Jordan and in Saudi Arabia, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served with the Department of State in Washington in senior level positions concerning primarily Middle East and Political Military matters. In 1987 he was appointed Ambassador to Jordan, where he served until 1990. Ambassador Suddarth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: In '67, we had had the Six Day War and all. What were you getting on your home leave?

SUDDARTH: I came back. Bill Handley was the deputy assistant secretary of State. He had been my ambassador in Mali. In the Near East Bureau, he did the economic things. But I sat down with him and the first thing he said to me was, "Aren't those Arabs awful?" Of course, it was a

devastating defeat for the Arabs. People have often overlooked the fact that the Egyptians had their best divisions in Yemen where I had just come from fighting against the Yemenis, so they were really ill-prepared on the ground to do anything. Of course, the lightning strike of the Israeli air force decided the battle in the first few hours. There was a very anti-Arab feeling in the United States. I would say perhaps even more there was a very strong pro-Israeli thing. Here was tiny Israel that had vanquished the combined Arab armies and had occupied the West Bank. So, Israel was felt to be very much of a victim. So, it was in that atmosphere that I found home leave. This segues a bit into my assignment to Libya. My own leave was cut short. I was going to Libya to be the interpreter (I was in the Political Section.) for Ambassador David Newsom. There had been major riots in Libya at the time of the June war. Libya was host to both the British El-Adam and the U.S. Wheelus Air Force Base, which were all-weather training bases of incredible value to the U.S. and British air forces in Europe, which had bad weather a lot of the time.

So, I was sitting in France on my way to Libya planning a leisurely three week vacation and planning to go down with my family to visit the Loire Valley when I got a call from the Department, "They want you in Libya immediately. The Libyan government has decided to open renegotiations for Wheelus Air Force Base." So, it got more complicated. I curtailed my vacation, flew to Libya, and had to go immediately with the ambassador to see the prime minister to talk about a wide variety of subjects. The prime minister happened to be a Cyrenaican tribesman who had been put in to crack heads. So, he was not the sophisticated-looking prime minister that we were used to dealing with. He had some of the most difficult Arabic I have ever had to encounter. So, it was quite a thing for me. The Libyans were trying to finesse the popular hostility to the air base by pretending to renegotiate, but all they were doing was playing for time until popular unrest curtailed.

Q: You were in Libya from '67 to when?

SUDDARTH: I was in Libya from July or early August 1967 until mid-July 1969.

Q: Could you describe what the situation, not just the problem right after the Six Day War, but the government and how we saw it of Libya at that time when you arrived?

SUDDARTH: Sure. Well, Libya was one of the great oil success stories. It was one of the poorest countries in the world until they discovered oil in the late '50s/early '60s. Their main exports were esparto grass for making quality paper and scrap metal which is from the wreckage of the Axis forces and our own forces in World War II. But with the oil boom, you had a government under King Idriss, who was a popular figure because he had resisted Italian occupation and there were stories about the brutality of the Italians in World War II where they would take Libyans out who were leading opposition and fly them up in planes and then drop them thousands of feet into the Mediterranean. But the government was... At that point, King Idriss had kind of renounced the world and had moved himself to Tobruk, which was on the extreme eastern part of Libya on the sea right next to the El-Adam base, but leaving a government in place that had to report to him from time to time. The government was composed essentially of technocrats and conservative people who were committed to the U.S. and to the British relationship.

In 1965, they hit really big oil. Mobil Oil gave up a concession where they had drilled within one

kilometer of the famous Idriss Field, which Occidental got when they had to relinquish the Mobil claim. It was a big, big gusher.

In addition, with the closure of the Suez Canal during the 1967 War, Libya had a real hold on European oil supply. It was before the advent of the supertankers. Libyan oil production was very, very high after the '67 War and absolutely essential for Europe.

Q: Looking at the government, the obvious comparison would be with Saudi Arabia, which you are familiar with. How did they differ? They were both run by a king.

SUDDARTH: Well, the Saudi government is a kind of theocratic, a blend of secular kingship but with a strong commitment to a fundamentalist religious ideology. You didn't have the social restrictions in Libya. Women did not wear veils. Liquor was allowed in the country. Even though King Idriss himself was a very pious person. In effect, his retirement to this place of contemplation was because he felt that the world was going to hell. He didn't want anything to do with it. So, we were dealing there with a situation where you had a monarch who had partially renounced government. He had a government in place but yet he would occasionally assert himself and fire somebody or do something. He was still essential on the major issues.

Q: When you arrived there, what was the view at the embassy of the stability of this government?

SUDDARTH: Well, I think there was concern after these riots both in Tripoli and Benghazi during the 1967 War. They were cracked down on. We spent a good bit of our time in the following two years trying to shore up their security forces, trying to get them equipment doing various things. I think there was some concern, but I'm jumping ahead now. Everybody thought at the end of our tour that King Idriss was going to abdicate in favor of his virtually adopted son who was a colonel in the military. It was Qadhafi and the lieutenants who sensed that and went in under the... This was kind of the big story at the end. It's not yet proven, but the belief is that all of the security services had relaxed because things had built up to the fact that Idriss was out of the country (This was in mid-1969.), he was in Turkey, and they thought that there was going to be a benign coup in favor of a republican government and Idriss was acquiescent in. What happened was, with the relaxed vigilance of the security services, Qadhafi and company came in and when people awoke on September 1, Qadhafi and his junta were in charge and the colonel was in jail.

Q: There is a very distinct parallel to what happened in Greece in April of '67 when the generals were supposed to have a coup and everybody was waiting for it and the colonels took over.

SUDDARTH: Exactly.

Q: Let's talk about early on. David Newsom was not an Arabist at this point.

SUDDARTH: Yes, he was. David was highly experienced. I am a great admirer of his. I've worked for him when he was ambassador to Libya, then when he was head of African Affairs. He brought me back to be the Libya desk officer. Then I ran his office when he was under secretary. I consider him one of the finest minds that we've ever had in the Foreign Service. Newsom had served in Baghdad. He had been on Robert Anderson's mission in the peace process. He had been

in charge of North African Affairs for about four years before coming. Then he was the Near East man in London for about three years. So, he was totally steeped in the Near East.

Q: Did you in working with Newsom find that Libya and the Libyans were a different breed than what you had been used to in the Yemen?

SUDDARTH: Well, the Libyans tended to be pretty xenophobic. They had been kicked around by everybody from the Greeks, the Romans, and Spartacus was doing his work in the quarries of Libya. Then they had had a particularly harsh Italian occupation. So, the Libyans were naturally pretty xenophobic. It was difficult to get close to the Libyans in a way that it wasn't with Lebanese or Jordanians, for instance. So, you had this contradiction between a government that was very friendly, particularly with the British, who were the liberators, and the King. King Idriss had a very close relationship with Queen Elizabeth and prior to her with King George and so forth, and a population that number one, didn't like foreigners; number two, was alienated in its more radical elements by the Israeli victory in 1967.

Q: There were two influences that were inserted into the xenophobic country. One was the American and British military and the other was oil. Can you talk about the relations beginning and up to the coup of the military, both the British and the American? It would strike me as a recipe for disaster to have new people flying in all the time to do their thing and when they get out at night they want to whoop it up. How did that work?

SUDDARTH: I think it worked pretty well. In the Political Section, we ran for the ambassador the Wheelus Air Force base relations thing, not only negotiations with the government, but also making certain that Wheelus took good heed of public relations. So, I recall very, very few incidents of airmen getting into trouble and so forth. They had an officers' club. People stayed there. When I say that Libya was not Saudi Arabia in terms of social restrictions, as I recall, there were still relatively hard to... There weren't any real nightspots around. It was not this sort of thing.

But for amusing stories, I had a bright idea that turned out to be a dumb idea, which was we had a whole strategy for having Wheelus accepted or acquiesced for the Libyan population. For instance, we used the excellent medical facilities. We would admit influential Libyans there on a selective basis. But one time, I thought, "Hey, they have a good basketball team. The Libyans like basketball. Let's have a Wheelus-Libyan national basketball team match." It turned out that the Libyans played international rules that are much more rough and permissive in terms of body contact than the American rules, so within the first five minutes we had fistfights. The Wheelus Air Force Base guys thought they were not only being roughed up but that the referees weren't catching it. So, we stopped that after a while.

Our major problems, there was a thing called the El-Watiya Gunnery Range, which was out in a forsaken part. These gunners would come in and they would use their cannons, bombs, and whatnot. There would be the occasional nomad who would wander in and get killed. This became very tribal. We had to do a lot of shuffling and paying a lot of money for things that happened like that which were really nobody's fault.

Q: Did you find yourself going out making contact with the tribal leaders and all that?

SUDDARTH: Yes, we did it to a limited extent. But as I look back on it, we had relatively little contact outside of the official community. Newsom and I and several others went on a three-week trip through the desert near the Chad border, a fascinating trip, to look for some artifacts down there with the University of Pennsylvania and we met a few tribal leaders. But they were pretty well integrated into the government. You had some tribes that were ministers. We would get our tribal thing that way. It was pretty much a government to government deal. We weren't doing very much outside of that. Again, the Libyans were not particularly hospitable. It was only somebody who was in search of a contract for F-5s or something who would invite you to his house. So, there was not the social interchange that one would have liked. You invited people and the husband would show up and the wife wouldn't. I recall virtually no entertaining that you would normally do in a diplomatic post.

Q: What about the oil relationship? Particularly in our developing field, as it was in Libya at that time, the roustabouts, the American oil workers... You don't just turn the spigot on and off. You've still got to drill the oil. These were a pretty rough crew. Did you have any problems there?

SUDDARTH: They may have had a few in Benghazi, which was closer to the fields. As I recall, most of the oil companies would fly these folks into the site and fly them back out and they would then do their R&R in either Rome or Malta.

Q: Which could take it.

SUDDARTH: Yes. So they would in effect be in the field for a couple of weeks and then they would spend a week off in Malta or something like that. You didn't have too many families. You had headquarters elements who were professionals who were very well conducted.

Q: Some of the people who were dealing with the Libyan oil fields came out of the ARAMCO experience. I remember knowing some of those who were early on beginning to move over. They had quite a sophisticated relationship with the Saudis to curtail too many demands, were making sure that they were giving Saudis significant jobs within the oil thing... Was the same sophistication being used in Libya?

SUDDARTH: I think so. ARAMCO is unique because they started an entire culture. It's still very much self-contained and that's partly because of the Saudi cultural division between men and women. You didn't have that in Libya. I would say the oil company executives always had some very experienced people, Arabists on the staff, people who were very sensitive to these issues, and they made sure that they employed a good healthy quotient of Libyans as opposed to foreigners. But it was nothing like the Saudi ARAMCO experience. In Libya, Mobil, Exxon, and Occidental were the two big companies at the time. But you had Continental, Marathon, Bunker Hunt... You had a tremendous number of oil companies in there because Libyan oil is excellent oil. You can practically put it in your gas tank. It has a high sulfur content and tends to choke up in cold weather but it's a beautiful crude, so it was highly demanded on the market.

I don't recall the oil companies getting black marks at all in Libya. I think they were quite sensitive.

Q: I assume there was a pretty close liaison between you and the Arabists on the oil company staff.

SUDDARTH: Yes. There was Don Medford and Don Marquard and several other guys. The ambassador met with their heads and we kept them abreast of the way U.S. policy was heading. Everybody was worried after the 1967 War whether they'd have sabotage in the oil fields and whatnot. But since they were out in the desert, they were well protected.

Q: Were you getting in whatever social occasion you had the litany about "Why did you recognize Israel so soon" and that sort of thing?

SUDDARTH: The people we tended to deal with in government were quite moderate. Yes, there was resentment. One prime minister resigned, Hussein Maaziq, after the 1967 War. So, there was turmoil there. But as a commentary, unlike in Jordan or in Lebanon, in the Levant closer to Israel, people were not quite so vocal on the issue. You'd get the incendiary editorials in papers from time to time. But I don't mean to minimize it. It was a big issue.

Q: How about Nasser when you got there? Obviously, Nasser even had that resignation-redemption... Was Nasser a presence in Libya when you were there?

SUDDARTH: He was definitely a presence. He was considered the greatest Arab- Even after the debacle of the '67 War, he was still a revered figure among particularly the younger and the Arab nationalist forces.

Q: What about Libyans who were... Was there an important segment of the Libyan population that was going abroad using its newfound wealth, particularly the young people getting educated and coming back?

SUDDARTH: Yes. The older generation was not educated. They didn't have college educations. But the people who were under 40 were pretty well educated. They had gone to England or some of them had gone to the United States.

When I left Libya as a young officer, I thought I knew the promising young Libyans who were going to be the leaders of the next generation. I belonged to a thing called "The Fiqr Society," [The Thought Society], which was a kind of think tank, which was unusual for Libya. I had met a number of these young guys who were young technocrats. So, when I left in July of '69, one of the embassy officers gave a party and I invited the Libyan leaders of the next generation, none of whom was ever picked by Qadhafi.

Q: Did we have much of an exchange program, sending leaders or people whom we felt would be leaders to the United States?

SUDDARTH: We sent a number of leaders. There was one embarrassing story. Abdul Hamid al-Bakkoush was the young hard-charging prime minister, a well educated lawyer who after the '67 War was brought in to sort of put a better image on the government, more in tune with the younger generation. He announced that he was going to visit the United States and he was asked to

resign the next week or the next day by King Idriss. Idriss didn't want anybody rising too prominently. But we had a very strong military assistance relationship. We sent a lot of Libyan officers and noncoms to the United States. While I was there, we negotiated an F-5 deal. The minister of defense was a Cyrenaican tribesman. His opening thing on the F-5 sale was, "We have rings and we want to buy." That is a bedouin expression meaning "We have some money and we want to buy." We were the sole supplier for the Libyan air force with F-5s, C-130s, and so forth. So, there was a tremendous military relationship. The idea was in exchange for our use of military facilities, we wanted to be very forthcoming with the Libyans as much as we could be because they were not considered a threat to Israel.

Q: Did you feel the pro-Israeli lobby in our relations with Libya or were you off their radar?

SUDDARTH: No, we were really off the radar because Idriss was considered to be a good friend of the United States and a moderating force.

There is an interesting side story that you may recall. There was a Khartoum conference that occurred after the '67 War where they had the three "Nos," no recognition, no end of war, no negotiation. They pledged money to the so-called confrontation states (Egypt, Jordan, and Syria) for the extra expenses that they needed to rearm. Libya was given its subscription, the amount of money it had to pay without ever being asked. They were there, present, and an announcement was made and so Libya was not even asked about this. This kind of shows the remoteness or almost disdain with which close allies of the United States were held by both the Syrians and the Egyptians that were calling the tune at that point.

Q: Were we concerned that the Nasser government might in frustration turn on Libya, either a military move or put its own people in?

SUDDARTH: No. I think that they realized number one, the U.S... And particularly the British, who had a defense treaty with Libya which if anybody invaded, the British were obligated to come to their defense militarily. But there was worry about the Egyptian intelligence service and there was a big trial that I covered where I think something like 140 Libyans and several Egyptians were indicted for being agent provocateur during these riots that took place after the 1967 War. So, there was some concern about Egyptian subversion.

Q: Looking at Libya, the rather small and unsophisticated population, I would imagine a considerable number of Egyptian workers would have come in to work in the oil fields.

SUDDARTH: Yes, I think so. I don't recall how many, but I would assume so. But they were again kept in remote locations and so forth. But there was enough of an Egyptian population that they probably had some Egyptian intelligence agents mixed in.

Q: How about in our embassy? Did our military attaches have much of a connection with the Libyan military?

SUDDARTH: As I said, we had a big military assistance program. So, the answer is, yes.

Q: But it wasn't getting down to the lieutenant level?

SUDDARTH: If you want to hop ahead to Qadhafi, we can do that.

Q: How did the unrest, the riots and all, after the debacle of the '67 War, did that calm down?

SUDDARTH: Oh, yes. There were riots at the time, the first week after the war. Then they stopped. So, to that extent, yes. Libyans are a pretty quiescent population. This was very unusual. There were no other instances of that during my two years there.

Q: How about relations with Tunisia and Algeria?

SUDDARTH: Tunisia was a moderate country, and a republic. By King Idriss, I think he considered them too secular. Algeria was a revolutionary republic and they were considered to be dangerous, but they had a desert border and there were a couple of oil fields close to that. But I don't recall any particular disputes.

Morocco was a monarchy and was not particularly close to Idriss. Idriss was an ascetic, saintly kind of figure, otherworldly who really didn't mix with and didn't try to cut a figure in Arab politics.

Q: Unlike Hussein or Hassan.

SUDDARTH: That's right.

Q: Until the Qadhafi thing took place, it was a fairly normal state of relations?

SUDDARTH: Well, there were some serious things that led up to the Qadhafi takeover. One was corruption. It was widely believed that some of the oil company giants had contracts had been the result of corrupt influences in figures - not King Idriss himself; he was pure as the driven snow. It was widely believed that a lot of the oil company concessions, the big concessions, were the result of corruption and in effect to a figure close to Kind Idriss, Omar Shalfi. King Idriss had no children. He and his wife, Queen Fatima, had no children. I've forgotten exactly the reason, but the two Shalfi boys - Abdel Aziz, who was a colonel in the military, and Omar, who was a shadowy figure who dealt in deals, in effect... Omar Shalfi used influence according to these allegations to get oil concessions and got handsomely rewarded for it.

Then there was a big rather smelly British defense contract that was for both aircraft and Rapier missiles. Both seemed to be in excess of Libya's needs and it was widely believed that there was a lot of money being passed under the table.

So, this was another souring element. You had first the riots, the fact that the air bases were there. Let's not forget that there were false allegations made that U.S. planes from Wheelus Air Force Base had helped the Israelis. And this British aircraft and missile deal was costing hundreds of millions of dollars and it seemed to be far in excess. They were going to put in a whole package of maintenance, supply, and whatnot. So, that didn't sit well with the Libyan population and

particularly with some of the young radicals and some of the people in the army, who didn't see the need to be spending that.

One of our major concerns at the embassy was corruption. The fact that Idriss and removed himself from the fray - there was nobody minding the store.

Q: Were we concerned at that time with American firms giving payoffs and all that?

SUDDARTH: I'm not going to go into names, but there were a few of international oil companies that were believed to be making payoffs. I think this was before the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

Q: Yes, I'm quite sure. That came in the '70s.

SUDDARTH: Yes, that's right.

Q: Was the embassy getting complaints from American entrepreneurs who were coming there and saying, "Should I pay? I'm being asked to do that."

SUDDARTH: I was in the Political Section, so I had my hands full with dealing with that. I can't really comment on that. It's unusual for companies to come to an embassy and get advice on whether they're going to need to pay somebody off because the answer would be, "No, you shouldn't do it."

Q: You were saying corruption was one problem and there was another one.

SUDDARTH: The other was the fact that they were host to two foreign bases and that rankled Arab nationalism. Nasser had made his reputation in keeping the British out of Egypt. He was frequently calling for the withdrawal of our bases in Libya.

Q: Am I right, there was no Soviet mission in Libya at the time?

SUDDARTH: No, there was a Soviet mission. There was no Chinese mission. I think they had relations with the Soviets, although I'm not sure.

Q: But they weren't much of a factor?

SUDDARTH: No.

Q: How about the Italians?

SUDDARTH: Well, they were playing catch-up. They had a bad reputation from the war. Now, Italy is the largest consumer of Libyan oil. But there was a bit of a cultural tie. Some of the Libyans had learned Italian. Italy was close. Rome was a favorite place for Libyans to go.

Q: Moving up towards the end of your tour, can you talk about the development of the Qadhafi coup?

SUDDARTH: I should point people who are interested to a wrap-up airgram (We did airgrams in those days.) on the prospects for the Libyan regime. It's one of those embarrassing things. I went through the corruption. I went through the British arms deal. I went through the Arab nationalism. I wrote this one myself. I was rather proud of it. At the end, the DCM, Jim Blake, a good friend who was always a great supporter of mine, wrote in that "Nevertheless, we don't see any clouds on the horizon for the next five years." This was all under my name.

Q: Had Newsom left?

SUDDARTH: He and I both left about the same time, which was mid-July. He took over immediately - I think probably the first of August - as assistant secretary. I came back on September 1 to be the Libyan desk officer and was greeted at the airport by a message to call the State Department. I was told that there had been a coup in Libya and please report immediately. We talked about the toll on families. Here I have my lovely French wife who had been on two or three home leaves to the States but had never lived there. I had bought a house, fortunately, beforehand. Our two young children... In effect, I said goodbye to her for two years because I was living at the State Department. That's a bit of an exaggeration, but all Saturdays and many Sundays and getting home at eight or nine at night during particularly the early days of the revolution and the Wheelus Air Force Base negotiations and then the Tripoli oil negotiations. So, it was a very brazen time. I'm still reproached for my absences during that period.

GEORGE M. LANE
Principal Officer
Benghazi (1968-1970)

George M. Lane was born in Maryland in 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from Cornell University in 1951 and a master's degree from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1957. He served in the U.S. Army from 1951-1954 and joined the Foreign Service in 1957. His career included positions in Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Libya, Swaziland, Yemen, and Germany. Mr. Lane was interviewed on August 27, 1990 by Richard Nethercut.

Q: *Your next assignment, after Morocco, was in Libya at the time that of the Libyan revolution. Could you comment on that in terms of your experience there?*

LANE: Yes. We were hoping to spend a third year in Morocco. We hadn't had any three year assignments overseas, and as you know two years is just about the minimum time to really feel like your working at the maximum. But suddenly, after we'd been in Morocco for two years, I got one of these calls from Personnel, "You're the only man available, George, and you've got to do this. We need somebody to take over the Embassy Office in Benghazi, Libya." So suddenly I was transferred to Benghazi in 1968, and was there for about a year before the revolution -- before Qadhafi's revolution -- during the revolution, and then for about a year afterwards.

Q: *I notice that you referred to it as the U.S. Embassy Office. What's the distinction between that and a full-fledged Embassy?*

LANE: At this time King Idriss was on the throne in Libya. And King Idriss' basic home area was Cyrenaica, the area where Benghazi and Beyda are located. So when the government sort of moved to Tripoli partly for political reasons, and partly for, I think, sentimental reasons, he maintained Benghazi as a co-capital and started building a new capital up in the so-called Jebel Akhdar, the Green Mountain area. So there were really three capitals in Libya at this point.

Q: *And the Embassy?*

LANE: The Ambassador and the main part of the Embassy were in Tripoli, where they had always been. But technically, rather than being a Consulate, Benghazi was a branch Embassy, as was Beyda where there was one officer.

Q: *At Benghazi then, how did that get involved in the Libyan revolution? Or how did that affect your job there?*

LANE: Well, very dramatically, of course. Under King Idriss the people running Libya were really the Shalhi brothers; the two sons of the man who had been the number one counselor and adviser to King Idriss, and who had been murdered by other members of King Idriss' family. He was so angry when they assassinated his adviser Ibrahim Shalhi, that he made these two sons, rather than exile them, he made them his favorites. So that the Crown Prince, who was a nephew, was largely ignored and these two brothers were almost running the country. One of them was a colonel in the Signal Corps -- a colonel in the Libyan military -- he ran the Signal Corps; and the other one was really Mr. Five Percent, who had a finger in every commercial, economic deal that was going on in Libya. And there were a lot of them at that time because, of course, oil had been discovered in 1956, I think, and the oil boom was really going at this point in 1968. Armand Hammer, and Occidental Petroleum, were very active. It was not only the majors, it was the independents, and they were all going full blast with the oil business. And then King Idriss, in the summer of 1969, went off to take the baths in Turkey -- in Bursa, I think. Everybody thought that these two young men, Omar and Abd al Aziz Shalhi, were going to pull a coup, and then the King was going to abdicate, and they would take over the government.

Apparently a 27-year-old First Lieutenant, Muammar Qadhafi heard this rumor also, so he decided to move up the timing for his coup which he'd been thinking about doing ever since he'd been in the military academy. And so, on the first of September, 1969 there was a sudden -- I guess you'd have to call it a coup d'etat -- simultaneously in Tripoli and Benghazi. And for two weeks nobody knew who was in charge. Qadhafi was very shrewd, and he knew that if he immediately announced that as a 27- year-old First Lieutenant he was taking over the country, opposition would spring up everywhere. So he passed the word initially that somebody else was behind the coup -- spread a rumor -- that it was a Libyan colonel, who was -- I think he was then the Libyan Military Attaché in Rome -- who was then on vacation. When the world press tracked him down he said he didn't know a thing about the coup, he didn't know what they were talking about. But by spreading this kind of rumor, Qadhafi gave himself some time, and he and his revolutionary command council primarily, Abd Al Salam Jallud, who was number two, succeeded in arresting, or nullifying all the possible

areas of opposition. So he was able to take over the country.

Q: *What time frame does this -- what years?*

LANE: This is the first of September, 1969; from the first of September until about the 15th nobody knew who was in charge. Many of us diplomatic corps in Benghazi were meeting with somebody who had been a Lt. Colonel, we could tell, but he'd ripped all the insignia off his uniform when he met with us because those ranks, of course, no longer meant anything as far as the new revolutionary government was concerned, plus, of course, as we learned later, he outranked his leader, and you can't have that.

Q: *So that meant that for about eight or nine months you were there after the coup d'etat, and while Qadhafi had acquired power, did that bring you into contact with him? Or affect your work there?*

LANE: Well, it's funny, my first contact with Qadhafi was an interesting one. On the morning of the revolution, they, of course, announced a curfew, and they had taken over the TV station -- in modern revolutions the first place you have to take control of is the TV stations, and that's where the revolutionary command council was meeting. So I decided I'd better go down there, and see if I couldn't get a pass which would enable me to move around during curfew hours because there were a lot of Americans working in eastern Libya in the Benghazi consular area in the oil fields. Tripoli was the headquarters for the American oil companies, but Benghazi was the headquarters for the roughnecks, and the guys that did the work in the oil fields, and if any of them got in trouble in this rather dicey situation, I was going to need something that would enable me to move around. So I drove down through innumerable fourteen year olds with Kalashnikovs trying to figure out what I was doing, to the headquarters of the TV station. And there was a first lieutenant standing out front directing traffic, and I went up to him and explained in my best Arabic who I was, and what I wanted, and that I needed to go inside, that I needed to get a pass so that I could move around and take care of American citizens, that was my responsibility as the man in charge of the Embassy Office in Benghazi. And he said, "I don't know anything about that." And I said, "Can you tell me where I should go to find out?" He said, "No, I don't know anything about that." So I was getting kind of desperate, and I said, "Can you tell me your name?" And he said, "Yes, my name is Muammar Qadhafi." And it was as I found out later, it was Qadhafi himself who was out directing traffic, and, of course, keeping an eye on what was going on, while the people who were really his subordinates, were inside trying to make policy for the new Revolutionary Command Council.

But very soon after that, Qadhafi, who had been in the Benghazi area during the coup -- he had run the coup in Benghazi, and Jallud had run the coup in Tripoli -- but very soon after that Qadhafi moved to Tripoli, where he took over the government, and started negotiating with Joe Palmer who was our Ambassador there at the time -- well, first it was Jim Blake who was the Charge, and then Joe Palmer, about the evacuation of Wheelus. So I didn't see Qadhafi very much in those nine months after the revolution because I was still in Benghazi, and he was in Tripoli. But, of course, it affected our operations enormously. During the time when King Idriss was on the throne, U.S. and Libya had very close relations. I think frankly our CIA people were declared to the Libyan government, which, of course, caused all sorts of consternation when the revolution took place and Qadhafi's people took over control of the files of the Libyan government. You can imagine some

of the brouhaha that went on as a result of that.

But after Qadhafi's revolution came in, of course, then the Americans changed very quickly from being the number one friend, to the number one enemy. Because Qadhafi was motivated very much by two things: by a sense of Arab socialism as personified by Jamal Abd Al Nasser, who was his absolute hero; and a little bit of Islamic revivalism fundamentalism in the great tradition of the Arab reformers who sweep out of the desert to sweep away the corrupt people in the cities. You can see this in Morocco with Ibn Tunbal, in Saudi Arabia with Muhammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab, and even in Libya with the Sanoussi. That was really a part of the Sanoussi movement.

Q: *Now this early contact with Qadhafi must be unique in the Foreign Service, and I wonder what you would conclude from what has happened subsequently involving Libya, and the way in which Qadhafi has become almost personified as the arch enemy, and the way in which we have been responded to him, including the attack on Libya. Do you have some comments on that?*

LANE: Yes. I claim to be one of the original Qadhafi watchers, and I've, of course, been fascinated by keeping track of him ever since 1969. I've been in other countries that he's visited, and in other places where its been fairly easy to keep track. Qadhafi, of course, is not crazy. I really find it sad that leading American politicians, and commentators, like to call our enemies crazy. It's an intellectual cop-out. If you don't want to spend the time and energy to think about why he's doing what's he's doing, and what are his motivations, then you just sit back and say, "Well, he's nuts." And that means you don't have to think about it.

Well, of course, from Qadhafi's point of view, he's erratic. He does some unusual things, he's not your average man. Your average man doesn't make a coup when he's 27 years old. He's a very unusual character. But to say he's crazy, is an intellectual cop-out. He became, of course, the great Beelzebub, particularly for the Reagan administration, although he'd caused us lots of troubles before that. It was one of those apocryphal stories, I guess, that Qadhafi was supposed to have said after Nasser died, "Egypt is a country without a leader, and I am a leader without a country." As you know, he spent years trying to figure out ways to unite Libya with other countries to build a unified Arab state. He initially tried to unify immediately with Nasser's Egypt, and I suspect sometimes the Egyptians wish they'd taken him up on it, because they could have swallowed Libya very fast, I think, if they'd played their cards right. But, of course, Nasser died in 1970, and then Qadhafi sort of went off on his own trying to unite his country with various other Arab countries, trying to push himself as the heir of Jamal Nasser's, the only true believer, the one who is carrying the flame for Arab nationalism, the only true supporter of the Palestinians.

One of the reasons that he attracted so much attention in the United States, was that the American media made such a play for him. I can remember pictures of Ted Koppel, or some such person, interviewing Qadhafi as he drives a tractor through some part of Libya plowing up the soil to create a new green area. He loved that sort of thing. He got a lot of publicity, and he made a lot of outrageous statements. And that raid on Libya did not stop his support for what we called terrorism. What it did was to stop him from talking about it. I think that's what he learned; that is, it's silly to shoot your mouth off all the time because then you attract attention. There was an article in the Christian Science Monitor just a couple of weeks ago saying there's considerable evidence that Qadhafi's support of terrorism is just as strong, or more so, in the last three years than it was

before that raid on his headquarters, which killed some innocent people, and some people in the French Embassy, as I recall.

Q: *Right now, in the summer of 1990, there is considerable interest in the links that Saddam Husseinn in Iraq has had with both Yasser Arafat and with Muammar Qadhafi. Is there a historical dimension to that? Is that a triangle, or a mini-alliance, that has had some historical roots?*

LANE: I don't think so. I think that's a marriage of convenience, if you can call three people getting together a marriage. But it's a question of, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The thing they all have in common is that they're all opposed to the United States.

Q: *Does that transcend their enmity to Israel, or stem from it?*

LANE: It stems from it, basically. The United States is the number one supporter for Israel. If Israel is your number one enemy, then you're looking around for somebody else who has the same enemy that you have. And that's what they have in common. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

KEITH L. WAUCHOPE
Political/Economic Officer
Ft. Lamy, Chad (1968-1971)

Ambassador Wauchope was born and raised in New York, graduated from Johns Hopkins University and, after a tour in the US Army in Vietnam, in 1966 joined the Foreign Service. His specialty being African affairs, Mr. Wauchope served in a number of African posts, including Ft. Lamy, Asmara, Bamako and Monrovia. In 1989 he was appointed Ambassador to Gabon, where he served from 1989-1992. In his several Washington assignments Ambassador Wauchope dealt with personnel, cultural, Latin American affairs and Sudan affairs. Ambassador Wauchope was interviewed by Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: What about turning to foreign affairs, I mean I realize you were pretty close to the bottom of the totem pole, but what about Libya and Sudan? I mean these were difficult countries.

WAUCHOPE: They were, and both of them were active at that time. As I say, the key political event in the foreign affairs of Chad at the time was the overthrow of King Idriss and the ascent of Muammar Qadhafi who quickly assumed the role as a magnet for Arab radicals. He viewed his southern flank as vulnerable to his pan-Arab activities. There was an ongoing concern about him and, of course, he soon became something of a demon in the American hierarchy of demons, albeit that Libya was distant from the U.S. and not likely to be much threat to immediate American interests. We felt that the French strategy of having Chad serve as a buffer was probably overdrawn, and we were skeptical about Qadhafi's actual ability to immobilize the Islamic minority in Chad. They were a very decided minority in Chad, Niger and Mali, but he was testing the waters in these countries. Ironically, ultimately, he had some success. It wasn't necessarily

Qadhafi, but the Islamic peoples of the north did eventually get control of the government in Chad, and yet all the profitable former colonies on the coast are under no more threat than they ever were. Ultimately, whoever runs the show in these coastal states has got to think about their own domestic problems rather than worry about regional threats.

DAVID L. MACK
Political Officer
Tripoli (1969-1970)

Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

MACK: I arrived in Tripoli, Libya, in the latter part of July, as I recall, around the 20th of the month. I was coming to what was then a very large American embassy, coupled with a very large U.S. military presence at Wheelus Air Force Base next door. The government in Libya was a very traditional monarchy. The constituents of King Idris were basically his tribal connections in Cyrenaica in eastern Libya along with connections that had been formed in later years with leading families in Tripolitania in western Libya. The members of the Idris government were by and large older people. At that time, I was 29 years old, and they seemed ancient to me. Many of them were not very well educated.

Q: *There had not been a tradition of educating Libyans in Rome prior to World War II?*

MACK: The Italians were certainly the worst of all the European colonialists in terms of preparing the people of the colonized nations for independence. It had been very much the Italian theory that they would populate Libya with Italians. It would become Italy's fourth shore, and provide an agriculture hinterland for Italy, if you will. It was a place to which there could be a substantial immigration, as there was, of generally poor Italians from southern Italy. There was a very large Italian community still present. Remember that even after the end of World War II, at the end of Italy's empire, the 1952 agreement by which Libya obtained independence provided very substantial concessions for the Italian residents. They had a lot of privileges that other foreigners did not enjoy. They continued to have quite a strong role in Libyan economy up to the time that I arrived. Our own embassy also seemed to me to be fairly hide-bound in many regards. It was, large with lots of very senior people. I was a mere second secretary.

Q: *Your position was what?*

MACK: I was a second secretary in the political section, but my major responsibility was to be the American interpreter for the ambassador. However, soon after I arrived it was made clear that I was only one of several interpreters, because there were also two locally hired Palestinians who did interpreting chores. I had a brief overlap with my predecessor. Those were the days when you still occasionally had overlaps. He explained to me that the ambassador from time to time might prefer to have one of the Palestinians as his interpreter and go with him to meetings rather than me. This was a matter of some discouragement. I was beginning to feel that I would never break into and be able to do meaningful work in a place where the senior people in our embassy seemed to have all the important ties with senior people in the government. It wasn't even clear that I was going to be accompanying the ambassador to key meetings.

Q: *Just a couple of things. In the first place, you were in Libya from when to when?*

MACK: I was in Libya from July 1969 to June 1972.

Q: *And who was the ambassador?*

MACK: I arrived during an interim between ambassadors. David Newsom had left and returned to Washington to become Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. The newly appointed ambassador, Joseph Palmer II, was coming from having been Director General of the Foreign Service to what most people regarded as his final embassy. He was a very senior officer at that point.

Q: *Libya was obviously considered somewhat important within the Foreign Service.*

MACK: It was. Libya at that time was in the Bureau of African Affairs. And in the Bureau of African Affairs the three most important countries at that point were probably South Africa, Algeria and Libya. Libya because of its air base plus its very large and rapidly growing oil production. A lot of the oil was extracted under concessions to U.S. companies and a fair amount actually went to the United States, and certainly a lot of profits were repatriated to the United States. Libya was an important country, and a rather attractive country in some respects because it had supposedly stable politics. You had not only the embassy in Tripoli, you had a large branch of the embassy in Benghazi. Benghazi was the second capital, and the Libyans were at that point building a third capital at Al-Baidhah up in the mountains. That was the home area from which King Idris had come, and where he had his most loyal tribal constituents. That was also a particularly beautiful area with a nice climate, ancient Greek ruins, and it seemed to me like an entirely nice place to have a capital. Some people, however, considered it to be really in the sticks. This included most Libyans, particularly the Tripolitanians, who thought this was a backward, not a very cosmopolitan part of the country.

Libya was really an odd combination of disparate parts, and didn't have much unity to speak of. There was mostly tribal and traditional Cyrenaica, with strong religious influences, speaking an Arabic dialect that was much more akin to standard eastern Arabic. Then you had Tripolitania, which was more urbanized with a greater degree of education, even though under the Italians they did not receive much. I believe at independence they had something like three university graduates. I'm probably off on that, but it was very low. The Italians had put in a lot of nice physical infrastructure. Tripoli was a very attractive city, as laid out by the Italians. The Italians

had also built many roads, and even railroads, but they clearly had not done much to bring the people up so that they could in any way participate in running their own affairs. It showed in the sense that Libyans tended to have an inferiority complex toward other people and to resent outsiders. There was a third part of Libya in the south called Fezzan, which was much more Saharan, much more akin to Berber societies in the Sahara. All told, it was not an easy and natural national entity.

As I noted I was taken in charge by my predecessor, who was Roscoe Suddarth. Rocky was an extremely talented, highly regarded young Foreign Service officer. In fact, I was told I would have an extremely difficult act to follow, that he was almost too perfect as a Foreign Service officer. I remember colleagues in Beirut telling me those things. And he certainly did his best to get me started, introducing me around. For example, he took me to the palaces to call on, people in the *diwan* protocol sections of the palaces for the King and the Crown Prince. He taught me proper protocol in the royal presence, and how one backs out of the room at the end of a meeting, letting the ambassador be the last one out. It was all very interesting arcane information, which turned out to be totally irrelevant for what I eventually did.

The first six weeks were outwardly very uneventful. Most of the prominent Libyan political leaders, including King Idris and the Crown Prince, were outside of the country taking vacations. Many of our senior embassy officers also were taking some vacation. They gradually began trickling back in late August, and I was briefed on a lot of arcane issues, the relationship between the embassy and Wheelus Air Force Base, for example. Part of my job seemed to involve how to go about dealing with requests from prominent Libyans for admission to the Wheelus Air Force Base hospital, and lots of things of that nature.

Q: *But overall what was the feeling towards the stability and the personality of King Idris that you were getting during this time?*

MACK: King Idris had the reputation of having been a highly regarded figure, a fatherly figure, but increasingly remote from the process of governing, completely uninterested in governing, much more interested in the here-after, and having not a very high regard for the Libyan people. His government had the reputation for being incredibly corrupt. This was the reputation of the formal structure, cabinet members, but also the informal structure of leading tribal sheikhs who were very important in the affairs of Libya. The departing ambassador, David Newsom, had very gently and discreetly raised issues of corruption during his parting calls. But basically relations between the United States and Libya were considered quite good, and there was a lot of concern that there might be political changes that would impact unfavorably on U.S. interests. There was an understanding that there would very possibly be a coup, a military coup. It had almost become the accepted wisdom that there would probably be a military coup, led by senior army colonels, and I guess there was a brigadier or two at the top of the hierarchy. These senior officers were very well connected, of course, with people like the Crown Prince, and there was a feeling that there would be basic continuity. There would be a military coup, a lot of the old tribal leaders would be tossed out and their relatives in the army would take charge. There was concern that it take place smoothly, and there was not a lot of concern that when it happened it would necessarily impact badly on U.S. relations. The British also had bases there, in their case in the eastern part of the country, in Cyrenaica near Tobruk. And, of course, the international oil companies, predominantly

American oil companies, had these major economic interests in the country.

