

SINAI
READER
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CLAYTON E. MCMANAWAY, JR.

**Acting Director, Sinai Support Mission
Washington, DC (1975-1976)**

Clayton E. McManaway, Jr. was born in North Carolina. He graduated from the University of South Carolina and served in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in Phnom Penh and Saigon, and as Ambassador to Haiti. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

McMANAWAY: Larry Eagleburger talked to me about staying in the State Department. He wanted to establish another assistant secretary-level position for a resource manager, but that never happened. At one point I did a special job for Phil Habib. I think the Sinai Mission was the next thing I did. Larry asked me to take on the establishment of the Sinai Mission. Now this was right after the Yom Kippur war.

Q: The Yom Kippur war was in 1973. So by the time you finished the immediate Vietnam business, we are talking about late 1975.

McMANAWAY: What had happened there was the agreement that Kissinger had managed to negotiate for the separation of forces. Both sides [Israel and Egypt] wanted an American presence between them. I think we started this in October, November and we had to have it done with an early warning system set up between the forces in order for them to disengage. This disengagement was to take place, I think, in February. So we had a strict deadline on us. We had other restrictions placed on us by the Congress when the money bill was passed for it. We couldn't use anybody who was actively military, they had to be retired at least a year. We couldn't use any intelligence officers and we had to use maximum involvement of private industry. This was to be set up where the Sinai Pass is. Basically there is nothing there but a water line left by the Israelis. It was just desert. So we were faced with building a small town to support the associated early warning system. And we were to do it on contract, bid. And we did it. We got it done. I was the acting director of the Sinai Mission.

Q: Were you doing it in Sinai?

McMANAWAY: No, from Washington.

Q: How did you get the contract?

McMANAWAY: Well, we sent a team out first. We put together a team of different skills that were necessary. I called on some people that I had worked with in the past and who had different skills, whether it was engineering or electronics or communications. etc. Based on their survey we put together an RFP [request for a proposal], which went out on the street. It requested industry to respond in an unusual way because there was very short time. We spent that December and Christmas working, evaluating the various bids that we got. The main bid we got was from E-Systems who had subcontracted to a construction company in San Antonio, Texas, run by a self-made man who started by laying sidewalks. It was a fascinating company. They went to him because he had a hobby of building modular buildings and had put up a hotel for some kind of fair in San Antonio using modules that were about the size of a railroad freight car.

They were completely self-contained, basically a little apartment. That was the concept we bought. We then proceeded with it. They made every deadline we gave. And we made our deadline and were operational when we had to be.

Q: What were the main problems that you found?

McMANAWAY: Oh, we had a multitude of problems. We didn't think we would be able to communicate from there. This fellow that I had brought in devised a system where we bounced a signal off the side of the mountain to be able to communicate out to the Egyptian and Israeli governments. We had trouble with the size and weight of these modules. Half way through the planning one of the engineers...at that time there was only a pontoon bridge across the Suez Canal and we had planned to go in through Egypt...figured out that one of the modules would have sunk that bridge. So we had to go in through Israel.

Exactra was the name of the construction company. Boy, what a can-do outfit they were. They went out there and set up search lights to work at night and built a town, as well as laying in these sensors that reported any movement across the lines.

Q: What were the sensors and what were you trying to accomplish with them?

McMANAWAY: We were trying to assure both sides that they would be notified by a third party, and they wanted Americans to do it, of any movement towards their lines as they withdrew. The Sinai Pass is a key pass in the area, the only way through for armor in either direction. It is like a choke point. We had sensors that would sense movement and laid them out on the desert.

Q: How cooperative did you find the Egyptians and the Israelis?

McMANAWAY: Quite cooperative.

Q: On both sides?

McMANAWAY: Both sides, yes. They wanted to disengage and wanted our presence there. We also were doing overflights regularly for photography and providing them to both sides.

Q: One of the things that has come up at a later date from people who have dealt with this is that one gets the feeling that the Egyptians were sort of cloddish, and the Israelis were always probing and trying to take another inch, almost like it was a game. Did you find this at all a problem?

McMANAWAY: Not during my time because once it was up and running I turned it over to [another officer]. He ran it for the next several years. I went on to Management Operations.

Q: Was Congress pretty much behind this?

McMANAWAY: Congress was supportive except for the restrictions they put on us which made it more difficult to get the job done. We didn't have a lot of bureaucratic problems. The major

problem we had was the time pressure and there industry responded, I must say, admirably, and the physical reality of what had to be done within the time constraints. The other problem was manning it and again we had to use a lot of contractors who had to be screened with background checks and all that. So there was a lot that had to be done within the short time we had to get it done. Those were the main problems. We had good support. We didn't have any major bureaucratic problems either within the executive branch or with Congress.

Q: Well, you were also drawing upon a tremendous amount of expertise which had come out of the Vietnam war weren't you?

McMANAWAY: I was.

Q: Both civilian and military. There were people basically in their prime who had been there. There is nothing like a war to hone skills.

McMANAWAY: We put together a very good team. The evaluation of the contracts was done on a highly expedited basis. We had special teams working around the clock almost.

Q: Well, it sounds as if you got the right contractor?

McMANAWAY: Yes, it was good. Unfortunately I never got to see it. I never went out there.

Q: So that lasted into 1976. Is that right?

McMANAWAY: Yes.

OWEN W. ROBERTS
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1976-1979)

Ambassador Owen W. Roberts was born in Oklahoma in 1924. He received his A.B. from Princeton University and his M.I.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army. Ambassador Roberts entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Egypt, the Congo, Nigeria, Upper Volta, Ethiopia, Gambia, Seychelles, Chad, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

ROBERTS: In June of '76 I went off to be deputy director of the Sinai Field Mission. Kissinger had managed to stop the Israelis before they completely crushed the Egyptians around the city of Isma'iliya on the Canal. With a great deal of difficulty, he also got United Nations troops inserted to make the Israelis respect the cease fire and initiated a very intelligent peace-monitoring system for the Sinai desert. It basically set up a north to south empty zone about five miles wide and 85 miles long, with five more miles of limited-force zones on either side of it. This grid, as peace developed, would then slowly be shifted eastward across the Sinai until it

reached the 1967 frontier between Egypt and Israel. The first of those demarcations, in which the U.S. Sinai Field Mission (SFM) was located, divided the Sinai north-south about 30 miles east of the Canal. The SFM was set in the empty zone north east of Isma'iliya in a strategic, rocky, mesa-like area through which ran the two main cross Sinai routes.

The particular arrangements for the U.S. managed SFM were accepted by both sides, who insisted that the United Nations alone wasn't competent enough to provide good peacekeeping. They wanted the United States to be responsible within the U.N. zone for the most critical area. This was the Mitla and Gidi passes, through which all significant traffic passed, whether they were caravans as in the old days, or whether they were the tank columns from Israel and Egypt that variously attacked each other. The SFM was given the job of monitoring the peacekeeping program in a 15 by 20 mile area of mesas, wadis, and rolling sand dunes.

Given that the UN was to have about 6,000 men in the peacekeeping zone, I wondered at first how significant our role, with 150 people, would be. I didn't have to be in the field very long to find out that 6,000 U.N. troops, spread along 15 by 85 miles of desert, did not actually amount to very much surveillance of the actual territory. The UN was supposed to assure that absolutely no one was in the neutral zone and that in the limited-force zones on either side there were only the agreed, limited number of tanks, artillery pieces, and military personnel. The U.N. established widely scattered outposts of five to ten men, mostly out of sight of each other. A very loose network indeed, particularly as they seldom patrolled. During nighttime, about ten hours of every day, these outposts could not see and were wholly ineffective. Then, during the day, there were sand storms and heat that limited visibility. While parts of this Sinai area consisted of open flat stretches that you could see over clearly with binoculars, other parts included a lot of gullies, big mesas, semi-mountains, and rolling sand dunes, that made monitoring very difficult. The UN would have needed maybe ten times as many people to watch over their area even adequately with its traditional outpost system. The Egyptians and Israelis were right: the UN system as designed could not assure the two parties that arrangements were fully respected. Finally, UN execution, given its political-bureaucratic operations, has always been inherently very fallible.

So I've come to think that the U.N. is a marvelous institution to discuss international issues and to authorize peacekeeping activities. This mandate is the first essential step. But a UN mission, by its multi-national composition, is inept at the next stage, the operations of peacekeeping. For instance, in the Sinai, the UN mission consisted of five different national military units as monitors: Swedes, Indonesians, Ghanaians, Nepalese and Finns. There was also a Canadian administrative support group and a Polish road repair unit.

Q: Any Irish?

ROBERTS: No. The Irish occasionally send units, but mostly they send individuals, often for staff functions.

These five national military units varied tremendously in capability. In some, all the enlisted staff and officers were college or high school graduates. In others, the average educational level might have been fourth grade. Some had all necessary equipment, including vehicles and communications. Others had only sidearms, if that. Some units could communicate with their

outposts by radio; others only visited them to bring a daily ration. None of these military units could communicate with each other. Often, most of them could not reach their local UN headquarters near Isma'iliya by phone line or radio. This abysmal level of competence was and is still common for UN operations. It does not represent serious operations but rather a costly farce. UN "peacekeeping" in the Sinai was reduced largely to being a "presence." That was and is totally unacceptable for serious situations. The UN's technical capability needs major overhaul.

The Sinai Field Mission (SFM) thus indeed had a serious assignment in supplementing the UN in monitoring effectively the terms of the demilitarized zone agreement. "Effectively" meant in fact to a level satisfying mutual Israeli-Egyptian suspicions. As such suspicions of outright flouting, cheating, or manipulation were very intense, the monitoring standard had to be extremely high. Even after two years of steadily improving our capability, and strong assertion of our role, I don't believe we earned their full trust, but we did establish ourselves as a serious element in the situation and helped move the system on to its final multi-national non-UN, monitoring stage at the 1967 frontier.

The Sinai agreement fortunately was conceptually very sound. It did not make the UN or the SFM responsible for such a sensitive role as providing the two antagonists warning of military threats or maneuvers. Rather, it set up an elaborate system whereby both Israel and Egypt could watch for themselves what the other was doing in the monitored zones and beyond. The UN and US roles were rather to monitor the two countries' activities to assure they were in compliance with the agreement. If not, a violation was reported to all parties. Warning of a military threat is much too vital a concern to entrust to any third party. Even our monitoring of the terms of the agreement was barely acceptable to both parties.

In order to watch each other, both were authorized to fly up and down the neutral and demilitarized zones on alternate days and take any pictures they wished. They could only come down to, we'll say, 5,000 feet altitude, and they could choose to fly or not, but they had to stick to their chosen schedules. To supplement the two sides' aerial monitoring, the US had the right to over-fly the same area. We did this about once a week with a Blackbird SR-71 from Cyprus. The US photographs were then promptly distributed to the U.N., and to both sides, so that they could check their results on emptiness of the neutral zone and the number of tents or pieces of equipment or what evidence there might be of activities in the two limited force zones.

Then, on the ground, both sides had combination observation/intercept stations overlooking the other's territory neighboring the zones.

Q: Intercept means a radio intercept.

ROBERTS: Yes, a radio intercept and passive radar station. The Israelis already had one on the Gidi Hills, overlooking the 30 miles of flat sand desert to the Suez Canal. They were allowed to keep it. But the Egyptians didn't have any such post, so the US helped them build one, overlooking the Israeli central Sinai positions. These arrangements gave both sides a fairly good ability to reassure themselves continually that nothing too dangerous was going on in the Sinai.

Our job was simply to see that the rules were followed: that airplanes maintained their height and scheduled days; that no airplanes other than the scheduled ones flew over the demilitarized zones; that the two intelligence stations contained only intercept and observation capabilities; and that no unauthorized persons or vehicles of any type were in our section of the empty neutral zone. The job essentially was that of a referee. We watched for violations and blew the whistle, when justified, by reporting any breach immediately to the Defense Departments of both parties, to the UN Sinai Headquarters in Jerusalem, and to Washington. We also watched for anything that might be preparations for a major violation, as a military buildup, but we would only report actual violations of the agreement.

What became increasingly obvious was that we had to be a good enough referee to convince two very dubious parties that we in fact could detect all types of infractions. That is something that cannot be mandated; it must be earned in the field.

Monitoring -- refereeing -- the over-flight arrangements of the agreement had not been considered in much detail by the drafters. It was technically difficult and there was little guidance. Capability and procedures had to be built up. This was particularly hard for the UN, given its operational weakness. The five UN military units never agreed on what had happened in the air. Quite often, the units weren't notified that an Israeli or an Egyptian flight was due, and they would report an infraction when in fact it was the scheduled flight. Then an airplane, or several, might come that should not have been in the area and represented violations. The Swedes would report that the plane was an Israeli-made copy of a French Mirage flying at such an altitude and time. The Indonesians would report that, no, it was actually a fixed-wing aircraft, but they agreed on the direction it was going. Then the Ghanaians would report, a day later after their ration run to their outposts, that they had been looking very carefully and nothing had crossed their area. The next unit would say, oh, yes, they'd seen planes but they had not been over the prohibited zones. The Finns might largely agree with the Swedes, but introduce significant variations.

The poor U.N. commander would get all these conflicting observations, received 24 hours or more after an event, and be hard pressed for what to report. He couldn't take the first data to arrive, despite the need for urgent reporting, without affronting the other national units; he couldn't accept one report as probably more accurate than another without exhibiting bias among nationalities; and he could hardly average them out. In practice, the U.N. commander had to wait until all his units reported in, so it might be two or three days before he would have the materials to comment on an airplane infraction. From the Egyptian and the Israeli point of view, this was wholly unacceptable. Plane infractions could be terribly serious, because military jets could get back from the Sinai to either capital in just a few minutes. They needed to know immediately whether or not something unauthorized was flying over the demilitarized zone and if it were dangerous.

Peacekeeping missions frequently require really efficient, high-tech kind of monitoring. Just as war is an extremely tense, technically executed process, so peacekeeping has to be equally fierce and efficient if it's going to handle relations between terribly suspicious people.

To implement the good basic mandate and operational arrangements in the Sinai agreement, the

SFM brought in much technical equipment not previously used for peacekeeping. This included several hundred seismic ground sensors, each with a radio reporting unit, that were buried along likely travel routes; infrared sensors set up in wadis and stony areas where seismic sensors could not easily be used; and strain-sensitive cable sensors buried across roads or tracks. These sensors were much like a home security system that detects fiddling with doors or windows and movement within a house. The seismic sensors had been developed for use in Vietnam. They were adaptations of regular earthquake sensors and were highly reliable. They could detect a tank or heavy vehicle at a mile or more distance, a person within fifty meters, or a rabbit nearby. Their sensitivity could be increased, but then very slight tremors, as created by windblown desert plants tugging at their roots, would activate them.

The sensors were laid out somewhat like a minefield to cover strategic areas. Their layout was plotted on a large map in SFM's operation room with red lights that lit when a sensor was activated. The appearance and advance through the layout of an intruding entity could be immediately spotted and tracked. The sensor fields were also watched over by three SFM outposts, manned to both spot and identify violations 24 hours a day. This system worked as planned, largely because of effective adaptations and fine tuning by Washington and by the contractor personnel (from E-Systems of Dallas, Texas) who handled field administration and technical services. The State Department provided Mission management, international communications, and monitors at the Egyptian and Israeli observation/intercept stations.