I was at that time still staying with my wife in a temporary apartment adjacent to the embassy, which was very close to the Royal Palace in Tripoli. I am a light sleeper, and early in the morning of September 1st, 1969, I was awakened by the sound of gun fire. I walked out to investigate and saw the armored cars. At that time there were no tanks in the Libyan military inventory. Seeing armored cars drawn up in the area around the palace, I rushed back to first of all call the ambassador, and he instructed me to call Wheelus Air Force Base, which I did, and other personnel, who gradually assembled in the embassy. The Libyan revolution was on. Shortly thereafter there was a curfew in this interim period of extreme confusion following the revolution. We had a chargé d'affaires, James Blake, now also retired from the Service. My immediate boss was the head of the political section, Holsey Handyside. Both went on to be ambassadors later - Handyside in Mauritania, and Blake in Iceland - and they're both still living here in the Washington area. They were both tough, rather assertive, hard-charging Foreign Service officers.

Q: *I came into the Foreign Service with Handyside. Relaxation is not a word that would ever apply to Holsey.*

MACK: Handyside could be faulted by micromanagement, but he was always very supportive of me. He did seem to recognize that I had special things to bring to the job in terms of my Arabic language abilities, so he tended to tell me what my sphere was and let me do my thing. I had only the most distant kind of relationship with the chargé at that point. We hadn't really gotten to know each other at all well before September 1st, only he had been very kind and had pleasant words when I met him and had me to his house, along with my wife.

My wife and I were right there in the center of action during the Libyan revolution, since our temporary apartment was in the adjacent building. In fact, there was a courtyard connecting our building with the embassy and we used that courtyard for people to pass back and forth between embassy offices and temporary bunking accommodations where they would stay during this period of several days in which there was gunfire around, etc. I didn't go back to the apartment that morning after having gotten up, it was much too exciting. I was glued to the radio listening to the various communiqués coming out from something called the Revolutionary Command Council, and we were all trying to figure out what these so-called free officers were up to. This language of free officers and a revolutionary command council was very reminiscent of Nasser's Egypt.

Q: *Did you start rummaging through your files because of Egypt's Lieutenant Colonels and the like*?

MACK: Well, there was a lot of speculation that this had been the long awaited coup, and people were talking about the colonel who might well be behind this. But the members of the Revolutionary Command Council remained anonymous, in most cases they remained anonymous until the subsequent January when the names were finally announced. There were a lot of misunderstandings and false assumptions about what was taking place. I remember the Central Intelligence Agency came out not too long thereafter with a list of people that were “very probably” in this Revolutionary Command Council, I think those were the words the CIA used. None of them had the slightest thing to do with Revolutionary Command Council. The U.S.

Government was very prepared for a military coup, but what happened was a revolution, a very fundamental change in Libyan politics. As it turned out, the new leadership was composed of men who were first of all, about two generations younger than the old leadership. Secondly, they were much better educated in a technical sense, and quite sophisticated about the uses of modern communications, for example. Third, they were for the most part from lesser tribes or very unimportant tribal backgrounds. They didn't have the kind of connections that were thought to be absolutely necessary for success in Libyan politics. They were people who had been brought up to feel they had little stake in the Libyan political system. Of course, they had grown listening to Radio Cairo and felt an attachment to a larger Arab nation, and a great sense of resentment against the United States for our alleged help and support of Israel and its treacherous attacks on the Arabs, etc.

Anyway, at some point during the first day a few Land Rovers with Libyan soldiers came to our embassy. We were told by a sergeant who seemed to be in charge that he wanted to talk to us. I went down with Handyside. The Libyan introduced himself as Sergeant Mohammed, and said that the Revolutionary Command Council wanted the U.S. chargé d'affaires to come to the radio station where they were meeting, and they would explain what they were trying to accomplish, etc. He was polite, even deferential, and trying to be reassuring. He had already collected the chargés d'affaires of France and Great Britain. At this time there were no ambassadors from the major powers in town, as it was still too early for ambassadors to be back from their vacations. When Handy and I consulted with the charge, there was some skepticism on the part of my boss, but it was decided we'd go along with them. So the chargé and I piled into one of the cars, along with Sergeant Mohammed, and we were led to the Soviet embassy. At that time, there was no Chinese embassy. The Soviet charge was extremely skeptical, particularly when he saw this mini-convoy of Land Rovers arriving with the chargés d'affaires of the U.S., France and Great Britain, and myself as an interpreter. But the French chargé rather eloquently suggested to him that he come along. I remember the Soviet said: “who are these people, why should we go with them?” The Frenchman said: “Why, alors, they have zee guns.” So we went off with them to the meeting with a spokesperson who turned out to be the same Sergeant Mohammed who had picked us up. As we later found out, he was Abdul Salam Jaluud, often considered the number two in the revolution. We met with him for a while, then we met with Muammar Qadhafi, but neither one revealed their names. They provided us with all the reassurances one could expect in terms of security. Under instructions from Washington, our chargé asked whether they would continue to respect agreements to which the Government of Libya had entered. They replied positively, assuring our delegation of foreign diplomats that they would protect property, foreign property and lives. Then we were delivered back to our embassies.

Over the succeeding days we met more and more of these young officers.

Q: *Just a quick question. When you had this revolution, and gunfire, was there much, or was it pretty much over rather quickly as far as the seizing of power?*

MACK: There was a lot of gunfire that continued for at least a couple of days.

Q: *Firing at whom?*

MACK: It was quite hard to say. There were people who had held out at the palace, palace guards initially. Since we were very close to the palace, I believe some of the soldiers who had been given orders to take over the palace perhaps thought they were being fired upon from some of the buildings around the embassy. So there were some shots that were fired through the windows of embassy apartments in that area. Unlike me, who had a job to do, it was very scary for my wife, for example, who was there in this temporary apartment with nothing to do. She got violently ill and called me up at one point. I crawled back over there through the courtyard and found that she'd gotten sick, although it was just nerves. With good reason, particularly since she didn't have a clue as to what was going on. In those days, of course, no effort was made to inform spouses. There was no effort to counsel people. If you didn't have anything to do, you were supposed to just remain calm and bite your lip, I guess.

I remember coming up with the idea that maybe she could make some cookies or sandwiches which I could take back to the embassy personnel. That gave her something to do, which made her feel much better.

Over time, as I say, we gradually began to meet more of the young Libyan officers. We had extensive files on young Libyan officers who had been trained in the United States. We were working closely with the British embassy, where I had a young counterpart, David Gore Booth, whom I had originally met in Baghdad when we were both first tour officers. David was in the same situation as I was, although both his chargé and subsequent ambassador spoke Arabic, while mine did not. But we were in a somewhat parallel situation, and they had a set of files on Libyan officers who had been trained in the UK. Between the two of us, we gradually built up quite a dossier on people we were meeting with. Months later, by the time the names of the twelve members of the Revolutionary Command Council were announced, the British and ourselves had come up with a list of about eleven that David and I felt pretty confidently were members of the Revolutionary Command Council. But along the way it was an interesting intelligence problem. The CIA, obviously under pressure to produce and show that they had something came up with a list that was totally irrelevant, lots of interesting biographical material and pictures, etc., which had nothing to do with reality.

After a few days a small operation was set up at the Foreign Ministry. I might mention that the Foreign Ministry had officially been moved to Al-Baidhah, which was to be the new capital. So there was only a very large office in protocol in Tripoli that was still dealing with the diplomats, and it was a awkward situation. We had a person up in Al-Baidhah who would receive from us by cable copies of diplomatic notes, which he would then deliver. But a figure with whom everybody had been dealing in the Tripoli Office of Protocol was assigned to deal with diplomats. (He was Mansour Kikhya, and he later became Libyan Ambassador to the UN before defecting to the opposition.) Having the urbane Kikhya as a familiar point of contact reassured a lot of the diplomatic missions. It was at that point that our government decided to go ahead and send Joseph Palmer II, to take up his job as ambassador.

Q: *Was the air base operating and oil companies proceeding?*

MACK: Yes. The Air Base at that time was under the command of, something that was very unique at that time, a black Air Force colonel, Chappie James. If I'm not mistaken, he later became

a three-star general.

Q: *Well he had actually fought in the North African campaign. Wasn't he one of the Tuskegee airmen? I'm not sure, and they fought in the North African campaign.*

MACK: He was a somewhat controversial figure in the Air Force at the time. He was a person of undoubted military virtues, who also could be rather loud and profane. There was a combination of personal and racist antipathy toward him, some of which was based on his failings and shortcomings as a human being, and others that were simply prejudice. There were tensions out there [among the Americans], but those weren't my problems. My problem was trying to help settle Libyan-American disputes that would arise out at the Air Base. I was the one who would be called in the middle of the night by the Libyans, because they very soon became accustomed to dealing with me as being an intermediary, a person who was always there in meetings with the chargé or ambassador.

When we had our first call on the Chief of Protocol at the Foreign Ministry Protocol Office, he informed the charge that he can deal with him in English, but when dealing with the young officers Arabic should be used. Furthermore, the charge was informed to always bring me as his interpreter, not one of the Palestinians. Suddenly, from being a very marginal person, I became very central. As a young and ambitious Foreign Service officer, this was all important to me and tended to give me a very upbeat, optimistic view of what was going on. The country had been taken over by people in their late twenties. Not entirely a bad idea, I thought. Maybe the embassy should be taken over by people in their late twenties!

Q: *What rank were these officers?*

MACK: They were all lieutenants, except for Qadhafi who was a captain. Qadhafi was 28 and the others were 26-27. I was 29. And they saw me as peer plus somebody who spoke Arabic. I would get called by them in the middle of the night when crises arose. They called me up one time to say there had been this altercation out at the air base. We later found out that Colonel James, arriving late one evening or in the early morning hours from a party somewhere, and having had a fair amount to drink, was considered to be disrespectful. Well, I had these kinds of emergency relationships with the base but did not get into their internal affairs in any great degree at that point. I remember also that I had a very different view of what was going on than the chargé did. Both of us were trying to figure out what was going on, but for me it was a kind of an intellectual game. For him it was obviously something very different. At one point, I remember, I had written something that maybe was a little bit too witty, or light-hearted, in a cable. The charge came storming down to the political section, and he said, “you're having a good time, I can tell it. Well, I want you to know that I'm not, this is a very dangerous situation.” And then he turned around and walked out of the office.

Q: *It's really very true, there's nothing more fun than having a tremendous amount of responsibility during a coup or something. All the adrenaline is going, you feel important and people farther up have a real problem on their hands, where you've got adventure.*

MACK: Exactly. I also remember that the chargé and myself were once told that we were going to

have a meeting with a lieutenant colonel. Now we had not met with any military people above the level of captain at that point. We went to the meeting with this lieutenant colonel. He was quite civil, basically pro-American, although he expressed some strong anti-Semitic viewpoints. He had studied in the United States, had very warm memories of the United States, and it was basically a very pleasant kind of meeting. On the way out the chargé said to me: "He's the one, he's the one, he's the chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council." I was pretty sure he wasn't because he was first of all, too old, and secondly he spoke to us in English. And the chargé for the same reasons, I think, felt that he was the kind of person who would be leading the country. This was the kind of person the US government had anticipated would come to power in a coup d'etat.

Q: *At a lieutenant colonel level was at that point, particularly after Nasser, was kind of where we looked.*

MACK: Exactly, and as I said, they had a couple of brigadiers, but they had very few high ranking people in the Libyan military at that point. So colonels, lieutenant colonels, were who were viewed as being ambitious, and dissatisfied enough to take action, and take over. As it turned out he clearly had been brought out as a figurehead for the Revolutionary Command Council, and he was sent off to a diplomatic job of very little importance to the Libyan revolutionary regime, I don't even remember what it was. I think he was sent as an ambassador somewhere.

When our new US ambassador arrived it was Joseph Palmer II. Although he was very senior Foreign Service officer, he was also a person who had a rather youthful outlook and a progressive view of this situation. He had a career mostly in Africa, dealt with countries coming into nationhood, and he recognized that this was what was happening there.

Early on, in one of the discussions the chargé had, I believe it was with Abdul al-Mun'im al-Huni, one of the officers, we raised the question of whether they would accept the new ambassador knowing that we had a letter of *agrément* with the previous government. After conferring with a diplomatic aide, the officer said if you want to send Palmer, that's fine. It will be fine with us, I'm sure he will be very good. They were very reassuring. So Palmer came to Tripoli. Palmer, obviously, had taken the job under one set of circumstances. He could have been expected not to go off to a place that was probably going to be fraught with problems, instead of a fairly pleasant assignment. However, he was very much committed to service, and took it as a challenge, and came ahead. He was a remarkable contrast to the young officers who were young and sometimes seemed rude. Palmer was a very polished gentleman, but he also had an underlying toughness and commitment to U.S. interests. It was very interesting to watch him work, and I learned a great deal from him. I continued to go with him to all the meetings. My additional duty was to always have extra cigarettes in my brief case, since he was a chain smoker. But basically my job continued and became increasingly interesting as we began to get into substantive issues between United States and Libya, such as the presence of Wheelus Air Force Base, our military and security, military supplies, security relations, issues involving oil companies. Basically, the U.S. Government by this time had taken the decision that it was going to find some way to work with this government.

The U.S. Government had not yet confronted the issue of whether it was going to be possible to maintain an Air Force base there. There was a lot of division within the government. I think it was because of the division that Ambassador Palmer felt it was necessary to have a second sort of

policy planning group in the embassy. In addition to his country team, who as I say were very, very senior people, he privately reached out to three young officers, myself, Jim Placke, who was second secretary in the economic section, also an Arabist, and Chris Ross, now our ambassador in Damascus. Chris was, I believe, a first tour officer in the U.S. Information Service at the time. All of us were Arabists and young. The ambassador met with us and asked us to take a fresh look at a zero based policy for the country, what were U.S. interests, and how we should proceed.

Q: *I might add that knowing the time, this was the time of the young generation coming in...the Kennedy spirit, there was an organization called JAFSOC, a Junior Foreign Affairs, but as director general he had to be comfortable with dealing with sort of the young Turks and almost establishing young Turks as being a new force to be reckoned with. There were a lot of things going on in the Department and he must have been part of it.*

MACK: Certainly as Director General he'd been aware of how it might be necessary for the old system to adapt to this. He sort of gave us our head. All of it done without telling our immediate superiors. We had meetings after hours, we were all at the office until endless hours, but then we would get together separately, the three of us, usually at Jim Placke's home, and we came up with a policy toward Libya. We reached the conclusion that our interests were to assure access by the west and our industrial allies to the oil of Libya, and that the price would be far less important than having the access to the oil. It might be nice to have a military relationship, but we had to look at the realities in that regard, and the military relationship was of far lesser interest to the United States nationally. The implication was that we should be prepared to subordinate military concerns to our economic interests, which are the larger and more strategic interests for the United States in regard to Libya. In addition to access by the industrialized world to Libyan oil on commercial terms, the paper advanced two other interests. One was a cold war interest in Libya denying military access to the Soviet Union. The other was a U.S. regional interest that Libya maintain its independence from Nasser's Egypt, a country with which we did not have diplomatic relations at the time. The ambassador took this paper and never told us what he did with it. But I subsequently learned that when he went back to Washington on consultations where he was trying to get some kind of inter-agency agreement on the negotiating scenario for the bases, he made use of this paper. In fact, subsequently of course, word got back to Wheelus Air Force Base where they were outraged that some young striped pants weenies at the embassy had suggested that there could be any alternative to just continuing business as usual.

Q: *A question here. In the early stages you and the other two men in this group who were Arabists, were you getting any feel just by being at meetings and whatever dealing with you, about the thrust of this revolutionary group, anti-western, anti-American. What were you getting from them? Did they like dealing with young people, were they comfortable with that?*

MACK: Yes. It seemed to us as if these people were very much a part of the nationalist, pan-Arab, movement. While they acted as they did because of Libyan reasons, and they had not been instigated to take action by external forces, they perhaps had been inspired by what had taken place in Egypt and elsewhere. We thought there might be a relationship between them and the Baath party of Iraq, particularly when the Iraqi ambassador showed up at an initial meeting that some of the Revolutionary Command Council members had with the whole diplomatic corps. There was the Iraqi ambassador, not sitting in the audience but sitting up with the officers. That seemed to

imply some kind of strong link to the Baath party of Iraq which had been in power for a little over a year. It turned out subsequently not be the case. However, there was a feeling that, one way or another, they were connected to other Arab movements by sort of a common ideology. We didn't believe they were organizationally tied, but they were tied by a common ideology, and a common sense of Arab nationalism, resentment against the west because of the establishment of the state of Israel, of the June 1967 war, and that these were things they shared with the eastern Arab nationalist forces. We did not have a feeling that they were going to turn their back on the west in a cultural sense. There was a feeling that they were going to want to continue strong educational links to the west, and to go to universities in the UK and the U.S. They would want to have close relationships to western companies in order to develop Libya, which remained a very underdeveloped country.

The oil boom hadn't really gotten underway. Oil prices were still very low, set by the international majors, a little over $2.00 a barrel. There had been a trickle of oil money that was beginning to come into the society. You hadn't really gotten a flood of it yet. There was a lot of poverty and need for development in Libya. It was felt that they would turn to the west to find this.

Q: *When they talked to you saying, oh, you Americans this, you Americans that, which usually is a sign of distaste for the United States.*

MACK: There was some of it. Jaluud himself, for example, related a personal incident when a friend of his was killed or badly injured by something having been thrown from a car by some American military person who was driving along the road, just threw bottles out of the car and hit a friend of his. There was a feeling that we had run roughshod over Libyan rights in some areas. But it was more, initially at least, they seemed to show a grudging respect for us, and wanted to continue relationships. There was no sense at that point of the degree to which Qadhafi would turn his back in a very emphatic sense, culturally and politically, on the west. But we recognized that there was this strong pull toward Arab nationalism. Nasser was still president of Egypt at that point, and interestingly enough one of the major U.S. Government concerns that emerged was that somehow we had to prevent Libya from becoming unified with Egypt. The motto of the Revolutionaries, like the Baath party motto, was unity, socialism and freedom. As it turned out that had less to do with the Baath than some people had thought. But the attitudes of young Libyans certainly suggested that Nasser, who was greatly admired by the young officers, probably could have arranged for unity at that point, if he had wanted. Qadhafi early on began looking for possibilities of unity with Egypt and Sudan. That was the first big scheme that he came up with.

Nasser, who had been badly burned by the unity experiment with Syria, and had also had a very unpleasant experience trying to spread Egypt's influence down into Yemen, was much less enthusiastic about this. But it was interesting that for the U.S. Government this was the thing that was most feared, as I recall, that somehow they would become a part of Egypt.

Q: *We tended in those days to see everything in light of the Cold War and the Soviet Union. How did we feel about Soviet influences in this whole thing?*

MACK: We did not think that the Soviets were likely to have much influence in Libya if we maintained a minimum of security ties along with our strong economic position. That was one of

the reasons why, for example, it was eventually agreed that we would try to negotiate an orderly withdrawal from Wheelus Air Force Base. But it was agreed that we would also be prepared to talk about continuing arms supply relationships, the F-5 program. We were providing F-5 fighters and C-130 transports. It was decided to continue that partly because it was felt the Soviets would benefit if we did not. What we didn't know was that they were obviously having some very serious discussions with the Soviets about arms supplies. But this did not become apparent until after the conclusion of the base negotiations.

Here I should probably talk about the base negotiations which started, as I recall, soon after the beginning of the year in 1970. I had two roles, I was an interpreter for the base negotiations along with Chris Ross; we were sort of an interpreting and translating team. But I also was the head of a committee to deal with labor and property disputes between our Air Force base and the Libyans. We had more than one physical location for our base facilities, including the important air to ground target range of Al-Watia. As interpreter in the meetings, I am to this day given a far more important role than I actually had because when the Libyans every year run the television tapes in celebration of the U.S. military withdrawal, they show me reading in Arabic the opening statement of Ambassador Palmer, the head of our delegation. He made a statement in English, then I read it in Arabic, and they show me delivering the statement as if I had made it. I remember one of the things I said in there. Palmer wanted to say something toward the outset like, you are Libyans, we are Americans, but we are all human beings. And I changed it in the Arabic version. Instead of doing it absolutely literally, I said, you are Libyans, we are Americans, and we're all sons of Adam, which I remember got a very good kind of response.

Washington sent out a large team to back up the ambassador. The ambassador would be in charge of the negotiations. He had managed to obtain that concession from Washington, but they would also have a general officer from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I think he was a one-star, he may have been a two-star, I don't remember at this point, and a lawyer from the State Department, and a senior official from the Secretary of Defense side, I think he was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense in ISA. It was a strong delegation. The lawyer was a woman, Elizabeth Bergen, and to this day she talks about it, because when she arrived the ambassador drew her aside and suggested that she should have a skirt with a lower hemline.

The Libyans created a bit of theater for our opening negotiating session in mid-winter of 1970. For this opening negotiating session they had big demonstrations down where we were to meet. It was very cold. I remember I took precautions, knowing that the Libyan offices were usually unheated. I wore long-johns and wool socks and therefore was much more comfortable than some of the other American negotiators. But we had arrived in the midst of this very stormy demonstration and proceeded to have our discussions. In the first meeting that we had at the radio station the previous September there had been guns all over the place. I remember our charge suggested that we would feel more comfortable if they didn't have guns on the table where we were having our discussion, so they put them on an adjacent chair. By the time we had the negotiations at least there weren't a lot of guns in the room, although there were always bodyguards for the Revolutionary Command Council members. Qadhafi came to the first session and delivered a very tough speech about the unacceptability of bases in an Arab country and we should have known this all along. It was very uncompromising, very tough, lots of rhetoric, and then he turned the negotiations over to Jaluud. Jaluud had a much more pragmatic manner. He was a deal maker. Negotiations went much better.

The negotiations were conducted by English on our side, Arabic on their side. Everything had to be interpreted, making it awkward and at times difficult to have normal communication. I felt a lot of strain although it was interesting professionally because as well as doing the interpreting when we got back to the office I remember the ambassador, or the chargé or somebody, would always do a quick summary cable which they would let me look at before they it was sent to Washington. But then I would have to do up a full reporting cable, virtually, not quite verbatim, but with a lot of detail, and that was the way we were reporting. It was a very heavy workload and I would usually be totally exhausted by the time I got into bed for a few hours sleep.

Q: *How did your wife, after the initial thing.... You're, I assume, still in a temporary apartment?*

MACK: No, we moved into a house, the downstairs of a rather pleasant Italian-built house, which was near to the embassy. I was able to continue walking to work, and my wife adjusted to the routine of things out there, although she was never very happy with life in Libya. For one thing, the Libyans early on decided that there should be no signs in foreign languages, no radio broadcasts in foreign languages, and no foreign newspapers, or at least no Libyan newspapers in languages other than Arabic. I was totally oblivious to this. To me this was great fun and everybody was coming to me and asking me to tell them what was in the news, etc., and it just made my position more central. For people who didn't speak Arabic, and even for people who spoke a little Arabic but didn't read it, it was very disorienting, and seemed very alien and hostile, which I never really focused on.

Qadhafi reinserted himself several times during the base negotiations, although basically most of the negotiating was left to Jaluud.

Q: *Were you figuring by this time Qadhafi was the man?*

MACK: Oh, yes, when the Revolutionary Command Council had been announced in January Qadhafi had been named as the chairman. We had learned earlier that he was the number one. Even before Libyans named the membership they did make it clear that he was the chairman, not just the spokesman as earlier announced. I realized for the first time that he was the number one when we went into a meeting with Qadhafi and Jaluud. Jaluud, a chain smoker, put out his cigarette going in and did not smoke during the meeting. Afterwards I asked him, why weren't you smoking? And he said, oh, Muammar does not like us to smoke. And that's when I realized...in fact, I think I did a report for Washington, that this was a clear indication that Qadhafi was the number one. From the beginning you could see he had a certain charisma. He could speak extemporaneous but literary Arabic that was really quite eloquent, although sometimes the ideas were totally screwy. He had eloquence with the spoken word that we could see would be very important in terms of Arab political leadership, whereas Jaluud spoke a very dialectical version of Arabic that was rough, that got his point across substantively but was not emotive. But it was also clear early on that Qadhafi was a bit mercurial. I remember noting at one point that he had recalled verbatim in a meeting we'd had, a long discussion that we'd had a month earlier. So I realized he was extremely intelligent, a very high IQ. But at the same time from time to time he would seem to be totally disengaged from the conversation. I even wondered if he might have epileptic fits, because he did seem to be a strange person. Unlike most Libyans who don't smile easily, he had a brilliant smile. He was very photogenic. He's a homely person. Even as a young person he was

homely, but he had a presence on camera that was quite remarkable. We saw these things as being attributes of somebody who could be a leader in the new communication age. It added to a certain personal control and magnetism he seemed to have over the other young officers.

The negotiations over the base gradually came to an end that was almost predictable, a full withdrawal, with no continuing mutual security relationships other than the possibility of continuing arms sales. We were able to satisfy claims issues for the most part in the favor of the United States, and that involved very complicated calculations as to why we wouldn't owe any more base rent, despite having been in arrears in paying it. From the point of view of the U.S. Government, we got out of the negotiations - it was thought at the time - without serious damage to our overall relationship. That was not the view of some of the people in the U.S. Air Force who had felt that the single most important thing was to be able to do the flight combat air training. They had a bombing range at Al-Watia.

Q: *It was a well used air base and not a... (overlap in conversation)*

MACK: That's right. I have been told that earlier we even had some nuclear weapons there, but I don't think they were there during my time. It was no longer a SAC base, but it was a very important base for training tactical aircraft. But they lost all of that, and they couldn't use the bombing range, which they had hoped would at least be possible. On the other hand, the rest of the relationship seemed to be intact. I misunderstood the degree to which the Libyan government was determined to make a more radical transformation in its relations with the west.

Q: *Did you feel this at that time, or as you look at it? Was this an evolving thing, or was this where they were coming from right from the beginning?*

MACK: I think they were from the beginning. There was a high degree of resentment against the west over the Arab-Israel issue and the colonial issue. It was as if they had an agenda but they only unfolded it one step at a time. Once the base negotiations with us were finished, they finished them with the British. Then they moved on the Italians, did away with the special treatment of Italian residents, and a lot of Italians were expelled. Told they could come back but just as ordinary foreign workers, not with any privileges. There were personal tragedies for many of the Italians, who had been greatly hated because of the colonial past. Even though as individuals some of them probably had good relationships with their Libyan neighbors, and co-workers. Then they moved on the oil companies to renegotiate the terms of the oil concessions. I recall a conversation that I had with an officer once out at Wheelus Air Force Base when he confronted me and said, “you people at the embassy are giving away everything that is important here”. I said, “what do you mean?” He replied, “well, in my view what we ought to do is just bring in the Marines and have a much stronger perimeter around this base and keep doing our business as usual.” I said, “what about all the American civilians in the country?” He said, “move the embassy on the base if you want.” I said, “how about the oil companies?” He said, “the oil company people can move on the base, too.” I said, “how about the oil fields?” Well, he didn't have an answer for that. On the other hand, in retrospect, I feel that Qadhafi and the other RCC members probably had a long-term plan for gradually decreasing their dependence on the west. But they started off with the base as being one that they had to get out of the way first.

After the end of the base negotiations, one of the next things that happened was the move on the Italians and also a sudden and surprising arrival of Soviet tanks. A shipment of Soviet tanks arrived, and I don't believe there was any advance warning from U.S. intelligence sources. They just showed up one day at the port of Tripoli. That was a serious indication that there was going to be a new orientation of some kind. I think people at the time thought it was going to be towards the Soviet Union. It was more kind of copying what the Egyptians had done to free themselves of reliance upon the west. The Soviets continued to be not particularly popular. They never did succeed in having a very close relationship with the Libyans, even though they did end up being the major arms supplier to them.

The oil company negotiations started off with the oil companies determined that they could raise prices a nickel or ten cents, and eventually their common front was broken by Occidental Oil Company, which had been a kind of an outsider from the very beginning.

Q: *Armand Hammer was the head of it and always enjoyed tweaking noses.*

MACK: They treated him as not a member of the club, so he fixed their wagon when it came time to do a deal with the Libyans. He did his deal first, and got what was marginally a better deal as a result. That worked initially, although eventually the Occidental holdings were nationalized as well at a later stage in the game. But Occidental was the one that broke the common front first.

That happened in the second year of both the Libyan Revolution and my Libya assignment. My time in Tripoli came to an end less than a year after I'd arrived. We were informed in Tripoli of an order by the RCC member Mustapha Kharubi, the military governor of Benghazi, that the head of our embassy office in Benghazi was no longer welcome and that we should withdraw him. The head of our embassy office was Joe Montville, who was a friend and a peer of mine. We had been together briefly in Arabic language training at Beirut.

We saw this Libyan move as partly a consolidation of Libyan authority in Cyrenaica. The Libyan revolutionaries had been suspicious from the beginning of the loyalty of the major tribes in eastern Libya, and Montville had gotten to know some of these personalities. We saw this not to be an objection to anything that Joe Montville had personally done, but an effort to break down any associations that we may have had with constituent elements of the old regime. There was a feeling that we wanted to protect Joe's career. I remember when we discussed it in Tripoli, after I had picked up the note and mentally translated it on my way back to the Embassy. I suggested we take them literally that he's not welcome in Benghazi. Why don't we bring him here to Tripoli? Therefore it won't be on his record that he was declared persona non grata. We just made a decision to switch him from Benghazi to Tripoli, and somebody could go down and be in charge. Everybody thought that was a good idea. Then someone suggested that I be the person to replace Joe in Benghazi. As it happened, within 48 hours my wife and I moved to Benghazi, and we switched places. In order to maintain the fiction that this had been an internal embassy decision, we didn't immediately move one another's household effects. The idea was we would say we were doing this on a temporary basis, and then we would find that it seemed to be good cross-training for these two young officers, and it would just become permanent. The Montvilles moved into our house, and we moved into their house. Joe had my wine cellar, I had his wine cellar, which was a good deal better than mine, and then only eventually did we actually move our household effects. I

became the head of the U.S. embassy branch in Benghazi, sort of like a consul general at a constituent post, which was sort of a promotion for me. By this time we had closed the Al-Baidhah office, which was one of the first things that the new regime asked us to do. So this would be a U.S. Government presence in the eastern part of the country. I'd have my own little post, and it seemed like a very desirable career move even though my wife was beginning to wonder whether we'd ever stay more than a year in any given place.

JAMES A. PLACKE
Economic Counselor
Tripoli (1969-1971)

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: Then to Libya, again a fairly obscure place. We got there three days before Colonel Qadhafi became famous and saw the revolution occur from the balcony of a temporary apartment that we were living in. We had just moved from [a] Hotel the night before and it was a weekend. Our kids knocked on the bedroom door. It was a Sunday and said, “Come out and see the war.” So, we came out and there were armored personnel carriers and armored cars. That was a about all the Libyan army had in those days. With [inaudible] in the gun barrels and so forth, an impromptu military parade going by right underneath the balcony. The palace was only about a block and a half away on the same street and that was why there was so much activity there. There were a couple of casualties on the palace grounds, but there was virtually no resistance and the coup occurred with lightening speed.

Being new to the post, one of the first things I did of course was sit down and try to catch up on some of the readings. I got the reading file and went back a week or two to see what had been going on. It became clear that a coup was scheduled. It was to be led by a Libyan general with a coterie of establishment types around him who it was almost it seemed almost to be with royal accommodation. It was Omar Saleh who was to be the leader of the coup and what the purpose was and what they had in mind other than enriching themselves was never very clear, but this was well known to the Embassy and it was all in the Embassy reported. So, when this group of no name middle ranking military upstarts staged this coup, it just came as a total shock to everybody. Nobody had seen it coming at all, but if the Embassy knew that Omar Saleh was going to stage a coup, certainly everybody else in Libya knew it. This group of so-called free officers again, you know, out of ‘67 you had these kinds of revolutionary groups coalescing in various parts of the Arab world where you still had traditional regimes and Libya was one of these. Qadhafi to this day is a disciple of Abdel Nasser. He believes in Pan-Arabism. He believes in Arab socialism. It’s not just rhetoric with him. He actually believes it, never mind that it doesn’t work. He still believes it.

Q: He kept coming up with joining with Morocco and joining with, I mean, you know, as Nasser did, these things that never really United Arab Republic stuff.

PLACKE: Exactly. He's still at it today. He gave a speech I think it was late last year saying that he found that the Arab leadership was absolutely hopeless, that the Arab world was not going to go anywhere. Israel was going to do whatever it wanted to do with the Arab world and he was going to turn toward Africa and become the founder of the United States of Africa.

Q: When you went to Libya, well, in the first place, who was the ambassador when you were there?

PLACKE: We were between ambassadors. David Newsom had just departed in July to became the new Assistant Secretary for African Affairs and Joseph Palmer, Ambassador Palmer who had been the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs arrived in September 1969. Ambassador Palmer was preparing to come to the post at the time the coup occurred and I think had to spend a week or two in Spain before he was able to come in.

Q: Well, what was your job?

PLACKE: I went out as the petroleum officer in the Embassy's Economics Section and I was there for almost exactly two years.

Q: '69 to '71?

PLACKE: Right. During the course of that time, more or less after the second year I was the economic counselor. I'd been promoted in-between and the Ambassador decided on an internal sort of promotion.

Q: The DCM was who?

PLACKE: The DCM was Jim Blake. He was ultimately Ambassador to Iceland.. Being again quite new to the post with this totally surprising coup that had occurred I was suddenly on even ground with everybody else because nobody else in the mission knew what was going on either. Jim Blake, it was an object lesson in how to respond to a crisis. He did a terrific job. He provided just really rock solid leadership to the Embassy, to the American community, which was quite large, because the oil industry was the thing in Libya. And we had Wheelus Air Base.. A group of young, truly revolutionary colonels that nobody knew pulled a coup and Jim just made all of the right moves in a real crisis situation. Remember at the time he was Chargé, the coup occurred while we were shifting ambassadors and Ambassador Palmer was not yet in country.

Q: How did he respond?

PLACKE: You know, he organized the Embassy into kind of task forces to do all of the different things that needed to be done. He established some contact with the Libyan government, to get a policy line from Washington that we can communicate with the new government, to call in the leaders of the American community and talk with them and give them whatever information and

reassurance that we could legitimately offer and we weren't trying to be Pollyannaish about it because that wouldn't serve anybody's purpose, to remain in touch with Ambassador Palmer in trying to get to the post, just juggling all these balls all the time and did a terrific job.

Q: I interviewed David Mack and he said at one point, David Mack being a very good Arabist and all, a young officer was running out and making contacts and all said, "At one point Jim Blake came to his office and said, 'Mack, I know you're having a wonderful time here, you know, I mean crisis and all that, but I want you to know I'm not.'"

PLACKE: That sounded like Jim. He was a bit crusty, but really knew what he was doing. Yes, David had arrived at the post [Editor's Note: July 1969] maybe less than two months before I did. He'd been there a month or so and Rocky [Roscoe] Suddarth had just left to be the Libyan desk officer in Washington. Rocky had actually been at the Beirut language school when I was there, but ahead of me by one class I believe. Chris Ross was also there.

After Ambassador Palmer arrived we had, he had a lot of problems on his plate, because this new government was very difficult to deal with, even to communicate, even to identify who was responsible because initially there were no names that were given to us, everything was just done in the name of the free officers committee. Wheelus effectively ceased to operate the day of the revolution and effectively never operated again and the Ambassador was the object of a lot of pressure from the military side of the house and directly from the Pentagon and perhaps from the White House, I don't know. That is not something I really have any insight into, but the military, as is often the case, said that the defense of the Western world would collapse unless Wheelus was back in business as normal. There was no substitute. Essentially what it was was a point for coordinating and carrying out various kinds of aerial combat training and just blow the daylights out of the Sahara on a regular basis. They had this huge free fire area that it would be very hard to find anywhere else in the world. Indeed, it was hard to substitute for, but they finally had to accept the notion that Wheelus was gone and it wasn't coming back, period. Difficult. So, there was the Ambassador and Jim Blake who continued as DCM for about another year, had the difficult task of not only dealing with the Libyans who on their best behavior were difficult, but also unhappy people in Washington. [Editor's Note: Although the Wheelus base agreement had just two more years to run, in December 1969 the US agreed to vacate the facility by June 1970.]

Q: Did you get involved right away in trying to help identify who the hell these people were?

PLACKE: I didn't do much in that. My bailiwick was the oil industry and every oil company was worth its salt was there and there were some that were quite new to the business were present in Libya. The Libyans had decided on a different strategy. Oil was discovered in Libya in the mid-1960s by what is now Exxon. I think it was the only major field that Exxon has ever actually discovered. Exxon is very good in turning resources into cash, but they're not particularly good at finding the resources. Those are two different skills. Hugh Winn, the head of Esso Standard Libya, was the generally acknowledged leader of the American community and of the oil community, so my task was more liaison with them which was a large segment of the American, a very large segment of the American community and indeed an important community overall. David Mack and Chris Ross and others with the language skills and on the political side, Chris was there as a USIA officer were those who were out and about trying to future out who was doing what and what

was going on.

Ambassador Palmer about a month or so after he arrived [Editor's Note: September 1969] decided that there was, and this was kind of the fashion in Washington as I remember at the time, there was too much old thinking and what was needed was some you know, innovative, imaginative approach to what was a very complex and difficult set of issues, so he appointed Chris Ross, David Mack and myself as a junior officers committee to look at these issues and come up with our private advice to him as to what we thought should be done. The big issue was what do you do with Wheelus. We did. I sort of headed the group and we came up with a report to Ambassador Palmer through Jim Blake and I think in effect we sort of confirmed to them what they already knew or what they believed to be the right course of action that Wheelus was a dead duck and to try to save it was only going to make more difficult our relationship with the new government and to reduce whatever chances there were for having any kind of decent relationship. So, to his great credit I think Ambassador Palmer worked out with Washington, which couldn't have been easy, a roadmap for an effort to try to establish a relationship with the new Libyan government. They needed a lot of things and wanted a lot of things and we offered them an assistance package that was pretty attractive, but again in this Cold War context, they decided that they were going to line up on the non-Western side of the fence and turn toward the Soviets. The first real solid evidence that we had of that was the first anniversary of the revolution in September of 1970 when they began unloading battalions of Russian tanks at the harbor in Tripoli and also in Benghazi. By that time that's where David Mack was. He had been transferred over to Benghazi to head the post. That in effect became our answer that they were going down the Soviet path. Wheelus by that time, there was a, we had some difficult negotiations through the winter of 1969 and '70, but ultimately agreed on a protocol for handing the base over to the Libyans and this was all in accordance with the original base agreement. In general there was a description of what should be done if the parties did not renew the agreement and that was the road that we followed.

Q: Well, what about the oil business, were we seeing this as well, let's cut our losses and go for oil?

PLACKE: This was the one of the turning points in the history of the international oil industry that became clear with hindsight. Under the old monarchy, the Libyan government about two years before the revolution in kind of a distillatory way, had begun to press the companies for a higher price for Libyan oil on the basis of its location and quality. It is very light and sweet and therefore valuable crude and to do some other things to restructure the relationship. The oil industry basically just stiffed them. They wanted to increase their revenue per barrel and we're talking in terms of cents in those days. I remember a conversation I had with one of the in-house counsels for one of the large oil companies. I had done I was able to get enough data to get a fair guess as to what the companies revenues per barrel were and make a comparison between that and the government take and it was very heavily skewed in the direction of the companies which they would never acknowledge. So, I was talking with this chap who I'd gotten quite well acquainted with and he was certainly a very able, also a very dedicated company man. He said, "Well, you know, just between us, yes." At that point they were talking about five cents a barrel and the Libyans wanted ten and he said, "You know, so we give them five cents and we give them ten and then it's going to be 25 and then one day you know soon it will be a dollar" which was an unthinkable amount of money. Well, of course, what they didn't think about was nationalization,

which is what the Libyans then ultimately, employed and it wasn't a dollar, it was many dollars. The price of oil rocketed. The Libyans laid the foundation for the changing, or the elimination really of the old oil concession system and the restructuring the price of oil.

Oil demand was going up at an astonishing rate and it gave Libya a unique pressure point because the '67 War had closed the Suez Canal and so the tankers had to go all the way around Africa and tanker construction hadn't caught up with that additional amount of tankage that was needed to make a much longer voyage at a time when demand growth was three to five percent per year which is extraordinarily high. These days it's two or less. The reason demand was growing so high that oil relative to other sources of energy was under priced. The reason it was under priced was that the companies were competing among themselves and the large concessionaires which included all the traditional seven sisters had these enormous sources of oil in Iran and Iraq and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and to some extent in Libya and they were doing very nicely in trying to keep as much of it out of the government's hands as possible. Well, this whole house of cards collapsed with the Libyan revolution because the new revolutionaries just weren't going to take no for an answer. They picked on Occidental which was a small California based oil company that really had made its way because of the discoveries it had had in Libya. They found oil in two areas that had been relinquished actually by Mobil and applied some changes in geophysical analysis to make a discovery that Mobil wasn't able to make. Their production mushroomed and they became a large oil company in a very short period of time, but they were very vulnerable. Financially they weren't nearly so strong and most of their eggs were in the Libyan basket, so the Libyans kept cutting back their allowable production and just wouldn't let them export more than a certain amount. After about it took two or three months when Armand Hammer who was the chairman and the largest stockholder of Occidental Petroleum decided he couldn't stand these pressures any longer and he agreed to the Libyan demands and that was the wedge that the Libyans needed that brought the rest of the industry in line within a short period of time.

Q: Was there while you were there somebody like equivalent to a Sheikh Tariki or somebody who is calling the shots, I mean, who knew what they were doing? I couldn't imagine colonels would know what they were doing.

PLACKE: I met Sheikh Tariki for the first time in Tripoli. When the word got out, as to what the new Libyan revolutionaries had in mind, Tripoli attracted all of the contrarians in the oil industry. Ray Kendricks, who at one time who had worked for Esso in those days -Standard Oil of New Jersey, now Exxon Mobil - had given a paper at the second Arab petroleum conference at which he advocated the new legal theory called the role of changing circumstances. He put forward the argument, which of course was exactly what the governments wanted, that because circumstances change over these long periods of time - the concession agreements were written commonly for 50 years - he said it was just inherently unfair to maintain the letter of these agreements. They were superseded by developments that nobody could have foreseen. He came to Tripoli, [inaudible] a former minister of petroleum in Saudi Arabia who retired came there and he was still a real firebrand in those days. And also the Algerians who of course, had just gone through their revolution and had become independent from France and who had a lot of revolutionary ideas as well. The Libyans got a lot of advice from the Algerians and from this coterie of international bomb throwers, if you will, as to how to approach this subject. I can't say which element in this mixture was responsible for persuading the Libyans to take the course they did and I suspect it

probably wasn't any one; it was a combination of all kinds of people who had unconventional thoughts. The Libyans took it all onboard and actually made it work.

Q: What about some of the others you know; I think of…who is the Italian?

PLACKE: Enrico Mattei?

Q: Yes.

PLACKE: He and I?

Q: He and I. I was thinking oh, it must have been a French outfit or something.

PLACKE: Well, [inaudible] although they were not active in Libya.

Q: But, I would have thought that these would have been sort of probably on the outside, too. This must have been sort of a happy hunting ground?

PLACKE: The Libyans,…I think I mentioned earlier, had taken a different approach to building their industry. Oil having been discovered I think as I remember in the late '60s, '64 to '66 sometime like that. They developed really only by the end of the '60s they decided that they would not grant these very long term concessions which had been industry pattern since before the Second World War and sort of the inter war period. They would give shorter-term concessions. There were concession agreements, but much shorter term, 20 years I think at the most and with very demanding work requirements. In other words, you had to spend so much money within a given period of time, you had to establish that there was a commercial resource there, or you had to relinquish that territory back to the Libyans. Mobil had to do this for example in the two blocks that Occidental later took and found enormous oil deposits. So, it worked and they also decided not to just deal with the seven sisters, but to invite everybody to come in. That's how you got Occidental and what became the Oasis group which was Marathon, Continental (now ConocoPhillips) and Amerada (now Amerada Hess). Nobody had ever heard of Amerada Hess in those days and people had barely heard of some of the others. Those three small American independent companies became the Oasis group, which became the largest producer and exporter in Libya followed by Occidental.

So, again the Libyan strategy involved inviting diverse - both large and small - oil companies, demanding work requirements, and much shorter concession periods all designed to accelerate the development of their industry which worked. Libya came out of nowhere and was a major oil producer and exporter by the time of the revolution and continued to grow quite rapidly for the first year thereafter. When the Libyans put pressure on the industry and partially nationalized the industry, it changed the financial structure in their favor, changed the whole terms as compared to what the industry had been accustomed to for all these years. These then became the new standard for the industry and were adopted in the older more traditional concession countries.

The Shah of Iran picked this up readily and began to apply the same sort of arrangements in Iran, which, of course, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq and all the rest of them followed. Then the '73

desert war came along [Editor's Note: the reference is to the Yom Kippur War, October 6-26, which was followed by the OPEC oil embargo], while I was gone from Libya from that time. That really brought the whole concession pattern to an end following the war. There's only a few instances where the industry was not nationalized, the United Arab Emirates being one and with hindsight once again showed the president of the United Arab Emirates and the Emir proved to be very farsighted in keeping the industry in fact was the right thing to do, but bringing them under a much greater degree of local control, much more responsive to local circumstances. In particular with the larger share of the financial benefits was what they had in mind and it was what they accomplished.

When the negotiations in Libya came to a conclusion in the fall of 1970, I think in about October, we'd gone on home leave. It had been a direct transfer for me from Kuwait to Tripoli, so I was there for a year having arrived in the summer of '69 and by the summer of '70 was due for home leave and return. I returned to the post in September and that was when the Libyans were just beginning to put serious pressure on Occidental and you could begin to see where this was going to go and what would come out of it all. I remember a meeting with the Ambassador with the heads of the oil companies and the Shell representative who ultimately became the I think in Shell parlance the managing director. Chevron was there and listened to what everybody had to say and was very complimentary about my analysis and said he thought that was something he shared because the direction in which it was going was pretty clear. Libyans were going to have their way and they did.

By that time, Jim Blake had departed post and the new DCM [Editor's Note: Harold Josif] and the ambassador both asked me, by that time I was economic counselor to give this some serious thought and try to draw out of this whole sequence of events what had really happened why and how and most importantly what it meant for the future because we all sensed that this had been a fundamental change. It took me about three months to think it all through fairly carefully and I wrote a very long telegram. It was a three-section cable, which in those days was a very long cable, called *New Rules for the Oil Game, a Case for Understanding What They Are*. That's been declassified. In fact I requested it when Daniel Yergin, the chairman of Cambridge Energy was writing his book, The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power. I'm in there. He referred to that piece because I had gotten it declassified so I could have a copy and show it to him and it was reasonable clarity laid out what happened to the industry over the next 20 years and it all came out of the aftermath of the Libyan revolution.

Q: Was our embassy playing any role in this or were we just reporting, because this was an oil thing, or were we…?

PLACKE: It was again a delicate situation, in a way analogous to what we had been through over at Wheelus AFB. The Ambassador was persuaded, and I suppose largely because of what I had, the analysis I had been able to demonstrate to him, that if the companies didn't make an accommodation with the Libyans they were going to lose it, which they ultimately did. What the companies were thinking in their boardrooms I would have no way of knowing. We saw a lot of senior company directors out there during the course of the Libyan negotiations, but they weren't telling us their innermost thoughts. I can't escape the notion that these guys were certainly not inexperienced and certainly not naive and just decided that it was ultimately to their benefit and the

benefit of their shareholders to take as much as you could get while you could get it and not worry too much about the long run consequences because it was going to come to an end anyway at some point and just get everything you could while you could, because that was essentially the strategy that they followed. I think it probably came to a much more rapid conclusion with much more drastic results than they probably had anticipated.

Q: There probably had been room for….

PLACKE: Well, in a way the in-house counsel that I referred to earlier was right. You know, you give them a nickel and then you give them a dime and you give them a dollar and where does it end? He was right. The end was you lose it all or you lose at least control and a large portion of the financial benefit and that was what the Libyans had in mind. That was quite clear, they were quite articulate about that. So, it was a clash of fundamental interests.

Q: Did you see when you were doing economic analysis, you could see this major income coming into Libya, could you see them using it different than in Kuwait, say?

PLACKE: By comparison with Libya, Kuwait is a model of development. Qadhafi who as I said still believes to this day in Pan-Arabism, the Arab cause, Arab socialism especially, has largely wasted a vast amount of the oil income on really farfetched schemes both political and developmental. The great manmade river project is one. This is a multi-billion dollar project that has gone on for, it started more than a dozen years ago and it isn't finished yet and it may never be finished in its original concept. It's a huge aqueduct enclosed because Libya has the highest recorded temperatures in the world. It is a very hot and dry place. It's mostly Saharan Desert. In the southeastern corner of Libya there is an area of geologically trapped water. It's been there for eons, but it is a finite amount. It's like an oil reservoir in a way. There it is and that's all there is. As far as anyone can determine and there have been hydrology studies done on this, it's not being replenished from any source. Well, the great manmade river, that is its source of water and while there is a lot of it there, it is finite. They've invested billions of dollars to bring this resource from across the other side of the Sahara to the coast to grow oranges and grapefruit and whatever. It is from an economic standpoint it is just an enormous waste, but these are the kinds of grandiose schemes that Qadhafi repeatedly came up with. Another bottomless pit is the Libyan military and it still is. I referred to the Soviet equipment coming in on the first anniversary of the Libyan revolution. Well, it has continued to come in over the years and the Soviets have charged some very good prices and the French as well, a lot of French military equipment was sold there. Not too much after sale service. The Libyans have the distinction of being the only army defeated by Chad. Chad doesn't even have an army and the Libyans were defeated.

Q: Well, the Chadians were using Toyotas.

PLACKE: They were using pickup trucks with the biggest machine guns they could find mounted on it and defeated the Libyan armored forces. I think they probably just scared them away. So, that gives you some idea of how effective those expenditures were. Qadhafi has managed to get rid of all of the oil wealth. Libya doesn't have you know a foreign exchange surplus cashed away somewhere. The money is gone.

Q: What about the Americans there, the oil workers and all, was there concern I mean hand holding on the part of the embassy, either to keep them there or to encourage them to go?

PLACKE: Our purpose was to first of all try to assure their security, everybody's security and to keep them informed of what the facts of the situation to the best of our ability to determine them really were. I think the oil community was not unduly over excessively, I should say, distressed by the Libyan revolution because they were one of the few largest elements in the foreign community by far and most of it in fact, but they on a day-to-day basis had working relationships with all kinds of Libyans in the government and in the companies. Libya was a country at that time with a population of about two million people. So, there weren't very many Libyans and if you knew a Libyan you had a line into some element of the Libya's highly tribal society. You could get through if you had someone that you could actually communicate well with and had some understanding with. It wasn't that difficult to tap into what was really happening, at least as perceived by the Libyans themselves. The revolutionary command council didn't publish its proceedings every week, so nobody knew for sure what was going on particularly the Libyans. But, I think because of these personal associations and professional associations at least the middle and upper levels of the oil companies were not worried about their security so much. They soon became worried about the future of their activities in the country, but never so much about security.

Libyan mobs could get out of hand. In the wake of the Yom Kippur War in '73 they burned our consulate in Benghazi and very nearly incinerated the Americans who had taken refuge in the secure room. It was a near thing because later I talked to some who were there. They also burned the embassy building in Tripoli [Editor's Note: On 2 December 1979, the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli, Libya, was burned during protests over allegations that the U,S. was involved in the Grand Mosque Seizure in Mecca.] At the time , I believe the early '80s, there were a lot of tensions of various kinds between the United States and Libya. That seemed to be a Libyan government inspired event and it probably was the best thing that could have happened to that building in any event. There were these, it's not that these events couldn't happen, they could and they did occasionally, but immediately after the revolution, I think the Libyans had great expectations. They, too were wrapped up in Pan-Arab, Arab socialist rhetoric. The king was not hated; he really was almost irrelevant. He was elderly and ill and had not been a very active political leader for a long time and so it was kind of, you know he really wasn't really missed because he hadn't played a central role. The oligarchy that had grown up around him they were basically there to enrich themselves and basically were not missed. People felt pretty relaxed and happy about the outcome.

Q: Well then you left there, oh, one last question, did you have any contact with Jim Akins who later became quite the, played prominent roles a few years later petroleum affairs.

PLACKE: Indeed. I first met Jim in Baghdad. He came to Baghdad on assignment in the political section in the summer of 1961. I left in October. He came in August or September and so we overlapped at the post for two months and that was when I first became acquainted with him. When I was in Tripoli he was heading the office of Fuels and Energy in the State Department and was the recipient of a lot of the reporting that I did. I saw his comment that he had written in the margin of this cable that I had referred to earlier which proved to be a pretty map for the future. He'd written, you know, this doesn't add up or this is nonsense or something like that. Somewhat

depreciatory. Jim has a very high estimate of his own evaluation of things and we mostly agree, sometimes we don't. We've stayed in touch. I see him from time to time.

Q: Okay, I guess this is a good place to stop.

PLACKE: Yes, it's kind of at the end of Libya.

Q: Let's just put at the end here. So, you left Libya in 1971?

PLACKE: In the summer of 1971.

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Q: Well, you said you wanted to say something about OPEC Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, see: http://www.opec.org/home/] ?

PLACKE: Yes, that was kind of, in looking back over my career that's probably one of the central themes. I was in Baghdad on my first assignment when OPEC was formed there in September of 1960 and had the opportunity to see that event and participate in evaluating it from the standpoint of American interests. We didn't give it a whole lot of credit at the time and I don't think even in hindsight that that was a mistake. I've always been sort of an OPEC skeptic and the first ten years OPEC really spent picking around the edges trying to enhance the government take from oil revenue in various ways given the old concession system, which was dominated by the international industry at the time where a company or more commonly a consortium of companies would gain the rights to explore for and develop oil and gas largely for and often for the whole country as Kuwait Oil Company had in Kuwait, Iraq Petroleum Company, Aramco effectively had Saudi Arabia and that was the pattern. It was the pattern that was broken by the Libyan oil negotiations after the Libyan revolution that I think I referred to earlier that really changed the character of the international industry fundamentally. That was an event that must be one of the more significant economic developments of the 20th Century.

It kind of got lost sight of because nobody thinks of the Libyans as begin trendsetters and particularly and for the most part they aren't. The negotiations that had dragged on between the new Libyan government and the oil companies for about a year or so were finally brought to a conclusion by the Libyans picking a tactic that certainly proved to be effective. They looked at the companies and decided the weakest sister was Occidental. Occidental was just a small regional products distributor when Armand Hammer bought it in California and it became a real oil company and a recognized name because of very large discoveries that they made in Libya and were on their way to becoming the lead producer. So, the Libyans simply said, "Look, these are the terms, this is the deal, if you don't agree to it we're just going to progressively cut back your production." They announced immediately a significant cutback I don't recall exactly what it was, but it was around 50%. Well, within weeks, Occidental came to terms and the rest of the industry, which planned to resists, but ultimately, realized they couldn't, fell into line. By the time I got back to Washington, well then there was the Washington Energy Conference that I referred to which was kind of another consequence of OPEC developments and at the time I got back to Washington OPEC had become a very different organization. It's been a feature of my post-Foreign Service

career as well. I have a terrific graphic, which shows the real price of oil over time from 1970 and plodded against that our political events and all the peaks and valleys on this price graph are related to some political event. The Iranian revolution, the Iran and Iraq War, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia rejecting the role of the marginal supplier in 1985 when their production dropped below two million barrels a day down to ten. All of these things that OPEC took credit for and built this myth that it really controlled the oil market and set the oil price. It's politics.

ROSCOE S. SUDDARTH
Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1969-1971)

Ambassador Suddarth was born in Kentucky and raised primarily in Tennessee. He was educated at Yale and Oxford Universities and Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served in the US Air Force before joining the Foreign Service in 1961. Primarily a Middle East specialist the Ambassador served as Political Officer and Counselor in Yemen, Libya, Jordan and in Saudi Arabia, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served with the Department of State in Washington in senior level positions concerning primarily Middle East and Political Military matters. In 1987 he was appointed Ambassador to Jordan, where he served until 1990. Ambassador Suddarth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

SUDDARTH: He and I both left about the same time, which was mid-July. He took over immediately - I think probably the first of August - as assistant secretary. I came back on September 1 to be the Libyan desk officer and was greeted at the airport by a message to call the State Department. I was told that there had been a coup in Libya and please report immediately. We talked about the toll on families. Here I have my lovely French wife who had been on two or three home leaves to the States but had never lived there. I had bought a house, fortunately, beforehand. Our two young children... In effect, I said goodbye to her for two years because I was living at the State Department. That's a bit of an exaggeration, but all Saturdays and many Sundays and getting home at eight or nine at night during particularly the early days of the revolution and the Wheelus Air Force Base negotiations and then the Tripoli oil negotiations. So, it was a very brazen time. I'm still reproached for my absences during that period.

Q: You arrived at the desk with the sand still in your shoes. How was the Department reacting to this coup?

SUDDARTH: Well, everyone was totally stunned. This was early in the Nixon administration. It was very embarrassing for Newsom, who was coming back as an extremely wise appointment of a brilliant diplomat and bureaucrat. The Nixon administration from the White House was asking, "How did this happen? You've been ambassador." So, it was a particularly poignant moment and a difficult moment for Newsom, I'm sure. I double teamed this issue for about two weeks with Hume Horan, who I was succeeding and who was going off to another assignment. But I recall, no one knew who was even in charge because it was a faceless junta. Joe Palmer, who had been the

assistant secretary, wanted to end his career as an Africanist in North Africa and chose our most important post in North Africa. Well, you could argue that Morocco was less important because it had declining air bases (I think they were out by the time of '67.) and no oil. So, Libya was it. Libya had 10,000 Americans and major oil production and so forth. The first week was sorting out who was in charge. We sent out Joe Palmer with two sets of letters of credence, one to the president of the Libyan Arab Republic, and the other one was to the Revolutionary Command Council so that he could use the credentials under whatever circumstances.

I remember another embarrassing incident...

This is an example. Here I had been in the field the whole time. Here I come back and am placed in the middle of a Washington bureaucracy and I'll never forget that Newsom gave me something and said, "Rocky, take this up to SS and LDX it to ISA." I said, "What?" We had a situation where it was obvious that this faceless, revolutionary group was in power.

We got together with the UK to figure out whether we should forcibly intervene. I'll never forget the elegance of the British copout, which was that "Our treaty does not confer upon us the right to intervene in an internal dispute." I also remember, Hal Saunders came over from the White House. He was the NEA senior advisor there. He told us, "We are not in the business of subversion, of using clandestine means to subvert this." So, we were reduced to contemplating meaningless gestures of fleet movements off the coast and we thought that would be counterproductive.

I think what was important in everybody's view was that we wanted to be able to preserve our oil interests. We only had a year and a half to run on our treaty, on our base agreement. It was felt, although the Defense Department under the form of Warren Nutter didn't agree... We had major fights with Defense. We felt it was better to try to establish a relationship with the new regime rather than to confront them over Wheelus Air Force Base. So, over the first three months that I was desk officer, it was fighting tooth and nail with the Defense Department. Finally, in December, we came to an agreement with them that we would get out by the end of June 1970.

Q: This is a classic case where the Defense Department, the military people, feel, "These State Department guys will sell us out every time in order to preserve whatever they call their relationship."

SUDDARTH: Fortunately, we had a huge oil stake that was more than just diplomatic glamour. Anybody with his head screwed on right realized that the oil had to be preserved - these major oil company interests there. Also, geostrategic interests. Libya with the Suez Canal closure. The other thing I'll never forget was Jim Akins came in right soon after the coup. Jim was head of the Office of Fuels and Energy. He said, "Look, guys, you've got very little maneuverability. With the Suez Canal closed, Libyan oil is essential for our European allies." So, we didn't have many cards to play. We tried to play them.

We tried to play first of all our sole supporter relationship with the Libyan air force as a way of maintaining some credibility with the military regime, although all of the leaders of the Revolutionary Command Council were ground force officers. They were from the army and not from the air force. But we were trying initially to maintain some kind of rights to Wheelus Air

Force Base. When that was no longer possible, we tried to maintain at least cordial enough relationships to nurture the oil industry that was remaining.

So, we went to great effort to get out amicably and that is leaving intact an entire air base other than the equipment that we flew out. But we faced a very vindictive Air Force personnel compliment at Wheelus Air Force Base. We had an excellent exchange officer named Jack something or other who later became head of Political-Military Affairs. He came down one day (He was an Air Force officer.) and said, "Despite State Department instructions, they have programmed the computers so that they're stripping even the light bulbs out of the fixtures at Wheelus Air Force Base." So, after the fact... It hadn't gone very far. We were able to stop that. We left them an intact air force base that they named Uqba ibn Nafi, who was the great Arab conqueror of Spain and of North Africa.

I do need to digress a moment. There were some important incidents that occurred right at the beginning of the revolution at Wheelus Air Force base. This is a weird story, but bear with me. The principal of the school, the Wheelus Air Force Base School, was an American named Dan DeCarlo, who was married to a French woman. Right after the coup, a Libyan of Jewish ethnic origin (There were several prominent Jewish businessmen in Libya prior to the '67 War and after the '67 War.)... He came to him and said that his life was being threatened, this prominent Jewish businessman, and prevailed upon him to hide him in a piano crate listed as a piano and to put in onboard a Wheelus Air Force Base C-130 that flew to Malta. As he was being offloaded and DeCarlo, I think, went with him and then was taking him out of his piano crate when the Maltese authorities saw something rather strange and apprehended him. I think he was eventually released, but the problem was that DeCarlo had left his wife and children at Wheelus Air Force Base. So, the Maltese, who wanted to ingratiate themselves with the Libyans, immediately notified the Libyans and the Libyans told us that Mrs. DeCarlo was not to leave until this Libyan citizen who had been illegally exfiltrated from Libya without going through any of their customs or anything was returned. We spent a good bit of our first three months dealing with that issue. I remember going down to brief Senator Howard Baker. A colonel named Mullen who was the brother-in-law of DeCarlo and was from Tennessee, had appealed to Senator Baker. I remember going down to see Baker. Baker, who was so astute, said, "Hey, DeCarlo got it all wrong" because DeCarlo said, "I will go back, but I wont tell them anything." Baker said, "He's got it all wrong. He'll say, 'I'll tell you everything, but I'll stay here.'" He also was furious that he had been so hapless in leaving his wife in harm's way. It was only when we agreed and signed that we would turn over Wheelus Air Force base three months later that she was allowed by the Libyan authorities to leave.

There was another even more egregious thing. That is that Colonel Groom, who was the commander of Wheelus Air Force Base, was prevailed upon by a fellow named Omar Yafiya, who was very close to Omar Shalfi, who was one of the adopted sons - not officially - of King Idriss, to exfiltrate him because he had been in the middle of various arms deals and so forth and so on. So, that was then found out. So, Colonel Groom had to account for that.

So, we had several real incidents that the Libyans used against the United States as we went into these negotiations. Those were the two that I remember. When you get involved in messy matters like that, it ends up taking a lot of your time. It's back and forth and that sort of thing.

Q: Now, you arrived back in Washington. I imagine there was all this going around - "Who are these people?" Did you find that CIA were as much up in the air?

SUDDARTH: Yes. They were caught flat footed and it was a tremendous blow to the Agency and careers were lost as a result of that. But they had the same situation. There were various prominent Libyans of the old regime who had come forward and offered to lead a revolt, but none of that was taken very seriously. There was a famous incident written up by Patrick Seal in a book where some mercenaries, some retired SAS British, took a boat from Brindisi and were going to try to stir up a mutiny in Libya, but it got nowhere. None of those plots got anywhere.

I do need to mention one important issue that came up. That is that we had some F-5s and C-130s that we had agreed to sell the Libyans and the issue was, do we go through with the deliveries, which were imminent. There was a big battle between David Newsom and Joe Sisco, the head of Near Eastern Affairs. The Israelis were bound and determined that no combat aircraft were going to go to a revolutionary regime.

Q: The F-5 is a combat aircraft and the C-130 is a transport aircraft.

SUDDARTH: Secretary Rogers gave this over to John Irwin, who was his deputy. The decision was eventually made to withhold the F-5s, which became another bone of contention with the Libyans, who used that as partial justification for the fact that they went to the Soviets the following summer and got a complete arms package from them. I think we ended up maybe delivering one or two of the C-130s, but none of the rest of them.

I should go back also... There were lots of circumstances the first week of the Libyan coup. We had just agreed to supply F-4 aircraft to Israel after the embargo of two years after the 1967 War. We were terribly concerned that this announcement about three days after the Libyan coup would further exacerbate that. We had the other issue, which was did we recognize the new regime? We tried to reassert a time honored but often in the breach diplomatic practice, which is, we don't recognize regimes. We recognize countries. If the regime changes from one to the other, that's the natural course we maintain and so that is what we tried to do. But we decided we had no choice but to do business with these people given the stakes in the oil industry. We called a special briefing of the press corps on a Saturday, about the seventh of September or something like that. Charlie Bray, who was the acting head of North African Affairs and a brilliant officer and wonderful friend, was new to North Africa. I think he was parked in North African Affairs because he was head of AFSA _____ as deputy to Jim Blake, who was coming back to be the head of the office. They thought Charlie would have an easy time of it. Well, he had the Libyan coup on his hands. John Root was the office director. John left after a month or so. But Charlie went down... He was a skilled briefer and later became the Department's press spokesman. He was very much liked by Rogers. Charlie went down and was ready to... It wasn't Charlie this time. It was John King, who was the deputy press spokesman, all armed with lots of talking points. One of the cynical members of the Washington Department Press Corps because the British had just recognized the regime, said as John was getting ready to deliver these pontifical remarks, "Okay, John, what is it, stumbling along after the British?" So, that captured the whole thing.

But we had a problem because Joe Palmer was all for Hands Across the Sea. We had another

problem. We had a Peace Corps group that was just going in, so we had to pull all of them out. But Palmer wanted to do Hands Across the Sea to Qadhafi. Jim Blake, his deputy, was rampantly against the Qadhafi regime, so Jim came back in December. He was very, very close to Newsom. He had been his deputy in North African Affairs before. Jim started pushing rather subtly at first and then more brutally against the F-5 deal. Newsom was sort of caught in the middle. Eventually, he acquiesced when Joe Sisco basically said, "We can't give these planes." Of course, we had a huge mail campaign by pro-Israeli elements in the U.S. public. I think we got 40,000 letters. Rosemary O'Neill, who was Tip O'Neill's daughter, was in Public Affairs. I gave her the models of what we should say. Poor thing, she had to answer 40-50,000 letters. So, that being the situation, we finally had to give way on the F-5s.

Q: As I recall, I think the C-130s, the whole group is sitting down in Marietta, Georgia to this day 30 years later. It comes up from time to time because the Libyans paid for them and we never delivered them.

SUDDARTH: Well, that's right. So, I think that's one of those issues that has to be sorted out. There was a million dollar yearly payment for the Wheelus Air Force Base. It was deposited by the Defense Department at a given day every year in a bank account at Riggs National Bank. After the 1967 War, the Libyan government didn't cash these checks. They were just sitting in a checking account and Riggs was making the money on the interest for several years of this. Newsom came up with a brilliant scheme, whereby we would get the Libyans to agree to augment their security force by buying things like anti-riot gear and those sort of semi-armored cars that move around and can withstand light bullets and so forth and to get them to use the money from their Wheelus account to fund this. But we were about ready to have sealed that when the revolution occurred. I call it a "revolution." It was really a coup.

I have to say that the coup was about a one in a million chance. Qadhafi and the officers who did this were mainly in the signals corps and they had mastered coordinated signals between 1,500 miles and three major population centers in Libya. They were able over the night to disarm the barracks in three separate cities.

Q: Remarkable.

SUDDARTH: With just a skeleton of officers. They took the reins and they had virtually nobody behind them. I would say it was almost a million and one chance. Because Idriss was in Turkey and everybody thought, well, he had once threatened to abdicate before. So, everybody just let this thing occur. It's a political phenomenon of great rarity.

Q: Were we looking initially at Nasser behind this?

SUDDARTH: I think yes, but we got no evidence and from everything that we have seen since, Nasser was as surprised as anybody else. This is a kind of amusing story, although Qadhafi idolized Nasser. They were going to do the coup on about March 30th, but there was a Um Kulthum concern. She was a very famous Egyptian singer, sort of the Frank Sinatra of her day, or the Ella Fitzgerald in Arab terms. So, they postponed the coup so they could do see the Um Kulthum concert. That is how serious they were. These things come up.

I had a good friend, a neighbor, who was a teacher at the Army English language facility for the Libyan army, an American. He invited me one night to go out (He had a boat.) with him and a bunch of Libyan army officers. This was in June of '69 with the coup occurring September 1. I had another engagement. I couldn't do it. I've always regretted that. I've often thought, "Well, maybe somebody would have told me about the brewing coup and I could have gone back and saved that from happening." That is pure fantasy, of course.

Q: Yes. How was our embassy dealing with making contacts, finding out, and all that, particularly in the early times?

SUDDARTH: As I mentioned, Libya was so quiescent, there were so few... They had a pretty vigilant, I suspect, pretty brutal security force. Oun Souf was a kind of formidable and feared minister of interior who controlled the security service itself. They ran a pretty tight ship. Dissidents of an Arab national character were thrown right out of the country.

There was another thing that came up and that was, the PLO was just getting started after the '67 War. They were establishing a PLO office in Libya. The Department was very concerned about this, that this could not only be destabilizing for Libya but that it was a growth yet of another movement that was not at all desirable. They hadn't started their terrorism, but we feared that they were going to be doing things like that. So, we got an instruction to go to King Idriss and to ask him if he would remove the PLO. Newsom, being the skilled diplomat that he is, sent something back and said, "I can do this and will do it, but it would go over much better if I told the King what we were doing in the peace process." At that point, Gunnar Jarring of the UN was being sent out. So, we gave the king a very complete rundown on what was being done through the UN to negotiate a withdrawal of Israeli forces in return for full peace as Resolution 242 calls for. We got Libya to remove the PLO. So, that was yet another nail in the coffin of the old regime because the Palestinians were very popular. I remember going to an exhibit before they got removed which showed Israeli atrocities and all that sort of thing. So, that's just another interesting side episode.

Q: You were in the Africa Bureau. Did you feel that with Sisco as the head of NEA, everything was by that time subordinate to our relations with Israel?

SUDDARTH: That's a bit of an overstatement. But we were very sensitive to Israeli security concerns. Sisco was trying desperately and valiantly to get a peace process going, a valid process. You may recall that the Rogers Plan was issued in December of 1969, which called for Israeli withdrawal and insubstantial border modification. So, that made Israel furious. In effect, we were telling them they should go back from virtually all the occupied territory. So, this occurred right after the Libyan coup. It turned out that Nixon wasn't willing to put political muscle behind it so that the Rogers initiative died on the vine. Kissinger was really lukewarm about it. Sisco's concerns were in reviving the peace process, but we didn't want to do anything since Israel was required to consent to this to gratuitously offend them. So, the F-5s to a bunch of rinky-dink lieutenants did not seem to be a very wise move.

Q: How were the oil companies and how were our negotiations on oil, keeping the oil companies there? Was there the feeling that these were really in jeopardy, that they might nationalize the

whole thing and try to take it over or was this not considered a real option on the part of the Libyans at the time?

SUDDARTH: I think it was considered a definite option if we didn't get out of Wheelus Air Force Base. That was one of the big things. Even though they had agreed to abide by all international agreements as a price of our recognition, I think it was recognized the oil industry was vulnerable, but it took the form of price negotiations. During the spring of 1970, the Libyans came forward with a modest proposal for a five or 10 cent increase in the posted price of oil. The reply of the major oil companies was that they couldn't do it, they had these agreements, and it would affect their worldwide interests.

So, then the next step was, the Libyans in the summer of 1970 announced the Tripoli Oil Negotiations. This was really major because, to make along story short, Jim Akins performed brilliantly as the head of the Office of Fuels and Energy. We got the Justice Department to rescind the anti-trust requirements, not allowing the oil companies to talk together. So, they formed a common front against these Libyan demands, but in the end, Occidental broke from the pact and agreed to a $1.50 or a $1.00 increase, which was huge at the time. In those days, oil was selling for $2.00 a barrel.

Then what happened was, having agreed to this $1.00 increase in the price of oil, the Shah of Iran got the idea that that wasn't enough, so they then had the Teheran Round, where John Irwin was in the middle of all this and Jim Akins was orchestrating it. He got another dollar or two. So, the net effect was the beginning of OPEC and the rest is history. But that was all started by the Libyans and they took enormous credit for it.

Q: Were they able to feel the sophisticated oil negotiators... You think of in Saudi Arabia Tereki, Yamani, and all. Did they have the equivalent or was this done sort of by the seat of their pants?

SUDDARTH: I think it was the seat of their pants. It's a pretty simple issue. You're taking too much of the profits on the oil and we want more. Implicit in that is, if you don't do it, we might nationalize you. But the majors were... They were going to risk nationalization and it was when Occidental broke that they had to revise their position.

Q: Occidental was run by Armand Hammer at that time.

SUDDARTH: Right.

Q: Was he sort of a maverick?

SUDDARTH: He was the maverick. He's the man who had negotiated the major oil concession and this put Occidental on the map. Up to that time, it was kind of a ne'er-do-well or middle range or lower range chemical company. This gave them a huge pool of oil that they were able to sell to Europe. Then they stayed on. Eventually after I left the desk, the Libyans did eventually nationalize some of the companies, but some of the companies still have concessions that were held in abidance. A lot of them have been paid off. The Libyans paid not top dollar for a lot of the concessions. One of the issues that we were instructing our embassy on... I remember missing part

of a July 4th weekend to instruct our embassy to say that in any nationalization we needed to have prompt and adequate compensation under international law.

Q: What about Libyan representation in Washington?

SUDDARTH: That was fun, a good amusing joke on myself and my unfamiliarity with the bureaucratic ways of Washington. The Libyan ambassador at the time of the coup was an old regime loyalist. I remember his coming in the first day I arrived in the Department calling on Deputy Secretary Elliott Richardson. I was told, "Rocky, get up there and join the meeting." So, I went up there and went through the meeting. Elliott Richardson made his points. The Libyan ambassador made his points, which were "We don't know what's going on" and so forth and so on, rather disjointed. I came back down to the desk. It was quite interesting.

I got a call from John Stempel, who was Elliott Richardson's staff assistant in the meeting. He said, "My god, you must have quite a memory. You've got to do a MemCon on this thing verbatim." I said, "Oh, yes, overseas (and this is true), with King Idriss, you never took a note because you might interrupt his rather reticent discourse." So, I immediately got out my pen and started writing down the notes for the conversation, which didn't turn out to be all that important.

But then the Libyans left and we went over to call on the new regime guy. Some young guys in the embassy kind of took it over. But we had no representation in Washington for a long, long time from the Libyans. Joe Palmer... We did all our business through Joe Palmer in Tripoli.

Q: On the base negotiations, were we doing it in harness with the British or was each one doing its own?

SUDDARTH: We were each doing our own, but I'm not clear on this point. Newsom is much more authoritative. Both come to the same conclusion and perhaps the British before us... I think Al Adam, they decided they would give up on that before we did on Wheelus Air Force Base. So that was another reason to give up on it even through they had a much longer tenure than we did. The point was, with 18 months remaining, it's a certainty you wont be renewed, so why not get out anyway?

Q: Yes.

SUDDARTH: I should add that one of my chores before the coup was, I was going to be involved with working out the U.S. position for the renewal of Wheelus Air Force Base with the Idriss regime. So, we had to shelve all that and basically throw it out the window.

Q: After about the first six months or so when things began to shake out, what sort of reading were you getting on who was Qadhafi? Was he the leader at that time?

SUDDARTH: Yes. I thought the French summed it up the best. They called him "un illuminé," meaning a guy with inner voices. Once the coup occurred, we dredged through various things and a very good Foreign Service officer before he joined the Foreign Service, Dan Simpson, had written an appraisal of him and Dan called me. He had been a teacher of Qadhafi back in 1965 or

‘63. He called me from Iceland and referred me to this. He said, “This guy was a troublemaker and he was charismatic. He shown in his...” He was obviously a leader in this English language class of his peers. So, we dredged through things. We found out from the British that he had attended a short course at Sandhurst. To show his disdain, it was the habit during the noonday break to walk the parade ground with friends and chat. Qadhafi made a point here at Sandhurst of facing toward Mecca and praying in a very secular time when nobody else did that. So, we trace things back and Qadhafi should never have been admitted in the army. He was a troublemaker from the fifth grade. He was an intelligent, charismatic troublemaker and somehow he got into the Libyan army, was put in a signal corps unit, and managed to organize the Free Officers Movement.

Q: After the initial period, how did things... You were there two years.

SUDDARTH: What happened was, there was a fellow named Mugraby, who was the titular head for the first few weeks. Then Qadhafi’s name finally emerged. There is another amusing story. The British chargé, Peter Wakefield, lived right next to one of the radio stations. When the coup occurred, Peter Wakefield came out and there was Qadhafi who had secured for the rebel forces the radio station. Wakefield said, “What’s going on here?” He said, “What is your name, officer?” Qadhafi said, “My name is Qadhafi.” It turned out that the former prime minister was named Wanis El-Qadhafi. It’s a tribal area. I think this may be apocryphal. Peter Wakefield said, “Oh, are you related to the former prime minister?” Qadhafi said, “Yes, I am.” Wakefield said, “Well, carry on.” Btu the point is that these guys surface and then we began to get some reports of their inner dealings. One day, it was, oh, we’re going to have a land reform. But they had no notion what a land reform was. So, they backed away from that. They had a kind of weird version of socialism for the people. Qadhafi later evolved into an even weirder position where he abolished the title of Supreme Leader.

Q: You’ve talked about your first six months after the Qadhafi coup on the desk.

SUDDARTH: We’ve talked about more than that. The oil negotiations were a year later.

Q: You left in ‘71?

SUDDARTH: Yes. There was the Soviet arms deal. I think there was the Munich slaughter by the PLO at the Munich Olympics. We were all trying to judge whether the Libyan regime would be a refuge for hijackers. At that point, the embassy thought there was some hope that they would take a harder line against it.

But, yes, most of the drama was in the first year. There are very few things to capture.

Q: We’ll pick up then on the Olympic side and your feeling about whither Libya.

SUDDARTH: And also the fact that they were beginning social transformations, blocking liquor and renaming things.

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Q: Today is May 22, 2000. You mentioned before we leave Libya in '71 the embassy's concern about the shootings at the Olympics, where Palestinian terrorists killed the wrestling team from Israel. What were those concerns?

SUDDARTH: I think our sequencing may be off here. I left Libya in '69. I was a desk officer in '71. I think the Olympic shootings were in '72. What's interesting is that when I was the desk officer and traveling back, we were all concerned about terrorism and about in that particular time giving refuge to terrorists. You have to check the facts on this. Our embassy was of the opinion that the Libyans were going to be responsible, that they didn't like terrorism in the early days of the Qadhafi administration. But when the Palestinians killed these Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in '72, I believe, I think they may have gone to Libya. In any case, our embassy turned out to be wrong in its assessment, although it was a kind of casual assessment that was not based on anything other than kind of innocent guesses. It turned out that Libya indeed was becoming more and more identified with various groups even in 1972. That was the great spate of PLO activism.

Q: Yes. Where did you go in '71?

SUDDARTH: I was the desk officer from September of '69 to July of '71. Then I went off for a year at MIT.