Our first major capability problem was augmenting the sensor alarm system with means to identify the cause. The planners had assumed large-scale violations by easily identifiable tanks, attack aircraft, and lots of soldiers. The reality was intrusions by one or more light vehicles, a few persons on foot, or camels moving about with or without riders. We could not report a violation but fail to identify the cause without raising much more alarm than we settled. So we had to check out any alarm with our own staff. Considering what or who might be out there triggering our system, especially at night, was scary and actually dangerous.

To increase our identification capacity, we used the highest power binoculars and the most sensitive night vision scopes available. This helped but was still inadequate. So Washington approved a major technical improvement. We put up towers with remote controlled TV cameras that could scan most sensor layouts. The towers also had big searchlights. The TV cameras worked on both infrared and white light. This not only improved our identification ability but provided a graphic record that could be shown to doubters or to those denying involvement. This steady increase in SFM's monitoring capacity was one of the major reasons for its success.

In military terms, there were no major violations in our area. Both sides wanted the agreement to work. But there were lots of violations of varying seriousness. Even minor ones really counted because as the number of "gotchas" mounted they proved the effectiveness of our peacekeeping system. When I left after two plus years of SFM operations, there had been 71 Israeli violations and two Egyptian ones. The big spread is because the Egyptians and Israelis are such fundamentally different types of people. It shows up particularly at the individual level when ordinary people are in contact with a system. Israelis will hop in a jeep and poke about the desert, disregarding their own instructions, barriers, keep out signs, or even warnings tendered in person. They may be just picnicking or exploring, or deliberately testing the system. The

Egyptians don't go walkabout, are not so assertive in the face of restrictions, and are system abiding. If caught out, the Israelis, like good lawyers, deny everything down the line. The Egyptians are more inclined to accept the violation but plead circumstances.

We almost never got the Israelis to admit to a violation. The individuals involved, military staff of various ranks, would report their version to senior local officers. These were loyal first to their own men and to an international agreement hardly at all. The senior officers' report would go up the Israeli chain of command and disappear into their Defense Ministry. We tried to end-run this process by also reporting through a liaison channel to the Prime Minister's office. While we seldom won an acknowledgment of our violations calls, I believe we built up some credibility within both parties' action offices.

This credibility was evidenced mainly by increasing cooperation among all those out in the desert living with the demilitarized system. First we got to know each other by repeated visits to each others' installations, and eyeballing the equipment on hand. Then we began cooperating a little.

For instance, after about a year of operations, an Israeli major phoned us about nine p.m. An aggressive type from a nearby military unit, he said, " Why haven't you reported, as you should have, the Egyptian intrusion in such and such a place? There are three helicopters right in the empty zone, where they have no right to be. I've already reported to Tel Aviv. We're going to shoot them down if you guys don't get them out of there."

We said, "What?!"

He yelled, "Yes, they are very clearly visible. We checked and they're at such and such a place."

We checked our sensor layout and not a sign was showing of any intrusion. This was particularly significant as a helicopter puts a tremendous pressure on the ground with the beating of its rotors. Much of our sensor board would have been lit. We cross-checked with our outposts. One of them reported, "Oh, yeah, there are some winking red lights way west about where the Suez Canal is, maybe 30 miles from here. The lights go on and off, and they're moving too slow to be fixed-wing. We think they're probably helicopters."

So we called back the major and told him that there were helicopters, all right, but they were 30 miles away, over the Suez Canal, way the hell out of even the Egyptian demilitarized zone. He said, "You're absolutely wrong, and I have asked for further instructions." Now, with further experience and contacts, we phoned J-1, the Israeli intelligence intercept station, which was looking out over the Egyptian demilitarized zone and the Canal. We asked, "Do you guys see some red lights out over the Suez Canal at such and such a place?" They replied, "Yes, we've been watching them for some time."

We then asked: "Would you kindly call Tel Aviv and tell them what you see, because your military camp has reported back that the helicopters are in fact right here in the Sinai demilitarized zone, and they're asking for orders as to what to do about them." J-1 agreed, and a matter that could have led to greater excitement was settled.

Incidentally, the Israeli major was not all that misguided. A light can be seen on a clear night in the desert a very long way. We once got stirred up by a light that appeared to be right at our perimeter fence. After careful triangulation over two days, we finally found it was a light bulb inside a tent at a Ghanaian outpost eight miles away. It "blinked" at us whenever the tent flap was opened.

Q: Was either side really trying to do anything, outside of individual officers or soldiers who were playing games, particularly on the Israeli side? Was there a "testing" problem really?

ROBERTS: There was no effort by either side to upset the overall system, but various situations that arose suggested they would try manipulate it. With many Israelis, if you drew a little line on the sand and said, "Now don't go over this," they'd shake your hand while pushing out a foot to see where exactly a call would be made. Done in a friendly way, but it was testing the system. Equally, there were accidental violations. And once we had deliberate cover-up. We reversed this by stringent enforcement of our violation call. It was perhaps our best handled peacekeeping incident.

We had one SFM State Department officer in a little monitor shack at the entrance for each of the two intelligence stations. An officer from each station was also assigned at each monitor shack to work with the American to coordinate with the intelligence command and its personnel. The two worked together screening everything going in and out to assure that no prohibited, offensive-type weapons went in and that the personnel level remained within the 150 allowed.

Our officers worked rotating shifts at these stations. After weeks and months of living with their counterparts, handling routine matters most of the time, everyone got well acquainted if not downright friendly. At the entrance to the Israeli station, J-1, there was also an Israeli guard post of eight soldiers. Their meals were brought out from the administrative buildings by pickup truck. One morning, our officer walked over to say hello to the driver and he noticed that in the back of the truck, along with some pots of hot food, was a bazooka. This was outlawed. So he said, "Hey, you got a bazooka in there!"

"No, I haven't," said the driver.

"Oh, yes," said our guy, "look at it right there."

"My God," said the Israeli, and he jumped in his truck and drove off.

So our officer phoned in the presence of a bazooka, a clear violation of the Agreement. But the evidence was gone. I was in charge then, as the SFM director, Nick Thorne, was in Jerusalem. I sent our operations director, Jim Shill, over to J-1 to review the matter with our officer and with Colonel Dani, the head of J-1. This was not a time sensitive issue and we could carefully verify the facts before issuing a significant violation. Colonel Dani met with Shill and said: "Yes, there was something in the truck, all right, but it wasn't a bazooka. It was a mock-up thing that we practice with, and it's rather realistic looking." He promised to produce it, which he did in about 20 more minutes. He showed Jim a piece of tubing as large as a bazooka with a plastic guard

shield and a handle on it. He added: "Anyone could easily have mistaken it. You know we wouldn't have a bazooka on this place. We all understand that's not allowed."

Jim asked our officer, "Is this what you saw?"

He said, "No, I saw a bazooka. It was in the back of the pickup truck. I had my hand on the side of the truck; I wasn't four feet away. I know I saw it."

So Jim told the colonel, "I'm sorry. Where is it? You've got to send it back."

And Dani said, "No, this is it."

So we had a standoff. Jim and I reviewed the situation. On the Israeli side was that the mock-up was very realistic; also, had there been a bazooka they'd only had at most 30 minutes to make the mock-up, and we knew Colonel Dani to be a very dedicated, straight officer. On the other hand, Jim knew Dani well and felt Dani had been uncomfortable in presenting the mock-up story. Furthermore, which we had not mentioned to Dani, our man at the J-1 gate was an ex-Marine who had been in Vietnam. There was no way that he wasn't going to know, four feet away, what was a bazooka and what was a mock-up. This was more serious than just the infraction decision. We were also calling the senior Israeli officer a liar which would leave no room for compromise. But it was a violation, so we informed all parties of the bazooka finding (but not the of background discussions). Thorne was informed by phone. He approved and noted we now had to get J-1 to cough up the bazooka as its presence was an ongoing violation and we needed to enforce our call.

I went back to Dani and argued the matter. He said, "That's fine, but you're mistaken. Your guy, I'm very sad to say, is mistaken." When I reported this to Thorne, he said, "All right. One of the things we can do is to cut them off. You close down the station; don't let anyone in or out." This was daring. Under the Agreement, we had authority to assure that the flow of arrivals and departures never resulted in more than the permitted 150 personnel at the station. We had no written authority to stop arrivals and departures per se, but there was nothing saying we could not. Furthermore, there was a practical problem. It was by now noon on a Friday. The Israelis always sent out about 100 staff on eight or more trucks for their Shabbat at home; and an equal number were on their way across the desert to J-1.

But either we took the risk or we let the Israelis get away with flaunting the Agreement and undercutting the US monitoring role. So I phoned Dani and told him we were closing entry and departure at J-1 until he produced the bazooka. We told our officer at the gate to inform the Israeli guards and to stand in the road if necessary. We sent some extra officers as help and witnesses. Then I went to the UN checkpoint on the road entering the Israeli side of the neutral zone and persuaded them to stop the Israeli relief convoy. I pointed out that we had closed J-1 and that if the Israeli military vehicles and personnel stayed in the neutral zone, that would be a violation. They protested that they had no authority to do this. Ultimately, to avoid being responsible for a violation in their area, they agreed to hold up the Israeli convoy pending instructions from H.Q. Jerusalem. As that was likely to be some time coming, we were spared potential Israeli pressure immediately outside J-1.

This worked out in part because we had good relations with all the UN units and personnel. We visited them regularly and they had standing invitations to visit and eat at the SFM. We had excellent food and the most reliable air-conditioning and plumbing for hundreds of miles. We were a much visited oasis. One of the UN checkpoint officers later explained to me that they were sympathetic with our move, and were suspicious of the Israelis in this instance, but as UN officials they could only follow their own rules. As there was nothing clearly applicable, it had been possible to cooperate while seeking instructions.

The Israelis were hopping mad. The excitable major at the neighboring Israeli army base phoned to say we would open J-1 or he would send out armor and overrun our Mission Headquarters and our J-1 outpost. He did indeed send vehicles as far as the UN checkpoint. But he did not cross the line into the neutral zone. That would have been a blatant violation. We discounted his threat to overrun SFM, but he might well have broken down our flimsy barrier at J-1. It was a dicey moment. As the major was volatile and unpredictable, we took initial steps to execute a frequently practiced hasty evacuation.

Meanwhile we began getting excited calls from further and further up the Israeli military chain of command, up to the HQ of their Southern Command, and finally the Ministry of Defense. Nick Thorne, whom we fortunately could contact frequently, told us to stand fast and to pass any proposals to him to negotiate. He was enjoying it. Originally, he'd sounded a bit doubtful about our violations call. Jim Shill knew him well and suggested that he was generally doubtful about judgments other than his own. So we agreed early on that Jim should drive to Jerusalem and explain things we could not mention on the radio or phone, particularly our assessment of Colonel Dani and the identity of our J-1 watch officer (whose military experience Nick knew personally). Jim made the three plus hour trip to Jerusalem in barely over two.

The Israelis first proposed that we open J-1 and that they would send an inspection group from Southern Command next day to review the situation. Then Tel Aviv said a general from the Ministry would come directly by helicopter. We said, "No" to all proposals and referred them to Nick in Jerusalem. We continued to get a lot of protest from J-1 and from the major. We could see his heavy vehicles at the UN checkpoint barely two miles away.

We were also in regular phone contact with our senior Israeli liaison officer in Jerusalem. He was a regular army officer, a colonel, had been on Peres' staff, and had direct access to the Prime Minister's office. As the tension increased, it behooved us to convince someone outside the immediate military chain of command around us. So we explained to him that our watch officer was an ex-Marine from Vietnam who had used bazookas, had seen it from four feet away, and that there was no way that we're wrong on this. The standoff continued right up to dusk. Then we got a call from the Ministry of Defense in Tel Aviv. It was just a message: "The colonel in charge of J-1 will meet you now at his perimeter now and turn over the bazooka." He did that, we collected it, and turned it over to the UN checkpoint for removal from the Agreement zones.

Much relieved, I invited the Israeli military in the area, including Dani and the major, to have supper with us that night. After dinner was over, and temperatures were somewhat calm, one turned to me and said, "What was all this fuss about, for just a little old bazooka?"

Basically the fuss was about the integrity of the system. We had been able not only to identify an event correctly, but had enforced our finding and buttressed our referee role. Once players in a rough game can intimidate or disregard a referee, his role is much reduced. The same in peacekeeping. I would go further, considering the stakes and costs, and say that if peacekeepers are reduced to being just a presence, they should be withdrawn.

I also think Nick Thorne exercised a lot of courage and was correct in not asking Washington for instructions. He said: "This is our call. It's up to us to make it work. If we report to Washington, they will look at it politically and say, "Hey, you can't do this to the Israelis, we're negotiating something urgent with them. Also, the legal office will say there's nothing in your Agreement mandate that authorizes you to close off J-1 in order to break a deadlock. Furthermore, this should be negotiated; you are threatening disruption of a major international Agreement." All that is eminently reasonable. We were taking a real risk of disrupting the system. But if we let the Israelis get away with it, the system was also disrupted, but less visibly. At the heart of this was that as referee we in SFM were ready to walk off the field if ignored; I'm not sure the Department was willing to risk the operation in order to maintain it. I'm not aware there's ever been a decision on this point.

As for the other parties, we had reported to the United Nations and to the Egyptians that the violation had occurred. Then we followed up with general reports of on-going negotiations with the Israelis about resolving the problem. At the end of the day, we reported that the bazooka had been turned over and the matter was settled. So, for the outside world, there was just a small matter of a bazooka turning up where it shouldn't have been and it was turned over to the UN.

Later, I learned from a senior Israeli staff officer that the issue had gone up to the Prime Minister's office. The Israeli government, however, had negotiated the Agreement and they wanted to keep it alive. The senior political level also did not have quite the military's strong chain of command loyalty. Furthermore, all this was occurring pretty privately on phone and radio so there was less loss of face. Finally, I was chagrined to learn much later that the top Israelis knew the bazooka was there because some illegal weapons had been stockpiled at J-1 before we got there. Just in case the Agreement didn't work out. Security, for Israelis, is too vital to trust to anyone or anything except their own capability.

Q: I take it that the pressure from the Egyptian side was negligible. No problems?

ROBERTS: Very negligible. They were less concerned about territorial security than the Israelis. They had the confidence of thousands of years that they would always be around. They also had a single interest. They wanted the Sinai back. Right away of course; but the process could take time. Everything does. So they were more relaxed about operations out in the field. They did not act first and talk later; we discussed problems with them upon visiting their regional HQ near Isma'iliya and the Defense Ministry in Cairo.

There were some problems with the Egyptian supply of their intelligence station, E-1. Their trucks were in such terrible condition that it took them hours to negotiate the 40 plus miles from the Canal to the station. Then the trucks frequently broke down in the demilitarized zones. Once,

several of them could not get up the last steep pitch to E-1 in time to meet the close-down dead line. We closed the E-1 gate, called a violation, and without saying anything over a radio or phone, sent over blankets and hot food for the soldiers who had to sleep overnight in their vehicles.

C. WILLIAM KONTOS
Director, Sinai Support Mission
Washington, DC (1976-1980)

Ambassador C. William Kontos was born in Illinois in 1922. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from the University of Chicago. He served in the U.S. Army from 1943-1946. Ambassador Kontos had served in the USAID program throughout most of his Foreign Service career. His career included positions in Greece, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Pakistan, Lebanon, Israel, and an ambassadorship to Sudan. Ambassador Kontos was interviewed in 1992 by Thomas Stern.