Q: In '71, you mentioned before that you were watching social changes come about. What were we seeing in Libya at that time?

SUDDARTH: I remember, you had a group of idealistic officers who had taken over who revered Nasser. So, you had sort of unfettered capitalism under King Idriss' government and these people were much more interested in social justice. There was a growing disparity of income. One of my predecessors said it used to be in the traditional Arab society that there would be differences in income but it didn't become qualitative, e.g., the very rich had a Boeing 727 at their disposal. Before, they were all riding on camels, in effect. But one might have a better camel than the other. In Libya at the end of Idriss' regime, a few people got pretty rich through corruption in many cases, but also legitimately because of the oil boom and getting oil contracts, service companies, and things of that sort. Increasingly, the arms deals began to make corruption much more an issue. So, I recall one of the early deliberations of the Free Officers, which were these Revolutionary Command around Qadhafi, was that they should have a land reform. It was obvious that they had no notion whatsoever about how to do it. Qadhafi as long as I was officially connected had not yet moved to the more idiosyncratic forms of government that he has now. He has no official function. He has a Jamahiriya, which means "the people rule." They have an informal committee and so on. But sure enough if there's a budget that he doesn't like, he stops it. So, there is a certain amount of hypocrisy there.

The only thing that showed that Qadhafi was willing to go outside the box during my time was just as I was leaving in '71, he imposed an Arabic passport on everybody who was going to enter Libya. So, we had this immense bureaucratic problem. You were supposed to have both your national passport and it translated into Arabic if you were to gain admittance into his country. We did a test case, Charles Martinson, the head of the Political Section - the DCM, I guess, by that time

- and one other embassy officer were picked to be the guinea pigs, to come in on regular passports, and they were stopped. So, I left Libya as Qadhafi was moving to the more idiosyncratic form of rule.

Q: When you talk about land reform, actually, the United States has been a great proponent of land reform and we have expertise... Was the Free Officer Movement so beyond the pale that we wouldn't say, "Hey, if you want land reform, we can do land reform for you?"

SUDDARTH: Well, we didn't have that kind of political relationship. We had tried to maintain ourselves as the primary air force supplier. We had a Peace Corps program there that was evacuated at the time of the revolution for security reasons. We made a very genuine effort and one that was highly criticized in the United States to extend a hand to the Free Officers Movement. David Newsom, the assistant secretary, and Joe Palmer both felt it was good to make a try. But once we, in effect, had negotiated our end... One of the reasons mainly that we decided to give up on Wheelus Air Force Base a year and a half before our contract ran out was, we had 10,000 Americans in Libya. We had a large stake in their oil industry. We wanted to preserve those interests. So, even after we were thrown out of Wheelus, we were hopeful we could have a relationship with them. For Palmer, the big thing was transfer of technology. We wanted to find ways that the U.S. government probably being on a paying basis by the Libyans would be able to transfer technology and that would be a basis on which we could continue our relationship. Then they had the Tripoli Round of negotiations, where they increased the oil price, but the U.S. companies still very much wanted to stay in Libya. Then after I left, so I'm hazy on the timing here, they began to nationalize American oil companies. Then they had the Soviet arms deal where they brought in large amounts of Soviet equipment. Then they started being hospitable to terrorists as a point of refuge rather than actively organizing. So, there was a really rather... It wasn't a precipitous decline in relations, but as we moved into the mid-'70s, it was getting on a steeper and steeper course.

But we maintained our relationship with Libya until '79 when they stormed our embassy. Our charge and his staff had to flee for their lives.

HAROLD G. JOSIF
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tripoli (1969-1973)

Born in Burma in 1920 to American Baptist missionaries, Harold G. Josif graduated from the University of Chicago in 1941. Josif served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, received a M.A. from Tufts in International Relations and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His overseas posts included Pakistan, Portugal, India, Iran, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka, Somalia, Libya). Josif also served as an instructor at the Air War College. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: This was 1969. Where did you go?

JOSIF: I got a direct transfer to Tripoli, Libya, as the DCM. In September, I had been called back briefly to the Department to meet with Ambassador Joe Palmer, who was the new ambassador to Tripoli. So, I got this direct transfer. I went ahead. My wife had to pack up and come later on.

Our official relations with Libya had just been set back by Muammar Qadhafi's coup of September 1. Overnight, they went from cosy to uncomfortable. When I arrived, we still had a big operation in Libya. It was true that we no longer had an AID mission, but we had just about everything else. We had a large military attaché outfit, USIS, and a consulate in Benghazi.

A total of 85 Americans were connected to the embassy. The American community numbered about 6,000, almost entirely in the oil industry. Then we had Wheelus Air Base. That had another 5-6,000. It was the largest American air base in the world in terms of area. It was the main training base for American Air Force pilots assigned to Europe. Because of the bad flying conditions in Northern Europe and the very good flying conditions in Libya, they were regularly rotating in and out to improve their skills in bombing and other things. But Qadhafi's revolution resulted immediately in a demand that we leave Wheelus. Part of the background on this is that in 1967 at the time of the Arab-Israeli War, the embassy decided because of the threat of riots and anti-American feeling to evacuate most Americans. They evacuated them through Wheelus, then entirely under our control. I think this was one of the many reasons why Libyans, Qadhafi in particular, were suspicious of our presence. Qadhafi had a lot of reasons to dislike us. He was an Arab nationalist. He thought we were responsible for Israel's existence and certainly its success. He was a firm believer that if the Arabs would just unite, they had the numbers, they had the oil wealth, the location, the other resources, so that they could drive the Israelis into the sea if it weren't for the Americans in particular and the West in general. Anyway, he immediately demanded that we leave Wheelus. This was our first big problem. It occupied us completely for months. We, the whole U.S. government, knew that there wouldn't be any peace about Wheelus unless we just left. We were there on a lease basis. The lease was to expire in about a year and a half. Considering time for closing in a normal way, there wasn't much operating time left at Wheelus anyway. The Pentagon, everyone, signed off on the position that we would negotiate an evacuation of Wheelus, but try to get the best terms we could on the incidentals like the timing (We would like to have as long a time as possible to get out.). We also hoped that the Libyans would want to buy a lot of the equipment and facilities there, and that our children at the American school would be allowed to finish the school year, for instance. Well, the negotiations were held at a downtown building. I went down with the ambassador and our staff. We had several Arabic-speaking officers: the head of the Political Section, the head of the Economic Section, and at least two others, one in USIS. The building was mobbed. Our car was barely able to get through. People were shaking their fists at the car windows. We went up to this room and met a group of military officers there. The head was Major Jaluud. He was Qadhafi's deputy. Several officers were wearing sidearms. Of course, we were completely unarmed. Jaluud kept in touch with Qadhafi by phone. He would occasionally leave the room and place a call to Qadhafi.

Well, the upshot was that we agreed to turn over Wheelus on June 11, 1970. In other words, we were given about six months to get out. That was the end of the school year. One of the only arguments that seemed to influence Jaluud was that our schoolchildren deserved to finish the school year before we left. He agreed to pay for some things at the base and not others. It was a

very complex agreement. We also received promises from the foreign office that the ceremony of turnover would be a military function, respectful to both sides. There wouldn't be any civilian crowds or demonstrations. Well, it turned out they invited the local village elders. This violated the agreement. I got pretty angry about that. But it was with a sense of relief also that the embassy could wire back, after our last plane took off, "Wheels up, Wheelus."

The next stage in our relations stemmed from the fact that the ambassador had apparently received encouragement in Washington for his idea that since Qadhafi was basically a nationalist and non-communist, he was worth cultivating. It was true that he had hurt our interests with respect to Wheelus, but maybe we could "establish a new relationship." The basis for this new relationship would be that we would offer extensive technical assistance to Libya on a reimbursable basis. The theory was that here was a rich country that was very poor in technical skills. Foreigners were really running almost everything that took high technical capacity, the oil industry particularly, which was their great resource. So, they could use competent technical assistance, which we had plenty of, on things like improving the water supply, locating more water, agricultural technical assistance, transportation planning, and so on. The ambassador made a big thing offering this in meetings with Jaluud, and by going back to Washington to get instructions and details ironed out. He persisted for months. He was more patient than I thought justified. I felt that there was very little to hope for. There was just too much deep-seated animosity towards the West, towards us in particular because of the Arab-Israeli thing, because of Libya's colonial experience, even because of Libyan xenophobia. Libya is the most xenophobic country that I've ever been in. It's a country that is sparsely populated. It was easily conquered by the Ottomans and the Italians and then the British came in, and the French, in World War II. After independence, we had the dominating role there. We were the chief prop to the king. So, as the leader of a revolutionary coup, Qadhafi wasn't very keen on seeing us hang around at all.

Anyway, this effort to establish a new relationship failed completely. The Libyans might admit that, yes, they needed technical assistance, but they didn't want a program. If they wanted any help, they would ask for it. They said, "Thank you, but no thanks," in effect. So, there was coolness. In fact, there was continuing hostility and even provocation, certainly on Libya's part and maybe on ours, too. There was continued squeezing of American property interests. For instance, shortly after the revolution, they nationalized a mission hospital in Benghazi. It happened to be a Seventh Day Adventist hospital. The Adventists estimated that it was worth a million dollars. They never got a cent out of it. The same goes for the American community church in Tripoli.

But the main interest was the oil industry, dominated by American companies. The Libyans completely nationalized Nelson Bunker Hunt's operation, for instance. They just took a majority interest in some other American companies. They started squeezing all of the companies for higher prices. They were successful. Because of Libya's location on the Mediterranean, a short distance from Europe, and the fact that Libyan oil is unusually sweet, low in sulfur content, they were in an excellent bargaining position. The Shah about the same time was pressing for price increases anyway. The OPEC arrangement was working at that point, 1969-1973 while I was there. Prices rose and the return that Libya received rose astronomically. Within a year, I think, it had quadrupled. I remember once when an American oil company was nationalized, I happened to go to the airport for some ceremony. I saw the oil minister waiting there, so I accosted him and said, "Look, we as a government do not fundamentally object to the nationalization of a national

resource, but we expect our citizens to receive prompt, adequate, and effective compensation." I reported this to the Department briefly. They complimented me on my prompt action, but nothing else happened. The fact was, as I soon learned, that the American oil companies (and the Europeans for that matter) valued access to the oil more than ownership. They didn't care particularly if they were nationalized as long as they could keep selling that oil and have the downstream benefits.

As to our official relations, they went from bad to worse. Apart from squeezing American property interests, there was constant criticism of U.S. policy, especially on the Middle East. Two rock-throwing demonstrations were directed against our embassy. Then there were Qadhafi's adventures abroad, his military buildup and his shows of muscle in Chad, for instance. And what particularly concerned us was that he started claiming territorial waters out to as much as 200 miles. Regarding the Gulf of Sidra, also called Sirte, he claimed that the line of Libyan sovereignty went from the cape on the east to the cape on the west. Of course, we maintained that we only recognized the 12 mile limit.

But we did a couple things that must have been very irritating to them. They, for instance, wanted to import some C-130 cargo planes. We warned them, "Well, okay, you can order them, but you'll have to get an export license and we can't guarantee that." Well, they ordered them and paid for them, but then we embargoed them. So, there was a continuing dispute.

Q: I think they're still sitting in Marietta, Georgia.

JOSIF: Yes. We were suspicious about them partly because they were dual use.

Q: They were. That was Qadhafi's military plane.

JOSIF: Right. And Qadhafi was exporting his support for terrorism. He seemed to have worldwide interests. He was supporting Muslims in Mindanao in the Philippines. He supported the IRA in Ireland and all sorts of shenanigans in other Arab and African countries.

Q: Were we looking at Qadhafi at this time to figure out what made him tic outside of being a nationalist?

JOSIF: Yes, this was one of our preoccupations. The problem was that very few people saw Qadhafi. Our ambassador only met him for a talk when he presented his credentials and when he left. He was complimented really in that he was given an exit interview. Most ambassadors left without seeing Qadhafi. I remember, an agency here in Washington sent us a psychiatric profile of him. This was probably in 1972. It was so bad that we decided not to comment on it. If we started fiddling and commenting on it, that would indicate we approved of it basically. So I was persuaded not to try. I don’t think we Westerners have a grasp of somebody like that. When I came back after this tour and was debriefed, one of the leading questions was, “Is Qadhafi crazy?” I said, “Well, he's odd. He's different. He may be crazy even, but he's not ineffective. On the contrary, he is very effective as a Libyan leader. He knows the local scene. He knows what he wants. He knows how to get it. That's what counts. Barring some accident or assassination, he's going to last.” Obviously, the ultimate decisions were all made by Qadhafi. It was almost useless, literally, to talk to the

foreign office or to the oil minister or anybody else. American businessmen learned this. They didn't even bother the embassy after a while. They developed their own relationship with the oil minister or whoever was important to them.

Q: Did we have some young officers who spoke Arabic and were the getting out and around? Were they of any value?

JOSIF: Well, not in that way. They were invaluable in that they could interpret when we had the negotiations about Wheelus, for instance. The military officers in the Revolutionary Command Council by and large didn't speak English or any other language we knew. We were all very restricted in our contacts. The average Libyan, I think, was afraid to be seen talking to American embassy officers. People who knew Arabic were particularly suspect. My wife happens to speak Arabic. Unlike me, she would be followed on the street when she went shopping and so on. They knew that she knew Arabic. This led to an amusing incident. She went up to an ordinary uniformed policeman and said, "That man is following me." He got very angry and rushed over to the offender, but the man showed him something that silenced him instantly. Apparently, he was a secret service man and showed him his identification.

Q: While all this was going on, quite a few Libyan students were in the United States.

JOSIF: Yes. There was an ambiguity about Libya then. It was that despite our political differences, they wanted American equipment and even operating personnel for their oil industry and they valued American education more than any other (British or any European). So we had a very large visa operation, especially for students. They had the money, generally speaking. Most of them had government scholarships. We were happy to let them get to the United States. They studied almost anything they wanted. I am afraid some of them studied atomic science, which perhaps wasn't so smart. But given our system, you can hardly prevent that.

Our consul, I thought, had an unusual listening post in that he would talk to these people regularly every day, and they were the cream of this society.

Q: Who was our consul there?

JOSIF: Well, we had a series. Joe Basile was the one when I arrived. Then there were two others in succession. They sometimes reported interesting information gleaned from our visa applicants.

Q: You left there in 1974.

JOSIF: Actually, it was December 1973.

Q: What were the Soviets doing during this time?

JOSIF: I think they were about as puzzled by Qadhafi as we were, but saw an opening in that we were having such difficulties. After I left, it became known that they had made a very large military supply agreement with Libya. It amounted to billions of dollars worth of imports of tanks and whatnot. We knew they had some military connections, but not on that scale. But the Soviets

had their difficulties, too. For instance, in 1972, we, the Soviets, and the British each received a note from the foreign office demanding that we reduce our staff (that is, our home staff) to 15. We still had 45 Americans at that point. In a little over a month, we slimmed down to 15. We closed our last outpost, which was Benghazi. Then we eliminated the whole Marine security contingent. Our security rested, I felt, on the attitude of the local government. If they wanted to invade the embassy, they could do it. If they didn't, we had some chance. This was imposed on the British and the Russians as well as us, so we couldn't very well claim discrimination. We reduced other staff. I won't go into all the details, but in effect it included the ambassador. Joseph Palmer decided to retire. He left at the end of 1972 and was never replaced.

During the year that I was in charge at Tripoli, from December 1972 to December 1973, one big issue was Arabic in passports. At the end of 1972, we received a note from the foreign office declaring that from now on, foreign nationals entering Libya must show passports printed in Arabic among the languages used. The local diplomatic corps was shocked at this sudden, sweeping ruling, obviously dictated by Qadhafi. Compliance would set a bad precedent. Here, if the Arabs got Arabic, the Bulgarians would want Bulgarian, and so on endlessly. The Department supported our position that we resist this. Of course, it immediately led to problems. I had to send the consular officer out to the airport continually to try to get some Americans in who didn't have Arabic in their passports. The Libyans soon realized that enforcing the rule 100% would hurt their oil industry and their revenue, so they began to make some exceptions for key people, but not their families. It was a mess. We spent a lot of time trying to help families. Feeling that there should be international cooperation on such a problem, I decided that it would be good to ask the Swiss chargé to co-chair a meeting with me and we would invite other missions to send somebody. We had such a meeting, well-attended. Everyone, I think, felt the same way, that this new rule should be resisted. But almost everyone else seemed to look for a compromise or hope for special treatment with the relatively few problems they had. I was not impressed by their guts, frankly. Of course, as the Libyan foreign ministry told me, within an hour of my meeting, they knew all that had happened there. The Department was strangely silent about this effort. They supported a firm stand in principle, but it began to get increasingly costly. One of my key officers, the economic officer, happened to have a girlfriend in Tunis. He went over there just before we received a note requiring even accredited diplomats to have Arabic in passports. He came back to Tripoli and they wouldn't let him back in the country. So, I sent my Political Section chief out to talk to Immigration and try to persuade them to let him in. He didn't succeed. So, I lost my economic officer (I actually had him go to Egypt and then try again to come in, but they were adamant.). I also lost my political officer. We received a note PNGing him for his efforts with Immigration.

In February 1973, a Libyan Airlines plane was shot down by the Israelis. All on board were killed. One of the passengers was a former foreign minister that we had dealt with. The pilot and, I think, the co-pilot too, was French. I remember, the French were having a cocktail party that evening. I learned about it just before attending and was the one who informed the French ambassador. Later, in early March, I had a meeting with the foreign minister. He wanted to talk to me about this Arabic in passport issue, because there was some high government official who wanted to get his son into the States. We had retaliated against the Libyans by restricting our student visas. "If you don't let us into your country, we're not going to let you into ours," was the idea. So, he called me in on rather short notice and I sent a cable to the Department asking if I could go beyond what the Department spokesman had said about the Israeli action. He had merely said that we regretted the

loss of life (We didn't regret how the incident occurred.). The reply came back, "No, you stick to what the Department spokesman said." I must say, I was tempted to go beyond my instructions, but decided as a good soldier, I would not. Of course, the minister noticed the paucity of my official regrets.

Q: Well, it was a bad thing. I mean, the Israelis were pretty sure this was a passenger plane.

JOSIF: Yes. It was a Boeing civil airliner flying from Tripoli to Cairo. The pilot met hazy conditions. He overflew the Nile, which was his landmark and instead got the Suez Canal, so he was flying north up the Suez Canal to the airport, which he expected was slightly to the right. Of course, that was slightly in Israeli-held territory. They shot it down, despite the fact that their fighter planes flew alongside for a while.

That was a key meeting I had with the Libyan foreign minister. His name was Mansour Kikhya. He was a very decent man, of a good family in Benghazi, and schooled in France. He had had a reputation before the revolution of being a mildly leftist type. Then he supported Qadhafi in the early '70s. Later, he defected from Libya, came to the United States, and was, I think, in the process of becoming an American citizen. In 1993, he made the mistake of visiting Cairo for a conference of Libyan opposition figures. There, he was kidnapped, apparently by Libyan agents, and reportedly assassinated in secret.

In the spring of 1973, because of our general ineffectiveness, and the passports in Arabic problem, I recommended that we just close the embassy. I was turned down very promptly by Washington. They said that while it was true that we couldn't be effective under current circumstances, once we closed an embassy, it would be very difficult to reopen. So, we stuck it out. We were unable to leave the country for any reason because we couldn't get back in. My wife's father died that fall. She wanted to go back for the funeral. We decided she should do so, even though she might not be able to return to post.

Then the war of October 1973, the Arab-Israeli War, broke out. While that was going on, the Department capitulated, really, about passports in Arabic and agreed that we would have Arabic in passports to this extent: when an American wanted to go to Libya, a page of his or her passport would be filled by a rubber stamp with Arabic phrases for Name, Date, and Place of Birth, and Passport Number and Date. The traveler could then take the passport to an approved translator to supply those items in Arabic on that page. That would be presented to the Libyans. In other words, we wouldn't <u>print</u> our passports in Arabic, but some basic data could be presented in Arabic. This was an acceptable solution. I hadn't proposed it, but the Department just decided that enough was enough. It's a good thing they did because the embassy was really run down. There were a lot of us there who were way over our tours of duty. Everyone needed at least some leave out of country. We were holding the fort until we could be replaced. We had had no new personnel for a year.

Because of the local American experience in the '67 War, I think there was an expectation in the American community, still several thousand strong, that if another Arab-Israeli war broke out, the embassy would evacuate them. Well, I had taken the precaution of bringing the leading American companies into our emergency planning. One of the main points that I made was that "Wheelus is gone. There is not going to be any official American airlift. We are just going to have to stay here.

Our security will rest upon the attitude of the Libyan government." Regarding the embassy's own security, I had the shutters all covered with steel plate so that, when they were shut, stones would just bounce off. They wouldn't break windows. I also arranged for a door that was in the back of the embassy that led to a patio that led to an apartment building to be available at all times, so that if a mob was coming in the front door, we could get out that way. That was actually used later when the embassy was attacked and burned. I also established and enforced a rule that nobody keeps more classified papers than they can carry under one arm upstairs to the burn barrels, where they could be disposed of within minutes.

Anyway, much to our surprise, there were no demonstrations against us in October 1973. We heard that Qadhafi was preoccupied with Sadat and furious at him for not letting the Libyans in on Egyptian war plans. I think he just forgot about us despite our aid to the Israelis on this occasion. Kissinger was bending over backwards to send them everything they needed and wanted. But Qadhafi apparently considered our little Embassy Tripoli as beneath his attention - at that point. In 1979, he had it entered and burned by a mob.

That is basically my story in the Foreign Service. I came back in 1974. I had been in class too long. I was also quite fed up and didn't want to have anything to do with any big bureaucracy anymore. I left the Service at the end of March.

Q: In a way, you certainly were in some difficult spots.

JOSIF: I was.

Q: Just briefly, what sort of things did you occupy yourself with after you got out?

JOSIF: I am frequently asked this. It is hard to account for where the time has gone. I have given a few talks. One of the professors that I supervised at the War College invited me down every year to talk to his international relations classes at Washington and Lee. I've spent time on such things as helping the elderly in our family. My mother and mother-in-law needed quite a bit of attention. I save money by doing most of the maintenance on the car, the yard, and the house. I do a lot of reading and play tennis. I feel very privileged that I have lasted this long. One Foreign Service officer we knew died within a month of his retirement. I have had the luck to live now for many years in relative calm. It's been a great experience.

Q: Well, anyway, you've been around.

JOSIF: Friends tell me that "when you were transferred from Mogadiscio to Tripoli, you went from the frying pan into the fire." That was about it.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Tripoli when you were there?

JOSIF: Joe Palmer.

Q: I think it was the desk officer who went out there and was saying he had the distinction of Joe Palmer coming up and saying, "What is Libya going to be like? I'm ready to retire soon and I don't

want..." He said, "Oh, it's very quiet and very nice and all."

JOSIF: That was before the revolution.

Q: Just before the revolution. Great.

JOHN R. COUNTRYMAN
Chief Economic Officer
Tripoli (1970)

Ambassador Countryman was born in New York and raised in New York and California. He was educated at Fordham University, Miami University and the Frei University of Berlin. After service in the US Navy he joined the Foreign Service in 1962. An Arab language speaker and Middle East specialist, Ambassador Countryman served abroad in Istanbul, Beirut, Dhahran, Tripoli, Libreville and Oman, where we was US Ambassador from 1981 to 1985. In his service in the State Department in Washington, he dealt primarily with Arab Peninsular affairs. Ambassador Countryman was interviewed by David Reuther in 2001.

Q: After Dhahran we turn an interesting page. In 1971 you go to Libya as the chief of the economic section. Here you are using your FSI economic training. Libya at this time has got to be rather interesting because Qadhafi has just come in. You have got the Wheelus airbase in country. There is talk about nationalizing the oil industry. What was the environment when you arrived? Before we start off, how did you get that assignment?

COUNTRYMAN: Well, the thought was that I would take a little hiatus because I knew so much about the Gulf, and was being considered for one of the chargés in one of these Gulf posts. Which would have been, I think, in terms of foreign service rank and face time, a great assignment. But I was a little concerned about being so associated with the Gulf. I didn't object, as this was being bandied about. This was way before I was up before transfer. People said, “Yes, that is a point. Maybe you ought to do something else.” There was always this thing that I had not used all that much, but I was one of our experts in oil. I mean I had gone through this FSI program. About this same time, Ambassador Palmer who was assigned as the ambassador to…Joe Palmer who had been Assistant Secretary for Africa, had been our Ambassador to Nigeria where, of course, there was oil. He had a lot of clout and he said, "Look, I want as an economic officer, I want someone who really is first rate on the technical side of economics, who knows oil field economics, who can talk to the oil field people. Obviously I will be talking to the big guns, but I want an oil man." They said, "Well this guy Countryman is your man." He said, "Yes, I want Countryman." Those two things, my self…the sense that maybe another Gulf coast was a little too much and would be getting too specialized, and a great interest in me by Joe Palmer in Libya led to my going to Libya. [Editor’s Note: Ambassador Joseph Palmer presented his credentials to Libya in October 1969 and departed post in November 1972.]

Q: Now who did you replace?

COUNTRYMAN: Jim Placke.

Q: What was the environment like when you walked in the door on the petroleum side?

COUNTRYMAN: Let's talk about across the board. I think the embassy was struggling to come to a modus vivendi with Qadhafi. To backtrack just a little bit, this was one of these cases where it wasn't supposed to have happened, and it hit us, everybody, Embassy, CIA, military…the coup against King Idris came out of the blue and you know, wasn't supposed to happen. We weren't prepared for it. Qadhafi…it was difficult, because he was deciding who he was going to be and what Libya was, so it was this very awkward dance in deciding well just how much can we do? How can we handle these things? What is the relationship going to be? Can we make him a friend? What had been decided early on was the policy of transfer of technology. Libya was so backward, but had so much money because of the oil that we would be their friend and help them develop the country, not through the normal AID process but this was like we had in Saudi Arabia, a joint commission or a way of funneling in, making available to them all kinds of American technological expertise outside the oil industry. It became very clear right from the start that the reason that was never going to work is, at the top of…Qadhafi was delighted with that, but at the top of his list was military hardware. That is what he wanted. He wanted tanks, planes. Well, if that was not going to be the case, then he wasn't interested in what we had to peddle, because he saw it as a political liability to have a kind of a close relationship with the Americans.

Q: This is the time of Nasser in Egypt, so he is more on the Nasser...

COUNTRYMAN: And he is very much Arab unity. He wanted to, he as a matter of fact, signed some meaningless papers for unity with Egypt. Then he got Syria, sort of unity declarations rather than actual amalgamations of countries. He also began to do a little green book and began playing the Islamic card.

Q: Little green book?

COUNTRYMAN: The little red book was the sayings of Mao. Well he published, I think I have a copy at home, the sayings of Qadhafi, quotations from the Koran, used politically. He was not what we would call a Muslim fundamentalist. He was using Islam for political purposes, whereas I think people like Khomeini and similar people are using politics to forward what they would call an Islamic purpose. Qadhafi's was a little more cynical. But it was a difficult time for the embassy. We didn't have much access to the Libyans. American business was not there in any great…there wasn't much American business. There never had been, apart from the oil industry. But because the political side of things was going to be so dormant or trouble ridden, the policy at that time was to try to do as much as we could in the economic field. Intellectual, USIA things were out. People didn't want to go to the United States. Some did, but that was not an area where we could do an awful lot, but the economics seemed to be a big thing.

Shortly after I arrived, my big job as head of the economic section was to organize our participation in the Tripoli international fair. This was a commercial fair. Because of the political

climate, Washington and the Department of Commerce were not particularly anxious to put a lot of money in it. That is they way these things are done. The United States government would really be given a building by the Tripoli international fair committee, but you would have to pay a certain fee, an entrance fee. Then all of the flats and decorations for some of the interiors that were not supplied by the companies would be something the United States government would pay for.

We were so successful the whole economic section was awarded a group distinguished honor award for organizing U.S. participation in the Tripoli international fair. What we did is we got the Department of Commerce to give us - for about two months- an exhibits expert, who was everything from a logistician to a carpenter. We used people from the Embassy and its GSO office. I mean literally set up the participation. We got local business and local oil companies to give us some money, and we recruited American companies to participate in the Tripoli international fair.

I spent a lot of time on that. Of course the other thing the ambassador was very interested in, I met constantly with the oil companies. At that time there were posting price negotiations going on with Libya about what the price of Libyan crude would be. This was very important. What happened at that time, there was less discipline among OPEC. Now it is more or less established that a particular kind of Abu Dhabi sweet crude would go for this amount. All of this is standardized through OPEC channels. When there is an increase, everybody moves together. If the Abu Dhabi crude goes up one cent a barrel then the Saudi Saffani goes up two cents a barrel. All of this is pre-arranged. In those days it was much more chaotic, and an increase in Libyan crude might mean that the Shah was saying "Hey, wait a minute!" Or the Saudi…it was much more...Or the Nigerians or the Venezuelans.

So it was a thing I did a lot of reporting on that, and the oil companies were very good about briefing me on their negotiations. They would give me highly proprietary information and business confidential information, and I had to arrange with Washington…in a very special way – a special reporting channels - about how this would be handled. If it was outside the normal security questions, it was who you could share this with, foreign governments, other oil companies. I have forgotten all of the rules now, but there were very clear rules that I had to insist on to Washington only because if they wanted me to get the information from the oil companies, this is what they were telling me I had to do, and if Washington let me down, they would cut me off. So I had to in a diplomatic way explain to the Office of Fuels and Energy and NEA, or whoever was listening in Washington, listen this is how you have to handle these cables. We even had a special designation on cables. It was called... It had a code word. It was like "secret oil barrel" or something. Any of those messages got special handling.

Q: This raises an interesting question. Libya was in the Bureau of African affairs at the time, not NEA (the Bureau of Near East Affairs). How was the control from the Washington desk? Did they understand some of these Arab and oil issues?

COUNTRYMAN: For the Maghreb (Arabic term referring to northwest Africa), there were three country directorates. Egypt was always NEA, but Libya was a country directorate all by itself. Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco was another country directorate as it is today. But Libya was its own country directorate.

Q: Do you recall who the country director, who was in charge?

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, he later went on to be ambassador to Iceland, a very nice thin sort of fellow, came out there. I have forgotten what his name was. [Editor's Note: probably Jim Blake, ambassador to Iceland from September 1976 to September 1978.]

Q: With the lack of political dialogue, you are focused on doing things like the fair. You are spending a lot of time with the oil companies. What other sorts of economic issues are you focused on?

COUNTRYMAN: Well that was it. I had a very fine junior officer who was very good. Fred Makelround, he is now retired, who was one of the early people. This was a time when economic modeling was coming up and he could do this. We did an economic model of the Libyan economy, with him doing the work. Then it was sent off to Washington for it to be tweaked and you know a little data added and so on. So we worked on that. Then we also did a comprehensive list cooperating with the Brits of all of the projects open for bid in Libya which would be to American companies. These were roads; these were airports, yes a list of government contracts. I did a lot of trade promotion. My door was always open, and the American businessmen would come in. Water, we had a water desalinization group who came out there. There was one group that was coming in, they were called the rainmakers. It was the time where you would use dry ice in the clouds and create rain. The Libyans had an oasis in the Qattara depression, remember in the Second World War the Brits and the Germans fought over the Qattara Depression. They had a multi million dollar agricultural project, and we got some of those contracts. That was something we followed, I went down there.

Q: Actually Libya is a former Italian colony. Did the Italian business people and the Italian Embassy have a...

COUNTRYMAN: They had a commanding position. The Italians still despite the, I think it is because some of the old commercial families stayed on even though King Idris was thrown out and had an earlier relationship with these commercial families. One of the big Libyan companies, a cousin lived across the street from our house in Libya. A lot of Italians would come over there for dinner. So the Italians were the leading force.

Q: If we were having a strained political dialogue with Libya was it similar for some of the other Europeans?

COUNTRYMAN: Well of course, nobody had an easy time. I think we were particularly the target of their wrath because we were the Americans.

Q: And we had Wheelus airbase. That is closed down by now?

COUNTRYMAN: That is another story. That is an important story which I want to come to. But, before I forget, the British at one point during the time I was there…the whole question of sorting things out in the Gulf was coming along. The perception was evolved that the British in effect let the Shah take over one of those disputed islands in the Gulf. As a retaliation, because he was an

Arab unity man, Qadhafi nationalized British Petroleum. So that…and British Petroleum had a very small element of that was Bunker Hunt, which was an American company. So, the Bunker Hunt section of British Petroleum was nationalized. Of course the British were very upset about this. I got very involved. The British wanted our support. What could we do? I mean we are kind of keeping our heads down because of course we had Occidental, Exxon, we had a lot of big oil companies of our own in Libya. I mean the Libyan oil strike was basically American. So the fear, of course, was that Qadhafi was going to nationalize us. Because British Petroleum was so small, and it was the British, I reported that my judgment was that the Libyans thought they could get away with it. They felt they had to do something that Arab Unionists was political rather than an economic one. They would not nationalize American companies. They would run into problems marketing. There were all kinds of reasons why they wouldn't do it. We got a lot of reports that they were going to nationalize tomorrow, nationalize Occidental. The word I got from the oil companies and my own sleuthing was that they were not going to nationalize and they never did. But at the time it was touch and go. It was of course a thing that Washington wanted to know, it was on me all the time, what is this latest rumor we hear.

Q: And your contacts with Libyan authorities, who were you touching base with most often?

COUNTRYMAN: I had very poor access, as we all did. The ministry of petroleum people, I had a couple of contacts there, but they were working level, lower level people. I only contacted them because I wanted to set their mind at ease. I didn't want them to think I was some kind of a spy or I was doing something that I shouldn't be doing. So I would call on them to talk to them. These were working level people.

Q: So the general standoff applied to even the petroleum bureaucracy on the Libyan side. They weren't very eager to see us either. They would deal with oil and gas companies, but talking to embassies was not attractive to them.

COUNTRYMAN: For instance, the Venezuelans had an Embassy there. They had a Venezuelan ambassador because of the oil. This Venezuelan was a very charming, a good looking Latin kind of guy who loathed his assignment. He loved to go dancing, had a very charming and pretty wife. For him the diplomatic corps was something like maybe it was in the ‘20s. He had a wretched house. He was probably told if you do this, the next go around we will send you to Belgium or Norway or something where your true talents could be developed. He was there for one reason only.

The Germans had someone from their energy ministry who was assigned there. Because I went to school in Germany, spoke German, plus we later became friends, the German ambassador asked Joe Palmer if their energy expert could come and call on me. This guy came and called on me. I was supposed to be an expert, and I knew a lot of things that I could talk with the oil men, but he was a real expert. A Germanic kind who knew oil economics backward and forward. An awfully nice fellow, so we struck it up. He would come over. He was useful to me because of his great analytical mind. I would maybe, have the ideas and the facts, but he could put them in a row better than I could. So it was a good relationship. We had this thing worked out – his English and my German were about the same – and we would trade off, English and German. He called me one day and we started speaking German over the phone. All of a sudden I hear this voice in English say, "You speak English or we cut you off. Speak English!" Of course they were tapping my phone. I

said, "OK." I talked to him over the phone, “Talk to you later, it was nice talking to you,” and hung up.

Q: In a lot of diplomatic situations I have seen, action officers from different embassies get together for a regular lunch or something and pool their information. You are talking about kind of one-on-one sharing with other embassies.

COUNTRYMAN: And with the DCM in the British embassy, a guy named Michael Hammond, who later went on to be an ambassador, who was a very good economist, Cambridge. Their oil portfolio was vested in him as DCM rather than somebody in the economic section. So he and I met very regularly. Can we take a break? Then the most important thing I want to talk about in Libya is probably the Wheelus Air Force Base thing, because that led to my being kicked out. There was a lot of unpleasantness. That was a big deal.

Q: You were just about to talk about Wheelus Air Force Base and how that impacted on your career.

COUNTRYMAN: Some very brief background. After the Second World War, I think at a time when NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was being set up, the British, of course, were instrumental in this because they had the presence in Libya following the war more than we did. There was an air force base that they had developed that became a NATO air force base. But we were the ones that were more clearly identified with it. The reason for it being there is it is a NATO training base because so much of the time the weather in Europe is bad. Even if you are a good pilot and you know how to fly instruments you do want some time when you can get people in the early days of training on an aircraft to have clear weather, and you can't depend upon it in Europe. I think there was also some strategic idea of lengthening the presence. That is beside the point. The point was that by the time Qadhafi overthrew King Idris, we had had a long standing arrangement to use Wheelus air force base, and it was extraterritorial really. It didn't fly an American flag but it was our base. There were American MP's at the gate. There might be a Libyan policeman with them, but in fact it was an American air force base, under NATO auspices.

Q: Was there a SOFA in place, a status of forces agreement?

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, and there was a treaty, an agreement with the Libyans for the use of this base. It had no end date to it. David Newsome was our ambassador when Qadhafi overthrew King Idris. One of the things he did very wisely is…as we worked to get the relationship going with Qadhafi. He got an agreement from Washington within 24 hours, an agreement in principle that we would vacate Wheelus, thinking that this would prevent any bitterness. We gave that to them, and we moved out of Wheelus very quickly. That was behind us. About a year before I left Libya, this would have been 1972, the Libyans came to us and said, "Hey, we still have an agreement on Wheelus. We want to formally abrogate that agreement." We said, "Fine." They had accompanied that though with a note verbale, a diplomatic note, with a huge bill for environmental degradation and damage to the reputation of the government of Libya, millions and millions of dollars. We immediately countered with a bill that was exactly the same amount of money for what it cost us to precipitously move out of Wheelus, and then we began negotiations. They were conducted by Joe Palmer, who was our ambassador at the time. On the Libyan side, the Libyans didn't take

somebody from the ministry to head their delegation, they took a member of their revolutionary command council. These were seven of the original officers who overthrew King Idris. One of them was a Major Jeroud who was a particularly, and I choose my words carefully, thuggish individual. He was in charge of negotiations, and he was the number two after Qadhafi. So we began these negotiations. Ambassador Palmer was one of these old style diplomats who had been through negotiations and was determined that since this was probably going to be his last post, that he is going to do this in a manner that was proper, dignified and right. It was the only thing that he really, he was somewhat frustrated because he for a very senior diplomat here he is in a country where he didn't do anything with. This was something that was a challenge. He very carefully briefed all of us on how we were going to conduct these negotiations. He obviously would be the chair, so would Jeroud. We obviously had a sense of who else the Libyans would have there and they would be totally unimportant, just people to occupy seats. It would be Jeroud talking to Qadhafi and other members of the revolutionary command council. Joe Palmer wanted the political officer, Charles Marthinsen, to be his number two, his deputy. They worked out all kinds of political strategy, what Charles might say at some time, be called upon to give a briefing, and so on and so forth. I was the third member of the delegation. He wanted me as the technical man. I presided over what we came to call “the book.” It was one of these three ring binder things about like this, or maybe I had two of them. We corresponded obviously by cable with Defense Department and its historians. We had the whole history of the base. We had the cost of putting in the hangars, the depth of the concrete on the runways, anything you wanted to know about Wheelus air force and its history, we had. I was the custodian of that book. The point was to…in the course as the negotiations unfolded, if there was a technical point, we would out staff them and Palmer could turn to me and I could get tab C that said what the depth of the runway was or how much we had spent on this. The efforts we had made to clean up bombs or what we had done for water purification, anything that the human mind could have conceived of. The Defense Department who, of course, wanted to negotiate this well too, provided me with this data. So I had this book, and that was my job at the negotiations. One day we were at a particularly nasty point in the negotiations with Ambassador Palmer being very quiet and very diplomatic and Major Jeroud pounding the table and ranting and using foul language. He made some kind of a statement; I scribbled something on a piece of paper and handed it over to Ambassador Palmer. It was a technical point, again my bailiwick. It was a good point to defuse the political anger. So, Ambassador Palmer said when we came back that, "You made the statement that, and I think the secretary has some information on that in his tab B." blah blah, so I took the floor. Just before I was going to speak, English was the language of negotiation, and the Arabic was being translated into English by a Libyan interpreter. Both Charles was an Arabist and so was I, so we were listening to this very carefully. Jeroud turned to someone on his side and said something to the effect that, “That little twit just called me a liar.” I said, "Ambassador Palmer, before I address this point, may I make a point. I believe the Major feels his been called a liar. I want to assure him that I did not call him a liar but that he was not in possession of the facts." I said that in Arabic to him. Well, he looked at me as if thinking “If I could kill this guy, I would kill him.” The negotiations went forward and we got what we wanted, which was a mutual write off. I think the final wording was the Libyan government has presented documentation that the cost to the Libyan government comes out to $8,000, 925.33. And the United States has tabled an accompanying document that shows the cost to the United States government is $8,000,925.33, and that by mutual agreement there will be a mutual write off, whatever that legal language was. This treaty is no longer in effect. So that passed us by.