Q: Then in 1976, you became the Special Representative of the President and Director of the United States Sinai Support Mission. How did that come about?

KONTOS: I guess it was the result of my directorship of the two Task Forces that I have earlier described. Since those groups worked well, I guess I became known to the Department's leadership. The Sinai job was not one that I sought; in fact I don't think I ever went out to seek any job, beyond my first one.

At that time, the headquarters of the Sinai Mission was on the Seventh Floor of the Department of State. That is where it was established initially; much, much later it moved to Rome as headquarters of the successor organization -- the Multilateral Force and Observers organization (MFO).

Essentially, the Mission was one result of Kissinger's shuttle which took place after the war of 1973. At that time, the Secretary was able to persuade the Egyptians and Israelis to agree to a transition period before the Sinai was turned over to Egypt. The transition period was intended as a time when both sides could build confidence in the peaceful intent of the other. It enabled Kissinger to lower tensions between the two foes and reduce the prospects of further clashes between them.

The Sinai Mission was established in the Sinai astride the traditional invasion routes -- the Mitla and Gidi Passes. Under the terms of the agreement signed by the U.S., Egypt and Israel, the U.S. was committed to deploy a civilian peace-keeping force in the Sinai that would protect the approaches to these passes from either side. This was to be done by setting up observation posts, electronic sensors and listening devices that would monitor any activity in the passes or nearby. Moreover, as part of the agreement, both Egypt and Israel were permitted a major observation point, which was to be manned by themselves. The Israelis already had one; the Egyptians were

permitted to build one of their own. That allowed each side also to verify with its own people that no invasion force was approaching the passes. The Secretary and the NSC decided that the State Department would become responsible for the management of this observation effort. The Department decided to employ a civilian contractor who would work under the direction of the Department.

In the Fall of 1975, Joe Sisco, then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Frank Wisner of the Secretariat and Bob Oakley of the NSC were assigned the responsibility for drafting the first mission statement. In December, 1975, I was asked by Winston Lord, on behalf of the Secretary, to take charge of the project. The man who had been working on the project had already brought in some people -- one from the Pentagon, a naval contractor, a couple from the research arm of the Army, a Marine Corps Colonel. When I was sworn in as Special Representative of the President, a partial staff was already in place and a request for proposals (RFP) had been publicized in a Commerce announcement. The proposals were for the establishment of a field mission, including housing for up to 200 people, observation posts at both ends of the passes, deployment of electronic gear, placement of the sensors, procurement of observation gear (telescopes, binoculars, night vision devices), and finally to construct a facility in the Sinai. The contractor also had to man this observation operation 24 hours each day. The responses were coming in as I took over the job. There was some urgency in making decisions because we were working on a deadline, which was sometime in the following Spring. A special appropriation had been made so that funds were not a problem.

My first task was to review each of the proposals that were already coming in. That was done meticulously and with great care. We set up a special board which included people with contracting expertise from various agencies to review the proposals. We established a dozen criteria that had to be met. Weights were given to those proposals that best met the criteria. In the end, the successful bidder was a Texas organization, headquartered outside of Dallas, called "E Systems". It, in turn, negotiated a subcontract with a Texas construction firm to build the facilities -- housing, offices, observation posts. The subcontractor, H.B. Zachary, was headquartered in El Paso and accustomed to building with pre-fabricated concrete units. They had used that process in the construction of motels. These concrete units were ideal for the Sinai requirements; each had living accommodations, kitchens, bedrooms. They were designed to be placed one on top of the other, so that a building of almost any dimension could be put up. The contractor obtained these units from an existing job and put them on a ship leaving Corpus Christi, Texas to be delivered in the Sinai.

Meanwhile, a group, including two or three men from my office and some we borrowed from the Defense Department, went out to the Sinai to survey the situation. They went to both Cairo and Jerusalem and established links with liaison officials of both sides. They identified a site appropriate for the Sinai Field Mission. The Sinai was then still Israeli occupied up to the passes. Beyond those passes, towards the Suez Canal, the land was in Egyptian hands, although Egypt had no military presence there. Only nomads wandered around in the area between the Suez and the passes. The only Egyptian military presence in the Sinai permitted by the agreement was the personnel to man the observation post. We chose the site, the perimeter of which was to be patrolled by armed U.N. guards. Our personnel would be unarmed.

We are now in January 1976. "E Systems" and the construction contractor used a number of airplanes -- converted 747s -- to ship the construction material in order to build a temporary facility on the site we had selected. This temporary base was to be used by the construction workers and also to serve as the beginning of our operations. We established communications between Washington, Jerusalem and Cairo. There was a lot of work that had to be done in a short period of time. E systems was expert in loading the planes so that the material was unloaded in a proper sequence. We did have a crisis when the issue arose as to how the heavy concrete units would be brought into the Sinai; this required flat bed trucks. The passes were obviously much closer to Egypt and we thought we would use that route -- from Cairo to the Canal, across the Canal and to the site. But the roads on the Egyptian part of the Sinai were meager and primitive; also there were no facilities in any Egyptian port for unloading these heavy units. Even if there had been adequate cranes, the trucks might have had problems crossing the Suez and might have blocked the Canal. So we scrapped the idea of landing them in Egypt and took them to Haifa instead. The route was obviously much longer, but roads were paved all the way to the Sinai site.

As the ships were en route to Haifa, I got a call from my deputy in Washington. I was in Cairo on one of my frequent trips during this period. He told me that the construction contractor's shipping agent had said that if the ship docks in Haifa, he would be in violation of the Arab embargo. That would mean that no other ships of that shipping line would henceforth be permitted to dock in an Arab port. So we had to get involved in finessing the Arab embargo rules. We had our Ambassador approach the headquarters of the embargo enforcement agency, which was in Damascus, to see whether the Haifa docking would be a violation. We were able in the end to persuade the shipping line to dock in Haifa without penalty. I have a vague recollection that in order to avoid the embargo, the ship had to stop in a neutral port first (Nicosia, I believe) and then it could proceed to Haifa. I am not clear on the details, but some kind of legal subterfuge was worked out. That was one of the many, many difficulties that we overcame.

I must say that I had terrific cooperation from both the Egyptians and the Israelis. The Egyptians appointed a Major General to be the liaison officer and the Israelis appointed an Army Intelligence Corps Colonel. They both were skilled at cutting corners and through red tape. I shuttled between Cairo and Jerusalem and Washington.

The temporary camps were constructed. The first message was sent reporting to me and to the Secretary that the Mission was in business. The living conditions were far from ideal; winter in the Sinai in prefabs was not exactly a picnic.

We also had to establish a continual support system for the Mission. Most of the fresh fruit and vegetables came from Egypt and the rest of the food stuffs from Israel. E Systems was responsible for supplying all the provisions.

After the Mission was working, its main functions were to observe events around the passes and to maintain liaison with both sides to resolve any disputes that arose from observations -- ours as well as theirs. We had to report any trespasses into the neutral zone. We had a very elaborate reporting system to both sides and to Washington, so that if there were a violation of either the airspace or the neutral zone by any unauthorized vehicle or person -- we had occasional mistaken

penetrations by people who did not know where the boundaries were or who may not have had appropriate authorizations -- there would be an immediate report made. There were a number of unauthorized penetrations, mostly by uninformed people. The more difficult aspect was air violations, which we did not handle as well as ground ones. We had a U.S. airplane monitor the Sinai periodically, that provided air cover for events in the Sinai and provided pictures to both sides from those flights. These planes had very good military photographic equipment on board; we used U-2s with the agreement of both parties.

Our main objective was to build confidence that the U.S. was serving both sides even-handedly and effectively.

We had a number of sticky moments. None of the Egyptian or Israeli observers were to have arms of any kind -- personal weapons or otherwise. There were some attempts made to bring arms into each side's observer posts. The Israelis had a very sophisticated observation point filled with the latest in listening and detecting equipment. The Egyptians were building a much more primitive post on their side of the passes. Both sides tried from time to time to pass our posts with guns, which they always said were with them inadvertently. We always checked the Israeli and Egyptian observers as they went to and from their observation posts. The Americans who did this checking were Foreign Service officers from State and AID. We had 12-15 young FSOs who were liaison officers to the two sides. The E Systems people manned the sensors and other observation equipment, but dealing with each side was left to the FSOs who were stationed at each observation post. The FSOs lived first in temporary and then in permanent barracks along with the E Systems people. They would go to their posts every eight hours where they observed what was going on in the observation posts of each side.

Q: Why was it decided that these observation post duties would be performed by Foreign Service officers?

KONTOS: Because it was a ticklish matter. We needed some people who had a feel for the sensitivities of the situation. The FSOs had other responsibilities. From time to time, they would be assigned to our offices in both Egypt and Israel. Two or three would man those offices on a rotational basis. They served as our day to day liaison to both countries. We therefore needed people with some good sense; in some cases, we required an officer with language skills. The assignment of an FSO or an AID officer to the Sinai Mission was for one year, but I think for them it was a very interesting, rewarding assignment despite some of the long and tedious hours at the observation posts. They got a lot out of their assignments.

Q: How does one evaluate the success of an enterprise like the Sinai Support Mission?

KONTOS: You judge it by the fact that it had a beginning, a middle and an end. It fulfilled all the agreements signed by all three parties after the Egyptians withdrew from the Sinai: the US, the Israelis and the Egyptians. The deal was sweetened for the Israelis -- who in giving up the Sinai also had to give up two airbases -- by two substitute bases financed by us on their territory. That cost the US several hundreds of million dollars. The Israelis withdrew from the whole of Sinai by the end of 1981, except for a very small area called Taba, which had been in dispute ever since the negotiations had started. It took further international mediation before Taba -- with

its large Israeli tourist hotel--was returned to the Egyptians.

The whole arrangement worked out very well, thanks in major part to our presence and our role as intermediary plus our financial generosity -- that made it worthwhile for the Israelis to give up their two airbases -- including large amounts of foreign assistance for the following years up to and including today.

Q: What was your role in obtaining Congressional support for the Sinai arrangement?

KONTOS: The enabling legislation which authorized the funds also included a requirement for semi-annual reports. So now there is a complete record of what occurred throughout the life of the Sinai Mission. There were also Congressional hearings. On the House side, it was Lee Hamilton's Europe-Middle East subcommittee that held the hearings; on the Senate side, it varied. For a long time the hearings were chaired by Senator Kassebaum of Kansas. I used to brief her privately as well. Hamilton had regular hearings. I was very pleased that I was able to report to him regularly that we had not spent all the funds appropriated because of our efficient operation. The Congressmen were very pleased to hear that.

I was the Director of the Sinai Support Mission for four years. After I left, the construction work was all done, the observation routine had been well established. While still Director and after things had settled down, I made it a practice to visit the area periodically, making sure that I would alternate my starting points between Cairo and Jerusalem. I used to talk to both sides and brief them on what was going on. The trips were often just an opportunity to maintain cordial relationships with both sides, but there were always problems cropping up -- transportation, clearances. At the height of our construction program, there were probably 185 people on site; we never reached the 200 mark. E Systems brought in people largely from Greenville, Texas which is where their plant was located. Many of them had never been outside of Greenville when then, all of a sudden, they found themselves in the Sinai with access to both Egypt and Israel. To deal with culture shock, we mounted an orientation program for the E Systems people, with specific emphasis on the principal executives of the contractor. Initially, we put on a two day program for them. They were briefed by Gordon Beyer who was on the Egypt desk, Larry Eagleburger, and others.

Of course, E Systems had to recruit their own staff for the tasks in the Sinai. I was amazed at how few problems their personnel created. Only a few got a little tipsy, but there were no real drinking problems. One or two were sent back home because they were found with some pot but, in general, there were no drug problems. In the latter stages of my tour, we permitted women to work in the Sinai; we had no problems with that. It was remarkable how little trouble we did have. In part, that was due to the E Systems' careful selection process; they picked people who were courteous, flexible and tolerant and who turned out to be good representatives of America abroad, even though most had never left Texas before. The supervisory staff served for two years and the others worked for 12-18 months.

I had two deputies on my staff: one was living in the field and one was in Washington. The deputy in the field was in charge of the whole operation; the E Systems people reported to him. He controlled the operations; he in fact was the Mayor of a small town in the Sinai. They had a

fire brigade, a security force, a cafeteria, etc. My deputy established the ground rules for leaves, etc. He was also the principal liaison with the UN which as I mentioned guarded the perimeters of our observation operations. They consisted of two rotating battalions: one Ghanaian and one Fijian. My deputy was also the principal liaison with the Egyptians and the Israelis and in charge of our two offices in Cairo and Jerusalem. My first deputy was Nick Thorne, whose wife resided in Cairo; his deputy was Owen Roberts, whose wife lived in Jerusalem. The officers themselves lived in the Sinai station. They may have seen their wives briefly every two weeks or so.

There was a story I might mention at this point. One of the drivers of the Sinai Field Mission director was made available to me when I would visit the area. He was a 19-20 year old Texan who had never left Greenville until this assignment. He may have had one year at the local community college and then had joined the E Systems. He was a splendid driver. But the most fascinating part of this young man's experience was how rapidly he mastered basic Arabic so that he could drive around Cairo. He knew all the labyrinths in Cairo of which there are many. He mastered the topography of Cairo so well that he could find almost any location in the fastest way possible; he knew where the traffic jams were forming and how to bypass them. He acquired the same skills for Jerusalem and Tel Aviv -- he learned enough Hebrew to get by in Israel as well. Everybody knew him; everybody greeted him warmly. Sometimes, when he needed to get directions, he would ask for them in the local tongue with a Texas accent. It was an eye opener for us and a wonderful experience for him.

Before we leave my Sinai experience, I would like to make one more point. The Sinai Support Mission was, in my view, one of the most successful cooperative ventures between the government and the private sector that I know about. It was run by the Department of State; it handled a major contractual negotiation; it oversaw the work of two splendid large Texan firms; it was a model in many ways of how the U.S. government and the private sector can collaborate effectively. We issued guidelines on the dos and don'ts. The relationship was very amicable and constructive and in the final analysis, very productive. When people say that the State Department doesn't know "how to run things", they should look back on the Sinai operations which were exceptionally well orchestrated and an illustration of good efficient and effective management.

Q: Before we end this discussion, I would like to ask how much interest did the Secretary and other senior principals show in the work of the Sinai Mission?

KONTOS: A great deal. Initially, the whole operation was run out of Eagleburger's office, when he was the Under Secretary for Management. He was personally involved until the Carter administration came in and then it was to the NSC that I reported regularly. The Congress, when it authorized the Sinai operation, made it technically an independent agency. We had our own line item in the budget. My official title was Special Representative of the President and Director of the Sinai Support Mission. I reported to the Secretary of State and to the President, although in the real world, it was to the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, first Scowcroft and then Brzezinski, who followed our activities on behalf of the President. So I worked closely with the NSC as well as Larry Eagleburger. Secretary Vance showed considerable interest in the operation when he became Secretary of State; he was very much engaged during his early days when Congress mandated a restriction on the number of

Americans who could be posted in the Sinai. (They were concerned for their security.) I remember that one day, right after lunch, I got a call from the Secretary's Office that I needed to come up with a master plan which would determine the number of Americans needed to be in the Sinai at any one time so that he could convey this information to a Congressional committee which was in the process of establishing this limit. So the two of us decided rather arbitrarily what the personnel limits would be.

Ben Read, who succeeded Eagleburger as Under Secretary for Management, also continued to show much interest in our activities.

RUSSELL SVEDA
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1977-1979)

Mr. Sveda was born in New Jersey in 1945. After serving with the Peace Corps in Korea he joined the Foreign Service in 1975. His overseas posts with the State Department include Korea, where he served as Staff Aide to the Ambassador and in Moscow, as Science Officer. In Washington, Mr. Sveda was assigned as China Desk Officer and subsequently as Watch Officer in the Department's Operations Center. He also served as volunteer in the Sinai Field Mission. Mr. Sveda was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June, 2000.

Q: We'll pick this up in 1977. Russ, what got you to the Sinai? Was this just an assignment or did you ask for it?

SVEDA: The Sinai Field mission also promised a degree of interest and excitement that I could probably never find except on the visa line in Seoul. The Sinai Field Mission just seemed like a very good of breaking the mold.

Q: So you were a volunteer.

SVEDA: Oh, absolutely. Everybody had to be a volunteer. The State Department brought me back for a month of consultations, but not knowing whether to teach me Hebrew or Arabic, either of which would have helped, even a few weeks of the language would have helped in either case, they decided to teach me nothing. So, after some consultations, I went out.

One of my consultations was with a distinguished former diplomat. I confided to him that I really knew nothing about the Middle East at all and I really felt unsure of myself. He said, "Young man, whenever anybody says anything about the Middle East, listen carefully, nod gravely, and say 'Yes, but the situation is more complicated than that.' You will never be wrong and you will get a reputation for wisdom far beyond your years."

Q: So, you were with the Sinai from when to when?

SVEDA: From December of 1977 through January/February of 1979. On my way to the Sinai, I stopped in Athens and was mugged. When I got to Tel Aviv, my first post, I informed the regional security officer of this, that I had lost my Department pass and everything and had to have it replaced. I gave her the details. Later on, that was to come and haunt me because anything you tell the security officers they will use against you at some time. I was mugged in the Plaka. I had been sitting and drinking Retsina, listening to a woman who reminded me very much of a Greek Joan Baez as she sang in the Plaka. I took what I thought was a taxi, but it turned out to be a way of divesting me of my money and also my pass for the State Department.

So, I got to the Sinai in late December of 1977.

Q: Could you explain just what the Sinai Mission was at that time and a little about the origin? This was sort of an odd Foreign Service assignment.

SVEDA: Yes, it was odd. You really have to look to the Yom Kippur War, which Israel fought with Egypt in 1973. What happened was that the Egyptians practiced crossing over the Nile and crossing the Suez Canal. The Suez Canal at that point was half held by Israel. The idea was to cross over the Suez Canal, establish a beachhead. They repeatedly practiced crossing the Suez Canal and establishing a beachhead. So, when Israel let its guard down at Yom Kippur in 1973, the Egyptians, having practiced, crossed over the Suez Canal and got to the other side. They were so triumphant that they forgot that they had never practiced anything beyond crossing the Suez Canal. So, they found themselves on the other side of the Suez Canal not knowing at all what to do. But they just stayed there. The Israelis suddenly awakened from their inattention, crossed south of them, and encircled them on the other side of the Suez Canal. Then Kissinger, who was then Secretary of State, intervened and told the Israelis that they should come to an agreement with the Egyptians because the Egyptians had successfully crossed to the other side of the Suez Canal. As the Israelis would say to me later, "The Egyptians had us surrounded from within." But this gave the pretext for recognizing some Egyptian gain since the Six Day War in 1967. Kissinger negotiated the Sinai Agreement, which was very interesting. The Israelis would not give up their position at the Gidi Pass. I have to explain a bit about the geography of the Sinai. The Sinai is this huge triangle of desert which separates Suez from Israel and from the port of Aqaba. The northern part, there is a sea road, a traditional road, that goes along the Mediterranean Sea. Below that, there are huge sand dunes, and I mean huge. We're talking 600-700 foot tall sand dunes. Their location shifts from time to time because they are sand dunes, very much like on the beach. You go to the beach one day and you see them. You go to the beach the next day, they're in a totally different location. So, for all practical purposes, that area is impassable. In the southern part of the peninsula, you have very rocky desert leading up to the heights of Mount Sinai, where St. Catherine's monastery is. But this is also impassable. As a practical matter, there is, aside from the sea road, only one way through the Sinai. That is through two passes called the Gidi and the Mitla passes. The Gidi and the Mitla Passes are on the eastern end of a large plateau like a sheet-cake with 150-200 foot cliffs. It's as if some giant had cut a piece of cake out of it which was 10 miles wide and 20 miles deep, a perfect rectangle. At the corner of one rectangle, you had the Gidi Pass. At the corner of the other, the Mitla Pass. As a practical matter, the Gidi Pass was the more important one because that was the direct connection between Tel Aviv and Cairo, depending on which way your army chose to start and which way your army was going to fish. So, at the edge of this plateau, at the northwestern

corner of this cut into the sheet-cake, the Israelis had erected a station which we called the Death Star, after the movie "Star Wars." The Death Star was absolutely the ne plus ultra of electronic command centers. The Israelis had a perfect electronic view of all of the Sinai from there. They directed all of their flight training there in the Sinai, which was a very important place because it was empty and there was a lot of room for their fighter planes to go and play games. It also monitored the Suez Canal. You could actually see the Suez Canal some distance away in the clear desert air and obviously also Cairo, which was not that far from the Suez Canal. So, the Israelis did not want to give up this place.

Kissinger fashioned on the rather brilliant idea of keeping the Israelis at the western end of these cliffs that oversaw this big staging ground for battles and put the Egyptians at a new base on the eastern end right near the Gidi Pass, right between the Gidi and the Mitla Passes. The Egyptians would therefore have to cross the Israeli lines in order to get to their camp and the Israelis would have to cross the Egyptian lines - theoretically at least - to get to their camp. In the middle would be the Americans. We were there to monitor the passage of troops, weapons, and vehicles from one army to their camp in the Sinai and back. So, our job as monitors (There were about 30 government personnel, of whom about 20 of us were liaison officers), our job as liaison officers was to monitor the number of personnel, weapons, and vehicles that were going into the Israeli camp on the one end or the Egyptian camp on the other end. We had a little cabin outside of each camp and we stayed there with an Israeli or an Egyptian counterpart. The cabins themselves were really a hoot. I'll get to that in a minute. What we did was, we would stand at the gate and count the number of vehicles and the number of vehicles that were in the camp, count the number of personnel, asked to see any weapons that were hidden. We had a right of preemptory refusal on any of these convoys at any given time. I'll get back to that in a minute. We also were in a zone that was patrolled by the UN. Theoretically, it was a UN truce zone. The UN truce zone had Finnish, Ghanaian, Indonesian, Polish, and Swedish soldiers. The Swedes and the Poles were working on logistics. Poland at that point was a communist country. The Finnish, Ghanaian, and Indonesian battalions were manning posts above the Gidi Pass, above the Mitla Pass, entry to the zone, and all that. It was totally bizarre to see these Indonesians who had never been in an area where it didn't rain an hour or two a day in lush Indonesian islands finding themselves in, of all places, the absolute antithesis to their whole world, the Sinai desert. It was funny to see their reaction. They just didn't know what to make of it. There were little anomalies like that all over the place. The camp itself was maintained by a contract with a company called E Systems from Dallas, Texas, which had a reputation for putting state of the art electronics on airplanes or anywhere. They were able to set up a monitoring system so we could tell at our little posts whether or not a movement that was detected was that of a camel or the Bedouin or the jeep or the rabbit. These were very sophisticated measuring devices. I noticed when I got to the White House later on that the Secret Service has a very similar system for monitoring whether any motion of the squirrels or tourists on the White House grounds were terrorists. We had 130 contractors from E Systems, almost all of whom were from the vicinity of Greenville, Texas, which made for a very interesting life there.

The Egyptians and the Israelis had agreed to this camp being set up in the middle of the Sinai desert and the Americans had said that we wanted to set it up within a timeframe of 90 days. The Egyptians and the Israelis were used to a different timeframe in terms of construction. The Egyptians since the Pyramids haven't done anything in less than 20 years. They Egyptians and

the Israelis were amused that the Americans would make this proposal. But we insisted on it. It turns out that the State Department knew of a Holiday Inn that was supposed to have been built in the vicinity of El Paso, Texas, which was a prefab construction. It was to have been built, but for some odd reason, it wasn't built in the desert near El Paso, so all that the State Department needed to do was load these things on flatbed trucks, set up some sort of water system and electricity system and, bingo, there we were. So, off the ships in the Sinai and the trucks which took these modular units and put the Holiday Inn right in the middle of the Sinai desert. It was bizarre. It was totally bizarre. We created the little world, a big fantasy world right there in the middle.

Q: Did it have a swimming pool?

SVEDA: No, of course, being government property, it could not have a swimming pool. Nothing under the contract would allow that. But we were talking about having an emergency water supply cistern with a retractable top.

Q: We had a number of these emergency water systems throughout the world.

SVEDA: It's critical. The one luxury that we did have... One day, the commander of the Finnish battalion came over and said, "Well, gentlemen, it's been very interesting having dinner. I will take my sauna and go to sleep." Our commander said, "Well, you can go to sleep if you wish, but you may not take your sauna because we don't have one." "Oh," said the Finnish commander. The next day, Finnish soldiers showed up and built a very large sauna, which became a coed sauna, which led to all sorts of interesting developments. We had about 10% women in this group of 150. It was extremely important because experience has shown that all male groups and all female groups are more apt to be contentious with all sorts of petty power struggles than with some mixture of men and women. For some odd reason, it doesn't even matter who the women are or what they're like. It's just having the women there that raises the politeness level among men and perhaps vice versa. But the women who were there were essential. The contractors had a very odd schedule which resembled more the way on oil rig contract operates. You worked in a two week period. In the two week period, you had four days weekend and 10 days of work. Now, if you agreed to pool several two week periods, you could have two weeks off every two months. The contractor gave these people free tickets anywhere in the world plus vacation pay with the suggestion that they not go to the United States because they've already got 30 days paid leave in the United States and according to American tax law, if you spend more than 30 days in the United States, you have to pay American taxes. These people all made very good salaries. Besides the trip benefits every two weeks and going off to Thailand to get massage or off to Germany to ski or to the Greek islands to do some boating, they also received a very unusual arrangement whereby for the first six months of their year and a half contract, they would receive a bonus for re-upping or for being around, in the second six months, another bonus, and for the third six months, a final bonus for completing their contract and a bonus if they would re-up for another contract. Also, for every dollar that they saved in a special account, the company would match them a dollar. This was an encouragement to save money and had a very good psychological benefit. Furthermore, all of their housing and all of their food was provided. All of our food and all of our housing was provided, but we didn't get anything like the benefits that they got. The 20 or so people who were with the government were Foreign Service officers and

some USIA people and USAID people. We had besides the liaison duty in the desert one week of desk duty in either Tel Aviv or in Cairo. We could mix or match and we could switch off Cairo for Tel Aviv if that's what we wanted. I preferred Tel Aviv greatly myself, even though I wanted to be an Egyptologist as a child. You get the idea of the Pyramids fairly quickly and you also get the idea of the Egyptian museum fairly quickly. There are only so many visits one can make to the King Tut collection before it gets a little bit boring, even though there are 5,000 objects there and a lot of other things of interest. We stayed at the Mina House. We were housed within Cairo at the Mina House in Giza, which is right next to the main pyramid. It's in an oasis next to the main pyramid. It was fun to stay there, but it was sort of bizarre. On the internal TV system that the Mina House had, they only played two films. One was "Bonnie and Clyde" and the other one was "Return of the Pink Panther." They rotated these two films permanently. You could turn on the TV at any moment and either see "Bonnie and Clyde" or "Return of the Pink Panther." I got to like "Return of the Pink Panther" very much. I got to detest "Bonnie and Clyde" quite heartily.

Q: Who was the head of-

SVEDA: Ray Hunt. He was the director general of the Sinai Field Mission. He was actually the director and later on was headquartered in Rome when they moved location after the Camp David Agreements. That happened while I was there, when they moved to a slightly different location and set up a more international operation, a newer operation, Ray Hunt became the director general of this operation. He chose to headquarter in Rome. Poor Ray, the Red Brigade at that time was running around killing people. One day when he was being driven through Rome in his official car with bulletproof glass, some Red Brigade terrorists began shooting a machinegun at his car. The bullet that killed him wound up going through the rubber separation between the window and the door. Had that bullet not gone through, he would have been alive. He was killed. Then this Red Brigade group announced that they had killed a NATO general. Well, he wasn't a general. His title was "director general." He was a civilian. It's really unfortunate. The whole thing was just stupid. That was in Rome a couple of years after I left the Sinai Field Mission.

Q: Talk a bit about the actual situation. I think by this time, in a way, neither the Egyptians nor the Israelis wanted to go at each other. Were you just there to make everybody feel good or was there a problem?

SVEDA: There was an attempt to build on your perception, which was really true. The Egyptians really didn't want to fight the Israelis again. They had fought them in 1948, in 1967, in 1973, and they were quite tired of it.

Q: They had been beaten really every time.

SVEDA: Yes. They had been beaten every time and they were just tired of it. Half the population of the Arab world is in Egypt and the Arab world was depending on Egypt to provide the manpower to fight against Israel. They were really, really, really tired. When we were in the Gidi and Mitla Passes, every time we entered there, we saw dozens of Egyptian tanks, dozens of Egyptian busses and jeeps riddled with aircraft bullets and with rockets. They were just like sieves. I have a photograph of myself sitting in one jeep which looks very much like a colander.

Right next to it was an Israeli sign saying "Drive safely." This was in the Sinai. All of the vehicles that were destroyed in the '67 war and then the '73 war were Egyptian vehicles, all of them. They were all, each and every one of them, going westward. They were going back to Cairo. They were fleeing. The Israeli command of the skies was lethal for the Egyptians. Two of the great tank battles of history occurred in the Gidi and the Mitla Passes and you saw the litter of it all over the place. Part of the problem that the Egyptians had was that their material was taken from the Soviets. The Soviets gave them tanks, jeeps, and trucks. The jeeps and trucks worked with an odd anomaly, the anomaly being that in order to prevent their vehicles from freezing and their engine blocks from freezing, the Soviets had built little kerosene lamps inside each engine block. I asked the Egyptians every so often when I opened up one of their engine trunks to look for weapons - and I was really looking for this little kerosene heater - and I said, "What do you suppose this is for?" The Egyptians would smile and say, "Oh, this is for making tea." They would put on the kerosene lamps and they would put their teapots on it.