Jumping forward to the end of my tour, I had met in Libya, the secretary of our office in Benghazi, a young lady by the name of Elena Fashan who was David Mack's secretary. She and I, it was love at first sight. She and I used to see each other quite a bit. The Embassy did not have a courier flight, so they would give…she became the courier between the Benghazi office and Tripoli, mainly so that she could come and see me. We decided to get married. About a year before I was going to be transferred, the Libyans reduced the number of people you could have on embassy staffs across the board in all embassies. The net effect of it was we closed our Benghazi office, so my wife-to-be, we pulled every string in the book, got her assigned to Tunis, so I could fly over and see her. So we were in the process of getting married. I went to see her, and we were all ready to get married, the date set and everything. We were going to get married in Malta. It was just charming, both of us were Catholics, and it would be very nice. I was there talking to her making some final arrangements. I arrived back…She was given the job of a regional secretary. She worked in the consular section in Tunis, but if there was a need for a secretary some place in Africa, she would go and fill the slot. She had already finished a TDY (temporary duty) in Ouagadougou, and was told to go to Khartoum, and was going to be the scribe, and was the scribe for all of the proceedings of the trial of people who murdered Noel, remember the Ambassador and DCM who were murdered in Sudan. She got on an airplane with me in Tunis and flew to Tripoli. I got off. She was going to fly to Cairo and then on down to Khartoum. I got off the airplane in Libya, Tripoli. The Libyans had come to a decision while I was away that henceforth all passports had to be in Arabic. Passports in Arabic! I mean the Libyan visa that I had was in Arabic, but your passport had to be in Arabic. You have seen passports, they are in English. They wanted the United States government to print a passport that would be in English and Arabic. And every other government. I arrived, and they refused me entry. I couldn't get in. I was told get back on the airplane, your visa and passport are not appropriate. Well, Tunis Air like all air carriers was responsible for me, so I got back on the airplane, and my future wife said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Oh I just couldn't be away from you." So we went to Cairo and went to the Embassy and everyone got all upset. I flew back to Tripoli, again couldn't get in. The embassy…Charles Marthinsen, the political officer, met me and tried to get me in and could not. So I went on to Tunis, and stayed in my wife's apartment while she was gone. The Embassy in Tunis sort of took care of me, I was like an extra complement until we sorted this out. Meanwhile, we made a number of representations and so on and so forth, and it was very clear that this rule was, one, arbitrary, two, was not clear. A lot of other countries were not doing this. We got some inside information from guess who, that they were delighted. They hadn't instituted this for me, but there were a number of foreign diplomats that they wanted to get rid of. They were delighted to get me and there was no way they were going to let me back in. The Department, and I think the Department made a mistake here, so did the Embassy, it was determined to get me back in. I was never clear why they were so determined to do this. So I stayed for about a month in Tunis, and got a message telling me to book a flight from Tunis to Paris and get on a particular flight, they had already made a reservation for me from Paris to Tripoli, because the French Ambassador was going to be returning from leave on that flight, and I was to enter with him and claim…we knew that the French did not have a French passport in Arabic, and I was to piggyback on his presence. I said, "It's the Libyans. They are going to let in the French ambassador and bar me again. This is silly." But you take orders. So I went off to Paris, left a couple of days early, visited some of my old haunts in Paris, nice time, good meals, hopped on this plane, said hello to the French ambassador whom I knew very slightly, sat down, arrived in Tripoli. Charles Marthinsen is again there to get me in. He was under orders to get me in period. I was under orders

to get in. So the Libyans took Charles and myself to a little office in the airport and ordered me to get back on the airplane. I said, "I am sorry, I'm not a free agent here. I can not get back on the airplane. This is my post and I am here." Charles Marthinsen said, "He is here, and you have no right to do this." The Libyan in civilian clothes who worked for, I guess, Libyan intelligence rather than their immigration service was obviously upset and really didn't know what to do. I said, "I'm not moving." There were these two Libyan two rather big guys, guards. He said, "You have got to get on the airplane." I said, "I am not moving." Now, I had been told that when they put their hands on me, I was to go. Whether that meant hitting with a billy club or just threatening me…going like this. When force was applied to me, then I would get up and go on the airplane. But not before. So literally for 20 minutes this game of chicken happened there. These guys sort of leaning toward me. I said, "I am sorry. I am not moving. this is my post and I am going to my house. I am a properly accredited diplomat. If you don't believe me, Charles can... Finally this one guy came over and put his hand on me. Charles made one more comment and this guy behind the table blew up and said in Arabic, "Finished. That is enough." The other one grabbed Charles and lifted him up out of the seat and frog marched him out to the airplane with me. By this time I had had force applied, I was walking. The guy was next to me very nice sort of smiling saying I did my thing. We were walking out to the airplane and Charles was being frog marched. Charles is rather a slight fellow. Literally this Libyan had lifted him under the arms and Charles' feet were not touching the ground, so he was carrying him out to the airplane. Charles was put on the same airplane with me and sat next to me and we were off to Tunis.

Q: Going back to Paris!

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, going back to Paris. Because it was a return flight and it was going to leave in another hour. We were the only ones in there because they hadn't boarded the other passengers yet. They put us on the airplane. Charles was sitting there, saying, “Well, we did our thing.” We were calm and so on. He said, 'What hotel are you staying on?" He had been in Paris a couple of times and all the rest and so on. All of a sudden a couple of more Libyans come on board and approach Charles Marthinsen and said, "You, get off the airplane." I thought, are they going to shoot him? "Get him off the airplane."

Well evidently the Libyans wanted not to just put him out, but they wanted to take him back to the Embassy and then formally declare him persona non grata because of ungentlemanly and beastly activity [Editor’s Note: literally persona non grata means "an unwelcome person", a term used in diplomacy with a specialized and legally defined meaning]. They had a whole, I never saw a copy, but they did a note verbale that formally declared Charles Marthinsen persona non grata. They wanted to have the opportunity to do that and needed him off the airplane. He was declared persona non grata and given 72 hours to leave. As a final little story, I finally got back to Tunis to wait there for further developments. Charles said, "If I go out to the airport, they are going to harass me, if I am persona non grata. Would the Department go for this, have the embassy drive me from Tripoli to the Tunisian border and I will cross." That Tunisian-Libyan border post was hardly ever used. There were a couple of Tunisian workers there. It was a very quiet post. "And I'll just simply exit. Then the embassy car from Tunis can meet me and I will fly out of Tunis to come back. I want the dignity of being able…because they will be laying for me at the Tripoli airport." The Department said, "That is a good idea." So Jock McDonald who was the political officer in Tunis, he and I got into a car and drove to the Libyan border. The embassy car comes from the

other side. There was a no man's land between the border points, you have got the one checkpoint here and one here and there was an area, a city block between in the desert. We saw Charles Marthinsen coming through with two suitcases. He walks across and comes into Tunisia, and then went back to the States.

Q: To get away with that strategy, he would need plane reservations to keep people focused on the Tripoli airport…

COUNTRYMAN: I think they did dummy reservations and so on and so forth. So that was that, and now the Department was deciding what to do with me. The old saying in the State Department is…the Department said you have been constructively PNG'd [acronym for persona non grata] to me. Of course, we had a lot of correspondence about why this had happened. We brought up the thing with Jeroud. There had been a lot of cable traffic on this. Anyway, I was pretty close to the expiration of my tour of duty anyway, so I was up for a new tour. I thought well, if I am in trouble for having gotten PNG'd…and there was a sense in the Department if you get PNG'd your career is over, or it is made, if you got PNG'd for the right reasons. Well, it became very clear that the Department didn't hold it against me because from Tunis I was in communication with Chris Nelson my personnel officer about planning my next assignment. You know, "Whatever you want, you can have within reason; whatever is appropriate for your rank." I held the rank of FSO-4 at the time. I had always wanted to be a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). I received a little management experience in Dhahran as DPO (Deputy Principal Officer) and I always thought it would be a good thing to be a DCM. So I said, "Look, I want to be a DCM." At that time there were very few posts in the world where you could be a DCM as an FSO-4. I was a pretty small voice. So the Department got back to me and said, "Well, we have consulted with the ambassador in Libreville, Gabon, and that is an FSO-4 slot, would you like to go as DCM to Libreville." I would be delighted. I knew something abut Libreville. I thought it would be kind of fun.

DAVID L. MACK
Officer in Charge
Benghazi (1970-1972)

Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. From 1986 to 1989 he served as U.S. Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: Today is the 23rd of January. Okay, we're going to Benghazi now, is that right? There were two questions I mentioned in the last thing, one was at the time you went to Benghazi where did the embassy feel that Libya was going? And then also was there a discrepancy between what the oil

companies you were plugged into felt at that time?

MACK: At the embassy there was still a very strong desire to try to keep a productive relationship between the United States and Libya. By this time there was an understanding that that relationship would not include any significant military cooperation element beyond, for example, the possible supply to Libya of transport aircraft for their military.

Q: *Weren't there some C-130s that were sitting for years...*

MACK: The C-130s that had been ordered by the Libyans, and the U.S. Government was holding up on delivery. I'm not sure the Libyans had been formally told at that point that we were going to hold up delivery. The idea was to see how things developed on the ground and to use this as a carrot. The Libyans also had U.S. F-5 fighters, and it was the belief of people in the Pentagon that we had a considerable amount of leverage to get some kind of maintenance and continuing supply and training contract. If the Libyans were prepared to be cooperative in those areas, and if the Libyans were prepared to continue a good relationship with U.S. oil companies, then that would be a basis for future development. The economic section, headed by Lannon Walker, was convinced that the answer lay in transfer of technology and that we have to make this the theme of our relationships with a new independent more assertive Libya. Because of Libya's interest in economic development, it would be tied to the west and to the United States. The views in the political section in Tripoli were much less optimistic. A new political chief had arrived.

Q: *Who was that?*

MACK: Charles Marthinsen. After his arrival, I gave Charles a fairly downbeat briefing on what I thought were the prospects for continuing movement of Libya in the direction of Cairo and possibly a decision to rely upon the Soviet Union for arms rather than the west. Gamal Abdel Nasser was the model for Qadhafi and the other free officers. Just as he had made that same critical strategic decision, it looked to me like the Libyans were moving in those directions. Their fundamental political relationship would be with Egypt, and their fundamental military relationship would be with the Soviet Union. I remember Charles remarking to me acidly that he didn't know about this transfer of technology stuff, it looked to him as if we should spend our time trying to make sure the emergency and evacuation plan was kept up to date. There was already a strong divergence of opinion within the embassy as to the prospects for any kind of meaningful cooperation.

Q: *Did the economic side reflect their contact with the oil company people. It sounds to me, going back to my time, because much of the oil thing coming out of the ARAMCO experience which is you go along, you get along if you go along, and don't get involved in politics.*

MACK: In the secret review that the ambassador had directed three of us young officers to make, we concluded that the access to Libyan oil was the critical strategic interest of the United States. There was a great deal of optimism that some kind of arrangement would be reached between the U.S. oil companies and the Libyan government. There were some other major oil companies involved as well, like BP, but primarily American companies. There were some concerns there as well. The very shrewd number two in the economic section was Jim Placke, who was following oil

issues and had previously had an assignment in Kuwait. He was really into the lore of oil politics. Jim was fairly dismayed at the views that he was hearing from the U.S. oil companies. These companies had indicated that it was absolutely out of the question to increase more than marginally the prices for Libyan oil, which at that time were still being set by the major oil companies. They were setting posted prices for everybody's oil around the world. And it was absolutely out of the question that there could be an increase of more than a few cents, maybe at the outside five to ten, and that was from a base of around $2.00 at the time. There were some warning signs, but I don't think even Jim believed that it was likely that there would be a total breakdown in talks between the major oil companies and the Libyans. In fact, that occurred over the course of the summer, and the stalemate was only broken when Occidental, which had been frozen out of negotiations by the major oil companies, cut its own deal with the Libyans. The Oxy deal then became a precedent setting mark, and the other companies in the end fell in line with it.

The other thing that was going on that was a very serious indication of Libya's drift, as soon as the evacuation of the American and British bases took place, was a decision by the Libyans to move against the Italians and to do away with the treaty rights under which Italian citizens in effect had special privileges in Libya. This was a hangover of the colonial period. It had clearly been imposed upon the Libyans as the price of early independence, and it was something that rankled very, very deeply. Perhaps even more deeply with most Libyans than the presence of the British and American bases. The British and Americans, after all, had not had a very profound or deep affect on Libyans at the time, whereas the Italians were very much hated as the former colonial power. A combination of all these things made it pretty clear to me, at least, that the drift was quite negative.

We also were of the view that the prospects for Libya remaining a united country were perhaps not very great. At least there were significant possibilities that Libya, which had been sort of an artificial invention of the Italians, might well fall apart. There could be a rift between the eastern Cyrenaican province and the western Tripolitanian area. Obviously the balance of political power had shifted from Cyrenaica to Tripolitania. But it was still thought that there were strong tribal loyalties in Cyrenaica, and that there might well be coup mounted out of Cyrenaica against the Libyan regime of Colonel Qadhafi. It was with this in mind that a lot of my work in Benghazi was intended to try to ferret out indications of either Libyan unity or disunity.

Q: *Benghazi was essentially the capital...*

MACK: Benghazi had long been the second capital of the country. Our office there was technically a branch of embassy, not a consulate general. Although, as part of the internal political arrangements of the Libyan revolution, it was made clear that Benghazi no longer had a status as the second capital, it was merely an important economic and cultural center. The Libyan University had its main campus in Benghazi, and a lot of the oil production was in Cyrenaica.

Q: *Where did the officer corps come from? Any particular area?*

MACK: The senior officer corps under the monarchy had tended to come originally from Cyrenaican tribes. However, the country was manpower short. One of the things that became clear as we analyzed the Qadhafi revolution was that the junior officer corps was loaded up with young men from Tripolitania and other parts of Libya who had previously not been considered in this

kind of a power center. There was quite a geographic shift in that direction. As I recall only one of the 12 Revolutionary Command Council members was a Cyrenaican.

Q: *One of the things behind this I guess was basically a regional...*

MACK: It's a mistake to refer to the revolution of September 1969 as a coup. It was a revolution, with new geographic centers of power. The old tribal elites had been shoved aside by a new technocratic elite. Youth, instead of experience, was the order of the day. This was reflected by their politics.

Q: *You were in Benghazi from when to when?*

MACK: I was in Benghazi from the summer of 1970 through the summer of '72.

Q: *What was the situation when you got to Benghazi in '70? The revolution had come, obviously there were new boys running the show who were not local boys. How did you find the climate in Benghazi?*

MACK: Benghazi was, as was most of Libya, in the middle of an economic boom. All this time, Qadhafi and the other free officers were in a sense riding on the crest of an oil boom, and they could afford to get away with some fairly outrageous things because Libyan oil was selling at a premium. Production had been greatly increased by the major oil companies under the royalist regime. And then on top of that, through some very shrewd and tough bargaining, the new regime got a major increase in prices without losing volume of production. In effect, the oil companies felt they didn't have any choice, and they stayed in the game at a much higher price for the oil they were taking out of the country. In the whole country there was a lot of economic prosperity during this period, a sense of economic boom. This tended to keep people relatively content with the politics of Qadhafi and the other free officers. Even though the new regime might have seemed peculiar to some Libyans, it seemed to be working. They managed to get the British and French out with no great problems. They managed to send the Italians packing. Despite all of the predictions the economy had not tumbled down, and in fact seemed to be doing better. In retrospect one could say that this was the result of the work of the previous regime and the oil companies, but certainly at the time to most Libyans it looked very good. They viewed the new regime with a fair amount of favor.

Whenever Qadhafi came to Cyrenaica to make a speech, he was mobbed and there was a lot of enthusiasm. At the same time, it was obvious that Qadhafi had installed non-Cyrenaican officers in charge of the situation in Benghazi and the rest of eastern Libya. They tended to be pretty no-nonsense about any kind of non-official political meetings. They were cracking down pretty heavily on any independent activism.

The other thing that became obvious is that if the relationship with Egypt was mostly a political one in Tripolitania, in Cyrenaica it was a demographic one. Huge numbers of Egyptians were coming into the country for all manner of employment: from agricultural laborers, to school teachers and advisers in the various government offices. Libyans were taking Egyptian wives, very often Egyptian second wives. Egyptian servant girls were suddenly seen all over Benghazi. You

never saw Libyan women out on the street, but you began to see lots and lots of Egyptian women in addition to Egyptian men. The demographics of the country were changing very rapidly. At one point in one of the political reports, I suggested that while there had been concern earlier that Nasser might take over the country and enhance his political power in the Arab world by having Libya as a part of Egypt, it looked to me like a growing possibility that over time, with or without Nasser, Egypt was going to swallow up at least eastern Libya. One day, the Libyans might just wake up to find out that they were vastly outnumbered in the eastern part of the country and couldn't hold on to it.

Q: *Sort of like the United States and Mexico with Texas.*

MACK: Yes, exactly. In this connection it was very interesting. We did not have diplomatic relations with Egypt at the time, and I couldn't have a formal relationship with the Egyptian consul general, but I met him informally at other people's gatherings. During the time I was there, Gamal Abdel Nasser died, and the Greek consul general who was effectively the dean of the consular corps, called me up. He informed me they were arranging for the consular corps to pay a call on the Egyptian consul general for condolences and then to march in solidarity with him in a procession to mourn the death of Gamal Nasser, and he didn't want to embarrass me but wanted to know what I felt. I said I would certainly participate, if nothing else in my capacity as a former student in Cairo. For that matter I did not really believe that Washington would have any objection, and in any case I didn't intend to ask them in advance.

Q: *Of course, Nixon went, too, didn't he?*

MACK: It was a fluid situation, and I just decided that it was the right thing to do. That was, as I remember, very well appreciated by the Egyptian consul general. As we marched together in that procession, large numbers of the non-official Libyans and Egyptians along for the march became quite emotional. I remember that I was walking with the Soviet consul, who was uniquely unqualified to represent his country there, not speaking Arabic and speaking very little English. His name was Bishkof, and he got terribly frightened. He thought that we were going to be torn up in an Arab mob.

Q: *I think this was also the feeling of many of the people who went with the American delegation to Egypt.*

MACK: It was a pretty wild scene.

Q: *And the Arab mob, particularly at that time, had a reputation of being very dangerous. I think misunderstood.*

MACK: Yes, it was a pretty wild scene. I pulled Bishkof off to the side of the road at one point to calm him down, and told him we'd be okay as long as we minded our own business. The whole period was a little unreal, as I said. Benghazi was not at the center of things. It was of course central in my thinking. I'm not sure the embassy felt the same possibilities that I saw of the country re-dividing again. I was not over working. I had plenty of time to travel around the area. I wrote a lot of interesting pieces based on travels in eastern Libya. There was a lot of interest about the

growing Soviet weapons inventory of the Libyans, and lots of questions about the Soviet personnel who were there, which was the reason I had been encouraged to be cordial with Bishkof. A couple of times I managed to get into Libyan military areas, in retrospect something that was a little too daring, but at the time it seemed to me like a good idea. Washington showed a lot of interest in my reports. This was the point when Badger bombers were being delivered.

Q: *These were medium-range Soviet type bombers.*

MACK: Right. This was of great interest to NATO, and I was able to get into a Libyan airfield, at some distress to the host government when they found me there, but I had a ticket to fly on a commercial flight which was also using that same airfield. So after I was interrogated a little bit by a Libyan official, they let me continue on the flight with my wife from out of the old Tobruk air base. We had traveled by land up to Tobruk and took a flight back. From Tobruk I was able to verify from the ground the rough number of bombers present, something we had also verified by other means. They had been put out of the way in Tobruk, rather than in any of the air bases near Tripoli or Benghazi.

I occupied myself with a lot of this political reporting, but it was also my first chance to be in charge of a post. I had a lot of administrative and management duties. A small post, but it did have a full communications section, and it was a multi-agency post. It gave me a chance to get involved in some of the inter-agency management issues that I had been shielded from previously.

I also recall it as a period of time when rapid changes were taking place in the United States that surprised me. For example, we had a young vice consul assigned to the post. Actually, he was only two years my junior in age, but it was as if a generation separated us. He arrived and made no secret of the fact that he had been a drug user in the past. He told me that he would have a visit from his girlfriend, a German national at that time, a very shocking idea in a very conservative town. I was very upset by this. I remember the inspectors were even more upset when they found out about it. In retrospect it seems like a tempest in a teapot. I was in a position where I was required to discipline him, and I told him that he would have to send his girlfriend back. I only found out later, as we both were about to leave the post, that he'd merely had his girlfriend move in with a Libyan-American family. I had perhaps been the only person in town that hadn't been aware of what he'd done. Of course, these days it would be nobody's business, I suppose. But in those days I'd been formally directed by the inspectors in the embassy Tripoli to resolve this situation. I shouldn't have been surprised when I was visited by my father-in-law. I remembered him as somebody who complained that I had long hair, and he wasn't sure whether I was perhaps too much of a beatnik to join with his daughter. I scarcely recognized my father-in-law when he arrived in Benghazi. He not only had long hair but also a beard. That's how much things were changing. We also had a lot of American hippies who were coming across country. Towards the end of this period, relations between Libya and Egypt turned very bad. Gamal Abdel Nasser was gone. Relations quickly turned bad between Libya and Egypt. The border was shut to land traffic, or at least to normal land traffic. We had these American hippies who would start in Tangier and work their way across to Nepal, sort of the hashish route. They would get to Benghazi and find that they couldn't go by land any further, and then they would have to either shell out money for an airplane, or wait for a ship to come in so they could proceed eastward. We had a number of protection cases, people without money, people ending up in the jail in Cyrenaica. I recall at one

point talking to a couple of these young men in my office. One of them turned to another and said about me: “He's like Rip Van Winkle.” I came to realize there were cultural changes going on in the United States that I was out of touch with.

Q: *How did you operate, getting around, meeting people and all that at this time?*

MACK: It was perhaps a little looser than Tripoli. I had more contact with Libyans, although not as much as I would have liked. I was still under surveillance by Libyan secret police. I am sure that the servants in our house were reporting to them, etc., who would come to the house. I had to be fairly circumspect, and I had to do a lot of my reporting based on surmise rather than precise information from Libyan sources. It wasn't an ideal reporting situation. In the end, as part of the inspection, the inspectors recommended closing the post. Interestingly enough, we had kept the embassy open very much against the wishes of the Libyan government. They had tried to get us to close the post.

Q: *Had the East German, the Stasi, the secret police achieved... Later, they ran things in Libya, didn't they? Was this a pretty much home grown surveillance thing at this point?*

MACK: At this point, yes. I'm not sure we were aware of East German activities in the country at that time. We were very wary of the Soviets, and one of the things we did from Benghazi was to track the activities of Soviets in eastern Libya. But we were still focused primarily on the Egyptians, up until the time when Egyptian-Libyan relations turned very bad. Qadhafi kept switching his alliances in variance parts of the Arab world, as he sought to maximize his own leadership and as he looked for yet another scheme for Arab unity. It also was becoming clear that the Cyrenaicans, who are pretty conservative religiously, were very put off by some of Qadhafi's speculations about Islam. It became evident to me that there could be a lot of resistance from conservative religious circles to what was even then beginning to appear as Qadhafi’s heretical views.

In retrospect, however, it's pretty clear that Cyrenaicans, like other Libyans, were doing well economically. A few of the senior business people felt aggrieved, but for most people the economy seemed to be moving along.

While I was there, the Italians came back. Italian nationals had left in the summer of '70, after the Libyans abrogated the Italian-Libyan treaty. But then the Italians came back in huge numbers on the same basis as other expatriates, as employees of construction and oil drilling companies. It became quite clear that Italy and Libya had a very close and special economic relationship which was going to persist throughout this period of political difficulty. In this respect I was spending a lot of time with some of the American oil company executives, and to some extent also with some of the British oil company personnel. They saw the Italians as the real threat to U.S. interests there, and in a sense they had a pretty good understanding of the ultimate strength of this Libyan-Italian economic relationship.

Q: *We're talking about the troubles between Libya and Egypt at that point. What were the concerns and were the Egyptians doing things, or were the Libyans doing things that did this?*

MACK: Well some of the Egyptian advisers had behaved in a very heavy handed way trying to treat the Libyans as their younger brothers, people needing to be tutored in how to run a country. The Egyptians overplayed their hand, just as they had in Syria and Yemen in earlier stages. But it's also true that Anwar Sadat did not have the same kind of charisma and leadership as Gamal Abdel Nasser projected. Still and all, however, there was a strong sense by most of the younger Libyans in Benghazi, such as those I came in contact with through the university, that their destiny was a part of the Arab world, not as a close partner with the west. This wasn't just a narrow little military elite that had these notions. It was much deeper than that.

I might just end on a curious note about Libya and Egypt. One of the things I did while I was down there was to redo the emergency and evacuation plan. The political chief in Tripoli, Charles Marthinsen had suggested that was probably our primary job. And you might remember in those days among the annexes was an annex on safe haven. I wrote that the one thing one could say for sure about Benghazi is that it would never be a safe haven for an evacuation from another country. I guess it was a good lesson for me: never say never. In the October 1973 war a major evacuation from Egypt was staged through Benghazi. By that time, we had closed the post a year earlier, and they had to send personnel down from the embassy in Tripoli in order to receive the incoming Americans and put them in Benghazi hotels, which had been underutilized before that point. Surprisingly, the Libyan government was quite cooperative. This indicates the depth of their unhappiness with the Egyptians.

Libya's leaders felt terribly miffed that they weren't brought into the planning for the October 1973 war as the Syrians had been. They would have wanted to participate. As it was, since they hadn't been allowed to share in any of the glory, they refused to go along with the Arab oil boycott. If I'm not mistaken, Libya was the only Arab country that refused to go along with the oil boycott that followed the October War.

Q: *Do you think at this time, from what you were getting from talking with other people from other embassies...was the feeling, not just Qadhafi because Qadhafi was not yet the man, was he? Or was he the man by the time we're talking about?*

MACK: By then he had clearly emerged as the number one.

Q: *Was there the general feeling that the other Arabs, and maybe the western powers, still considered him to be a real light weight in the business. Because I don't think Nasser was ever considered...he was considered dangerous, but he was never considered a light weight. But you had the feeling that Qadhafi, and even today is considered somewhat of a lightweight.*

MACK: I think certainly the other Arab diplomats considered Qadhafi to be certifiably crazy and very dangerous. This was true particularly true for Tunisians, Egyptians, and Algerians. Arab states adjacent to Libya were very, very nervous about this guy, and considered him capable of doing very foolish things. I never considered him a lightweight; I always considered him to be a very serious contender for political leadership. And were it not for Libya's very small population base, he could have been a successor to Nasser. But as it was he simply was not in a position to impose his will over any country other than Libya. Having gotten to know some of the other free officers, I'm frankly surprised that one or another of them didn't take steps to eliminate Qadhafi at

some point. But they were in a sense all aware that he was the only one among them who had the capability for keeping the whole show together. Even though he might be inclined to do dangerous things, nobody else had the charisma, speaking ability, and so on, to keep their ranks unified against the outside.

Q: *When did you leave Libya?*

MACK: The summer of '72.

CHARLES E. MARTHINSEN
Political Officer
Tripoli (1970-1973)

Ambassador Charles E. Marthinsen was born in Missouri in 1931. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Gannon College in 1953, he served in the United States Army from 1953-1955. His career has included positions in Dacca, Beirut, Jeddah, Damascus, Montreal, Cairo, Tripoli, and an ambassadorship to Qatar.
Ambassador Marthinsen was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in July 2003.

Q: After about a year working with Sisco, where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: I went to Tripoli, Libya. In September of '69, Qadhafi's coup brought down the Idrisid monarchy and yet another RCC was in business. My family and I arrived in early summer of '70.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MARTHINSEN: Joseph Palmer II.

Q: What was the situation there?

MARTHINSEN: Creepy. The Libyans were not sophisticated or used to dealing with other powers according to international norms. Their pool of linguistically talented personnel and experts in economic, political, and even military affairs was small. There were a few key civilian players in the government. All Libyans, whether civilians or military were suspicious of the United States for having been a patron of the defunct monarchy as well as a patron of Israel. Even American business interests, especially in the oil industry, were distrusted by the very xenophobic RCC. It was a strange situation. The ambassador made repeated efforts to reassure Qadhafi and Jalud and the other figures in the Libyan RCC that we accepted the new government and harbored no ulterior motives in our relationship. We wanted to have a reasonable, productive relationship with the Libyans in all sectors. But it was a very hard sell; the suspicion of us was extraordinary.

Q: What was your job?

MARTHINSEN: I was the senior political officer.

Q: Could you get out and around?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, we could all get out and about. Few places were out of bounds. We could travel throughout the country and did. Relations with the Libyan government were limited pretty much to Qadhafi's headquarters at Aziziya Barracks and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Libya's Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, Mansur Al-Kikhiya, was a pivotal contact.

Q: Had we left Wheelus Air Base by this time?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. By the time Kate and I arrived in Tripoli, Wheelus had been closed and all U.S. uniformed personnel had departed. We were still cleaning up what was left in the commissary and things like that.

Q: Could you talk to Libyans or was this a problem?

MARTHINSEN: We had contacts but they were limited, in part because Libyans had been treated rather badly by outside ruling powers, particularly the Ottomans and the Italians. Libyans lacked self-confidence and any sense of nationhood. Most of our contacts were in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Q: What were you interested in as a political officer, signs of dissent?

MARTHINSEN: The big question was what direction would Libya take. Qadhafi saw himself as the son of and probably as the heir to Gamal Abdul Nasser. Shortly after we arrived, in October of '70, Nasser died. The Libyans expressed feelings of despair because the clarion voice of Arab nationalism had been stilled. I have rarely seen such widespread outpouring of sentiment. There were processions of average Libyans marching for hours through the streets of Tripoli.

Q: How were relations between Libya and Egypt at the time?

MARTHINSEN: They were very good at least at the Qadhafi-Nasser levels. And there was much talk of reviving the UAR. The Libyans saw themselves as virtually destined to become members of an expanded United Arab Republic. There is a story to be told about why it never happened. Certainly the sentiment in the street was in favor. I presume it would be that the big difference would have been an economic difference. If you take on the Egyptians as your countrymen, you're going to have to watch your oil-rich pocket very carefully.

Q: Yes. It didn't work very well with the Syrians.

MARTHINSEN: No.

Q: A lot of Egyptians came over to Syria and were not welcomed.

MARTHINSEN: That's right. Well, they had more Egyptians than they had jobs.

Q: This was one of their major exports.

Did Libya have people from the better educated elements of the Arab world, Egypt and Palestine, staffing much of their…

MARTHINSEN: Yes, in particular in the education ministry and the university campuses in Tripoli, and Benghazi. It was very heavily staffed by Egyptians and Palestinians.

Q: How did we view the Libyan relationship with the Soviet Union and the East Bloc?

MARTHINSEN: Well, our country then was totally fixated with the USS. Any Soviet sales, appearances by delegations, any suggestion of Soviet Russian influence was viewed as a setback to the United States.

Q: Were there a lot of Soviet types running around Libya?

MARTHINSEN: No, but that probably is more a reflection of the lack of self-confidence and the xenophobia which were characteristic of Libyan society, particularly among the high-ranking members of the regime. Libyans were almost afraid they were going to be taken to the cleaners.

Q: How about oil developments? Was this going on despite the politics?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, it was.

Q: Including Americans?

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes.

Q: Were we having trouble with the assistance, Arabic in the passports and that sort of thing?

MARTHINSEN: That brought me to one of the points of my Foreign Service career that was certainly disturbing. It involved good news and bad news. Qadhafi decided that Arabic was as much an international language as English, Russian, Chinese, and French, and therefore all foreigners visiting or going to Libya had to have their passports translated into Arabic. Initially the reaction of particularly the Western countries was, "Oh, forget it. No way." For a while, that worked. And then on a weekend, he ordered that the regulation be enforced. All travelers were denied entry or exit if they had passports that were not translated into Arabic. Quite by coincidence, one of the members of the embassy was off in Tunisia that weekend. So, he was stuck abroad. I was kind of point man in seeking a solution to this particular problem. We devised several schemes to try and circumvent the difficulties. We arranged for our colleague to fly to France and to get on a flight to Tripoli carrying the French ambassador, who had been on leave, and several French peddlers of fighter aircraft. We thought surely if our colleague is arriving on the same plane (and the French had told us that they weren't translating their passports into Arabic; they would do what the UN required and nothing more) we could point out the difference in treatment accorded the French Ambassador and his team and our colleague. And then we played

with that strategy a little bit and decided to delay matters until that flight left; our colleague would at least be on the ground. It didn't work. Finally, they got rough. I had been annoying them by pointing out these discrepancies in their behavior towards the French and the American.

Q: They had let the French in?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, the French were admitted with no problem that we were aware of. I was there with another colleague and suggested he get out of there because I thought things could get nasty. Then they did. A Qadhafi relative who was the head of the police at the airport and finally grew vexed with my delaying tactic and said, "Okay, you're out of here. You will leave on the same plane." I pointed out that I had not intended to travel and didn't have my passport. He had me put on the plane by force. Two military policemen grabbed my arms and walked me onto the aircraft and into a seat on the plane. So, I called the steward and said, "I think the pilot should know that if I should take off in this aircraft (the next stop was Valetta, Malta), goodness knows what would happen. I have no passport and would be undocumented." The pilot said, "Forget it. I can't take someone who doesn't have his documents in order." My sole satisfaction on that occasion was that I was able to descend from the aircraft and look Qadhafi's relative in the eye and gesture that I was back here in Tripoli." A colleague and friend, Hal Josif, was chargé. I went in to report to Hal on the developments and concluded, "I think we can expect a PNG letter pretty quickly from our Libyan friends." My recollection is that it was that very same evening--it was unusual for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to act that quickly--the note PNGing me arrived. I left Libya two days later. My family followed later.

MARILYN A. MEYERS
North African Affairs, Economics
Washington, DC (1970-1972)

Ms. Meyers was born in Virginia and obtained degrees from Southwestern University and Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. A Japanese and Burmese language officer, she served tours in Tokyo, Yokohama and Fukuoka in Japan and as Principal Officer (Chargé d'Affaires) in Rangoon. Other assignments include Johannesburg, Canberra and Washington, where she dealt primarily with economic matters. Ms. Meyers was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in 2005.

Q: That was followed in 1970 by your assignment to the Bureau of African Affairs, North Africa (AF/N), I believe, as an economic officer, which was suitable. Had you asked for that or was this just an assignment that came to you?

MEYERS: That was an assignment that came to me. The African bureau was divided into regional or country groupings and each had an economic officer responsible for the economic/trade issues of that whole office. The "country" or "desk" officers focused on political and political- military issues etc. But the separation out of econ made little sense. There is no way, for example, that you could be "country" officer for Libya and not deal with the oil issue. When I came aboard in June

1970, we were being forced out of Wheelus Air Force Base. King Idris had just been overthrown the previous September by Qadhafi, who is still there. To take oil out of this bigger picture is really nonsense. Obviously, oil, oil exports, the ramifications of nationalization of U.S. companies assets, etc., would be an integral part of the Libyan country officer's job. So at best I was sort of a backup, trailing after more experienced, highly motivated officers.

Q: Did senior officials in the Department and in the White House take much of an interest in North African affairs in those days?

MEYERS: Yes, they did. One of the senior Department officials interested was Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, David Newsom. David Newsom, before his recent return to Washington, had been Ambassador to Libya. He later moved upstairs to be Undersecretary for Political Affairs. And Libya had oil and Algeria, gas, and these assets were being nationalized by radical governments. And besides these countries, we still worked closely with conservative regimes – Tunisia under Bourguiba and Morocco under King Hassan II. Yes, we had the attention of State's seventh floor and some in the White House.

Q: Did you get mixed up in the oil from Libya question or not?

MEYERS: I didn't. That was something that was so hot that the political cone Libya desk officer took it over. The incumbent, Warren Clark, tried to include me as much as he could. I remember one afternoon going with Warren to Undersecretary U. Alexis Johnson's office. Warren had a decision memo that Johnson needed to clear. And again, it must have been winter, because it was already dark. I stood at the desk. Secretary Johnson had the desk lamp on and his cigarette smoke curled up toward the light. And I just had this visual of this white haired man reading this paper. And I remember just standing there thinking, "You're standing on the edge of history."

Q: A paper you had drafted?

MEYERS: A couple of sentences, at least; a comma there or a crossed "t" there or something, part of it, not that much though.

KEITH L. WAUCHOPE
Sudan Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1977-1979)

Ambassador Wauchope was born and raised in New York, graduated from Johns Hopkins University and, after a tour in the US Army in Vietnam, in 1966 joined the Foreign Service. His specialty being African affairs, Mr. Wauchope served in a number of African posts, including Ft. Lany, Asmara, Bamako and Monrovia. In 1989 he was appointed Ambassador to Gabon, where he served from 1989-1992. In his several Washington assignments Ambassador Wauchope dealt with personnel, cultural, Latin American affairs and Sudan affairs. Ambassador Wauchope was interviewed by Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: What about at that point, what about some of the neighbors? What was Libya doing for example?

WAUCHOPE: Well, that was one of the reasons why we focused on Sudan, because of our concern about its neighbors. At this particular juncture, Qadhafi was being particularly obstreperous. He was deeply involved in the Chadian insurgency. He was stirring things up in North Africa, in general. He was alternately trying to make friends with Egypt or trying to undermine the Egyptian government. In general, he was throwing his lot in with the most radical Arab elements and was involved financing terrorist activities globally. There was a pro-Libyan faction in Sudan and we were encouraging Nimeiri to keep a close eye on them. There were radicals who would have liked to turn Egypt away from the West. Qadhafi's objective was to undermine Egypt by going through the soft underbelly of Sudan. He attempted to do that through his agents who were Islamic true believers or those who followed of the more radical Islamic approach to government, like the imposition of Sharia. If they had been successful at that time, as it proved to be the case later, it would have thrown the south into rebellion again, which ultimately did occur.

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Q: The visit to Jerusalem with Sadat?

WAUCHOPE: Exactly. As a result, there was a sense that we had an obligation to protect Egypt's southern flank from Qadhafi. As a result the Egyptians also understood this. If you go back in history, the Egyptians and the British in colonial times always felt Sudan was vulnerable to outside pressure, you recall the Fashoda incident, and it was susceptible to manipulation by radicals. So the Egyptians encouraged us to play this role. They didn't have the wherewithal beyond some technical assistance that they could put into the pot, but they wanted very much that we play a role to keep things quiet. This was one more source of pressure on us. So, when you looked at it, it was in our own interest to maintain stability in the region as the equation between Ethiopia and Somalia was shifting. You had the Qadhafi dimension, the Egyptians interest in stability, and the Israelis looking for a moderate regime as well. So, all of this militated that we become more aggressive in our overtures. Our assistance program went from about $10 million to a projected $100 million a year, which would have made it one of the largest programs in Africa. I don't think that it ever reached that level, but that was the direction that we certainly were headed.

STEPHEN BOSWORTH
Ambassador
Tunisia (1979-1981)

Ambassador Bosworth was born and raised in Michigan and educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1961 he served abroad in Panama, Madrid and Paris before becoming Ambassador to Tunisia, where he served from 1979 to 1981, to the Philippines

(1984-1987) and to the Republic of Korea (1997-2000). The Ambassador also was a member of the Department's Policy Planning Staff, and he played a major role in the US-Japan Foundation and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In 2009 Ambassador Bosworth was named the President's Special Representative for North Korean Policy. He was interviewed by Michael Mahoney in 2003.

Q: Well, let's go on then to Tunisia. You went to Tunisia in 1979.

BOSWORTH: In March of '79.

Q: March of '79. What were the major issues that you were confronting then?

BOSWORTH: Well, the major issues were then basically Tunisia's concern over Libya and our concern about Libya and Qadhafi.

Q: Why was Tunisia concerned about Libya?

BOSWORTH: Because they viewed him as aggressive, as interested in consolidating a position in North Africa. He would periodically issue declarations calling for sort of a pan Arab unity in North Africa various federations and federal schemes that would sort of knit the countries together. He never really had any basis in fact, but it was almost all hortatory, but it made the Tunisians very nervous. At one point soon after I arrived, there was a gang of Libyan commandos, I don't think they were very organized, but they came across the border and attacked a police post in a small southern town in Tunisia. The Tunisian government called for U.S. support, U.S. assistance. In a largely symbolic move we brought in two big C5 aircraft with various pieces of military equipment onboard and unloaded them visibly and tried to calm the Tunisians down and it basically worked.

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Q: What would you say the American interests were in a small country like Tunisia?

BOSWORTH: Basically to, well, at the time, they were basically to have a sympathetic ear for some of our concerns about broader issues in the Middle East, to have basically a pro-Western orientation. This was an important country for the U.S., for the U.S. in that region surrounded by Algeria on the one side and Libya on the other, so it was really Tunisia and Morocco as voices that we could more or less count on to be reasonable with regard to their attitudes toward us. The issue of Islamic fundamentalism had just begun to emerge in Tunisia when I was there and it was not yet an acute concern. It wasn't I think until several years later when we began to view Islamic fundamentalism as basically an anti-Western threat. Those were primarily the U.S. interests. Well, you didn't have the feeling when you were there they were sort of on the front line of the Cold War. We knew the Soviets were trying to do things there, but there was no real disposition on the part of any Tunisians to welcome back the Soviet Union in any fashion.

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BOSWORTH: I think they were working by and large, whether they're still working, I don't know. I'd be interested in going back and seeing what happened to them. The other program that I got quite involved in was in the basically the renovation of the Tunisian military. It was a very run down institution. So, I managed to get some additional more military sales money and we managed to begin the process of rebuilding their military. This was done primarily with the eye on the Libyans who of course had become very much engaged with the Soviets.

Q: Did the Libyans make serious effort to undermine the government of Tunisia do you think, or was it more rhetorical?

BOSWORTH: It was somewhat rhetorical, but we were getting intelligence reports of Tunisians or of Libyans rather dealing with Tunisian dissidents.

Q: Funding people?

BOSWORTH: Funding people.

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Q: Good point. Did the Department pay much attention to Tunisia when you were there would you say?

BOSWORTH: Not a lot. We were in the Bureau of North African Affairs. Libya and Algeria demanded more attention. Morocco of course was larger. The Libyan incursion in I think it was '79 or '80 brought some attention. I was quite content not being under Washington's scrutiny all the time. They would sort of let me run my own show.

WILLIAM P. POPE
Libya Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1981-1983)

Mr. Pope was born and raised in Virginia and educated at the University of Virginia. After serving in both the US Army and the US Navy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1974. Mr. Pope served several tours in the State Department in Washington, dealing, notably, with Counterterrorism. His overseas posts include Gaborone, Zagreb, Belgrade, Paris, Pretoria, Rome, and the Hague, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter two embassies. Mr. Pope was interviewed in 2006 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: Well then you left in '81. Whither?

POPE: Back to Washington. I was the Libya Desk Officer. It was interesting because I had gone in to ask Ambassador Eagleburger what I ought to do and I remember he suggested that an obvious

next step might be to be a desk officer. And so I looked at the vacancies and I happened to see the Tunisia desk officer and I thought, well that might be kind of interesting, to learn something about North Africa, not having served in the NEA bureau before, so why not try it. So I bid on it and the next thing I know I got a call from the Office Director who said, "We're really looking forward to having you as the Libya Desk Officer in Office of North African Affairs." And I replies that there had been a mistake because the job I bid on was the Tunisia desk officer. He said, "Oh yes, but we changed that." So somebody else got that and you're the Libya Desk Officer. And I just remember being puzzled because we had no embassy there and they had no embassy and I didn't really know what I was going to do. Well, in retrospect it was a fascinating, it was a terrific job and we didn't need any embassy for it to be very interesting.

Q: You did it from '81 to?

POPE: '83.

Q: '83. Okay, let's talk about it.

POPE: It was a terrific, interesting job.

Q: What were the state of relations and why were they the way they were in '81 when you got there?

POPE: It was dominated by the fact that Qadhafi had seen what had happened in Tehran and had decided, also in '79, that he needed his own embassy takeover. The mullahs in Iran couldn't be the only ones, so Qadhafi organized schoolchildren apparently -- this was before my time but I read up on it -- they brought in busloads of people and told them just scale that wall and trash the Embassy. And our folks fortunately were able to get out the back door and to safety. But it was not some kind of spontaneous uprising by the people; he organized it and bussed people in to make it happen because he wanted his own embassy takeover. Well of course we broke relations and we threw them out as well and we had protecting powers. If I recall correctly, they had the UAE (United Arab Emirates) and we had the Belgians, I believe, in Tripoli. Qadhafi was pretty close to public enemy number one at that point among the non-communists.

Q: When you went there, as desk officer for Libya, what were you getting from your colleagues about Qadhafi? Was he a nut, was he a calculating person? I mean, what was going on?

POPE: Eccentric. Nut would be going too far but he was an eccentric, a mystic, much more comfortable in his tent out in the desert than in the halls of power, ruthless with opposition. But also he was a kind of a megalomaniac in the sense that he viewed himself as a major world leader, at least a major Arab leader who happened to have been born and brought into a stage that was too small for him; in fact, considerably too small. And he both wanted to conquer neighbors but also to create organizations or alliances with himself at the center of ideally the entire Arab world and if not at least all of North Africa, with himself at the center and the others circulating around in his orbit. And Chad, you know, he actually actively had troops in Chad and was working in many other areas to destabilize.

Q: Yes, I have accounts of him appearing in, I'm not sure whether it was Central African Republic or a Central African empire, whatever it was. But you know, it was gifts and all this in other places too. I mean, he was on the road a lot, I guess.

POPE: He tried to buy influence or, where he couldn't buy it, he tried to create it by destabilizing, by creating or enabling dissident movements.

Q: How did we view, this is during the time you were there, '81 to '83?

POPE: Right.

Q: How did we view Qadhafi's connection to terrorism at the time?

POPE: He was an important player. He gave refuge to terrorists, he trained terrorists, he supported terrorists; he was a state player in terrorism.

Q: What were we, in the first place, as the desk officer for a country with which we had no formal relations but a power of the Belgians, what sort of information were you getting and how did you keep track of what was happening?

POPE: Obvious ways. There were other parts of the government that were collecting information, not the State Department, but there were other people. There were the press and other allied countries that had embassies there that shared information. There were academics. It wasn't a completely closed society; there were a lot of embassies there and there were people going in and out.

Q: Did we have oil people there at the time?

POPE: I think not. My recollection was that all of that had been prohibited and in fact even before it was prohibited I think, if I recall, he threw all the Americans out. And there were a number of major U.S. oil companies that had had legitimate activities there for which they had paid that were suing. It was a very messy situation from the commercial point of view, lots of claims against Libya, wanting assets frozen in the States, that kind of thing.

Q: Well did- were we able to in a way deal with Qadhafi's government? I mean, were there contacts in other places or through other embassies? In other words, was there some sort of relationship?

POPE: No. I don't think, to my recollection there was no relationship, but there were channels. There were the protecting power channels in both directions and they would carry any messages that we wanted carried. But we really didn't have too many messages because we had laid out very clearly you need to stop supporting international terrorists, not harbor people like Carlos the Jackal, and you need to stay out of your neighbors' affairs, withdraw troops from Chad. And eventually the Chadians kicked them out. The Chadians eventually just slaughtered the Libyan military and drove them back across into Libya. But stop trying to destabilize other countries in Africa, stop interfering more directly in your neighbors' affairs, forswear terrorism, that kind of

thing. And then at that point we can look at some kind of contact or relationship; it's up to you. And from time to time, I remember there'd be some kind of a message that came from some source, even private, commercial source once I remember, someone who represented a company said, basically I was given this message, I don't know what to do with it, here. And it basically said, "I don't know what you want; we don't know what you want from us." And it was tiresome in the sense that they knew exactly what we wanted; Qadhafi just didn't want to do it. He hadn't come around to the idea that-

Q: What did we want?

POPE: Well, what I just said, for him to be-

Q: Renounce terrorism.

POPE: Renounce terrorism. Not just renounce but actually stop. Renouncing is one thing but to actually stop harboring and supporting international terrorists wasn't so much the kind of terrorism we're primarily dealing with today, it was more secular, it was more Carlos the Jackal type terrorists. Stop supporting them and harboring them and helping them. Leave your neighbors alone, withdraw military forces and stop meddling in places like the Gambia and other places where he was trying to foment coups. It was crystal clear, he wasn't ready to move that way. He eventually got there but that was many, many years later.

Q: How did we see his, at that time, his ties to the Soviet Union?

POPE: I don't want to be imprecise here. My recollection is that because he was against us we probably felt he probably leaned towards the Soviets. But I don't remember that he had Soviet troops or anything like that.

Q: He wasn't considered a tool of the Soviets?

POPE: No, I don't think so. It was more somebody who wanted to be a big figure in the non-aligned movement and therefore probably was more leaning toward them than toward us. He clearly wasn't leaning toward us; we were really pretty much mortal enemies at that point after he destroyed our embassy.

Q: What about Libyan students in the United States?

POPE: I don't think there were very many. I remember there were some issues having to do with Libyan students and I think we pretty much, he either withdrew them or we withdrew them. There weren't very many. We had, I think, pretty good reason, as I recall, to think that a lot of them were not just students, were more than students. And I don't think there were very many, if any.

Q: Was Libya messing around with the IRA (Irish Republican Army) up in Northern Ireland at that time?

POPE: My recollection is that they were, that there was some kind of more financial or arms

support to them. Even if I wanted to I couldn't be more precise with you but there was something, there was some, yes, I'm sure of it.

Q: What about were you there when, was it the Berlin nightclub La Belle or whatever it was?

POPE: Yes.

Q: Was that happening on your watch?

POPE: Yes.

Q: How did that play out? Could you explain what it was and what happened?

POPE: That was a Libyan intelligence operation. I don't think it's very secret any more; it came out in the paper. And in fact, the President decided for whatever reasons to actually release an intercept in which the Libyan government back in Tripoli said go do this and then the Libyan mission in Berlin came back and said, "We did and we're heroes. We did it." And a couple of U.S. servicemen and a Turkish woman were killed as I recall. It was a direct Libyan terrorist attack, not something inspired indirectly by the government of Libya.

Q: And then how did our response come about? I mean, did you get involved in our response?

POPE: That occurred after my time. The reason I remember it so well is because I was serving in Paris at that point and I was on the other end of that process about our having made a decision to retaliate once we understood and the Paris connection to all of that. So I guess that was after my time on the Libya desk, but I remember it all very clearly.

Q: Well what about-we'll come to that, then later-but how were ties between its two neighbors, Egypt and Tunisia?

POPE: They were bad, bad with both. The Egyptians, I don't remember whether they were actually worried about Qadhafi or whether it was more annoyance. I think it was more the latter. I don't think they really feared Qadhafi very much, but he proposed a merger of the two, of Egypt and Libya into some kind of, there was some name for united, you know, it was like the United Arab Emirates, it wasn't that but United Arab something and that lasted about a day and then the Egyptians-

Q: We have these damned things of-

POPE: The Egyptians dissolved that.

Q: -the Egyptians with Syria and with Yemen.

POPE: Yes. And so it was always, it was always rocky, rocky with Egypt but it was really rocky with Tunisia because I remember they were trying to destabilize, the Libyans were fooling around inside Tunisia. I can't recall exactly what they were doing, but the Tunisians were really, really

unhappy with the Libyans at that point, with good reason. In fact, the Libyans didn't have good relations with anybody, Morocco, Algeria, they were supporting the Polisario. They were just a very negative, destabilizing force, both across North Africa and also south from there.

Q: Well, were you getting the feeling that France and Italy were getting quite a bit of petroleum products from there, were sort of taking a less hostile stand towards Libya than we were? And was this an annoyance?

POPE: Well, certainly the Italians had a different view toward it for many years, even recently; in recent years they've had a very different view toward Qadhafi. I'm talking about before he gave up the weapons of mass destruction. The French were a mixed bag because I think in general they had a different way of approaching these things than we did. But, at the same time, they also were very actively involved in making sure that the Chadians could withstand and eventually expel the Libyans. Active involvement of troop units moving into a Francophone country was beyond the pale for the French, but they always looked with less active concern on governments like Libya than we did.

And as far as annoyance, I don't remember any annoyance that was too serious. It was sort of like the non-aligned movement, it was our feeling toward them. It was annoying but it wasn't too critical because those were key NATO allies as well. And we had the big issue; the big issue was the Soviet Union and the Fulda Gap and all of that.

Q: If I recall with Chad, with the French help, they ended up with a hell of a lot of Libyan prisoners, didn't they?

POPE: I don't know whether hell of a lot but they had some for sure. And there were other situations that I either recall from the time or I have read subsequently where there weren't so many prisoners taken. There were potential prisoners but they ended up being more like dead Libyans. I remember reading in the press about this one unit that was swooped down on with their Chadians from all directions with their Toyota Land Cruisers. I recall that the report was that they wiped the Libyans out to the last man, just massacred this one Libyan brigade. So I don't know how many prisoners they had, but they had some, yes, they did. Could have had more, I think.

Q: Well, you left- in the first place, it must have been a hell of a lot of fun.

POPE: It was fun. It was so different than other desk officers. I was meeting people at very high levels and involved in things that I would have never done if I had been a more normal desk officer. It was a very interesting time.

Q: Did you get any feel, I'm not trying to pry secrets and all but for the role of the CIA? Were you getting good stuff from them or not or how did you feel about it?

POPE: Yes. I think, my recollection was that it was pretty good. I mean, I still hadn't been in very long, in the service. Analyzing intelligence is one of those things, even if you're not in intelligence, even if you just use it a lot, over the years as you get more seasoned, you get a better feel for it and a better sense for it. And it was all kind of golly gee for me because it was the first time I'd served

in Washington. I'd been overseas up to that point. And you know, to actually go out to the CIA and to go to the White House for meetings was exciting.

Q: What did you do at the White House?

POPE: Oh, there would be meetings, briefings on what Qadhafi was doing. I don't remember any specific meetings but with the NSC (National Security Council), with the NSC person for the Middle East, and to compare notes.

Q: Well then, you were off to Paris?

POPE: No. I stayed two more years in Washington, '83 to '85, I was the Special Assistant to Chet Crocker in African Affairs.

Q: Well that must have been quite a time; he was a major player in those days.

POPE: He was. And he had the best front office. First of all, Chet was there, Chet Crocker was there for eight years, which is very, very rare, almost unprecedented. Plus, he was a political appointee, but he came in as a deep expert in Africa, published. He also was the most brilliant person I ever worked for, before or since, in terms of just sheer force of intellect. And just a terrific person, I'm a huge Chet Crocker fan. But he also had a fabulous front office. Frank Wisner was the PDAS, the Principal DAS. You must have done an oral history on Frank Wisner. If not, you certainly should. And you know his background and his dad and all of that. And then Princeton Lyman who later went on to be Ambassador in South Africa and Assistant Secretary for IO. Jim Bishop. It was a terrific, terrific front office and we had real smart office directors, Ed Perkins who went on to become the Director General of the Foreign Service, people at that level, Ed Bogosian, Bob Frasure, the late Bob Frasure, and Nancy Ely-Raphael and many other people were either in the Bureau or working on these issues. And it was really, it was just fabulous to be in AF at that point.

CHESTER ARTHUR CROCKER
Assistant Secretary for African Affairs
Washington, DC (1981-1989)

Assistant Secretary Crocker was born and raised in New York and educated at Ohio State University and the School for Strategic and International Studies (SAIS). He served on the National Security Council (1970-1972), as Professor at Georgetown University (1972-1977), and as Director for African Affairs at the Center for Strategic and International Affairs (1976-1980). In 1981 he was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and served in that capacity until 1989, at which time he rejoined the faculty of Georgetown University. Mr. Crocker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

CROCKER: And then secondly we faced the challenge of what to do about Gaddafi. Gaddafi at a

minimum had to be kept in his box. He was nothing but trouble.

He had a skillful diplomacy of subversion and corruption and buying influence and building mosques in places where there was limited local enthusiasm for them. Lots of brown envelopes were passed.

And he wanted to take over the OAU, as it then was. He wanted to destabilize longstanding friends of the United States. He probably was active in as many as a dozen neighboring countries in the Sahel region of West Africa, Central Africa.

Very active in Chad, seeking to bolster his claim to what was called the Aouzou Strip, which is a northern band of territory that touches the Chadian-Libyan border.

So Gaddafi was active across the board and this represented for us a significant policy challenge and also a thrust of our policy in terms of response.

That response consisted of bolstering friends, providing significant foreign assistance, both economic and military. And if you look at the pattern of U.S. assistance in the Eighties, it is explained in part by supporting governments that actually worked, where we could find them. Secondly, supporting governments that we saw as moving away from Moscow. Obviously, supporting longstanding friends that faced, as we saw it, threats from Soviet clients or from Libyan clients, or from Libya itself. So that is somewhat the pattern of U.S. assistance.

Q: With Libya, what was motivating Gaddafi, as we saw it at the time? Was it ego, creating an empire, just being a bad boy, or what, as we saw it?

CROCKER: As we saw it and probably still do see it, to some extent, because some things don't ever change.

Well, first of all, we saw him as having somewhat of a free hand, because a little money goes a long way in sub-Saharan Africa. And here was a guy with a big ego and a big wallet playing in a very small pond, if you like. And for him I think it was irresistible as a way of accumulating people who would be supporters, or people who would be at least somewhat responsive to his influence.

We did not see him as a Soviet cats paw, but we saw him as falling sometimes into exactly the same game of destabilization. So our game was to try to stabilize fragile places that risked falling into the wrong hands. That was the way we defined our efforts.

So I think we saw him as somewhat of a Castro-like figure, an African *caudillo*, or an Arab *caudillo*, very nationalistic, very ambitious, eager to stand up to the US

He would have loved to have taken over a whole band of other states, been a Nasser-like figure, if you like.

Q: Well did we find that these other states, granted a little money goes a long way in that particular area, but at the same time I would think that the leaders, Marxist or what have you,

would be somewhat dubious about getting too close to a guy like Gaddafi.

I'm told by people who dealt with him, they thought he was a little bit nuts and I'm sure this came across to others. This wasn't somebody you wanted to give the family jewels to.

CROCKER: That's absolutely right and as soon as we made clear our interest in being a helpful partner and also using our eyes and ears to warn people, warn our friends in African countries, what he was up to, using our intelligence, they were quite responsive.

They saw exactly the point that you're making, that you want to sup with a long spoon when you sup with the devil, so to speak.

But he often brought a lot of resources with him, so that people were tempted. This was not just an East-West arena. It was Gaddafi trolling for influence with his neighbors.

Q: I have a wonderful description from an interview I did with Tony Quainton, who was at that time our ambassador to the Central African Empire, where Gaddafi came and distributed gifts and they all turned Muslim, the whole leadership turned Muslim, until it was cocktail time and then they converted again.

We saw Libyan activity in as many as twenty different African countries that I would describe as subversive: Libyans renting, buying or suborning African governments or political elites that were generally speaking quite weak and in some cases open to Libyan diplomacy, unless we were pretty active.

So we had a task there of trying to counter what we saw as unhelpful Libyan behavior. I want to emphasize we did not equate Libya in any way with Soviet activity. We never thought the Libyans were doing Soviet bidding or *vice versa*.

The Libyans had their own games, but they were playing games. They'd arrive in countries that were in need to foreign exchange with brown envelopes full of hundred dollar bills and try to insinuate themselves with the ministry of fisheries or the ministry of culture and talk about building fancy mosques and what they were really trying to do was to buy influence and sometimes to subvert pro-Western governments.

DAVID M. EVANS
Political Advisor to Commander-in-Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe
London (1982-1986)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security

and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: *Were you involved with, or was it on your watch, when there was the bombing of Libya*?

EVANS: Yes, that was one of the last things. That was in April of 1986.

Q: *Could you explain what started that and how your office dealt with that?*

EVANS: Parallel to the events going on in and off of Lebanon, was the ongoing concern about Libya and its activities in and support of terrorism, sometimes linked to the Syrian nexus, sometimes completely independent of it. Qadhafi, head of Libya, was emboldened, I think by other terrorist activities going on. He, perhaps, felt that he wanted to show them that he could play the terrorist game too. In any event, the Libyans were active in Europe. There was the bombing of the Berlin nightclub, La Belle, which was regarded as the result of Libyan terrorists, although I think you have argued that it could have been the Syrians, too. In any event, the official U.S. policy was that it was the Libyans who were involved. The second Libyan activity took place in the Gulf of Sidra, which is the Gulf north of Libya, in the Mediterranean, and brings into question how far a country has sovereign rights from ashore. The Libyans felt that they owned all of the Gulf of Sidra, which makes a large indentation. Libya, in effect, is like a "U." The Gulf of Sidra goes down the middle. Libya felt that they should have the whole area of the Gulf of Sidra. The U.S. position was that it was part of the Mediterranean Sea and, therefore, the Libyans only had sovereignty three miles off the coast. That meant the middle of the Gulf of Sidra was international waters, according to our theory. It was a constant challenge that the Libyans would try to assert their right to the whole of the Gulf of Sidra, we would then assert our right to be there and there would be some limited hostilities. As I recall, the issue that directly lead to the decision to bomb Libya in April of 1986, was the alleged Libyan role in the La Belle bombing in Berlin. That operation was the third major highlight, if you want to call it that, of the time I was there. It was taken in conjunction with the Air Force operating out of Mildenhall (U.S. Air Force base, England). One of the tricky diplomatic questions was getting flight permission for these Air Force planes to get down to Libya. The French refused them permission. So, the planes had to fly a longer way to get there, avoiding France. That was one issue. There were also other issues about the Naval forces. The Navy actually was more of a support for that operation which was a bombing mission carried about by Mendenhall. As I recall, there were Naval operations in support of it. We worked, of course, extremely closely with the U.S. Air Force.

Q: *Was there any dialogue at that time? We had the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean with carrier forces with a hell of a lot of planes and all. All of a sudden, we say we have to use F-111s, which are Air Force planes based in England. It became a very sticky diplomatic incident. France got mad. We got very mad at France. Was there any discussion that you recall about people saying, "Hell, the Sixth Fleet can do this? Why do we need these Air Force planes?"*

EVANS: Yes, I think there was. I'm trying to remember if there was any answer that I was aware of. The Navy felt very proprietary about Libya. Libyans are our problem. In fact, I went to Malta to talk with our ambassador about Libyan use of Malta for terrorist purposes. Speaking of that, you

may recall that it was in Malta that the Libyan role was established that it was involved in the bombing of PanAm 103 in December of 1988. The Navy, I think, was a little chagrined that the Air Force was called in. But the explanation was that the Air Force could fly higher than the Navy. There was tremendous concern that no pilot be shot down and captured. I think that was one of the major reasons. Therefore, I think it was felt that the Air Force, even though there was this longer distance to go, could carry out a cleaner or safer raid than the Navy. There might have been more casualties with the Navy which were unacceptable. Obviously, the last thing you would want is a captured U.S. military person. Then, you have to go and give away everything that you intended to be getting back. I think that was the main reason.

Q: *Did you have much diplomatic footwork to do after this Libyan raid, to explain what we were doing and all?*

EVANS: We all did in a sense. Particularly, when, as usual these things end up killing a lot of civilians. However, the point that perhaps we made was that we were sending a message to Qadhafi. It appeared after that time that Qadhafi did hold back on his terrorist operations. You could argue that PanAm 103 was his answer to it. I don't know if that was the case or not. It was two years later, and there may have been other reasons why PanAm 103 happened. I'm not totally sure that the Libyans were the ones involved in PanAm 103. In general, it was felt that it was successful because it did stop the very prevalent and overt terrorist operations of Libya.

Q: *The Bush Administration came in toward the close of your time?*

EVANS: Well, that gets into the dynamics of the closure of this meeting. We are in now, let's say, late 1988. There was a sense of the Communist glacier receding or the Communist structure cracking up, but nobody foresaw what would happen a year later. In the 1988 election, George Bush had been elected President. We knew that a similar mandate and instructions would probably flow from Washington. In mid-December of 1988 . . . I might mention a historical note - that two young women came to see me were friends of my secretary. I chatted with them because my secretary said one of them was studying Russian or something. I guess two days later, I got word that PanAm 103 had been blown up. These two girls were on the plane. We were very concerned that some of our staff was on the plane, but they weren't. That was an experience that hit us very hard.

Q: *This was a plane that was blown up apparently by Libyan agents?*

EVANS: That I guess is the best analysis people have come up with. There was some evidence that they had used transit facilities in Malta, as I recall. There was also evidence that the Popular Liberation Organization of Palestine had been involved in this. I forget why. I had, as you know, from my previous discussion, spent four and one-half years working in London with the Navy and dealing largely with ending terrorism. I forget how I saw them, but I did follow the fact that these PFLP cells were operating in Germany. The Germans had made some arrests shortly before. To me, it is still a murky issue. There is some thought that the Iranians might have been behind it or have sponsored it in retaliation for the shoot down in the August of the Iranian passenger Airbus over the Persian Gulf. I don't think we ever knew for sure. Officially, it was the Libyans who did it. Anyway, that was a defining moment because it was a great concern to us. There were a lot of

late-night frantic calls back and forth. Everybody was trying to account for staffers because at that point, our conference had more or less come to an end and some of those staffers started going home for Christmas break.

KENTON W. KEITH
Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia, USIA
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Today is October 4, 1999. What happened in 1983?

KEITH: I left Brazil and went back to Washington as deputy director for Near East and South Asia. That was a tour that eventually lasted just two years – '83-'85, and then I went off to Paris. As deputy area director, I handled mostly the Arab world and North Africa, as my boss was a South Asianist and he basically handled the South Asian posts. We split duties but each of us focused on the area of his expertise.

Q: How about the Libyan bombing?

KEITH: That was also afterward. The relationship with Libya was very much a part of our concerns at the time. The mental stability of Qadhafi was a big question and it wasn't just Americans saying that the colonel was a little apt to go off the deep end but Arabs as well. They sometimes found him amusing but also quite an unstable and dangerous man.

Q: At any point, were we looking at how to get through to this man?

KEITH: Especially in the earliest days after the previous regime there was a desire to have a relationship with him. We had a very strong relationship with the old King and his government before the revolution. We had a base in Libya. Wheelus. I think the history of that period will show that there were some missed opportunities on both sides. But finding a rapprochement with Qadhafi was not an easy matter.

Q: The head of USIA at this point was Charles Wick, a controversial figure. He could get funds which other directors probably couldn't. He had political clout. How did you find him and his impact on what you all were doing?

KEITH: I think you touched on the important things. He brought with him something that too rarely have the directors of USIA had and that is political clout. Ed Murrow had it. Carl Rowan had

it to a certain extent. We really didn't have anybody after that with that kind of political power or name recognition until Charles Wick came, bringing with him the personal relationship between the Wicks and the Reagans, That relationship certainly benefited USIA; there was a spike in the USIA budget at that time. He moved us into the television age. He was a man of great enthusiasm when he was with USIA. I thought his enthusiasm for his international television projects worked somewhat to the detriment of other areas of public diplomacy, but he definitely deserves credit for moving us into the television age.

Q: Did he have a point of view or was he reaching down as you were working on this very politically charged area of the world?

KEITH: I think he learned important lessons early in the game. He was not a policy man. He didn't have a deep of understanding of international affairs. In the earliest point in his Poland v. Poland fiasco, when he sought to influence affairs in Poland with a kind of political variety show, the Agency was in danger of becoming a laughing stock. At that time he was surrounded by political advisers who were committed to an ideological agenda that I'm not sure even he was comfortable with. I'm fairly certain he was uncomfortable with some of the politically-appointed ideologues who came into USIA under the sponsorship of right wing figures on the Hill. I think he felt they were a distraction to his main goal, which was modernizing the Agency's delivery system. Eventually he began to get rid of them. But he really didn't focus on those things until they became an embarrassment. Les Lenkowsky was the deputy director of USIA for much of the time that I was in Washington. He was and remains a person with a very conservative political agenda. He made no secret of that fact while he was there.

The enemies list. You've probably heard many of my colleagues talk about the enemies list. Lenkowsky publicly denied the existence of an enemies list, i.e. a list of Americans whose intellectual output or service in our overseas programs was prohibited because of their liberal credentials. When that became public there was outrage, and the Agency took some real blows. Lenkowsky, as you've probably heard, denied any knowledge of such a list and put the blame on "mindless gnomes in the bowels of the Agency" acting without direction. Agency employees were furious, and within a day or two people were sporting "Mindless Gnome" buttons.

In fact, Lenkowsky was one of many with neoconservative beliefs who came to prominence during the Reagan years, were less prominent under George H. W. Bush, were completely out of power under Clinton, and re-emerged with George W Bush. Under Reagan they brought with them a foreign policy agenda which was an aggressively American agenda with far less multi-nationalism than we had practiced since the end of WWII. The kind of cultural relativism or political relativism that marked a more liberal period in our history was gone. No remnants of that. There was a very strong feeling that our system - open markets, free markets, free enterprise, American democracy as a model – we should not be apologetic for these things and we should not be too eager to allow a relativist discussion. Other versions of popular governance or economic systems were irrelevant in their agenda. It was a tough period. Also, Lenkowsky and the people around him had a very enthusiastic pro-Israel agenda, to the extent that it sometimes became a problem for the Department of State, which also had quite a pro-Israeli agenda at that time. But the nuances and the steps forward that you took at the appropriate moment, the effort to try to get the sides together to fulfill a longer range agenda which was held at the State Department was sometimes threatened by

the more tactical activities at USIA. They might have taken the form of a VOA editorial that was ill-timed, that was particularly aggressive toward one or another Arab government or leader at a time when the U.S. was involved in delicate negotiations with the very same government. We were in a very confrontational stance.

But on balance the experience with Wick was probably good for USIA. He brought us kicking and screaming into the television era; he made us think about the use of new technologies; he didn't listen to people like me who talked about communication on a human level and face to face, etc. It wasn't that he didn't believe in those things necessarily. It was that the important thing to him at that moment was the use of the new technology and the establishment of USIA as a modern purveyor of information. He could be extremely persuasive. I observed him in action with ministers in Brazil and Jordan, and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia, and they took him quite seriously

Q: Did you find yourself acting as one of the gnomes in USIA?

KEITH: Vis-à-vis Lenkowsky I certainly considered myself one of the gnomes. In fact, I sported a gnome button, that I still possess, for some days after this comment was made in public. As deputy director of NEA, I was responsible for interacting with the Department and with the media on issues of public diplomacy and of public policy. So, when the part of USIA that was responsible for putting out material – brochures, pamphlets, and so on – wanted to do a piece on terrorism in the Middle East, it had to come through my office. I wasn't the final arbiter, of course. It would be an issue that would be discussed also with the appropriate State desk, but there was a political support structure for people who had a more aggressive propaganda agenda in those days – political support structure on the Hill and in academia and think tanks – whether it was the Heritage Foundation or other foundations who supported a more aggressive and more conservative agenda. So, those of us who were in the mode of the chess player moving pieces as it seemed to make the most sense at that moment, trying to get to a certain level of exchange and engagement between Arabs and Israelis, were in a way the opposition to that other way of thinking. I don't want to give you the idea that we had battles every day, but there was a sense that we, the gnomes, were standing in the way of effective policy action on these items.

PARKER W. BORG
Office of Counterterrorism
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Ambassador Borg was born and raised in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College and Cornell University. In 1965, after a tour with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During his career he served in Vietnam and Zaire, and in the State Department in senior positions concerning Vietnam, West Africa and Counter Terrorism. He served as US Ambassador to Mali (1981-1984) and to Iceland from 1993 to 1996. Ambassador Borg was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in2002.

BORG: In every country it's a ministry of interior matter. What we found in Europe was separate terrorist groups operating within almost every one of the countries from across the border in the next country, and they were usually given free rein. German terrorists were given free rein in France, and the Belgian terrorists were given free rein in Germany, and the French could get free rein in Italy, and so forth. So everybody was looking the other way and pretending that, well, "As long as they don't bother us here, it's not a problem." In all of our meetings with Europeans, we talked about these sorts of issues and that they were never going to deal effectively with the European terrorism problem until they could recognize that anarchist terrorists against any group are a threat to every group, and that the French had to turn against all of the Germans and the Spaniards that were working within their country, and the Spaniards had to turn against the Italians and the French that were working in their country, and so forth. It took awhile. There was a bombing in Berlin of a discotheque in late 1985, and we said it was a Libyan connection. I'll have to check my dates on this. A delegation went to Europe headed by Oakley, which went around from one country to the next and talked with them about, "We need to do something about this Libyan connection with these bombings, and unless we can get some kind of unified action, the United States will take action by itself." The Europeans said, "Yes, yes, yes," and a month later nothing had happened. I think it was the Deputy Secretary who was the next person who went out on a similar mission to talk with the Europeans about the need for common action against terrorism. Again, lots of head nodding and lots of jawboning, but nothing happened. It was at this point that the United States decided to take action itself. I think this may have been April of '86. We sent our planes against Benghazi and Tripoli. We bombed strategic points in these two cities which sent the Europeans aghast. We went back to them and said, "Look, we'd been talking with you about this. We've said that you need to take action, we all need to take action together, and that if you weren't going to act with us, then we were going to act on our own." The Europeans suddenly sat up and took notice. They did the things that we had suggested they do some time before, close down the Air Libya offices that were being used for counterterrorism purposes, to expel a certain number of Libyan diplomats who had been involved in questionable activities, and essentially adopted our agenda. But, more than that, they began meeting within the European Union about terrorism issues in general and began cleaning up their own act and halting the complicities that separate governments had with terrorist groups within their own country. It was at that point that European terrorism sort of dried up, and there really hasn't been much talk since 1986 of the Bader Meinhof gang, of the Red Army faction, all these groups. They just disappeared, and it was a question in my mind that the Europeans finally got together and said, "Hey, we've got to do something about this. We've each got to halt the terrorist activities that are happening against our neighbors from within our own country." An important factor leading them to do this was the way we had acted against Libya.

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Q: On the Libyan bombing, what was the initial reaction you were getting from the Europeans: "How could you?" or...?

BORG: They were absolutely apoplectic. If you remember correctly, the British permitted us to use their bases, but the French insisted that we fly around France and not even fly over France for the strikes. I think we had to fly through the Straits of Gibraltar to get there. But it was one of those tempests that lasted for a short period of time and then they got their act together and they were not

as hostile afterwards. They were much more cooperative afterwards. It wasn't that we were threatening to blow up any other country, but within each country the shift occurred to the people who were saying, "You know, we've got a serious problem and we have to deal with it," and complacency was overtaken.

DAVID E. LONG
Office of Counterterrorism
Washington, DC (1984-1986)

Mr. Long was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. He was educated at Davidson College, the Fletcher School and the University of North Carolina. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, Mr. Long studied Arabic and was posted to Khartoum. Subsequent postings were Jeddah and, for further Arabic language studies, Tangier and Beirut. Mr. Long became one of the Departments senior Arab and Middle East experts, serving in INR as Director and on the Policy Planning Staff. He authored several books dealing with Arab and Middle East matters as well as on Terrorism and Counter- Terrorism. His expertise brought him visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and the Coast Guard Academy. Mr. Long was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: How about on terrorism, how was Qadhafi seen at the time?

LONG: Demonized, we demonized people. I've studied this as a political scientist, and I've never really satisfied myself as to why we demonize one guy and don't demonize another guy. You can come up with 'we hate Arabs' or this or that, but that doesn't do it, I don't think. We demonized Saddam and, God, if there's a demon around, he's it. We demonized Idi Amin and we demonized Qadhafi. Once we demonize someone, rightly or wrongly, then that person is a demon and then we act toward them accordingly. I would like to assume that we do it cynically, but I think that many of us don't, that actually it's more comfortable to us in our conscience to believe this crap than just to do it not believing it. Qadhafi was demonized.

I once was in a meeting with Stan Turner, Admiral Turner. He was the DCI (Director of Central Intelligence) guy. That was the time when Ambassador Steigman got me on this staff job not at CIA but on the Intelligence Community staff. Somebody heard that I knew something about Saudi Arabia, so I was invited to one of their pre-briefs, which is a wonderful idea. I wish the State Department would do it. The only people who really know in-depth what's going on in the country are the lowly desk officers. When they have these things – this was before the DCI briefs the President – they bring in people who know something. It has nothing to do with rank. You can be a GS-12 or you can be director of a clandestine service, you can be anybody. They're very structured and somebody writes a paper, everybody reads it, and you go in and it's a 15-minute session and that's it. So you've got to say what's on your mind and say it quick and get out. It's fascinating. And rank does not matter. I don't know how I got invited, but it was on Qadhafi. Somebody had something, "What do you think?" because they knew I was in the State. Being a Southerner, I said, "My ole daddy he taught me, he said that when you see a hornets' nest there are only a couple of

things you can do. One is you can burn it until all of the hornets are dead, or you can just walk away and leave it, but the thing you don't want to do is poke at it and leave them alive, because they're liable to sting you."

That was not appreciated by Stan Turner. But that's what we were doing. We were creating a superpower out of this guy, because his biggest enemy was a superpower. To my way of thinking, he was not a threat to the national security of the United States. He was an irritant, a very big irritant, yes, but not a threat to our whole security, and in terrorism the same. He was demonized at the time, so when we were dealing with his terrorism, it was hard to do.

If you remember, we bombed Libya; that's an interesting story. In the previous December, two airports, Rome and Vienna, were attacked by Abu Nidal's group and a lot Americans were killed. I had sort of anticipated that the previous summer, because we had not noticed, not confirmed but we believed, that Abu Nidal had moved from Syria to Libya. I asked CIA if they would write an unclassified paper about the Abu Nidal organization, about which nothing was known. Well, they can't do that, because they deal with so much classified stuff that they just can't. So I wrote one, and it had not been cleared by anybody. I was going to wait till after the holidays and call a meeting and see if I could beg them to clear this so we could get it out to the public. I thought we needed the public to know more about this group in case something happened.

Well, something happened before I could get this done. I think it happened on the 30th of December. So Oakley came and said, "Have you got anything on Abu Nidal?" "Well, the only thing I have is this paper, but it's not cleared." So it showed up in the press the next day. Abu Nidal was connected with Libya. So there were big meetings – I wasn't privy to them – at the top levels about what could we do about it. There were those who wanted to take action against Libya because he had really gotten off the reservation on this and we were able to trace this directly to Qadhafi. Cooler heads prevailing, we told Qadhafi, "We know what you're doing. You do it one more time and you're going to pay." So instead of taking any kind of military action, we were told to put more sanctions on them. Well, the problem was we had invoked every law that had sanctions in it already against them except one, and this was the Emergency Powers Act, which says that if a country is a national security threat to the United States, which obviously he was not, you could institute a total embargo on them. And we did, and this meant that if you have a totally British firm that was owned by an American owner and the American owner could not deal with it and they went to the British firm then you had a problem "what do you do"? and I remember the deputy secretary, a very savvy guy said, cause people wanted to go after those firms, so he said, "no, we don't want a lawsuit, we'll go with an open mouth policy".