But the problem with the Soviet ordinance really was that the tanks were built for the planes of Central Europe and Eastern Europe. They were very flat, low slung, and they felt that this was a better way for avoiding detection by NATO tanks. The NATO tanks were very high, which is much better when you're behind a sand dune or a hill because you can shoot over the sand dune or the hill whereas the Egyptian tanks, the Soviet tanks, had to go up on top of the hill in order to aim their guns. This put them in a far more vulnerable position. The Egyptians had definitely lost the will to fight. When I was with the Israeli army one night before the Camp David Accords were announced, we fully expected that the Camp David talks would fail. I was talking with the soldiers who were my guards theoretically, about 15-20 of them, and the Israelis were reminiscing about their other fights with the Egyptians. You have to know that in the Israeli defense force, the Israeli defense force has a practice of never changing a soldier's unit. The unit is always the same. It's like the British regimental system. There is a tremendous amount of regimental comradery and pride that develops in this system. Because the Israeli adult males and unmarried females are required to have military service up to age 50, you always had these people showing up in their unit for a month of duty who had been in that unit 20-30 years before as a young soldier. So, there was a tremendous continuity. Everybody was telling stories, the younger soldiers sitting back and listening as the older reservists were telling what they knew. So, this was one such night. I had made some kosher Chinese food, my specialty when I was with the Israelis, and we were eating together and I asked them what they thought about the prospect of war with Egypt. They were very sad about it because they really liked the Egyptians. One of the soldiers told about what had happened in the previous war, in the '73 war. He said, "They had a platoon which captured an Egyptian emplacement and basically they killed everybody except for one captain and his batman." Egyptian officers all have butlers or valets, which they call a "batman." The captain, who was very well educated, and his batman were captured. The Israeli commander of that platoon said, "Look, we could just shoot you here and you could join your companions who are dead or we can send you back to the place where we're keeping prisoners. Because there are two of you, I would need four of my soldiers and we don't have that many to spare. So, the third alternative is for you to come with us and don't make any trouble." "Oh, no, no trouble at all," said the Egyptian. So, they are moving forward against the Egyptian lines and this Egyptian captain and his batman are following. The Egyptian captain is so happy to be alive that he insists that the batman do the washing and the cooking for all of the soldiers in this unit of about 12. The Israelis at first are wary about this. There are some sort of

Geneva protocols which perhaps prevent POWs from darning their socks and cooking their kosher food, but they thought, "Well, who's to know?" So, this went on for a couple of days and the Egyptian captain when they came upon one emplacement said, 'You know, I know the people who are commanders of this emplacement. If they knew how decent the Israelis are to prisoners, I'm sure that they would surrender without a fight. I can go over there under a white flag and talk with them.' The Israelis were a bit wary of this. Who knows, he could have double crossed them. But they figured, well, we keep the batman and let the captain go and if he double crosses us we shoot him but we keep the batman because he is really good at cleaning underwear. So, they watched the guy go over to the Egyptian side. He was wearing an Egyptian uniform, so he is not shot at. You hear a lot of commotion on the other side and then you see dozens of white flags go up. They're putting their underwear up as a white flag. The Israelis insist that they throw their weapons down and they advance. They do that. The Egyptian commander is just laughing and saying, "This is the least I could do for you. You were so hospitable to me. You were so wonderful. This is the very least I could do to repay your hospitality." He said that's what fighting the Egyptians is like. They really didn't want to fight the Egyptians. They were just too nice.

Q: I've talked to some people who have been involved in this and were saying that there are almost caricatures, that the Egyptians were sort of the "Inshallah, something will happen." They weren't very efficient more or less. But the Israelis were always challenging, trying to push weapons in and all. There was no great particular reason except it was just trying to see what they could get away with.

SVEDA: Absolutely. There was one time we had an Israeli commander there and we had to make a representation at the end of this report that we had for a given period which said that we had found 80 Israeli violations of the truce in this period and only two Egyptian violations and we were absolutely convinced that the Egyptians had just misunderstood what the instructions were. Most of these were airplane violations of the space, but there were also other violations in taking weapons. The Israeli commander just smiled. He was a general. He said, "There are two kinds of people in the world. There is one kind of person who when they see a park bench that is labeled 'Wet Paint,' they respect it. Occasionally, by accident, they may sit on it and get themselves covered with paint. Those are the Egyptians. There are others who when they see a sign that says 'Wet Paint,' have to touch. That's the Israelis. We have to touch because you're telling us that you're monitoring the truce and we have to see that you are monitoring the truce because we're a country which is the size of your state of New Jersey and only half as much population. We don't have the time to wait. We don't have the time to trust you. By the way, you missed a lot of violations."

Q: How were the Camp David Accords? You said before that you didn't have high expectations.

SVEDA: We had entirely low expectations. Of course, you probably know the story of the Camp David Accords better than I do. But the story that I heard was that after 10 or more days of negotiations, Jimmy Carter spent perhaps 15 minutes alone with Sadat and most of the rest of the time with Menachem Begin trying to convince him to give up territory for peace. The breaking point of opportunity came when Menachem Begin asked Jimmy Carter if Jimmy Carter could autograph some pictures of himself for Menachem Begin's grandchildren. Jimmy Carter spent a

lot of time picking out the right photographs with Menachem Begin present and getting the right kind of pen because not all kinds of pens write on photographs and getting the names of the children and asking questions about the children and asking questions about their parents and asking Menachem Begin what kind of a world did he want his grandchildren to grow up in? He basically wore him down with that. We had very low expectations. Myself personally, I think that the Israelis could have - perhaps should have - given up less of the Sinai than they did. There is an historical argument that could be made that under the Ottoman administration, the eastern half of the Sinai was regarded as Palestine and the western half of the Sinai was regarded as Egypt. In other words, not the whole of the Sinai. But the Israelis chose to do this and it was a very big gamble. I think it paid off because the Egyptians under no circumstances were joining in a war against Israel at this point. I really cannot imagine-

Q: Were you picking up any feelings from either side about Sadat?

SVEDA: The Egyptians, of course, were practically worshiping Sadat. There were pictures of Sadat all over the place and they regarded him with great pride and justifiable pride as a great leader with a very big heart. They were willing to follow him, whatever he did. The Israelis had remarkable trust in Sadat. I cannot recall ever hearing a word against Sadat from anybody. Believe me, I had contact with soldiers of all backgrounds, all degrees of orthodoxy or secularism or adherence to one party or another. I never heard a word against Sadat. Never a word.

Q: As we're talking today, Camp David II is going on with very low expectations between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

SVEDA: The central problem is Jerusalem. As the Israelis told me, they would happily give up Haifa and Tel Aviv, but they're not giving up one square centimeter of Jerusalem and especially not anything before the western wall of the temple. That is absolutely impossible. Any solution that has to be fashioned has to work around that. Maybe an idea of condominium is possible, but I don't know.

Q: During the time you were there, did the situation ever turn ugly on any particular thing?

SVEDA: Between us and the Israelis? Yes. We had a number of altercations between ourselves and the Israelis almost all the time. Once, for example, our director, Ray Hunt, was calling a "surprise" inspection of the base at the Gidi Pass, the Israeli base, a surprise inspection which we had a right to do. A surprise inspection which had a luncheon guest list of maybe 12 people from Tel Aviv and from our camp, including one general who was late arriving. When our director arrived for his official inspection, the gates of the camp were to be closed for any entries or exits and I was to be in charge of making any exceptions to that rule. So, what happened that particular day was, the Israeli general was late and he wanted permission from the UN battalion to enter the zone so he could go to the Gidi camp and have lunch with our director and the commander and other people who were there. My Israeli counterpart made the mistake of saying to me, "Well, you have to let him through because he's very important." I said, "No, I don't have to let him through because I don't have to." He said, "Well, we'll go over your head." I said, "What? Your general is not going to lunch if that's the case." So, this Israeli counterpart said,

“Well, we’ll see about that” and he started making calls. He tried to call the commander of the base. The commander of the base called Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv called Jerusalem. Jerusalem called back. Everything was going back and forth, but they couldn’t do anything. After about 15-20 minutes of this, he came to me and said, “They say it’s your call.” I said, “I told you that 15 or 20 minutes ago.” He said, “Well, why are you objecting?” I said, “Because you haven’t said ‘please.’” This was the most impossible thing I could have asked from an Israeli to say “Please.” He finally said, “Well, please, will you do it?” I said, “Fine” and made the call to the UN. But the point had to be made - and I talked to our director later about this and he laughed about it and said that the general was the commander of the camp - that as he said, our decision was absolute. He would yell at us and scream at us if we made a bad decision, but only back at the camp and never before anybody else. Our authority to withhold a convoy or to refuse it was absolute. As soon as that authority was shown to be soft in any way, then the whole system would crumble. So, he actually said, “Thank you for being impossible.”

Q: Did you find that in this testing period there was a problem that certain of the officers like yourself were softer than others and that all of a sudden more convoys came during so and so’s turn on duty or was it pretty standard?

SVEDA: It was pretty standard. Our schedule was so fluid that we never knew for sure more than a day or two in advance whether we were going to be there or somebody else was going to be there. In fact, actually, before your question, it never occurred to me that that’s one of the reasons why we couldn’t plan anything more than a week or so in advance.

Q: It’s a good idea. You’ve got a system that depends on personality as well as orders. You don’t want to say, “Well, good old Joe, we can always get around him.”

SVEDA: Everybody was always negotiating leave. Some people wanted to go to Cairo as opposed to going to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. I always wanted to go to Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. Some people liked going to Cairo because they could go to Khan el-Khalili, the big market for antiques and silver. One person wanted to go there and another person wanted to go to the gambling casino. Other people thought that Cairo was more attractive. I was happy to trade. I really loved Israel very, very much, especially Jerusalem. I could not keep away. I don’t think I had any bias toward the Israelis or toward the Egyptians, not that I can discern. Even when I was fighting with the Israelis, it was always understood to be just on the job and had nothing to do with the personal level. There were some funny things that happened. One funny thing that I learned about the Israeli army is that they are very democratic. A counterpart of mine who was a captain would yell at and embarrass the commander of the base, who was a general, if he made a mistake on something. The general at one point came over and chatted with me about how he had been to New York and how he liked going to some location and the counterpart said, “You’re absolutely wrong. That’s not true at all. It’s not there” and they began talking to each other in a tone of voice that I would have never imagined a superior would be hearing from an inferior.

Q: How about probably even more than the Egyptians and the Israelis, how did you deal with the Texans?

SVEDA: This was very funny. One day when I was in Cairo, I had to go to the airport to fetch one of our new U.S. government personnel. I noticed without much trouble that he was from Texas because he had this very distinctive style of speech that they have around Greenville, Texas. I asked him if per chance he was from Texas and he said, "Yes." He said, "How did you know that?" I said, "I'm pretty good at hearing a Texas accent." I began to talk with him as we came in from the airport about his life. He told me how much he had hated Greenville, Texas, and how he just couldn't wait to get away and he joined the Foreign Service as a communicator just to get away from Greenville, Texas. I said, "Oh, where have you been recently?" He was in Finland. He had gotten married. His wife would be living in Israel when he was in the Sinai. Fine. The next day, we went to our camp in the Sinai. I watched his eyes as we got to the camp because the gate guard was from Greenville. He said, "My god, I think I know that person." I said, "Really?" He said, "Yes, I went to high school with him I didn't know that you had people from Greenville here." I said, "Yes, we do." We got to the camp where we had this big cafeteria and his whole life began showing before his eyes. He saw men who had dated his sister. He saw people who he hated in football in that particular town. Later on that night at the little bar that we had, he said to me, "Why didn't you tell me about this? Why didn't you tell me?" I said, "Simply because I knew you'd never come." I must say that the Texans were really a lot of fun to be with. I like to tell people that the atmosphere at the Egyptian base was like Lawrence of Arabia. A very British army, disciplined. You could hear the music of "Lawrence of Arabia" playing in the background. The Israeli camp was a bit like a mix between "Star Wars" and "Fiddler on the Roof." If you can imagine "Star Wars" with the cast of "Fiddler on the Roof," it would have been probably very accurate. The camp that we had was basically like reruns of "Hee Haw," which was a kind of a musical comedy vaudeville show of the 1970s which was very popular, something like "Nashville Grand Ole Opry" except that there was a little bit more of a Texas flavor to it. It was very interesting. The Texans were always very polite. We had fights occasionally - not me, but they. They were very polite folks.

Q: Did the Foreign Service intrude at all? Did you ever feel you were a member of the Foreign Service?

SVEDA: We were always meant to feel that we were intruders. They were always saying "Good enough for government work" and other things to bug us, but we were just smiling blandly in all directions in the typical Foreign Service way. One of the mottos of the Foreign Service is "Where there are no alternatives, there are no problems." So, if your embassy is burning around you, there is really nothing to do but smile blandly. You can't do anything else. We were very pleasant. I don't think there were any real conflicts between ourselves and the others. They were earning so much more money than we were. One third of them were on leave at any given time. Their leaves were to exotic locations. So, they realized that we were there and they couldn't understand why we were there because we weren't being paid anything near what they were being paid. We got along very well.

There was a man named Frederick Wiseman, who made a film called "Sinai Field Mission." Wiseman is one of those directors who just does anthropological films. He just starts the cameras and-

Q: He did one on Belfast.

SVEDA: Every so often at the American Film Institute, they have this film. I saw it once. As luck would have it, it was filmed the month before I arrived, so I know all the people who were in the film but I'm not there. It is a truly surreal experience for me. It's also a lousy film.

Q: You had this interlude.

SVEDA: I'd like to say something about the Israeli end of things. One of the things that I learned from my counterparts was how the Israelis organize their military. It's really quite unexpected and it's an important thing to understand. I found this out one day when the Israelis crossed over the Litani River in Lebanon and established the protection zone that they just recently (about a week or two ago) evacuated after 20 years. I was going to be my little spy for a day and find out what I could about this event from the perspective of within the Israeli defense forces. I just thought it would be fun to do and maybe I could find out something of use for our government. As I was sitting there, both he and I, my counterpart in this little cabin and I, were listening to BBC, he without any emotion beyond general interest. This was driving me crazy because I wanted to know more and I began asking him questions. He smiled because he really didn't know anything. He explained to me that the idea of the Israeli defense forces are divided into three corps, one for the northern part of the country, one for the middle of the country, and one for the south of the country. When you join you are sent to one of the three. It's random. You could be living in the south and sent to the north or be in the south or in the middle; it doesn't matter. You'd stay with that corps. He said, "The important thing to understand is that not one person, not one bullet, is allowed to be given from one army to the other. The name of the game is survival. If one of the armies collapses, too bad. If the middle of one collapses, the first and the third have to keep on fighting. It's all about survival. If we dilute our own strength to help one or maybe two thirds that are failing, we will fail. It's all about survival. Here we are in the Sinai. We're in the southern sector. I know nothing about what's going on in the first sector, which is in the north." At that point, we heard a radio report from BBC which still is the best report that I've ever heard in my life. The BBC reporter noted that the Israeli commander had forbidden him to give any military information. Of course, as a radio correspondent, he knew the necessity of this and he expected it. However, sitting on the Israeli border in the town right on the border, Medulla, he said, "I am at liberty to report that two busloads of American Jewish tourists have had their reservations honored at the hotel in Litani." Both my Israeli counterpart and I began to laugh at this because we knew what the significance was. What that report meant was that the Israeli forces were far, far north of the Israeli border - in fact, we later learned, at the Litani River. I still think that's one of the finest reports I've ever heard.

Q: In 1979, you had gotten yourself out of the East Asia-

SVEDA: One more thing. In 1978, the current Pope, John Paul II, was elected. He is Polish and this was a matter of big surprise to me because I am Polish-American. He was in fact a big surprise as a choice in the world news. I happened to receive the news when I was with my Egyptian counterparts in the little cabin outside the Egyptian camp. They expressed great surprise, too, that a Pole had been elected Pope because, they said, all Poles are Jews. I looked at them blankly and said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Golda Meir is Polish. Ezer Weizman is Polish. Rabin is Polish." I said, "Well, excuse me, they are Polish Jews and they're not in Poland

because they didn't find it a very hospitable place to live and they moved to Israel." This was news to the Egyptians. I just looked at them blankly. I couldn't believe that they didn't understand the first thing about Israel or Poland for that matter.

JAMES H. BAHTI
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1978-1979)

James H. Bahti was born in Michigan in 1923. He graduated from Michigan Tech with a B.S. degree in engineering in 1948. Subsequently, he received a M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. Mr. Bahti entered the Foreign Service in 1955, serving in Germany, Egypt, India, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990

Q: You then had sort of a different assignment, the Sinai Field Mission, from 1978 to 1979.

BAHTI: I was supposed to go out there for a two year tour and my wife was supposed to live in Jerusalem, which she did. She was finishing up her work as a nurse in the Department of State. I knew Ray Hunt, I was interviewed for the job. He said that if I could come out right away I could be his deputy. Well, I really had not planned to leave right then, but that was the condition and so I left my wife at home with the house, the packing, the whole schmeer. It was kind of a dirty trick, but it was an interesting job working between the Israelis and Egyptians. In some respects it was a non-job since the director's job and my job in total was perhaps a job and a half. There was a lot of make work stuff, a lot of reporting which even then seemed kind of silly. Camel reports and Bedouin sightings.

Q: Camel reports meant?

BAHTI: You saw so many camels. And camels usually meant people. Boredom was the biggest problem and some people who get bored tend to drink. We had a bar there and cheap liquor, we had some drinking problems, some people sent home, there were fights. But we had a lot of contact with the Egyptians and Israelis. That was gratifying to me since it was my field, so to speak, and there was this glorious day when all three flags were flown above our compound. Up to that time we did not fly any flags, although it was clearly an American mission. It was mostly contract people, E-Systems from Texas did the bulk of the work. The State Department and USIA people were the communicators and liaison officers with the Israelis and Egyptians. It was there that for the first time the Israelis and Egyptians met under peaceful conditions in the Sinai to work out the terms of the agreement as it would apply on the ground. It was a pleasure to see these young Israeli and young Egyptian officers fraternizing and being genuinely friendly. They are the ones who are going to get killed if there is another war.

My tour was cut short because peace broke out and it was pretty hard to justify a mission of that size so I left after thirteen months. My wife in the meantime had been living in an old town house in Jerusalem. I would get there every three or four weeks for a long weekend so I saw a lot

of Israel and especially Jerusalem in that time. I also got to Cairo a couple of times. So I call that tour my second Egyptian tour. For my wife, that meant two moves in less than a year.

Q: Did you have much contact with our embassies in Tel Aviv and Cairo? How did that operation mesh?

BAHTI: There were personal problems -- my wife did not fit in any staffing pattern -- she was supposed to be supported by the embassy in Tel Aviv but lived in Jerusalem. The Consulate General in Jerusalem was not as supportive as I thought they might have been. The liaison officers would visit there occasionally and make deliveries or whatever was needed.

When there was a violation of the armistice agreement, when there was an overflight by an Israeli plane or helicopter, or an Egyptian would stray across the line, we would send off immediate flashes to each embassy, Tel Aviv and Cairo and to the UN delegation in New York and to the Department in Washington. When those things happened that relieved the boredom. We spent a lot of time keeping the people busy, games and the like. We were surrounded by Ghanaian troops who were our protectors as they were in charge of the territory where we were located. We had a lot of contact with the embassy and we would invariably call upon them when we went into town. My boss, Ray Hunt, tended to go to Cairo more often than to Israel- -his wife lived in Cairo. When, for instance, we were preparing for this exchange of documents ceremony the Israelis came in and supplied certain of the equipment, flagpoles and stanchions and all to keep the crowds back -- and they painted them all Israeli blue. I sent out a message to Cairo saying that this may create a little problem for the Egyptians. Ambassador Eilts said in effect, "You are damned right this will cause a problem -- can't they be painted white or something?" We explained to the Israelis that Israeli blue would not do -- so they came in and painted it all silver. We consulted with both embassies because both ambassadors were present at the ceremony.

Q: The ceremony was doing what?

BAHTI: Exchanging instruments of ratification of the Camp David accords. This put the Camp David agreement into effect. It was a big day, the press was out there in force. The Department was thinking of sending out a lot of people. I said, "Hey, there is no place here to stay." We were talking about doubling up, but it did not work out that way. They came out in the morning and left in the evening. We would occasionally give dinners for the UN people or the Israeli defense or Egyptian defense people. It never happened that the Israelis and Egyptians were there at the same time until the last few months we were there. It was quite an experience. I am glad I had it. From a career point of view it was in no sense a traditional job, but I was getting a bit long in the tooth anyway. It was a lot of fun. I met a lot of people with whom I still keep in touch.

WAYNE WHITE
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1978-1979)

Mr. White was born and raised in Pennsylvania and educated at Penn State, Abington. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973 he served in Nigeria and Haiti before being assigned to the Sinai Field Mission. He subsequently devoted his career in the State Department to Middle Eastern Affairs, serving in senior positions in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research dealing with Arab-Israel, North African and general Arab and Iranian Affairs. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well then you got off to Sinai. You were established with the foreign service.

WHITE: Yes, recently tenured.

Q: Well let's talk about, you went to Sinai?

WHITE: Yes it was the old Sinai field mission, not the MFO out there now. When I went out there, — FINALLY! — I felt sort of like the proverbial kid in the candy shop. I finally had gotten to my Middle East.

Q: Could you explain what the background of this was?

WHITE: The Sinai field Mission, under the disengagement agreement between Israel and Egypt following the 1973 war, was charged with helping the United Nations Expeditionary Force (UNEF) guarantee the peace. Henry Kissinger had come up with the idea of placing a small clutch of U.S. observers in the buffer zone between the Egyptian and Israeli armies to offset Israeli mistrust of the UN. The buffer zone was largely manned by members of UNEF. Anyway, in the buffer zone there was UNEF, but the jewel of the buffer zone was the Sinai Field Mission or SFM. We were there primarily to guard electronically and by observation the two strategic passes, the Gidi and the Mitla, as well as the Israeli and Egyptian bases inside the zone. We had technicians (for maintaining the sensor fields and 3 watch stations) and support staff for the entire mission, contractors who won the U.S. Government bid, making up probably 85% of the population of our base camp of about 160-odd people. They were mainly from Texas because the contractor was E-Systems of Greenville, Texas.

Then there were 23 Foreign Service personnel there who led the overall mission, functioned as liaison officers in Cairo and Jerusalem and Tel Aviv with the defense and foreign ministries there for ten days out of every 30 of the month, two Admin types, and a small State C&R section. For the liaison officers like me, for 20 days out of 30 in the month, you live and worked side by side with the Egyptians at a base (E-1) which overlooked the Israeli side of the buffer zone, and doing the same at the Israeli base (J-1) that overlooked the Egyptian approaches to the buffer zone. You lived during 24-hour shifts with an Egyptian liaison officer (or an Israeli liaison officer) on the perimeter of their bases in a elongated, cheaply-built office & living quarters with two desks, a lot of communications equipment, a little bathroom, a tiny kitchenette, and two bunks in the back separated by a little partition. This was a great arrangement because you got to interact, particularly on the Israeli side, with some fascinating personalities, and got to really know the Israeli and Egyptian militaries, how they worked, their politics, etc. It was a fantastic experience. MFO, the organization that replaced SFM in 1982, is far less interesting, with

officers helicoptering around in a far more distant role, counting tanks and the like and living on a largely U.S. military base. We had a much richer hands-on experience.

Q: You were doing this from 1978?

WHITE: Yes, I arrived there in October of '78 and left in September of '79, mainly because INR wanted me a little earlier. They were one-year tours because they were considered hardship tours. For one thing, my wife had to stay in the States.

Q: What was the Arab Israeli situation in '78-'79? I wonder if you could describe what type of thing was the Sinai field mission doing at the time; how did you operate?

WHITE: Well, I have already described some of that. For liaison officers like me, there would be the duty officer for the day job (all of this on rotation) overseeing and troubleshooting various things from base camp on certain days. It even involved taking weather reports from a little weather station. The national weather service had us take weather readings regarding several areas of data twice per day. I remember one time when one of my colleagues installed the chart paper incorrectly on one device, and we were recording 165% humidity in the Sinai. We knew it was surprisingly high in the early morning, but it didn't get quite up to above 100%, let alone an impossible 165%! You could get involved in all manner of issues like reporting on repeated Bedouin attacks on water lines that ran all the way from Israel through an Israeli base to us, tapping into water lines to water camels and such, and protesting to get the Israelis to sent patrols out along the line.

But out at the bases with the Egyptians and Israelis, we were mainly checking convoys of varying size moving in and out of these small facilities. We also were on the lookout for arms not permitted according to the agreements that might be brought in, maintaining a count because both bases had to be below a certain number of even personnel and small arms, monitoring scheduled (or illegal) reconnaissance overflights, etc. Some of this could be hilarious. I remember one such time while checking the arms coming out of the Egyptian base. Apparently they were sending virtually their entire inventory (or a large part of it) back to Cairo for refitting. Here I was in the back of a truck, and there were AK-47's stacked nicely in gun racks by base personnel, and the Egyptian lieutenant who was my counterpart would hold each rifle up to me, so I could record the serial number on my clipboard, and then he would toss the rifle onto the metal floor of the truck. Nothing was reloaded into the gun racks, and this truck went down the very bumpy hill, with some AK's visibly bouncing up as high as the closed rear of the truck.

Q: We were also flying U-2's weren't we?

WHITE: Yes. In fact, because of my service with SFM, the moment I set foot in INR they said: "You are in charge of the Olive Harvest program from the INR side," which were the U-2 flights that flew over Sinai (and the Golan Heights). We never saw the U-2 from the ground in Sinai; it flew too high (around 65,000 feet, as opposed to approved Israeli or Egyptian reconnaissance flights no higher than 35,000 feet). The Egyptian base commander had his entire office wallpapered, not as a map but just to be kitschy, in U-2 footage from these missions. It was my first glance at the U-2 film that we sent out routinely to both parties. But we monitored the other

visible over-flights, so we all had to go down to compass training at Fort Belvoir before going out, one day down there, out on the golf course, which was a hoot. In Sinai, what we did was, every time there was an over flight, we had to time carefully what was going to happen. Each one of us had to get outside with a compass and in order to triangulate its course by feeding our results back to base camp for computations to make sure it didn't break the plane of the other end of the buffer zone and constituted a "violation." The quality of those kinds of results varied considerably, depending on the skill — or lack thereof — on the part of the observers. Just before I got there, the Egyptians laid concrete block as part of several steps in front of our Egyptian liaison hut, and a terribly lazy and rather inept compass-reading predecessor had taken the wet concrete and had rather nicely engraved north, south, east, west, so he didn't have to use the compass anymore. One can only imagine how crude his readings must have been.

Q: Well one of the things, I have interviewed various people who have been in Sinai. One of the two things that have come up, the impressions that I would get, was one, just as you have described your Egyptian colleague throwing stuff down, that the Egyptians really were not very I mean they were sort of laid back. This was a time in the sun. The Israelis were always pushing, trying to get stuff in. But did you find one, the Egyptians you really didn't have to pay a hell of a lot of attention to because they really weren't trying to do anything, and the Israelis essentially weren't either, but they were always trying to test the bounds. Did you find that?

WHITE: Absolutely. I can see you have interviewed other people because that was the situation exactly. We were summoned occasionally by the UNEF observers to examine tire tracks and things like that, left behind by Israeli military elements during apparent probes. The Israelis used to play games with us to test what they could get away with, such as by running vehicles up wadis quietly to see if we or UNEF could detect the activity in foggy conditions or heavy rain. We had one horrendous rain and wind storm out there during the winter of 1978-1979 that lasted three days, with 50 mph winds. The Israelis executed a ground probe during that storm. I went out and reported on the tracks and everything else indicating a penetration of, say, a mile or so into the Buffer Zone, reported by an especially alert Argentine major with UNEF.

Toward the end of my tour it became apparent that we had a problem with some of our Texans related to the Israelis. Some of the Texans made it quite clear that they disliked the Israelis and very much preferred the Egyptians. Why? At least in my view, some of the Texans and Israelis were, in fact, too much alike in certain ways. In many cases, they both could be sort of extremely proud, hard hitting and "in your face;" back in Philly, it would be called "attitude." It got so bad that one time, as was permitted occasionally, I invited two Israeli liaison officers to have dinner at our SFM cafeteria, which had very nice food. It was Tex-Mex night. There was a going away soiree for somebody the next night. I was cornered by several drunken Texans asking why I had invited those "damn Jews" to the base camp. They were pulled away from me by their supervisor (a good friend of mine) who read the riot act to them, and threatened to fire them if they didn't change their attitude. That said, I want to emphasize that most of our Texans were terrific and never showed any such prejudice.

The irony was that, in part, a number of Texans liked the Egyptians, only because the Egyptians were so pleasant, but also capable of tricking them so deftly in doing business that some of the Texans never caught on. There were mail runs every day to the Suez Canal and then to base

camp also with passengers coming out from R&R (E Systems staff), State liaison officers rotating, etc. The E-Systems people got a week out of every month off in either Jerusalem or Tel Aviv. Once I was returning to base camp on the mail run from Cairo with two Texans. They are in the back seat of our Carryall, with our veteran Egyptian driver, Hanna, a Coptic Christian, up front. The Texans in the back wanted to have one last shwarma in Cairo and pestered Hanna and I to stop at a shwarma stand before leaving the city. It is basically shaved beef or lamb in the pouch like Arabic pita bread with onions, spices, etc. Each of them handed Hanna an Egyptian pound note. Meanwhile, I was sort of quietly laughing. Hanna said, "What is this? Why two pounds?" He handed one of them back. He then took the one pound note, bought shwarma for each of us, and returned to the Texans some small change. The Texans just looked at each other, stunned, only now realizing how badly they had been ripped off during the whole week in Cairo, which gave them a more balanced attitude as to what some Egyptians were like (i.e. not perfect angels who could always be compared positively to those so-called "pushy" Israelis).

I do want to return to one thing you were asking before about the vibrations or the overall atmosphere out there at the time of my posting. It was characterized by excitement and hope. Sadat had gone to Jerusalem. There was a tremendous amount of curiosity on the part of the Egyptians toward the Israelis. I can't speak too much about the Israeli side because the Israelis had always ready for engagement — and curious — wanting to be accepted, so that is not surprising. But on the Egyptian side, the curiosity was so intense that at the end of another shuttle run from the canal, when I was taking E-Systems personnel into Cairo and beginning a Cairo liaison officer stint, the E-Systems people momentarily forgot where they were and started tipping Egyptians with Israeli pound notes. I immediately went into damage-control mode, telling them: "Get the pound notes back!" The Egyptians (a small group of taxi drivers, and a several bellhops from the hotel) shouted: "No, no!" An even bigger crowd formed, and they all wanted souvenir Israeli pound notes. They were willing to pay double the exchange rate in Egyptian pounds just to be the first ones in Cairo to have Israeli pound notes. I also was at base camp for the first transfer of a slice of territory in Sinai to the Egyptians after the peace treaty. Prior to it there had to be a meeting in our cafeteria between Egyptian and Israeli officers, about a dozen on either side. At first, the Egyptians were quite standoffish. Then within ten minutes or so, out came the war stories, wisecracks, back slapping, etc. It was like a big military reunion. So these were very good days for Arab-Israeli relations, at least in that corner of the Middle East.