We'll tell everybody which companies are having their foreign subsidiaries do business with them, and that will be such a black eye that they're going to lose market share and they won't do it; and sure enough it worked. Then the Berlin disco happened.

Q: Would you explain what that was.

LONG: This was a discotheque in Berlin that was bombed by Libyan terrorists. Actually we were right behind them, and we almost got them before they got hit. He had tried several others times. In fact, we were successful against him, but this time they got through and they did it, and you knew

they did it. So, again, what do you do about it? It was clear that we were going to have to use military force because we said we would if he did any more. He had done more and we knew he was doing more, but he had not succeeded in any of the other ones and he did here. So there was a big to-do in the public media about whether or not the President was a cowboy and blah blah blah. The fact was we really didn't see that we had any choice. If you make a threat and you don't carry it out, then it's 'Katie, bar the door'. So we did it, and the fascinating thing about the response was – there were two things – one, I was asked to write letters from the President to all the Arab leaders telling them why we had to do it, because we knew that, even though they couldn't stand him, they would have to stick together as Arab brothers and criticize us. What happened was that they didn't say a word publicly, but privately they said, "Why didn't you knock him off when you had the chance?" But the good that that did was not against Qadhafi so much as it finally got the Europeans to pull up their socks. They were making money in Libya and they didn't want to admit that terrorism is everybody's problem, not just somebody else's problem, and they were always saying, "This is the Americans' problem. We are not involved in this." Well, this happened in Berlin and it happened in several other places. Their intelligence services knew it, but it didn't come out in public because it was...

Q: Had some shoot-outs in Paris too, I think.

LONG: And in Turkey. So the decision was made on our part at the highest level to let folks know why we knew he did it. Some intelligence folks were very upset about that, but we did, because the Europeans were trying to say, "We don't know what the Americans are talking about. They're just a bunch of cowboys over there." Well, they knew full well what we were doing and they didn't think we would spill the beans as to why we knew. We did, and it forced them to pull up their socks.

Q: These are some intercepted calls, telephone calls, I think.

LONG: Yes, right, which to this day I couldn't even talk about except it came out in *Newsweek*. It was a calculated decision to make, and the Europeans as a result of that got real serious for really the first time, I think. They were serious sporadically – but really got serious in intelligence cooperation and sharing and law enforcement against terrorism. So the effect of this was salutary, not necessarily on stopping Qadhafi per se but on increasing our cooperation with the Europeans. When they would have a meeting of the Economic Seven, or however many there were back then, they discussed it, and Oakley would be going along with Shultz to discuss this. So when you look at a single case such as this one, the implications of it go like dropping a block in a pond and seeing how far out the ripples go.

Q: Except for the PanAm 103, Qadhafi pretty well moved out of that business, didn't he?

LONG: There's a story told about a fellow who has a flat tire in front of an insane asylum. He was changing the tire and all the lug nuts fell in the moat which was between him and this island, and he didn't know what to do. This guy over on the other side of the wall on this island said, "Why don't you take one nut from the other three wheels and then you'll have three nuts on each wheel and you can drive somewhere where you can get them." He said, "That's a good idea. If you can think that up, why are you on the other side of the wall?" And the guy said, "Well, I may be crazy, but I'm

not stupid." And that to me sums up Qadhafi. Every time he would be confronted not just with a bluster or a show of force but what he thought was real…he'd gone too far. He'd back off and disappear into the woodwork until he thought nobody was looking again, and then he'd come back. That's what he did, but I think the sanctions and the loss of business and everything else that has happened to him since is what finally made him agree to send these two guys to be tried.

Q: For the PanAm 103 bombing, which is going on as of now in Holland.

LONG: Yes, as we speak. And he held out all these years.

Q: But there have been a couple other times, particularly in the Reagan Administration. They had a so-called line of depth, the Gulf of Sidra – and "don't go over this," and we went over it with a carrier force and he had the stupidity to set up some planes, which were immediately shot down.

LONG: And he stopped. Now, I am not a supporter of just carrying a big stick and flying it and that will teach them a lesson. The Israelis have been trying to teach the Arabs a lesson since 1947 and they've never succeeded, and the Arabs are trying to teach the Israelis a lesson. They don't succeed in teaching each other lessons very easily. So just to say, "As a matter of principle, you've got to teach them a lesson," to me is pretty bad policy, but there are times – and the ones we are talking about, I think, are excellent examples – that there are times when teaching a guy a lesson will work, if he hurts bad enough.

MICHAEL USSERY
Deputy Assistant Secretary for North Africa
Washington, DC (1985-1988)

Ambassador Ussery war born and raised in Columbia, South Carolina. He was educated at Newberry College and Georgia State University. He joined the state department in 1981 as a congressional relations officer in the International Organizations Bureau. He was appointed as the White House liaison with the state department in 1983. He served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for North Africa from 1985 to 1988. His final appointment came as the Ambassador to Morocco from 1989 to 1992. Ambassador Ussery was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *When you say North Africa, what do you mean?*

USSERY: Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia. And I was in the job a month when there were the tourist airport bombings in Rome and Vienna. And smoking guns pointed to Qadhafi in Libya, and we began a two-year confrontation against Libya. It was my first real what I call foreign policy or bilateral or regional job -- I had done other nice things around the core of foreign policy for four years at the State Department -- and I went in to see Arnie Raphel and we talked about, well, what are we going to do, how are we going to handle this Libyan crisis? And he says, "We're going to put together a 12-agency task force on Libya." I said that sounds like a great idea because that's

really going to be an all-engulfing kind of job, and all that. I didn't know anything about Libya, and I said, "But who are you going to get to chair it?" He said, "You're the DAS -- you are." And I said, "Me?" I don't really know anything yet about Libya. I've only been here a month." He said, "Yes, but it's your job, and we're not going to give up control of Libya. You've got to become Mr. Libya." I spent two years, I probably spent close to 90 percent of my time, on Libya, 10 percent on the rest of the Maghreb. But the job included congressional and press affairs for the entire region. At the time you had the Afghan War; you had things hot in Lebanon; you had the Iran-Iraq War, the Mideast Peace Process -- it was fantastic to be involved in those issues every day. I loved it. And I became the chairman of a task force to do a billion-dollar military arms sale through the Congress to Saudi Arabia. I also became involved, because of congressional interest in Afghanistan, in helping further the humanitarian supplies going to the Afghans. I once went on a cargo plane into Pakistan and back. So it was really terrific. In fact, most of the time I've spent in European capitals was during this job because of the need to coordinate with the West Europeans on Libya.

Q: *Let's focus on Libya, and then we'll move to some of the other areas. In the first place, how did you come up to snuff on Libya?*

USSERY: By immersion, by being thrown in the river and told to try to swim.

Q: *How was Qadhafi seen at that time by us, and then what were some of the forces at play?*

USSERY: Qadhafi was always seen as a little bit crazy and very much dangerous, very destabilizing, very threatening to Tunisia, to Egypt, to the Sudan, trying to build an elaborate terrorism network. Certainly, during that two-year period, the biggest criticisms we took, which I was comfortable with defending, were that we shouldn't have bombed him -- and I certainly feel it was the right thing, the military attack in mid-April 1986 -- and the other was that we were elevating him and making him more important than he was and deserved to be. Maybe, but sometimes my view is that if some guy's trying to hold a gun to you and trying to rob you on the street, it's tough to say, "Well, let's don't give this guy too much attention." But to me it was, we were reacting to him, and out of necessity.

But the first big decision came in early January. The President made a nation-wide speech, and he made the tough decision not to respond militarily against Libya but to put in far-reaching economic sanctions, prohibitions against travel and business with Libya, and to try to block American subsidiaries in Europe from doing business in Libya, and to try to get the Europeans on board. So it was really quite a major undertaking. And my job initially was to chair the emergency task force which tried economically and politically to isolate Libya to the extent possible.

Q: *On the military side, in the first place, had the Berlin explosion happened, and the bombing?*

USSERY: What happened was for three months we kept tightening the noose on Qadhafi and were pleased. Qadhafi responded by plotting four other terrorist activities, including the possible kidnapping of our ambassador in Rwanda, which we intercepted information on that and thwarted that before it ever --

Q: *Who was that, do you remember?*

USSERY: John Upton. But he did succeed in having a bomb planted in a Berlin disco, which killed a US serviceman and a Turkish woman. But that was after. What we finally built up the White House involved in pushing the military was in mid-March.

Q: *Was this '86?*

USSERY: '86. The US military finally took its ships across the line of the Gulf of Sidra.

Q: *The "Line of Death."*

USSERY: The Line of Death, which Qadhafi declared. Instead of the internationally accepted 13-mile limit on international waters, he drew a line which went across from the west to east of the Gulf of Sidra, and said, "Once you come in here, 13 miles doesn't apply -- you're in Libyan waters." And very few would ever test it. Of course, there had been an incident in 1981 where some American pilots crossed the line and shot down two Libyan airplanes that went out to intercept them. So Cap Weinberger finally agreed to take some ships across the Gulf. And the interesting thing I saw was that when we acted -- and maybe this, people say, is a lesson from Vietnam, and maybe it's the right lesson, but it was interesting to find out that for whatsoever we wanted to do, the Defense Department took the view, whatever we do, we do it with major overkill. We don't take one ship across; we've got a couple of aircraft carriers out there; we'll have other ships -- we go big time. And so if something happens, we have plenty of assets in place. So actually, we had to wait for some assets to come from other oceans, things like that. So in mid-March they did it. Qadhafi was stupid enough to send out some boats and missiles, and we whacked him back and knocked out everything that he threw at us, and in a day it was over. And we went on. So our critics -- particularly some here and in West Europe -- said, "Well, that's a lot of American chest-thumping, trying to make themselves feel big and roar at Qadhafi, but it doesn't really do anything. It doesn't hurt him inside Libya – it helps him inside Libya." And so then Qadhafi, after the Gulf of Sidra, launched the terrorist plans that he had going, and the bomb went off in the Berlin disco. Then President Reagan said, "Okay, now we're going to retaliate. Now we're going to attack Libya."

Q: *Prior to this attacking Libya, what were you getting from the Europeans, particularly the French, the Italians, and in a way the British?*

USSERY: Actually, I was very pleased with the cooperation we were getting everywhere, except the Italians were a little concerned about what they might lose in the oil industry. And the French, we really had a nice little debate going with the French about. . . . And to sort of cut to the end of it, I really learned that economic sanctions don't work very well. They're a very clumsy instrument of foreign policy, but they're an excellent instrument of foreign policy if your only alternative is military action and you don't want to go into military action. They're porous; they're controversial; you know, there are a lot of things about economic sanctions that aren't great; they hurt our own companies -- all this. But as an alternative to military action, if that's where you are, I think it can be a useful tool. I'd never want to have to be the implementer of economic sanctions again in my life, but I was surprisingly pleased at the progress we were making outside of France

up until that time. Part of our effort was also to work with the intelligence community to find those trying to sneak in goods or trying to provide services surreptitiously from the West European side. There were companies that, independent of their governments, were trying to continue doing business with Libya; and we'd find out about particular violations and try to get these companies' own governments to intervene. Usually, we had excellent cooperation if we could provide information that what we were talking about was something of military potential. We found less cooperation in oil commerce. The President ordered all Americans out of Libya, the few hundred that were there, because we didn't want anything to happen to them, we didn't want them to be taken hostage, didn't want them to be in the way if we had to exercise the military option. So anyway, I thought things were moving well, but I knew they'd never have a grand impact on Libya, except possibly over the long term, because you just can't squeeze out enough commercial ties and prevent somebody from finding alternative products on the market somewhere.

Q: *Particularly when it's oil.*

USSERY: Yes. Oil's fungible, and that's the way it goes. But anyway, I knew that we weren't heading towards destabilizing the régime. We were doing what we thought we had to do politically in the United States to be seen responding forcefully to terrorism and to try to, probably inside the Administration, vent our spleen and make ourselves feel good that we were getting tougher on Qadhafi.

Q: *Well, there had to be thought, of course, about could you destabilize this guy. What was the consensus that came up?*

USSERY: The CIA had been working on this a long time. I found that we had been providing training to Libyans outside of Libya. There had been an attempt to bring in expatriate Libyans through Tunisia in a failed raid that didn't work. And all that was very -- to me, as I started to learn about black operations through this exercise -- I was very unimpressed with our options and possibilities to destabilize or do anything effective inside Libya. Qadhafi had a very tight operation. We had very few Libyan sources of information, and fewer possibilities of inside cooperation. Unless we could create some kind of sea change, or change in the political dynamics inside Libya, we did not have reasonable hope of turning the Libyan military and others around Qadhafi against him.

Q: *Not as a subversive thing, but did we see the natural tension between Egypt and Libya sometimes springing?*

USSERY: The Egyptians really were probably more than us eager to try something to overthrow Qadhafi, and they couldn't stand him -- the Tunisians as well -- but we couldn't find a vehicle. I will explain later how I became involved in writing a covert plan to try to topple Qadhafi, something that leaked to the national media and became an issue inside the US, but that was in the summer a few months after the bombing raid on Tripoli and Benghazi. But up until the time when we started our military retaliation, we didn't have a realistic expectation of destabilizing Qadhafi.

Q: *Did we see the Soviets as being much of a factor?*

USSERY: We spent a lot of time thinking about the Soviet question. The Soviets were giving him a lot of military supplies, and again, when we talk about trying to tighten that economic noose, he had the Soviet alternatives. The Soviets could supply almost anything that the West pulled out. The biggest griping from the West Europeans was "He's just going to go buy it somewhere else. We're just depriving ourselves of a business opportunity. We're not hurting Qadhafi." But what we all were poring over and trying to analyze carefully was to what degree and how far did the Soviet Union go with this guy. And our prevailing view was the Soviets will probably not do more than public posturing as long as our actions seem to be falling short or aimed short of destabilizing Qadhafi or, let's say, of overthrowing the régime. At that point we were concerned that the Soviets would intervene, and there was the risk of a Mediterranean confrontation.

Q: *Well, we come to the point where this bomb goes off. Were we pretty sure from the beginning where the source of the bomb was?*

USSERY: We were pretty sure of the source being the Abu Nidal organization, and the issue became, was Abu Nidal acting on behest of Qadhafi with Libyan support, or more on behalf and with the support of the Syrians? And there were certainly journalists and critics in the United States who said we're going after the wrong guy, we ought to be going after the Syrians on this one. And the Syrians were hot behind the killing of 240 Marines years before in Lebanon, and we hadn't done anything. When the Syrians did something, we didn't do anything; when poor little Libya gets behind something or *may* be behind something or gets a fingerprint on something, we try to turn it into a Libyan operation. I think what we felt sure about was that the Libyans had helped the Abu Nidal operation in the Rome and Vienna airport attacks. It was much clearer than a Syrian hand. But we never could say with 100 percent certainly that Qadhafi himself ordered or sanctioned the airport attacks. We could see Libyan operatives helping Abu Nidal, but they did that on an ongoing regular basis.

Q: *How did it work out, though? I mean, at some point we became fixed on the idea that this Berlin bombing --*

USSERY: Well, then, the Berlin bombing, though, was definitely a Qadhafi operation.

Q: *Are you talking about the earlier ones, where --*

USSERY: In January.

Q: *-- the airport ones, where you weren't sure?*

USSERY: That's right, the airport ones where we weren't sure if Qadhafi himself personally ordered them or just had his intelligence network giving its ongoing support to the Abu Nidal terrorists. For the Berlin disco we intercepted messages from the Libyan Government to go ahead and bomb the facility.

Q: *So this is apparent very quickly.*

USSERY: Yes, very quickly.

Q: *Well, then, how did the order come about, I mean from the President?*

USSERY: No, the American public was surprised. There was a good cloak of secrecy around the decision to bomb Qadhafi. News broadcasts interrupted their early evening shows to announce that we were now in the process of bombing Tripoli. The media hadn't expected it. They had believed a possible attack could be decided in the next week or so, but might not be decided by the President. So it was a total success in terms of the element of surprise. The President worked with a close group inside the White House. I was told on the eve of the bombing to write a paper speculating what would happen if Qadhafi died, what would happen inside Libya. And by myself I wrote this paper, and I basically supported the idea that even if Qadhafi's lieutenants succeeded him, the Libyans' hostile foreign policy would change. You might have the same kind of political domestic politics, but you really would dramatically change the external politics and the possibility of moderation.

So that told me we were getting pretty serious about that, and only on the afternoon of the bombing was I told, be sure to stay late tonight, we're going to need to work late, which further alerted me that an attack was imminent. But that's how secret it was.

Q: *It would seem that if you're going to attack Libya, there would be a need to figure out what would be the effect or the target. I mean, in other words, when you're targeting, you really should go beyond "is this brick or concrete, and what sort of weapons do we use?"*

USSERY: That's right. There was a lot worked out between the Defense Department and. . . I'd reviewed military targeting list from back in January of that year. I'd seen a wide range of different kinds of targets and what we thought went on there, whether it was chemical or biological weapons being made in a pharmaceutical facility, where the small Libyan navy was, where their military command was, where Qadhafi's bunkers were. And the military and the NSC picked the targets and presented them to the President. I wasn't involved in targeting. When we did the Gulf of Sidra operation, I was in the Operations Center, and we were connected by audio with the military commander as he said, "Okay, now we're about to fire at a radar facility here." It was a sort of listening line to a war, and messages going back and forth, and then he'd say, "The Libyans are sending out two airplanes now against this ship, and we're going to attack, then we're going to attack, send our missiles at this target." I wasn't involved in the true military preparation; I was involved in the political and diplomatic, around the clock for four days straight, once we'd bombed Libya on April 15-16, and would go home for six or seven hours of sleep and come back and work all day and the evening as we tried to gain support around the world, defuse the issue in the United Nations, work with the American Congress and press -- that was my role.

Q: *What was the reaction from, say, Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt?*

USSERY: Their governments quickly expressed sympathy with the Libyan régime. They felt that we weren't going far enough to overthrow Qadhafi, and they'd be darned if they were going to be out there looking like they supported military action against Libya. They'd be on the revenge list. So we were very disappointed with their expressions of Arab unity and brotherhood against "our brother Muammar Qadhafi and the Libyan people."

Q: *Were there problems with the American public?*

USSERY: Well, there was some problem after the Gulf of Sidra, but mostly broad support. This is just a provocation, and of all times, now that you're in with Qadhafi, why do you have to send ships now to do what we profess was just a routing testing? And the view was, look, if you don't challenge the right to cross that line, then over time, you allow his claim to stand. And of course, they were like, "This is a provocation, now's the worst time, you could have waited a year to test this, "bla-bla-bla. Of course, there was truth to that.

But when we bombed Tripoli and Benghazi on April 15, there was great American public support for the military attack on Libya and surprisingly good public support in Europe, maybe more than I had imagined, though the governments there were more critical -- except our allies the Brits. You know, the governments felt we were being the reckless Rambo Americans, and Ronald Reagan was being a Rambo cowboy maverick leader again. But the people in Europe were very supportive, and that quickly tempered the support of the governments in Europe, and they saw that we were having success, and it had certainly thrown Qadhafi and his régime into turmoil, something of a tizzy, and so the reaction came around.

Support in Congress was very strong, and I remember I was called and told, "Look, Senator Kennedy needs somebody to go up and brief him right now on why we've attacked Libya." And I went, "Oh, God, well, Ted Kennedy, liberal Democrat, he doesn't like that we'd gone out there and done this macho foreign policy, and I've got to go up there and take the heat." So I went up there. I saw a group of other senators who were very supportive, applauded President Reagan for attacking Libya. I said, "Well, I've got to go in and see Senator Kennedy." And Kennedy said, "Look, I'm about to go take off on a flight to Boston. I've got to know what to say when the reporters meet me at the bottom of the airplane in three hours. Tell me." And he couldn't have been more supportive. He said, "This is great. I just need to know what's behind it." I said, "Well, he's about to launch more terrorist attacks. Here's what was going on." And I said, "And we even found out he had a terrorist plan to kidnap our ambassador in Rwanda." And Kennedy paused, looked at me, looked around the room (and there was only Kennedy and I in the room), and he said in his famous Boston Kennedy accent with a little bit of stuttering, "W-well, where's Rwanda *now*?" And I could tell, of course, he had no idea where the hell Rwanda was. This was between the horrendous genocide in the '70's and what would happen a few years later when we'd all know where Rwanda was, or is. And so I, being the diplomat I think I was becoming, said, "Yes, that's right, Senator, in Central Africa." He said, "Yes, yes, that's what I thought."

And so anyway, the support in the US was great. It gave a big boost in the polls to Reagan, but that wasn't the objective. And all the predictions of grand support for Qadhafi inside Libya and of tremendous support for the Arab World for Libya really didn't come true.

Q: *Were you running across something, as I've had my Foreign Service career and afterwards, one of the great, I think, myths is, "Well, if you do this, they'll be Arab mobs in the streets in all the capitals," and I've watched these Arabist experts -- some of the people whom I've interviewed and know well -- and they still talk about these mobs.*

USSERY: That's right, and that was the case back then. And of course, there I was, new to the Arab World, and my instincts told me that this doesn't make sense. Nobody likes this guy. And there was a case where, you know, I said, Listen to your gut. I mean, not that it was my decision, but I was in there having to advocate and lobby what our course of action should be and actually I was for more military action from the get-go, from January, than most people and was definitely supporting military action. And my gut said, This is not true; it doesn't make sense. Why would all these people come out? Why would these governments hurt their relationship with the US for what we do in response to being attacked by Qadhafi? And it turned out, you know, even when I tried in my usual manner to reach out over those months to people who were experts on Libya in the United States -- at Harvard, at Columbia, other places -- and tried to get a view outside of just the US Government view of Libya and understand it, learn -- you asked, how did I learn? By immersion, but that was part of it; I'd read what I could, I'd reach out to people, and people who totally disagreed with our policy, from January -- I still felt I want to go for a lot of communication -- and they always predicted to me, "It'll be a disaster if you ever attack this guy militarily, and it will be throughout the Arab World." And after our military strikes in April, these people, some of them, were calling me and saying, "Well, you know, I tell you what, I'm really surprised. I never would have believed that it would have looked like this or that you would have had this reaction." And so that was gratifying.

Q: *Well, I think this probably is a good time to cut. And I'll put where we want to talk. We've been talking about the bombing of Libya and the immediate aftermath, but let's talk for the longer term, what happened, any developments internally in Libya and responses from there as seen from your perspective in the DAS job up to '88, and then also we want to talk about the developments during this time, when we move away from Libya, in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, and also did you get involved in the PLO, Palestinian Affairs?*

USSERY: Not really, more involved in Morocco, so I think what I hope we do cover then is a little more about the South Asia and the Maghreb in general, and in fact, I used to say I worked more on the wings. I didn't work as much then on the Mideast Peace Process other than trying to get the Maghrebis behind our position. I worked more on bilaterals there and more on the Afghan War, and then we'll talk about how in the summer I found myself involved in a national controversy over the plan to try to overthrow Qadhafi. That will probably cover my NEA experience very well.

LEONARD H. ROBINSON, JR.
State Department, Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs
Washington, DC (1990-1993)

Mr. Robinson was born and raised in North Carolina. After graduating from Ohio State University he joined the Peace Corp, serving first in India and later at Peace Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C. His varied career took him to Capitol Hill, to AID and to the State Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. Mr. Robinson was also active in a number of private organizations having to do with African Development and with Population Programs. Mr. Robinson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: What was the role of Libya? What was Taylor after? What were the issues?

ROBINSON: Taylor wanted power. He wanted to be head of state. He wanted to take over the executive mansion. That was the prize. He had been trained in Libya along with Foday Sankoh who later became the principal guerilla leader in Sierra Leone. There were about eight of them trained in Libya. They were armed and financial resources were provided. There was a fairly well documented connection between Libya and Burkina Faso insofar as the NPSL guerilla group was concerned. The principal objective of Charles Taylor was to become head of state of Liberia. Eventually he succeeded.

Q: What was Qadhafi of Libya doing?

ROBINSON: Qadhafi had always had in mind a grand scheme in which he would have his tentacles in every country in Africa. Certainly at that time, he did have his tentacles in practically every country in Africa through the use of his oil-generated resources and his various emissaries and agents and spies. Qadhafi's reach across the continent was fairly significant. A lot of it was *sub rosa* but it was there nonetheless as we could tell from our various sources. I would also say that Qadhafi always had designs on as much territory as he could reach. Not that his ideas were imperialistic, but he certainly wanted to have political and religious influence in as many parts of African continent–and perhaps others as well -- as possible. The fact that Liberia had a special relationship with the United States was probably a factor in Qadhafi's calculations. Remember that we checked Qadhafi's ambition in the Haidzu strip in Chad back in the early 1980s when there was an aggression.

Q: This has become known sometimes as the Toyota wars.

ROBINSON: That's right. So I think it was to some extent a finger in the eye of the United States that Qadhafi was sticking because he was certainly working in collaboration sometimes with the French–and sometimes not. We certainly prevented Qadhafi from taking over and penetrating into Northern Chad at that time.

Q: At that time, were we thinking of doing something with Qadhafi, saying knock it off or we will hit you again as we had after the…

ROBINSON: Something did happen in the Reagan administration.

Q: And that stopped his activities?

ROBINSON: That stopped him. It checked him for a long period of time. He maintained an extremely low profile. It was difficult initially to find the Qadhafi or the Libyan fingerprint on what was happening in Liberia, but there is no question it was there. I think, in his own low key way, he saw it as a relatively risk free way of irritating Washington.

G. JONATHON GREENWALD
Office of the Special Representative for Counterterrorism
Washington, DC (1991-1993)

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Greenwald earned degrees for Princeton University and Harvard Law School. His first government assignment was General Counsel in the Department of the Air Force. He later transferred to the Department of State, where he served as legal advisor as well as Political Officer, both in Washington and in various assignments abroad. His foreign posts include Germany (East and West Berlin), Yugoslavia, Hungary and Belgium. He also had assignments concerning anti-terrorism.

GREENWALD: It's been resumed in different ways at different times since then, but during those two years that I was in Washington working on it from 1991 to 1993, the follow-on with Syria always remained in limbo. There was another major Middle Eastern activity, which was the effort to deal with the Lockerbie bombing. When I came to the office, the effort to establish responsibility for that was reaching its culmination in the Justice Department and the FBI investigation, which was being conducted in great secrecy. There was compartmentalization within the office, and at that point I had nothing to do with it. After I had been in the office about four months, in the early fall of 1991, the Justice Department released its findings, its conclusions that that bombing had been carried out by Libyan government agents who were also responsible for a similar bombing that brought down an Air France plane in northern Africa a short time before that. That bombing, by the way, resulted in the death of the wife of our ambassador to Chad, Bob Pugh, who was a good friend. Both of them had visited us on their way out to Chad in Berlin not long before that tragedy. The question was how would the United States respond. During that period before I became involved in it, the decision was reached that we would not respond militarily, we would not do what we had done after the bombing of the discotheque in Berlin a few years earlier when President Reagan had ordered a bombing raid on Libya. That was an event in effect of hot blood, and this was already quite some time after the bombing, and it was felt that the world wouldn't support that kind of reaction, that we needed to have a diplomatic approach, diplomatic strategy for dealing with it. Then it was turned over to the Office of Counterterrorism in the State Department to come up with that diplomatic strategy, and at that point I was brought in as part of my responsibilities as an office director, and we spent a very large part of the two years that I was in that office working on that problem. It was one in which we worked very closely with the British and French, the British who had also suffered in the Lockerbie bombing. The plane had fallen on the town of Lockerbie, and a number of citizens of that town had died as well as British citizens who had been on the plane. The French were deeply involved because of the Air France bombing. The first task was for the three of us to come to an agreement among ourselves as to how we would proceed and what we would want to do, and then we had to sell it to others. The basic approach that was decided upon was to go to the Security Council of the United Nations and get the Security Council to support our demand that Libya turn over for trial in the United States or in Scotland the named agents that we felt were directly responsible for the Lockerbie bombing and for Libya to equally cooperate with a French judicial procedure for the Air France bombing. We essentially succeeded in the Security Council with a series of resolutions, first Chapter 6, which is the non-binding, hortatory resolutions under the charter, and then move into Chapter 7 when Chapter 6 didn't work, Chapter 7 meaning mandatory binding resolutions that all members of the

United Nations are required to adhere to and implement under the charter which is binding international law. Those Chapter 7 resolutions required all states to cut off civil aviation contacts with Libya, which meant that the Libyan-Arab airlines could no longer fly anywhere outside of the boundaries of Libya, and there were a number of other restrictions. All of those restrictions were to continue until Libya proved that it had cut off all contacts with terrorists and support of terrorism and turned over the individuals for trial in the United States or the U.K. and satisfy the French judicial authorities. That was a major success at the time. It had put Libya in a box and isolated it. The Libyans went to some considerable lengths to demonstrate that they were not supporting terrorism, that they were cutting their ties to terrorist groups that we had pointed out they did have ties to, from the IRA through Middle Eastern groups. It had an effect, in other words, on Libya's involvement in the terrorist scene and it made Libya and still makes Libya very cautious about its activities for fear that there could be severe retribution if it had its hand caught in the cookie jar again, but it didn't lead to the turnover of the individuals for trial in Scotland or in the United States and, in fact, this is still very much an open point. [Ed. note: The individuals were later turned over and tried in the U.K.] It's only periodically in the news, but now five and six years after the events in the Security Council, the task we're still facing is to maintain pressure, increase pressure in the international community on Libya to meet those conditions, lest gradually the sanctions erode. So it's still very much an open question whether our strategy will in fact prove ultimately to be successful or not, but during those two years that I was involved in it, we achieved the goals we set ourselves but not the ultimate goals that were set. So I felt some sense of accomplishment, but it was an incomplete sense, because clearly we were still in the middle of a situation which you couldn't judge in 1993 when I left that office.

CHARLES O. CECIL
Chargé d'Affaires
Tripoli (2006-2007)

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

Note: Subsequently, Ambassador Cecil served as Chargé d'affaires of the US Interest Section of the Belgian Embassy in Tripoli, Libya from 2006 to 2009.

Q: Chuck, do you want to tell how you ended up in Libya and then we'll talk about Libya.

CECIL: The period that we're going to be talking about is specifically November 15th, 2006 until July 6th, 2007. For one week short of eight months I was chargé there. I think for the reader or the listener, I should briefly sketch some of the important historical points that led to our re-opening in

Libya and led to my going. Probably the starting point would be in April of 1999 when Libya turned over the two suspects in the Lockerbie Pan Am 103 bombing case. They were transferred to a Scottish court in the Netherlands for trial. Then in October of 2001 the United States and the UK began meetings with Libyan officials to ensure that Libya would comply with international—that is, UN Security Council resolutions—regarding terrorism.

In August of 2003 Libya did accept responsibility for the actions of its officials in the Pan Am 103 bombing. It set up an escrow fund to compensate the families of the victims. Because of that, in September 2003 the Security Council lifted the sanctions on Libya and Pan Am 103 families began to receive money from the escrow account.

On December 19, 2003 to be specific, Libya announced its intention to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction (it had a rudimentary nuclear research program, and a program to weaponize chemical agents) and to give up missiles that it had, to bring itself into compliance with an international missile control regime. Libya announced that it would turn its missiles over to the west or dismantle them.

On February 8, 2004 the United States reopened an interest section in Tripoli under the Belgian flag. Later in February of that month we announced the lifting of our travel ban on travel to Libya. We allowed companies to once again do business in Libya. We invited Libya to open an interest section in Washington. It was really the beginning of the return to substantive relationships.

I'm trying to skip some of the points and will let the real student of Libya go into other sources. I just want to hit highlights here.

On June 28, 2004 we officially opened our own U.S. liaison office in Tripoli, no longer under the Belgian flag in other words. That was the resumption of our own direct diplomatic presence. On May 31st, 2006 the U.S. liaison office was upgraded to an embassy. Our first chargé was an officer named Greg Berry. The embassy had been functioning for almost two and a half years when I arrived. The reason I went was that Mr. Berry fell ill and was not able to finish his assignment, and the Department suddenly wanted someone else, a senior officer, to take over the post. I arrived on November 16th, 2006. Greg Berry left in October. There was a short gap between his departure and my arrival.

As we talk about the following eight months I think the issues fall generally into two categories. One I would call administrative issues. There were quite a few administrative or management issues that I needed to be involved in. Then there was a group of policy issues that I played some role in although I would say that throughout all this period David Welch, our Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs was the real action officer on the important policy issues with Libya. He was a combination *chargé d'faires/*super desk officer back here in Washington because the Libyans trusted him. They had tremendous confidence in him, and he was able during my time and the following year and a half ultimately to achieve real progress on some of the most difficult issues. I would always give David Welch the primary credit for the progress we made in our relations with Libya during 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Let's talk about the admin issues for a moment. Let's start with just a few words about sending a

person like myself, a retired officer who returned to work as what we call a WAE, a person who gets paid when actually employed. You get paid by the hour with no other benefits. There are some limitations on this kind of service. There are salary caps. A retired officer is not allowed to earn over a certain amount of money in any single year or his pension is reduced. This can be waived by the Director General, and in my case the Director General did waive it so that I did not have to leave Tripoli when I reached my salary cap.

There's another ceiling, however, a ceiling of 1,040 hours of work a year. That's six months of a year. Although I think the issue is debatable, the common practice is that the Department, the DG, does not seek a waiver to the 1,040 hour limitation. I've read the code of federal regulations very closely on that point, and I do believe that the DG does have the authority to request from OPM a waiver, but as far as I know, the conventional knowledge is he's apparently never done so. When I eventually left Tripoli the following July it was because I had reached my 1,040 hour ceiling—actually exceeded it by a bit.

Shortly after I got to Tripoli, I did list some goals and objectives in an email that I sent to Gordon Gray. Gordon was the deputy assistant secretary in the Near East bureau who was responsible for overseeing North Africa, so he was my immediate boss. I will share some of those goals and objectives with you. I certainly didn't achieve them all, but when I arrived and after I'd been there about two weeks, they seemed to me to be the types of objectives I should be working toward.

When I arrived the embassy was housed in the only five-star hotel in Tripoli, a hotel called the Corinthia. We occupied four complete floors in that hotel. Forty rooms. It was extremely vulnerable from a security point of view. A circular driveway went past the main entrance. When I arrived there was absolutely nothing that would prevent a car or a truck from driving up the circular driveway and detonating itself right in front of the main entrance. Although we were on fifth through the eighth floors we would certainly have taken the brunt of any such car bomb or truck bomb. Around the first of the year the hotel management with lots of prodding and pushing from us did finally install those kinds of bollards that go down into the ground and rise up. Most the time they're supposed to be up. That did provide a little bit of control, but the management of those bollards really left something to be desired.

One of our objectives was to move out of the hotel. Another agency in the government had already found property elsewhere in town about a 20 to 25 minute drive from the hotel, and they had rented a couple of villas and set up their operations there. There were other unoccupied villas adjacent to those occupied, so we set out to rent, lease, long-term lease, the other villas.

One of my objectives was to do everything I could to speed up that process, get us out of the hotel, and get us into the villa compound as we called it. The houses were situated in such a way that there already were walls around them or with just a little addition we could surround the whole group. It was seven villas in all we wanted. We could turn it into a small compound, and we hoped to operate from there for the period of several years that it would take to find land which was another objective on my list: Find land and buy it and build a permanent chancery.

Q: What was happening business-wise, property-wise, in Tripoli at the time?

CECIL: First of all it would be a real estate agent's dream. Property values were zooming up because with the lifting of UN sanctions and our own sanctions, Libya was once again able to participate in the global economy. Lots and lots of companies were coming, opening offices, needing residences for their people. New embassies were also opening, so there was a lot of demand for property that would be suitable for a diplomatic establishment. Libya had a special problem in that earlier during the revolution, I can't remember whether it was in the '70s or '80s, at some point all property was nationalized.

Also, coincidentally I suppose, there was a fire in the municipality headquarters building, and all property titles were destroyed in the fire, so proving ownership to a piece of property was a special problem in Tripoli. It gave many, many opportunities for graft and corruption if you had to deal with the municipal authorities to try to get some documentation that would give you the right to either rent or sell your property. This could be a very long and frustrating and difficult process.

I was told during my time there that the French had been looking for three years for a site to buy to build a chancery on, and they finally gave up. They simply just gave up and said, "We'll just stay where we are. We'll make improvements where we can, but this process is leading us nowhere. The British were looking for a permanent site. They rented offices in the other important building in town, a very tall building full of commercial offices, but it too was vulnerable from a security standpoint, and they were not comfortable there.

The British ambassador there did most of his work out of his residence, and a few of their offices were in that residence. The residence had been the property of the wife of King Idris, the king overthrown by Qadhafi in 1969. The ability of the British to remain in that residence was always somewhat precarious. The ambassador was somewhat concerned about how long they would be able to continue to rent the facility. The queen I'm pretty sure was dead, and money was going, I guess, to her heirs, so the British were also looking. Everybody was looking for some way to improve their physical facilities, and it was an extremely difficult search.

Another item on my list was to find a residence for our new ambassador who we thought would be coming relatively soon. The house that Greg Berry occupied and that I moved into was a 45-minute drive from the Corinthia Hotel. It's hard for me in looking at the situation, and I ask people, it's hard for me to understand why that house was chosen so far away, and I never got a good answer to that. In any case, it was clear that it wasn't a practical location for a new ambassador's residence.

Q: Also make more vulnerable for whoever's ambassador being waylaid.

CECIL: It was out in the country. That's right. Other diplomats made fun of me being out with the sheep and the goats. It was literally true. A shepherd was grazing his sheep on a plot of land just almost in front of my house. It was a terrible waste of time, the commute. I said 45 minutes. It could be worse if traffic was bad, but even in the best of times you couldn't do it in less than 40 minutes.

We were looking for a house for the ambassador. A general services officer who was with us TDY for several months undertook the task. She visited and walked through 50 houses over the course

of two or three months. Of the 50 she found five that might be suitable but really only three of the five were close to what we needed. Finding a setback was a big problem. Tripoli is a rather congested city, and there aren't a lot of houses that offer both some setback from the street and also that offer some opportunity for parking because you do have to have a place for visitors to put their cars, especially if you're having dinners or receptions for more than a handful of people.

Finding a good residence was a long, time consuming job, but in the end just about the time I left we did finally successfully lease a property, and that will be the residence of the new ambassador who was sworn in, I should say, this week, Wednesday. We can go into a little bit later the reasons why this took so long.

When I went out in November 2006 we thought we'd have a new ambassador there in a few months, probably by April because I had agreed to stay six months. I presented a request for agrément for our ambassador on January 24, 2007. We all thought that the Libyans would be so anxious to have an American ambassador back in town, the first time since 1972, that we anticipated a quick turnaround on the agrément question. In fact, we finally received agrément on July 8, as you can see, more than five months later.

Why it took so long is a fascinating question. We don't really know. We were told repeatedly that it would just be a short time, "just another week or two, and you'll have the answer," but it's an example of the fact that nothing important happens in Libya without Muammar Qadhafi's agreement. There are many delays associated with getting .Qadhafi's agreement. Sometimes people don't want to put the questions in front of him. Sometimes he doesn't want to make a decision, so long delays can result. This was the first request for agrément for an American ambassador that Qadhafi ever had to face. He came to power on September 2, 1969. Our current ambassador remained until 1972, then we had four chargés after that, taking us up to 1980.

We finally because of the increasing deterioration in our relationship and the fact that our embassy was attacked and burned, we finally closed in 1980. So this was the first time Qadhafi had been asked to agree to receive an American ambassador, and maybe it was a psychological step that was difficult for him to take. I don't know, but there are some thoughts along those lines. Instead of coming home in April, in the end I agreed to stay until our national day of reception on July 4.