Q: Did you get any impression of the Israeli military and the Egyptian military during this?

WHITE: Most definitely. The Egyptian military, which was considered one of the best militaries in the Middle East, could be a pretty sad sight at times. I've seen portions of other Arab militaries — Iraqi, Jordanian, within some of the Arab Gulf states, etc. — and observed similar problems. Let me tell a little story. We had to inspect side compartments on Egyptian water tanker trucks entering the E-1 base in Sinai for possible weapons. They apparently rotated those trucks around to other, non-Sinai duties. In any case, there were plenty of water tankers around Cairo, Ismailia, etc. that had done the Sinai run. We could always recognize them in traffic because the compartments had all been bent open using crowbars. They always lost the keys, so they were regularly crow-barred open with their flaps bent out, which gives you some idea of how sloppy the Egyptian military could be. Attitudes were also interesting. The Egyptian liaison officers we served with were all young men in their early to mid twenties. They had gotten out of

college and had to do their two years in the army. They hated universal conscription, and isolated duty in the Sinai. Only one of them was on a regular army officer career track. His brother — older brother — had been killed in the 1973 war serving as a tank commander. We got in a long conversation about the war one evening, and I asked him, “How do you feel about that now?” (Peace with Israel was just over the horizon). He said, “It was a complete waste. I don’t blame the Israelis; I just blame the war. May we never have another war.”

Q: How about the Israelis? Were they treating you with a certain amount of almost hostility?

WHITE: Actually, the Israelis were a highly varied lot — as you might expect. But on duty in Sinai, we met an exceptionally narrow slice of them because they had to speak English, were reservists, were generally older men ranging in age from about late 30’s to mid 50’s. They were people like El Al navigators, the most prominent veterinarian in Jerusalem, an evening news anchor (literally the Dan Rather of Israel), the most prominent trial lawyer in Israel (a real a character), all doing their 30-day reservist stint, and most very cosmopolitan. The veterinarian was a Canadian who had emigrated about 15 years earlier. Of course, with the increasingly tough kosher laws in Israel, he couldn’t get certain foods, even under the table. So when he found out that we could bring stuff from base camp, he said, “You can bring Bacon?” “Yes.” “Ham?” “Yes.” “Wow!” I remember the first morning after I brought the pork products, when I was trying to get some sleep around 4:30 before the first convoy check around 5:30, and I hear this sizzling and rattling from the stove: he just could not wait to get his hands on the bacon. We became fast friends with several Israeli liaison officers, even, in my case, socializing with three during stints in Israel. When Sonia came out to Egypt to visit around mid-tour, we did the same with an engaging Egyptian LO, who gave us the grand tour of Alexandria, his home town.

Across a narrow road from us at the Israeli site in Sinai was a bunker, surrounded with razor wire and two solid rock walls (rock sections in chicken wire) up to about 6 feet, and an M-60. These enlisted men — about 10, who rotated — were not only supposed to cover one portion of the base perimeter, but also protect us in case of whatever. I saw first-hand that there was a substantial gap between the Ashkenazi (or westernized Israelis, largely from Europe, who were officers) and the enlisted Israelis on the other side of the road (mostly Sephardim, from Jewish communities in Arab countries, such as Yemen). They were a bit wary of each other. I always made it a point to go over there and schmooze, have some coffee, etc. with the enlisted men to let them know that the Americans cared about all Israelis and didn’t just deal with the officers. I should also mention that phone calls to the main base on the part of westernized Israeli officers, often speaking still-shaky Hebrew with Sephardim operators, frequently deteriorated into arguments, once again highlighting this gulf.

Q: Well then when you left in '79, I take it there were no major incidents or anything of that nature or were there?

WHITE: Not really, no. Well, the Israelis accidentally machine gunned our base camp one night in the course of an authorized live fire exercise on a base just outside the buffer zone. At least one M-60 ended up pointed in the wrong direction, and tracer bullets were ricocheting off the top of our main administrative building on and off for about 10-15 minutes, behind which some of us were standing, peaking around the corner and looking up at all the action. You asked about our

base camp; you know what it was? The USG found out that a Holiday Inn was not going to be constructed in Florida and learned that Holiday Inns were modularized. So they bought the Holiday Inn, and the modularized rooms were just spread out in rows; inside, the rooms were more spartan than those in a real Holiday Inn. But anyway, we came under machine gun fire, and in order to file a protest and back it up, come morning, I was asked to go up on the roof, which sounded like fun, to find the evidence. We needed a few buckled slugs or ricochet marks to photograph. I couldn't find anything, which was truly bizarre.

With that hostility toward Israelis among some of our Texans in mind, two hours later when we are inside writing up the report, we get a knock on the door. It is one of the Texans saying, "You didn't look hard enough." He also was one of those in base camp with a rather large collection of military souvenirs from around the Buffer Zone. So I went back up on the roof again where there now were over 100 rounds of ammunition, doubtless drawn from many scrounging expeditions past. Slugs were all over — pistol slugs, machine gun slugs. I was especially impressed with one 20mm automatic cannon round, and the amount of corrosion that could be found on a number of these planted rounds that were supposedly expended the night before.

Although not "incidents" by definition, aside from the great machine gun attack, I should mention the continuous hashish smuggling. The Bedouin were fairly regularly crossing the buffer zone leading small camel caravans. When encountered, the Bedouin would hide with incredible swiftness, but one always knew they were nearby — and armed. The hashish was carried in large rectangular pouches dyed to roughly the same color as camel fur and made very thin. This way, from a distance of, say, more than 100 yards, it was very difficult to tell the difference between a wandering camel without baggage and one carrying a load of Hashish. The Ghanaian UN battalion covering our sector of the buffer zone once tried to confiscate a group of camels, only to come under rifle fire from the hidden owners in an area only about a mile from our base camp. Once, driving in a deep defile to inspect a small old domed building in a very isolated area that was supposed to have been a way-station of sorts on the old overland route to Mecca, we stumbled upon a caravan of at least 20 Hashish-carrying camels. Knowing their rifle-totting owners were doubtless hidden nearby, watching our every move, I had to just about drag another overly enthusiastic liaison officer who wanted to take camel photos back into our Chevy Blazer and away from there as quickly as possible. On a hunt for prehistoric sites where I might find stone tools (found one nice site while in Sinai on a high ridge) on a day off, I stumbled upon a Bedouin encampment, with coffee still brewing in a crude pot. I was curious enough to spend about five minutes with another guy from SFM walking around and looking over their gear (but without bending over and touching anything), knowing they were certainly armed and watching from somewhere nearby.

And Sinai could be a very dangerous place otherwise. In an area of northern Sinai filled with vast mud flats behind the beaches where we would go to look over ancient ruins and trade with local Bedouin on Sunday excursions, we encountered a Bedouin who had had his foot blown off by a land mine. We were warned that mines from the various Arab-Israeli conflicts could drift oddly in the mud — and tides that sometimes penetrated the mud flats — making minefield maps rather useless. We were told not to leave the elevated roadbeds through the flats; this Bedouin had tripped a mine a few feet from the roadbed. He and his friend absolutely refused our assistance, so all we could do was call for a medical team from the nearby Swedish battalion

headquarters, but the two would not accept transportation from us to get there faster. We stayed until the Swedish ambulance arrived.

Q: Then you say you got home and you left there in '79, got home back to Washington.

WHITE: Yes. It was interesting because, stuck at that time in the Consular Cone, I really had to bid on a Consular position after a so-called "political" tour. So, seeking an interesting Consular position, my lead bid was for a staff aide position in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. My second bid was for an INR Middle East analytical position, a way to edge my way deeper into the Mideast loop should bid #1 fail. So the head of the INR office I would work for, Phil Griffin, Director of the Office of Analysis for the Near East & South Asia (INR/NESA), called me up long distance and bent my ear for 45 minutes (more of a big deal in those days) about why I should flip INR into the number one slot, which I did (just couldn't resist something else related to the Middle East).

Q: So you were in INR from '79 to when?

WHITE: September 1979 until I retired in March of 2005.

DONALD A. KRUSE
Deputy Director: Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1980-1981)

Donald A. Kruse was born in Philadelphia in 1930. He later attended Wheaton College and majored in history. Following his graduation in 1952, he received a masters degree in political science at the University of Pennsylvania and then joined the army. Following his two year run in the army, Kruse joined the Foreign Service and served in posts in Canada, Luxembourg, France, Belgium, Jerusalem, Italy, and England. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1997.

Q: In 1980, where did you go?

KRUSE: I went to the Sinai Desert for a year. I was the deputy director of the Sinai Field Mission. That was kind of a follow-on to my years in Jerusalem. The Sinai Agreement came and the reason they had this American team out there, the Sinai Field Mission, was because of the peace agreement that Henry Kissinger brokered in '73 and '74 between Egypt and Israel, which called for the U.S. to monitor the forces in the Sinai. So, we were out there monitoring, we with our helicopters and Cheny Blazers out among the Bedouins and the camels. So, we were right in the middle of the Sinai Desert.

Q: What was the status during '80 to '81 during this period you were in the Sinai?

KRUSE: It was half way into the terms of the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt; their

peace treaty in '78, which called for a complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Sinai within a certain period of time. The period of time was, I think, eventually to end in '82. So, while I was there, we were still half way there. We still had some Israeli forces in part of the Sinai. It was a confidence-building measure for the Egyptians and the Israelis to have us there, particularly for the Israelis. They insisted on us. They wouldn't take the UN. So, we paid the price to do that. It was a fascinating experience. It was unusual because it was the only time in my career when my family could not be with me. In that sense, I would wake up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror and say, "What in the world are you doing out here?"

Q: Tell about how it progressed while you were there first.

KRUSE: This was the first time I had dealt directly with the Israelis in an official sense, and Egyptians; dealing with each of them. When you would go into Cairo, you'd have an agenda for the meeting. You had a lot of tschai (tea), coffee, soft drinks, lots of jokes, lots of laughs, get through the agenda, come back in a month or two and not a thing had been done. But we had had no arguments. When we would go in with the Israelis, there were a certain amount of refreshments and that type of thing, but every item on the agenda, every jot and tittle, would be argued over. You would set deadlines for this or that. You'd have courses of action for every one of the items. When you came back in a couple of months, it was all done. Everybody had done their work. So, it was a difference between the way the Israelis acted and the way the Arabs, in this case, the Egyptians, acted. The Israelis were such sticklers for every phrase of that agreement they signed with Egypt. That's why I was so appalled when it comes to the agreement that Israel signed with the Palestinians, they don't care at all about keeping any parts of it, no deadlines, no nothing. No apologies. Just forget it. If we had tried that with the Egyptians, we would have been frayed by the Israelis.

Q: You mean the Israelis.

KRUSE: Well, if we had let the Egyptians get away with violations. If the Egyptians hadn't met a deadline, boy, we would have never heard the end of it. So, it all depends on who's in a superior position.

Q: I've talked to some other people who have been involved in this and they say that, as you said, things were a little bit haphazard and sloppy and all. But the Israelis were always testing. They would try to get things they weren't supposed to have--overflights or get arms in or something. It was almost a game of doing this. People I've talked to say it was basic, almost hostility there. Did you feel that or not? Was that unfair?

KRUSE: I think what you've got is this dual strain in the Israeli psyche or makeup. You've got the one that identifies with the Labor party, where indeed, they strive and believe that a Jew can make it in the world on his own, that he doesn't need to worry that everybody is after him. The Likud is the mentality that it doesn't matter what the Jews ever do, they would never accept them as normal people. Therefore, according to Likud, if Israel wants something, it's going to have to fight for it and don't worry if the world objects. I think that kind of paranoia is, to a certain extent, in every Israeli. Given the history of the Jewish people, it is understandable. Of course, the history of the Middle East has not been one where their arrival and setting up their state has

been wildly welcomed. So, I understand that they may not feel that they are completely a normal state in the region. But I think the Labor people felt that normalcy was a possibility. I'm afraid Likud doesn't think it ever is going to be a possibility.

Q: Were there any incidents or any particular problems that you might want to recount?

KRUSE: No, just the fact that we almost had the helicopter crash one time with our director and a whole gaggle of Egyptian officers. I wasn't on it. It had taken off with a full load of fuel. They had forgotten that they were at an altitude of about 4,000 feet. It was somewhere near Mt. Sinai. That makes a little difference in your lift. So, the thing got up and bounced a whole lot, turned over, but did not catch fire. It was a scary thing. If a tragedy had happened, I must say, it would have marked the Sinai Field Mission in people's minds forever.

Q: I thought we might stop at this point. We're in '81 after you left Sinai. Where did you go after that?

KRUSE: I came back to Washington to attend the National War College.

ROBERT W. DUEMLING
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1980-1982)

Ambassador Robert W. Duemling was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree and a master's degree from Yale University. Prior to becoming a Foreign Service officer, Ambassador Duemling served in U.S. Navy intelligence and was stationed in Japan. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Rome, Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Ottawa, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Suriname. Ambassador Duemling was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: You were assigned to the Sinai which was territory between the Israeli and the Egyptians.

DUEMLING: That is right. After four years as DCM in Ottawa, I rather belatedly went to the Senior Seminar which was a terrific experience that I enjoyed greatly. The year I graduated was a bad time in the Department's history as far as its personnel situation was concerned. Not a single one of my State Department colleagues in the Senior Seminar -- not one -- had an onward assignment when we graduated from the Seminar. We were told that we were on our own and that we could roam the corridors to see whether we could find a job. It was an appalling situation. I went looking around and happened upon the fact that there was a new organization being started called the "Multinational Force and Observers". It was the successor organization to the observer teams we had in the Sinai earlier. But this new organization had to be created to implement the Camp David Accords. There had to be a combination of civilian and military observer force. The State Department took the responsibility for getting in touch with other governments to see whether they would participate in this endeavor. Initially we had hoped for a

U.N. peace-keeping force, but the Russians were going to veto that in the Security Council. So the U.S. had to sponsor the effort. This was the first and perhaps the only multinational force organized outside of UN auspices, except Vietnam. The Department went around and signed up about eleven different countries, who agreed in principle. Then the U.S. as the lead country had to design this force -- there was not really any prototype for it. It was decided that what was needed were somewhere between 4,000 and 6,000 troops which included a helicopter component. Under the Camp David accords, the Sinai was divided into three zones. The Israelis were going to withdraw and the Egyptians would move in behind them incrementally, eventually taking over the entire Sinai, which is the situation at the present. There were various levels of armaments permitted and other agreements that required daily verification by both military and civilians to maintain the integrity of the Camp David accords.