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I officially relinquished the chargéship on July 6 to Christ Stevens who had arrived on June 26 to be the new DCM, so he was actually the chargé on July 8 when he was called in. I was still in the country. I was taking a few days to pack up before leaving. Chris was called in on July 8 to the foreign ministry and was given agrément for Gene Cretz. I felt sort of like Jimmy Carter must have felt when our hostages in Iran were released on January 20 just as Ronald Reagan was sworn in. I couldn't help but think of that.

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Q: Have any other major countries cut off relations with Libya?

CECIL: I don't know the number, but it included the United Kingdom. Britain had reopened about three years ahead of us, however, in probably I'm guessing around 2001 or 2, but they had been absent for many years before that.

Q: Had they had some of the same problems or were__ ?

CECIL: I think we had more problems than almost anyone else. During Greg Berry's chargéship there were a number of senators and congressmen who visited Tripoli including Senator Biden. I'm not sure if it was Senator Biden who was told this. It may have been another senator, but people were talking about this when I arrived. One of our congressional visitors had a meeting with Qadhafi. Several did, but I mean in this particular case. In this meeting Qadhafi said to the senator that he wasn't sure he wanted a large American embassy in Tripoli interfering in Libyan politics and affairs "the way you do in Cairo." President Mubarak is a frequent visitor to Tripoli, and I suspect on one occasion President Mubarak had complained to Qadhafi about these Americans always pressuring us on human rights issues and democracy and elections. Maybe Qadhafi thought, "I don't want that."

We think that may have been responsible in part for the great difficulty we had finding a suitable piece of land. The government clearly could take a political decision to cut through all the paperwork, the absence of titles and so on, and lots of zoning regulations. They could clearly facilitate our finding a piece of land and buying it, but they did not do anything during my time to speed up that process. If they had wanted to help us they could have done so in the blink of an eye.

We were with goals and objectives for Gordon Gray. The second item on my list actually was to do what I could to create or maintain high morale. When I was being briefed in Washington in November prior to going out, I was told that of the 22 American positions on our staff in Tripoli ten incumbents—10 officers—had curtailed in the previous 12 months. That's a tremendous percentage of curtailments at post. Almost half in other words in the preceding 12 months, so I was asked to please try to do something to improve the morale out there and try to create conditions under which the staff would fulfill their tours.

The reasons for the curtailments were varied. Of the 10 my recollection is that I was told that five were for medical reasons and some of those are obviously beyond anyone's control, but medical is also a term that includes psychological reasons, stress, tension, and that is sometimes used to terminate or curtail a tour. Maybe we made some improvements during my time, but we didn't completely solve the problem. During my eight months we had two additional curtailments. Our budget and fiscal/human resources officer curtailed after being there about three months because she decided she would rather go to Baghdad than stay in Tripoli. Of course volunteering for Baghdad was an immediate exit from many posts in the world, so if you're unhappy for whatever reason, you go to Baghdad.

Q: Chuck, Tripoli doesn't strike me as a particularly bad assignment. There are other places where people are shooting at you or you're terribly constrained. It's a pretty place, it's…

CECIL: It is. Let me talk about the difficulties of life in Tripoli, but first let me say the other curtailment that occurred during my time was our regional security officer whose wife was the

subject of some harassment in town by Libyans. Young Libyan men followed her in her vehicle, and there was at least one clear incident where she was extremely uncomfortable. They never touched her, but nevertheless she was very uncomfortable, and the RSO felt that for the safety of his wife, he needed to curtail. He's the RSO, the one we call upon to determine the risk involved in living in places like Libya. It was difficult to counter his arguments, and he felt very strongly about it, so he curtailed.

The difficulties of life in Tripoli varied depending on whether you can read and speak Arabic or not. For those who can't read or speak Arabic life is much more difficult. For many years since the 1970s all the road signs, to give you an example, in Libya are in Arabic only. Qadhafi believed that Arabic was the perfect language, God's language, and there was no need for any other language to be used in public. If you are trying to read a road sign and you can't read the Arabic alphabet even much less pronounce it, it's difficult. If you go out of Tripoli onto the highways of the country and you want to go somewhere—and there are some interesting places to go—but if you come to an intersection, and you're faced with a bunch of road signs in Arabic and you can't read them, it's very frustrating. You have to have very clear directions before you go anywhere, and just to find your way home in town, you have to memorize the route because you can't read the street names. So that's difficult.

Libya is an absolute police state. Not every member of the embassy is followed, but certain members are. We know that all the phones are listened to, and emails are monitored, so there is a lack of privacy. That can get on people. Again, if you don't speak the language, there is almost nothing in the way of recreational or cultural diversion. There are beaches, but those near Tripoli are often polluted because the sewage disposal system is not modern. There are archaeological sites and ruins—Greek, Roman, Byzantine—wonderful ruins around the country. There is an organization called the Tripoli Archaeological Society that organizes monthly field trips to these places. If you have those interests, that's a great outlet, but not everybody is interested in archeology or history, and how many times do you want to visit the same ruin? There are no bars, no movies, very few places to go if you wanted to hear a musical performance, and if you did go to hear one it would be Arab music. It wouldn't be Western. The diversions are few and far between.

The climate isn't all that bad. It's a Mediterranean climate, but it does get very, very hot in the summer, and there is the hot wind from the desert that comes up several months a year. Many people find life there difficult. The Libyan government is hard to work with. As I said earlier, it's hard to get decisions. It's very difficult to get visas for American visitors. The government does not always facilitate that, so an officer in the embassy can make all the arrangements, set up a program for visitors from Washington or from some other post, and at the last minute the person doesn't get their visa, so all your work is for naught. That's frustrating. Sometimes we would have to plan entire programs for officers two or three or even literally four times before the officer would ever get there. It was frustrating.

If you're an Arabist there's a lot to keep you busy and occupied, and the Arabists by and large tend to be quite happy in Tripoli. The dialect is not that difficult to understand. It's not like the Algerian or Moroccan Arabic. It's an interesting society and culture, and the Libyans themselves are very welcoming to Americans. I was quite surprised at the absence of any hostility, no references to the Iraq war. I think the Libyans were just too polite to ever raise it. When people would learn that I

was an American, even without having any idea what my job was, they would say, "Welcome! Welcome to Libya! It's so nice to have you here!" People who speak Arabic can find a lot of cultural attractions and a lot of opportunities to improve the language. It's easier for them to travel. I think the difficulties of morale differ greatly between those two categories: those who know the language and those who don't.

What else? Back to property questions. Another administrative issue on my To Do list. We still owned property from prior to our departure in 1980. We owned an ambassador's residence. We owned our embassy building, the one that was burned. It was still standing, a tall multi-story commercial office building in downtown Tripoli, not on a main street, one block up from a main street, but still sitting there today, a burnt out shell. Not totally burned out but quite thoroughly burned but still standing structurally. Sound apparently. We had the chancery, we had the residence. We had a staff residence building where we had six apartments that our staff had occupied prior to 1980. That was livable again and, in fact, it was occupied by members of the local staff, I believe, of the Belgian embassy , and we received a small amount of rent from them for that. We had four other private residences that we had owned in the '70s. A couple of those had been torn down and new property had been built on the land, but a couple were still there. In any case the important ones were the chancery and the ambassador's residence.

The Turkish government wanted to buy the ambassador's residence from us because their embassy was on the piece of land next door. They wanted to tear down the residence and build a consular office building on that site.

The Turkish government would not proceed until we could produce title to show that we actually owned the land and had the right to sell it. We had our documentation. We had bought it from an Italian owner in 1952, but we needed some kind of Libyan document from the municipality. The Libyans would not assist us in getting that. That's a case where they could have done it in a week if they had wanted to, but obviously they didn't want to help us. The same was true for the chancery. There were Libyan businessmen who expressed an interest in acquiring the property, but once again we couldn't get the title we needed, so that was kind of a frustrating issue.

Our old ambassador's residence was lived in by squatters and once again the Libyan government said, "We'll get them out if you can show us that you really own that property." Again, we couldn't satisfy them.

Other items on my To Do list were to cultivate a broad circle of Libyans, try to learn anything I could about the country and the people, obviously part of my own education. I also wanted to travel outside Tripoli as much as I possibly could to increase my knowledge of the country. It's always been my feeling that you don't learn a whole lot, or you quickly reach your limits, if you just stay in the capital. You have to travel around the country and talk to the local people and local officials, so I wanted to do as much of that as I could, and I was able to do quite a bit, actually.

I was looking for ways to expand our public diplomacy activities to remove obstacles that were currently impeding our access to the universities and people in the cultural areas. There was enough there to keep me busy. As we'll see in some cases I got something done, and in other cases I ran up against a brick wall.

I might say another word or two as we're on this administrative side, one aspect of living in Tripoli. I mentioned surveillance. I was under constant surveillance 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There was always a car with two Libyans from what's called the "external security organization." That's the intelligence agency that oversees foreign intelligence gathering and diplomatic activities. They were always with me. When I went home at night their car was parked by my front gate. They slept in their car. I couldn't go anywhere without their knowledge.

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On the other hand, photography is my hobby, and I would spend my weekends taking pictures in Tripoli, or I would be making a trip out into the countryside or even when I went with the Tripoli Archaeological Society in their group-organized tours on a big bus, my security guys were in a car right behind the bus following me every step of the way. Sometimes it actually helped me take photos. If there were people in the way and I was waiting for them to move, my security guys would go up and shoo them out of the way, even though I would never request such a thing. "Get out of the photo!" That's an interesting side note. Before I arrived in Tripoli, I thought this will be a difficult country to take pictures in. They'll be hypersensitive, and I'll really have to watch it. It was the exact opposite. In eight months I never had any… Well, there was one case and that was probably an aberration, so I had one case which probably isn't even worth talking about where somebody protested about my taking a picture. The security guards didn't care at all what I took a picture of, so that was quite a surprise to me.

Another item on my To Do list was the opening of a full service visa section to issue visas to Libyans. We were not issuing visas to Libyans when I arrived. Libyans had to travel to Tunis to make their application, and then they would have to go home and return many weeks later—the average was six weeks later—to pick up their visa. The long and slow clearance process that we had in Washington resulted in those long time delays. Libyan law prohibited the mailing in the international mail of Libyan passports, so they couldn't go just once and apply for the visa and have it mailed to them in Tripoli. They had to go back and pick it up, so two airplane trips, and it always required an overnight because of airplane schedules.

This was a great irritant to the Libyan government. Even in such cases as official visitors, that is, international visitors invited by our public diplomacy program, if we were inviting Libyans to participate in some program here in the States, even they had to go to Tunis for their visa. We included travel money in their grants, so we were paying for that trip. It was costing the U.S. government to send invited Libyan guests to Tunis to get their visas.

During my time we liberalized that a bit. We did reach the point where official visitors traveling on official Libyan government business could come to us with a diplomatic note from the foreign ministry stating the purpose of the visit. We would grant those visas in our embassy, and we would do that because in those cases we did not require personal appearance. In other cases, that is, any Libyan businessman, any private individual who wanted to go to the States for any reason, the regulations required a personal appearance in front of the consul.

The law also requires that we protect our consuls, and normally we have what we call "hard lines"

in our consulates—that is, walls and bullet proof glass that would prevent a disgruntled applicant or a terrorist for that matter from shooting the consul through the window or setting off a little bomb. I'm sure in the case of a big bomb it wouldn't help. We have to protect our consults with strong reinforced physical walls and windows.

We couldn't do that in the Corinthia Hotel. Even the villas that we subsequently rented were all built to be private residences. They weren't built to be offices, so they didn't have the reinforced walls, structures, that a consular section required. I thought when I had my talks in Washington in November that we would be able to achieve the move of the consular section from the hotel to the villas probably by April—my initial estimate—and we would be able to open our doors and start providing consular services. This was part of the reason why it's so difficult for Americans to get visas. The Libyans were simply engaging in reciprocity. If we didn't give them visas easily, they weren't going to give us visas easily. Their procedures were even more unpredictable than ours.

That did not happen.. We did not move by April. It's a very disappointing story of what I would consider the slowness of Washington to respond to the needs of a post, the failure to attach the importance to the issue that it merited despite the fact I sent in a long cable with all of the reasons why we needed to start offering full visa services in Tripoli. The OBO, Overseas Building Operations, that handles our construction overseas, they did not want to invest any money in a temporary facility, a villa that we were only going to occupy for two or three years. The Near East bureau didn't seem to want to engage in this. They seemed to value their relations with OBO more than they valued their relations with the Libyan government. I'm sure that the bureau did have many other issues with OBO, issues in other parts of the region such as Iraq and elsewhere where they needed OBO cooperation, so I think we were just sacrificed on the altar of expediency, and no one in Washington really went to bat to get the money required to prepare the villa so we could offer full consular services.

Since I left there has been some gradual improvement in that. I understand that we have since moved the consular section into the ambassador's residence that we found—which the new ambassador wound up not using anyway. While I understand we aren't yet receiving what I'll call the man in the street, the businessman or the private citizen, they tell me that in a few months we will be moved into these villas about two years later than I hoped, and we'll start full visa services in Tripoli.

Q: One time, this is before all the trouble started with Libya, Libyan students were one of the mainstays of our universities. How stood that during your time?

CECIL: What you say is certainly true. There were thousands of Libyans who studied in the States, and you still find them. They're almost all, of course, over 50 years old. Every one of them that I met has very fond memories of his time in the States. They speak good English, and they long to see the restoration of a normal relationship between the U.S. and Libya. Then there's a huge gap, a whole generation, which doesn't know the United states at all, which doesn't speak English, and one of our problems is this is the generation that's now rising into senior positions as the Libyans who are 50 and older—and many of them are 60 and older—as they retire and leave government. They're being replaced by younger Libyans who don't speak or read English, so we have a tremendous amount of catch-up work there in enabling this whole generation to acquire English

language capabilities.

We were just beginning to launch again an effort to bring Libyans to the States for university study. I now forget the exact number during my time, but I think it was this: I believe that in 2006 we had about 60 Libyans back in the States for university study. In 2007 we had about 120. I was just at a Libyan panel discussion early this week to brief Gene Cretz, the new ambassador. One of the people from the State Department there said we now have 1,170 Libyans in the country as of right now back in university studies. Clearly we are making great progress toward restoring our relationship.

There was a temporary blip when in March of 2007 Muammar Qadhafi gave a public speech in which he made a very interesting statement. He said, speaking to the parents of young Libyans, he said, "If you send your children to the United States or to England for university studies, 50% of them will be recruited as agents to come back and work against our country's interests." In other words, they'll be recruited to be spies.

That had a pretty chilling effect on the idea of sending your kid outside the country to study. I think that that speech was one reason why I was always denied permission to set foot on a university campus. In March of 2007 shortly after that speech as it happened… Of course, we didn't know the speech was going to be made, but shortly after it was made, I asked to travel to Eastern Libya, to Cyrenaica to visit several cities there and also to see the Greek ruins. I wanted to go to the universities in the towns of Bayda and Derna and Benghazi, which is the biggest city of the East. I was going with the PAO, and the defense attaché was traveling with me also, but he had proposed military meetings that he wanted to have.

The PAO and I said we wanted to visit the universities so we could meet with the deans and faculty members to explain to them what we could offer in the way of English learning opportunities. We wanted to describe the Fulbright Fellowship program to them in both directions, Libyans going to the States, Americans coming to Libya to study. I even offered to spend an hour with any English language class where the teacher might like to expose his or her students to an American accent. I said, "I'll talk about anything you want. It doesn't have to be politics or foreign policy. I'll just talk about life in America. I'll do it in English."

We were explicitly denied permission to visit any of the three universities, and I think it's in large part because of that speech, but maybe there was even a deeper reservoir of hesitancy. If you're a government official in Libya, you don't want to take a chance on anything that might displease The Leader. Of course, all university faculty are government officials. There are no private universities in Libya.

I guess the speech like so many other Qadhafi speeches has now been forgotten or relegated to the past. Clearly we're making great progress in restoring the numbers. I guess it'll continue to increase.

I think that's a pretty comprehensive survey of what I called the administrative issues. Maybe we should turn now to what I would call the policy issues.

Q: Okey doke. Policy.

CECIL: As I said earlier David Welch was the real action officer on the important policy issues. He was the Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern affairs, a real Arabist, a real professional. I made whatever contribution I could. Often our role, frankly speaking, was to arrange meetings. David would sometimes come to Tripoli. Other times he would meet senior Libyan officials in Europe at their mutual convenience either in Rome or in London. Those were frequent meeting places. Sometimes we were just facilitators, but it takes a lot of facilitations sometimes to make a meeting happen. We might exchange papers or thoughts before the actual meeting to try to figure out what could be achieved, that sort of thing. I certainly couldn't claim any leadership role during this period, but more a facilitating role.

One of the first issues that I encountered shortly after I arrived was the question of follow-up to the disposal of the weapons of mass destruction even though those talks, the breakthroughs, had been back 2003. Nevertheless, there was still a lot of implementation that still needed to happen, so we were still talking about that with the Libyans. There was a mechanism. The acronym was TSCC. I know that's Trilateral Security, and I'm not sure what the next C stands for, but I think Trilateral Security something Commission, U.S.-UK-Libya. That group would meet from time to time. Only two weeks after I arrived in Tripoli, I found myself on the way to London to participate in talks in London that took place on November 28. From Washington had come Under Secretary Robert Joseph. I forget his exact title, but it's probably under secretary for arms control and compliance, something like that. He came with a team of other people from his bureau. We had a number of issues to talk about.

The Libyans sent several members, General Mohammad Azway. A-z-w-a-y is one way it's sometimes spelled. He was the point of contact for military issues. The defense attaches all talked to him. If I had a military issue, I went to see him. The Libyans like to centralize the contact points. They don't want you running all over their government. They want to know who you're talking to, and they control it that way. General Azway came. Abdulati al-Obidi. I'll say more about him later. That's often spelled O-b-i-d-i. That's how he spells it on his calling card. Sometimes it's spelled O-b-e-i-d-i.

Abdulati al-Obidi is one of the few trusted confidantes of Muammar Qadhafi. His current position is assistant secretary for European affairs in the foreign ministry, but his role and his importance are much more than that. He attended, and the Libyan ambassador to London, and some others that I would call technical experts from the Libyan government.

One of the issues we talked about was the Libyan tardiness in disposing of their yellow cake which they had a quantity of that they had bought many years earlier when they had an active intention of pursuing nuclear enrichment.

Q: Is this in Niger?

CECIL: I believe they did buy some from Niger, and I'm not sure if they bought it from other places as well, but certainly Niger is nearby and does have yellow cake to the south. The Libyans should have disposed of this earlier, and we were prodding them. Their answer was always that

they were studying the market, they want to get the best price, there are problems with transporting it, we have a French firm coming next week to inspect it. They always have a reason for why they haven't acted yet. I wonder if they've disposed of it even today, but hopefully they have.

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Another issue we talked about in London was the disposal of Libya's chemical weapons. They had a stockpile which they had agreed to give up, to destroy them, which required the construction of a special incinerator designed specially for these particular chemical weapons. We agreed to provide $45,000,000 to design and construct that incinerator in Libya. The Libyans were to provide $13,000,000 in local costs: transport costs, labor costs, local construction costs. We discussed that in November in London. The agreement with the U.S. was finally signed in late January or early February.

After signing the bilateral U.S.-Libyan agreement, then the Libyans were to negotiate the detailed contract with a company that we had selected, but after a few weeks the Libyans came back to us, and they said they really didn't want to pay the $13,000,000 in domestic costs. They thought we should pay that, too. Washington was very firm on that. They said, "Nothing doing. First of all, a deal's a deal. We've talked about all these points before, and you do have some obligation to pay local costs." The Libyans said, "In that case, we're going to cancel the agreement. We'll just talk to the company on our own without your money, and we'll do it the way we want." And they did. Giving up $45,000,000 is remarkable because so many other times the Libyans were looking with their hat in hand. Why would an oil producer with over $40,000,000,000 in reserves at that time act like that? Now two years later they have over $100,000,000,000 in reserves, but they're always looking for a handout.

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An often repeated theme that we heard in London, and I heard it many times in Tripoli, and David Welch heard it many times wherever he met with Libyan officials, was the question, "What did we get for giving up our weapons of mass destruction?" The Libyan officials maintain they need something clear and conspicuous to point to for the Libyan people. We often said, "One of the benefits you got is you're now re-entering the world stage." People like Tony Blair are actually visiting Tripoli—he had done so—and other world leaders were beginning to visit Tripoli or to invite Muammar Qadhafi to visit their capitals.

The embargos had been lifted, but this was never enough to satisfy the Libyans. They were always pressing for what they called "tangible rewards." They said, "Look at what you're offering North Korea in terms of fuel and food, and you've even made some offers to Iran. What are we getting? We look like we've been taken advantage of, made fools of." I'm sure they're repeating things that Muammar Qadhafi was feeling. He wasn't happy in retrospect with the deal, so it was a constant theme that we heard.

Another issue that we discussed in London was establishing a nuclear medicine center in Libya working under the IAEA. Libya had this vision of being a center to treat with nuclear medicine, treat people from all over Africa, and they wanted us and the UK to provide the funding. We said,

"That would be difficult for us to justify politically. We'd be happy to work with you under the IAEA umbrella to see what we can do to establish such a medical center, but we're not in a position to provide any money for it." Under Secretary Joseph suggested that they sell the yellow cake and use the money from that!

Q: You were really back to the suq, weren't you?

CECIL: Very much so.

Q: The bazaar in Arabic terms.

CECIL: This was a good introduction for me to what it's like to negotiate with the Libyans and to participate in that. Those issues were handled more by Under Secretary Joseph's people in Washington than by the Near East bureau. It's a case there a very technical issue is handled outside the geographic bureau—more by the functional bureaus of the department. It was interesting, and our talks on various aspects went on over the following weeks and months that I was there.

Another issue that was very much on the agenda during my time was the Bulgarian nurses.

Q: Oh, yes.

CECIL: Our role in that was essentially a tangential one, but we were supportive, obviously, of the desire to secure the freedom of the Bulgarian nurses.

Q: Would you explain the background of the Bulgarian nurses?

CECIL: Right. There were I believe it was five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor employed by the Children's Hospital in Benghazi, Libya. At some point over 400 children were identified who had been infected with the AIDS virus, the HIV virus. All had been treated in this hospital. The Libyans came up with a conspiracy theory in which they blamed the Bulgarian nurses for intentionally infecting these 400 children, so they arrested them and the Palestinian as well, and held them. They were sentenced to death by the Libyan courts. Trials were held, yet the Libyans would not admit the testimony or evidence provided by Western experts.

A number of European experts studied the hospital and the evidence. One of the experts was the French, I forget his name. It's on the tip of my tongue, but the French doctor who discovered the HIV virus participated in this study. They all concluded that it was the sanitary practices of the hospital and the absence of effective blood screening measures that had led to the infection of the children.

I was actually visited during my time by an American Nobel Prize winner. It's terrible to say that I can't remember his name. I think he won the prize for chemistry if I recall, but he was involved with one of the committees working to secure the freedom of the Bulgarians. He actually visited me in the office in Tripoli, in the hotel. He said to me, the point he was trying to make to the Libyans was that they needn't feel any particular shame or guilt over this. When it occurred—around 2001 or 2002—blood screening measures weren't as good as they are today in

2007. It's not surprising if the Libyans didn't have the latest state-of-the-art blood screening technology in place, so the Libyans shouldn't feel so guilty. Rather than accept the blame or the responsibility, the Libyan approach was to blame the outsiders. Blame the foreigners.

A trial was held with very limited testimony provided by the Libyans. The nurses were sentenced to death as well as the Palestinian. There's a long history of legal actions. The case was sent to an appeals court. They reaffirmed the death sentence. When I arrived the case had gone from the appeals court to the supreme court, and the supreme court had referred it back to the appeals court for review, and we were waiting for the results of that review which were announced, I believe, on December 19th or 20th of 2006. This was mostly a European issue. All of the EU members were solidly behind Bulgaria which had just then been admitted to the EU, whereas when the case started, it was poor little Bulgaria trying to face up to Libya.

By joining the European Union Bulgaria acquired the support of the entire body in presenting its case. There was a very active committee and international series of discussions with Libya. The talks on the European side were headed by a man named Mark Perini. He had been the EU ambassador to Libya when these talks had started, and later he was transferred to Ankara, Turkey as EU ambassador, but he continued to carry this portfolio. From time to time Mark Perini would come back to Tripoli for talks with the Libyans, and there would be meetings with the UK ambassador, the Bulgarian ambassador, sometimes the German ambassador, and I was invited always.

Q: How about the French? Didn't they secure the release of the nurses?

CECIL: We'll talk about that at the end. That was a very curious and sudden development. During the meetings that I attended I only recall the French ambassador at the last meeting, and that would have been probably May or June of 2007. The French were not an active player in the early months in my participation in this.

We did have one sign of tangible engagement. We had proposed a memorandum of understanding between the Baylor University Medical School and the Children's Hospital in Benghazi. The U.S. government was providing the financing for that arrangement. A few hundred thousand dollars, I think. Not more than $400,000. It was a program under which Baylor would provide training and technical assistance to the Benghazi Children's Hospital. They would send people from Baylor to Benghazi occasionally, and I think there was also provision to bring Libyans back to the States. That was the demonstration of our support.

The Libyans delayed months and months signing that agreement. Again, it's one of those inexplicable things. We don't know why they didn't sign it quickly and move ahead, but anyway it took months and months.

Under the Libyan judicial system when the appeals court would issue its verdict on the, my notes say December 19, if they once again reaffirmed the death penalty the case would be reviewed by the Supreme Court. All death sentences in Libya must be reviewed by the supreme court. If the supreme court affirmed the death penalty, then there was a higher body above the supreme court called the Higher Judicial Council. As it was explained to us, the supreme court is the last legal

review, but the Higher Judicial Council can review difficult cases in a broader context. They can take political considerations into account rather than solely legal ones, so we were always told that the Higher Judicial Council could overturn any death sentence that was issued.

During all of my time there we were waiting for this case to proceed very slowly. We were told on December 19 in a meeting with Abdulati al-Obidi and some other Libyans… Ambassador Azway who had been ambassador to London was by that time back in Tripoli and filling a somewhat unclear position, but he participated. He had been a former minister of justice. I remember him telling us how quickly this could all proceed. Once the appeals court issued its verdict on the 19th, it would go immediately to the supreme court since the supreme court had already studied the case earlier it wouldn't take them long. They would come to their judgment and then it would quickly go to the Higher Judicial Council if it was necessary, if the supreme court didn't throw out the death penalty. As with everything else in Libya, everything moved very, very slowly.

It happened that the same day by coincidence the Bulgaria foreign minister was in Washington calling on Secretary Rice on December 19. There was a lot of concern that Secretary Rice might say something that would irritate the Libyans, and we didn't want that to ever happen, so we stressed in our press guidance that we prepared that she needed to be very careful not to criticize the Libyan justice system. This sent Libyans up the walls whenever any foreign commentator criticized their justice system. We urged Secretary Rice to concentrate on the humanitarian aspect of the case, the fact that these nurses at that point had been imprisoned five or six years already and to express our sorrow for the suffering of the children.

Some of the children had died by that time, but the majority of them were receiving treatment and responding well to the treatment. Some had been taken to hospitals in various European countries. European governments had paid for their treatment. I remember Mark Perini telling us at one point that there were only somewhere between 30 and 50 cases that really required treatment in Europe. The other 300 some-odd cases could be treated quite adequately in Benghazi which now had the benefit of European advice and new procedures, new equipment, and new techniques for treating HIV victims.

Secretary Rice, thank goodness, made a very fine statement about the humanitarian side, and she did express her disappointment that on that day the appeals court did again reaffirm the death penalty. She expressed our willingness to let the Libyan justice system run its course, and that satisfied the Libyans. They were happy that we did not try to pass our own judgment on their legal system.

In January I found myself suddenly on a plane going to Sofia, Bulgaria, a country I never thought as an Arabist that I would ever have a reason to visit, but Washington and in particular our embassy in Sofia, wanted me to participate in meetings that the Europeans were going to have in Bulgaria on January 16. They wanted someone there from Tripoli, from our side, to participate. I and the British ambassador, my colleague, hopped on a plane and went off to Sofia. I had a 24 hour visit to Bulgaria which I never expected to have, even had a meeting with the president of Bulgaria during that. At the end of our talks, all of us had a half an hour with him as he discussed Bulgaria's efforts to free the nurses.

In the negotiations Abdulati al-Obidi had for several years been the point of contact for the Europeans and the Bulgarians, but around the beginning of 2007, Muammar Qadhafi's Number Two son Saif al Islam Qadhafi began to assert a role. He was the head of something called the Qadhafi Foundation which the Libyans pretended was an NGO, but in fact all of its funding came from the government. It was a convenient tool for the Libyans to use when they wanted to do things, but they didn't want them to be done by the Libyan government, so they said, "Well, we'll let the NGO handle that."

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In mid-June when the French ambassador attended one of our periodic meetings with Mark Perini, that was the first evidence I saw of French involvement. Perhaps they'd been somewhere back there behind the scenes, but I was certainly not aware of it at any time. Then there was talk in June of Foreign Minister Kuchner making a stop in Tripoli at the end of an African trip that he already had planned. That was an on-and-off thing. In the end I think he did make a quick stop in Tripoli. As I said earlier, I relinquished the chargéship on July 6. I don't have the date in front of me, but it was about maybe 10 days later that we had the flurry of activity in which the wife of President Sarkozy came to Tripoli and secured the release of the nurses and the Palestinian. It's a mystery to me what justifies the French claiming so much credit for this, but I guess I just have to plead ignorance. I'm sorry that I don't really know the inside story there. But why the French got so much publicity—favorable publicity—for achieving this is a little beyond me when I look back on the years of work by Mark Perini and the other European ambassadors who were negotiating this issue all that time.

Q: In the first place, PR is PR. Public Relations is Public Relations. If you've got the wife… I think this was the only time she played a role, and she got divorced from Sarkozy, and he married an Italian fashion model-singer.

What was your evaluation, Chuck, of Qadhafi and his regime, as he affected the regime?

CECIL: Let's divide that into two aspects. There's what we might call the Libyan decision-making process, which I can say a few things about, and then there's the question that occupied every diplomat in Tripoli. That's the question of the succession. What will happen when Qadhafi goes?

First, on the decision-making process I think I said earlier decisions are very slow and difficult to obtain because no government official will decide anything important unless he knows it's okay with The Leader. There's no reward for initiative or risk-taking in the Libyan government. There's only risk, only danger, so no official will do anything unless he's absolutely certain it's okay. Getting The Leader's opinion on issues is not always a quick process. Sometimes Libyans are reluctant to present difficult questions to The Leader. They don't want to irritate him or seem to be the bearer of bad tidings or difficult issues. So sometimes there's a delay there.

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On another occasion, in February I think it was, I was invited to Sirt, or S-i-r-t-e sometimes it's spelled, which is where he spends a lot of his time. It's in the north middle part of Libya between

Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, and it's where Qadhafi wanted to establish his capital. There are many huge expensive government buildings there, mostly empty because the move never happened. But Qadhafi has his famous tent there, and he likes to receive visitors there in the tent which is a very fancy, elaborate tent with air conditioners and everything else.

Anyway, Libya had negotiated a peace settlement between the central government of the Central African Republic and a rebel group led by a rebel named Miskine. Qadhafi decided he wanted the ambassadors of the permanent members of the UN Security Council to come to Sirt to witness the signing of the peace accord. Saturday morning I got a phone call from protocol telling me I needed to be at the airport at four o'clock that afternoon when I would be flown to Sirt to witness this event. There it was a much smaller gathering, and I was able to shake Qadhafi's hand and greet him, but we didn't engage in any substitive conversation.

In the course of those ceremonies he did give another… I'll call it speech. Once again he mumbled, and it was difficult to understand. He had at that time a French interpreter; that is, a Moroccan I believe he was. In any case an Arab who translated his Arabic into beautiful French. The French was delivered very clearly and articulately, but the speech by Qadhafi was somewhat the opposite.

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The question of the succession. That's an interesting word, succession. Qadhafi holds no government position and no party position. There is no party. He likes to speak from this posture, this position. He frequently says, "The government has messed up. I'm not part of the government. I'm here to represent you the people." His only title that's ever used in Libya is "The Guide of the Revolution," or sometimes "The Leader of the revolution." Other than that, no official title. I never heard anyone call him Colonel Qadhafi in Libya. We seem to still do that in the West.

If he has no official position, how can somebody succeed to no official position? Nevertheless, he is the decision-maker, so if he disappears, who's going to make the decisions? That's a difficult question for the Libyan political system to figure our since they've hardly ever done that. Qadhafi has six sons. The oldest is from his first wife. That son is named Mohammed, and he oversees the country's communications, telecommunications systems, telephone, TV, that sort of thing. He seems to have no political ambition.

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I once asked a very respected European diplomat, an Arabist, if the Qadhafi sons would be able to agree on which one should succeed their father. He replied, "'Agree' may not be the best word, but they will work together. They know if they do not stand together, they will all be thrown out." There may be some truth in that.

There was a demonstration in Benghazi in February of 2006 before I arrived which got out of hand. The intent of the demonstration was to protest in front of the Italian consulate after an Italian minister had worn one of those famous tee-shirts with Mohammad on the tee-shirt, that bad cartoon that I think originated in Denmark but anyway, stirred up people all over the Muslim world. For some silly reason the Italian minister wore it in a public place. The Libyans attacked the

Italian consulate in Benghazi and burned it. When they finished with that, they then turned their attention to certain Libyan government offices and attacked them. In the end at least 12 Libyans were killed by local police and security forces. That seems to indicate hostility near the surface against Libyan government interests.

Throughout his history one of Qadhafi's main problems has been the apathy of the Libyan people. You can read the books written by the real experts, people like Dirk Vandewalle and Ronald Bruce St. John. They talk about the frustration of Qadhafi and his colleagues in trying to get the Libyan people to react and to get engaged politically. They were so apathetic that this was a great frustration. Dirk Vandewalle describes this especially well in his book, A History of Modern Libya. I wouldn't anticipate an eruption of public dissatisfaction. I think there might be expressions of joy in the hope that Libya would become a less oppressive place, but after 39 years of police state control, the Libyans have been cowed into submission. It's a rare Libyan who will raise his head and say anything publicly, so I think it's quite likely that a rather oppressive regime would remain in place for some years even if Saif al-Islam is the front man and even if he does push forward some liberalizing measures. He's talked about a constitution, for instance, but…

Q: It's probably a good solid security apparatus, well satisfied with the way things are.

CECIL: Yes, very much so, and they get their benefits keeping the people under control. And the leadership around Qadhafi does receive a certain good quality of life and travel and that sort of thing.

A couple of things I might say a few words about before finishing. During my time there was a gradual increase in the level of our dialogue. I've already mentioned David Welch. He would come occasionally. I don't know the history of all of his visits, but I was there for the December, I think it was 18th or 19th, 2006 visit which was two days of talks with senior Libyan officials. That was certainly very, very instructive… David's primary issue was, of course, the compensation for the victims of not only Lockerbie but also what's called the La Belle Discotheque bombing in Berlin in 1986, for which Libyans were responsible. I guess it would be too much maybe to go into all those details, and I'm not up to date since I left Libya …

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David Welch came in mid- December and had a general review of these and some other issues. He was really a delight to watch. He has such a good way with Arabs. He continued to press for practical solutions to these issues. Eventually, of course, it didn't happen until either the end of October or November 2008, this year, that the Libyans finally concluded an agreement and delivered the money to pay off all the claims. There's a long history of Lockerbie claims, and I guess I wouldn't try and repeat that here, I guess. It's a little bit detailed and complicated, and I may be not the best person to do that.

After David in 2007 the level of our visitors began to rise. Andrew Natsios came in March. He was the president's special envoy for Sudan to try to solve the Darfur problem, to bring an end to the genocide in Darfur. When Natsios came in March he was the most senior U.S. government official to ever come to Libya in this new era of our relationship. We thought that he would see Qadhafi,

but in the end The Leader didn't see him. Instead Natsios had talks with the Libyan assistant secretary for African affairs Ali Treki. The Libyan role in trying to solve the Darfur problem was always a positive one. We had very good talks with them, and they really wanted to see an end to this because they didn't like that source of instability so close to their borders with spillover effect that it was having in Chad as well. Natsios came, and we had good and useful talks, but the problem, really, was the Sudanese. The rebel movements were so disunited and unwilling to come together, so that's why that problem is still dragging on.

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It's curious that a large number of al-Qaeda members in Iraq have been found to be Libyans. I read just recently that 18% of those who had been captured before they could kill Americans or blow themselves up were Libyan. The majority of them came from the town of Derna in Cyrenaica. Why that town is a source of Libyan fundamentalists is a really interesting question that deserves further study.

Q: Our Marines were there on the shores of Tripoli.

CECIL: Yes, that's an interesting history there. A Colonel Eaton marched a mercenary force overland from Egypt intending to free the 300 American sailors who were imprisoned in Tripoli. Colonel Eaton and his force captured the town of Derna and held it for some weeks before he was then ordered to evacuate because Thomas Jefferson's envoy in Malta had negotiated a settlement with Tripoli in which we paid ransom.

Q: This was from the Philadelphia*, wasn't it?*

CECIL: Yes. *Philadelphia* ran aground in Tripoli harbor and was captured by the Libyans. It was from the *Philadelphia* that these 300—I think 305—hostages were taken and held for about a year before their freedom was negotiated.

The best book dealing with that is The Pirate Coast by Richard Zacks. A wonderful account of Colonel Eaton's march across Egypt and Libya and of the naval engagements in Tripoli.

Q: I wrote a book called The American Consul. I bring this up because he was the consular officer.

CECIL: Was it Turnbull? Was that his name?

Q: Turnbull was one of them.

CECIL: The one who negotiated the ransom?

Q: Anyway…

CECIL: Of course since I left, it took a while, but finally Secretary Rice visited Tripoli. The relationship has gradually matured and returned, maybe, to the full level of contacts, consultations, that we used to enjoy back in the '60s and '70s. Well, '60s. I guess that pretty much stopped after

Qadhafi's revolution.

For me as a retired officer called back to service, this was quite a wonderful re-tread in Foreign Service work and certainly an educational opportunity not to be missed. The opportunity to spend eight months in Libya and learn what I could learn about how that country works and to observe Muammar Qadhafi was quite a wonderful opportunity.

I don't think it's going to be easy to deal with Libya as long as Qadhafi's there, certainly that'll be the case. Our new ambassador Gene Cretz will arrive the day after tomorrow, the 21st or 22nd. Maybe I should say for the record, once we got that agrément on July 8, 2007 then I think we were totally surprised to see that the Senate, especially Senator Lautenberg and Senator Levin didn't think we should send an ambassador to Libya because they had constituents who had not yet been compensated for either their injuries in the case of the La Belle discotheque bombing or the death of family members in the case of Lockerbie.

The Senate put a hold on Gene Cretz's confirmation which in the end lasted almost a year and a half. He was confirmed the last night that the Senate was in session before adjourning for the end-of-year recess Thursday night, whatever that was, the Thursday before Thanksgiving. Had they not confirmed him he would have had to start all over with the new administration resubmitting his nomination. He will certainly provide a boost to the morale of our embassy. The senators never seemed to understand that withholding an ambassador doesn't really punish the Libyans. It only punishes our own people. An embassy staff that deserves the leadership of an ambassador is left without the leadership it needs. The Libyans, they didn't care. They're happy to deal with a chargé. I could see just about anyone I needed to see when they thought it was worth their while to. I had good access.

Tripoli seems to attract, not that I'm one of them, but Tripoli seems to attract the best Arabists of the other diplomatic services. I had a circle of wonderful, wonderful colleagues there from whom I learned so much. The Russian ambassador, the Swiss ambassador, the Canadian ambassador, and the Serbian ambassador were all superb Arabists, speaking beautiful Arabic and understanding the culture. I got the feeling that those governments knew that's the kind of person you need to send to Tripoli. Gene Cretz is a good Arabist, and I'm sure he'll do well there.

End of Reader