We had to set up this observer force. The commitments were made by about eleven countries; then we had to go to these countries and fill in the blanks on the table of organization. At the time, the countries had only committed in principle, not to any specific mode or type of contribution. When I joined this organization, it was still in the process of trying to design itself. It was deciding what the table of organization would be, what units would be involved, the nature and size of these units, and what the civilian role would be. The U.S. was going to provide all the civilians and a full battalion of troops and a lot of logistic support, but we were looking to the other participants for two more battalions, trucks and drivers and mechanics to support the transportation fleet, helicopters and pilots and mechanics, a headquarters company, a signal company, etc. There had been no agreements that anybody would do anything specific. I was assigned to this organization to be a negotiator to go to governments as we determined which we thought could fill the various responsibilities. I would go as part of a team to persuade governments to give us what we needed as opposed to what they might have in surplus and would be willing to give us. In that capacity, I worked initially with Frank Maestroni and a couple of others, but eventually I ended up leading the teams myself. In addition, even if a country had agreed to give us what we needed, we had then to negotiate the terms and conditions and the remuneration, the timing, the logistics, etc. I worked with the Colombians in Bogota to work out their commitments for a battalion of troops. I visited Montevideo to work out the terms and conditions of the trucking unit from the Uruguayans. I visited London and The Hague to discuss with the Dutch the assignment of a signals company and with the British, the headquarters company. That was tricky, because we initially had intended that the signals company be British because that is a hard requirement to fill. This company needed highly skilled radio technicians, who are in short supply in any country's military forces. You need radio technicians who are communicators trained to the NATO standards, using English and the NATO signal-books. That narrows the field. The British refused to provide such a company because they didn't have the man-power. The only country left was Holland.

I was despatched as a "one man Mission Impossible" to go to The Hague to try to persuade the Dutch military that they should provide this company. I met with the commanding general of the Dutch army, who was very nice, very polite. I laid out our problem and the reasons for having the Dutch -- namely, that they were virtually the only force that could do it. He listened to me and then said that I was asking for the impossible. He said that the Dutch had barely enough of those skills in their own army as it was. He pointed out that the Dutch had a draft Army, which had very short periods of service -- only six months. Communicators had to spend another six

months or more. By the time the Dutch finished the training, they only had three months left in their service. He pointed out that I had asked for six months assignments. He concluded that the request was just impossible because the soldiers would have to re-enlist for another three months to fulfill my request. He thought that was hopeless and no one would do that. I asked him to do me a favor and to publicize the opportunity to serve in the Sinai. If anybody wanted to volunteer, they would have to re-enlist for another three months to complete a six months' tour in the Sinai. He agreed to that for us, but didn't give it much of a chance. When he did announce the program, there were 1,000 volunteers. These young people wanted a little adventure. All we needed was sixty, so the Dutch were able to fill our request.

I take my hat off to the negotiators of the Camp David accords. They made that whole thing work. You never hear about peace-keeping problems in the Sinai because that whole operation is in place, very effectively administered and we never had any problems with it. It continues to this day and you never read about it.

As it worked out, the borders between Jordan and Israel would be adjusted by a unique method. Israel would cede certain, disputed areas back to Jordan, but Israel would hold them for a long period under a rental arrangement. There would be the possibility of a joint, Israeli-Jordanian airport near Eilat and Aqaba, at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. Water issues would be dealt with. It was a great breakthrough. There would be a possibility for Israeli investment in Jordan because, of course, Jordan had a very weak economy, which had been further weakened by the embargoes which the Saudis and others had proclaimed against Jordan because of its stance during the Gulf War. There was hope that something could be done in this respect. So that's how that particular breakthrough worked out.

FRANK E. MAESTRONE
Director, Sinai Support Mission
Washington, DC (1980-1982)

Ambassador Frank E. Maestrone was born in Massachusetts in 1922. He received a B.A. degree from Yale University in 1942. He was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946. He joined the Foreign Service in 1948, serving in Austria, Germany, Egypt, Kuwait, and the Philippines. Ambassador Maestrone was interviewed by Hank Zivetz in 1989.

Q: *Let me see, what was the year that you were director of the Sinai support mission?*

MAESTRONE: I was director of the Sinai support mission from 1980 to 1982.

Q: *Yes, could you tell us something about that?*

MAESTRONE: The United States-Sinai support mission was the result of the negotiations which took place with respect to the second Sinai disengagement agreement between Egypt and Israel, which were conducted both in Israel and Alexandria, Egypt, when I was DCM in Cairo. In fact, I

was control officer for the Egyptian end of the negotiation.

The agreement had essentially been reached, but the Israelis wanted some kind of an assurance that their withdrawal -- because this would require them to disengage from their previous alliance, vis à vis the Egyptians -- that this would be that the buffer zone between the two would be monitored, and they insisted that the Americans do this. So it was agreed that the Americans would set up a technical monitoring system which used sensors and a variety of things that were subsequently developed to do this. They would be located in the Sinai desert between the Israelis and the Egyptians.

This was, I think, in addition to the agreement of protocol, or something like that. I'm a little dim in my memory on if this was actually part of the agreement or an annex to it. In any event, it was agreed that we would undertake this. And when we agreed to do that, then the Israelis were willing to agree to the disengagement arrangements. But the Israelis insisted that there could be no nationals employed, and they were thinking, of course, of the Egyptians working for the Americans who were there, because they were afraid that they might be intelligence people or something like that. So the Sinai field mission, so called, was set up, made up completely of Americans. There was not a single Egyptian, or Israeli, or any other nationality involved in this operation.

When I took it over in 1980, they had moved from their previous phase of the technical monitoring to an actual on-site inspection of Egyptian deployments in the Sinai. There had been a subsequent further disengagement, which came as a result of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The military requirements, with respect to the Sinai, set in the peace treaty had to be monitored, and this was done by the existing Sinai field mission, which sent people actually around to count tanks and personnel, etc. This included some Israeli installations as well that still were in the Sinai.

Q: Where were you physically?

MAESTRONE: Physically, I was located in the Department of State, where I had a suite of offices. It was a relatively small operation. I had about 16 technical experts, etc., working in the Sinai support mission as such. We had the major work and the whole operation was done by a company with whom we had a contract, namely, E Systems of Dallas, Texas.

Q: It was a civilian operation?

MAESTRONE: Yes.

Q: Oh, that's interesting.

MAESTRONE: It was entirely civilian. That was another requirement that was insisted upon by the Egyptians, that this be entirely civilian, and no military people were to be involved in this, completely a civilian operation. Although it was not specifically stated, we were very careful never to select retired personnel who had been with CIA or any of the other intelligence agencies. We did hire retired military personnel because we needed their expertise in terms of

identifying tanks, airplanes, etc. But these people were no longer associated directly with the military services.

Q: Is this still going on? I know that there is something there, but is this the same operation?

MAESTRONE: The American-Sinai operation was concluded in April 1982 under the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. This was one of the steps that was taken --

Q: What's happening now?

MAESTRONE: When the Israelis withdrew completely from the Sinai, at that point the American operation closed down. It was turned over to the multinational force and observers, I think it's called, MFO, which again was something that was insisted upon by the Israelis, and in which there was to be American military participation, as well as participation from a number of other countries, I think, nine or ten other countries.

Q: Under the aegis of the U.N.?

MAESTRONE: No, this did not come under the aegis of the U.N., because the Israelis would not agree that the U.N. would be involved. They were, and continue to be, very suspicious of the U.N. So it was a separate operation, an international operation set up, in effect, by the United States, Israel, and Egypt.

Q: While you were director of the Sinai support mission, were there any specific problems or crises?

MAESTRONE: There were a number that came up about various Egyptian deployments, etc., at least, that the Israelis reported their intelligence had picked up. But our practice was to, naturally, inspect these challenges from either side immediately, then to hold a meeting between the Egyptians and the Israelis themselves, at which we were merely observers. We would present the facts of our inspection, and then allow them to discuss and settle the problem. This helped to build a good working relationship between the Egyptian and Israeli military, which served to be part of the development of their relationship under the peace treaty.

GILBERT D. KULICK
Sinai Planning Group
Washington, DC (1981-1982)

Gilbert D. Kulick was born in Connecticut in 1942. He attended the University of Texas and graduated from there in 1963. He earned his M.A. from UCLA in 1965. In 1966 he joined the Foreign Service. His posting included Mogadishu, Addis Ababa, Tel Aviv, and Washington D.C. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 29, 1993.

Q: Then you left [Israel] and just moved over a little to the South? You left [Tel Aviv] in 1981?

KULICK: No. I came back to Washington. [Tel Aviv] was my last overseas post [in the Foreign Service].

Q: I thought that you went out to the Sinai.

KULICK: No. I went to the unit [in the State Department] here in Washington that was setting up the multinational observer force, established [under the] Israel-Egypt peace treaty. This was a multinational [operation] outside the UN system because the UN, of course, completely rejected the Camp David Agreement and would not or could not provide a peacekeeping force. However, one of the conditions that the Israelis insisted on was that there be a kind of multinational force out there in the Sinai to monitor Egyptian activities and serve as a "trip wire." So the U. S. took it on itself to organize such a force, which we did. I volunteered to serve in the group that was putting this force together, frankly because I hoped to stay in Israel -- an option which I had failed to exercise at the time that I should have and which I could have done, at the end of my second year [in Tel Aviv].

But at that point my wife was very eager to get back to the United States. We weren't too happy with our son's schooling. However, by the end of the third year [in Tel Aviv] we had changed our minds. But it was really too late to stay on in my Embassy position. I saw this Sinai possibility as a way of staying there. Anyhow, I did get involved in that group, but all of the work was done back here in Washington.

Q: I know that time is moving on. This is almost a parenthesis to [your assignment to] the Italian desk.

KULICK: I was [on the Sinai planning group] for close to a year. I should say, just to put the cap on the Israeli segment of my career, that in the summer of 1982 I went back out to the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] for about four weeks on TDY [temporary duty]. Again, this was my wife's idea. [She said], why not offer myself to the Embassy as a utility person?. The war in Lebanon had broken out. I knew that the Embassy [in Tel Aviv] would be "stretched," with transitions between assignments and so forth. So I prevailed on Ambassador Sam Lewis to bring me out there. The Embassy gave me an [airline] ticket. I found my own housing. I "house sat" for somebody who was on R&R [Rest and Recreation]. I spent a month at the Embassy, reporting on Lebanon, etc.

Q: What impact did [your period of TDY at the Embassy in Tel Aviv] have?

KULICK: You mean, [because I came back]?

Q: No, not that. I'm talking about dealing with [the war in Lebanon] during the time you were there [on TDY]. What was the feeling in our Embassy [in Tel Aviv] regarding this movement into Lebanon?

KULICK: Very negative. That was one of the points that came out. However, ironically, a lot of

people believed -- myself included -- that the only reason that the Israelis invaded Lebanon in 1982 was because they got "a wink and a nod" from [then Secretary of State] Al Haig. He has consistently denied this, and it's not written down anywhere. However, I have no doubt that they [the Israelis] looked at Haig and considered what he had to say and concluded that they could do this.

Q: I had an interview with [Ambassador] Nick Veliotis, who said that they weren't sure -- I mean, that NEA [the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] -- wasn't sure [about Haig's role]. They [got in touch with then Israeli Defense Minister] Sharon and said, "Well, now, listen here." [Veliotis] wasn't sure what Haig had said to him [Sharon] and tried to persuade Sharon that we were not receptive to that type of action [the Israeli move into Lebanon]. Of course, if you're somebody like Sharon, you hear what you want to hear.

KULICK: Absolutely.

Q: I think that Haig had probably, as one military man to another, sort of said, "Well, I can understand..."

KULICK: Yes. I'm not saying that I'm certain that Haig did this with the full cognizance [of President Reagan], but I have no doubt that Sharon, at least, interpreted Haig -- and I personally think that he interpreted him correctly -- as saying, "Boy, you've got a real mess there. Somebody's got to clean it up."

Q: Yes. Well, anyway, this was not a glorious time for the Embassy [in Tel Aviv].

KULICK: No, it was a period of great tension between Israel and the United States. Well, you know, they [the Israeli Defense Forces] were at the gates of Beirut. I guess that we probably came down on them as hard, at that point, as we had at any time since 1976, when we forced them out of Sinai. However, Ambassador Sam Lewis had the standing and the access and the trust to be able to handle that without any great [damage] to [Israeli-American] relations.

STEVENSON MCILVAINE
Sinai Field Mission
Sinai (1982-1983)

Born in Pennsylvania of Foreign Service Parents, Mr. McIlvaine was raised in Washington D.C. and abroad. He graduated from Harvard University and served in the US Army before joining the Foreign Service in 1967. His assignments abroad took him to a number of posts in Africa, including Kinshasa, Bissau, Dar es Salaam, and Lusaka, where he served as Chargé d'Affaires. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. McIlvaine dealt primarily with African issues. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2003.

Q: You were doing this from when to when? Tell me about how you set this up.

MCILVAINE: For one year, April '82 to roughly April '83.

Q: What were you doing?

MCILVAINE: I was one of the 10 or 11 observers. Part of the Camp David Accord was that Israel would give the Sinai back to Egypt only if there was some sort of US-heavy international force in between that was not controlled by the UN. No Soviet veto.

Q: And also the UN had pulled the UN observers out in '67, which allowed the Israelis to really mop up the Arabs. It left a bitter pill.

MCILVAINE: They viewed the UN as hostile and as a creature then with the Soviet veto and very much a creature of the Arabs. So, this was going to be a non-UN peacekeeping effort with 10 or so U.S. government observers who would be running around making sure that everybody was playing by the rules. There were 3 zones set up – 2 Egyptian, one Israeli – and each zone differed on what sort of military equipment you were allowed to have. So we were the police of the accord. It was a fascinating job. It was really fun because we had huge Chevy Blazers with great V8 engines. We had our own little helicopter air force to run all over the Sinai, this magnificent landscape. I had never seen anything like it before. It was full of wrecked tanks and relics of 4 wars. It was our job to run all over it and make sure everybody was playing by the rules.

Q: Let's talk first on the Egyptian side, your observations of how they were working, and then on the Israeli side.

MCILVAINE: The Egyptian soldiers that we dealt with extensively going around to all these Egyptian outposts were always charming, welcoming, just as nice as they could be in an army that clearly was challenged on some of the efficiency and equipment fronts. It was, if not exactly Third World, it certainly wasn't First World. During Ramadan, we'd land in a little outpost of a couple of Egyptian soldiers and come up to chat and they would insist on offering us a tea when it was 100 degrees in the desert. They couldn't drink because it was Ramadan, but they would insist on us drinking because that was hospitality and it was right.

The Israelis, on the other hand, had a high tech, First World, very good army, and were just as obnoxious as they could possibly be about every bit of it. They didn't want us around. They didn't like this. Most of the Israeli soldiers were reservists doing their stints. It was really remarkable. The democracy in the Israeli army was spectacular. A private would tell off a colonel at the drop of a hat because maybe that private was probably the museum director and the colonel was just a baker. But it was real democracy within the army. For someone who had never dealt with the Mideast, it was a very interesting insight into that world and that conflict. Of course, the real news at that time was not the Sinai. It was Lebanon and the invasion of Lebanon and then later Ariel Sharon and the camps, Shatila and Sabra, when he endorsed and allowed the massacres in those 2 camps.

Q: Let's stick to the Sinai. I've talked to people who have served there who say that one of the

problems was, the Israelis kept trying to push the boundaries all the time.

MCILVAINE: They were always pressing the rules. The only real serious violation I caught was an Israeli self-propelled 155 millimeter Howitzer in their border zone where they weren't supposed to have any artillery. It was fun to nail them because they were so busy constantly pressing us to nail the Egyptians for all sorts of petty Egyptian violations that weren't very serious. This guy had gone and done some target practice and been a little sloppy about where the border was. He was quite surprised when this orange helicopter landed beside him and I got out in my funny orange jumpsuit – that's so everybody would see us and not shoot at us – and said, "You know, you're in the wrong place." That was fun. They were constantly pressing it.

Q: Did this have any effect on the observers?

MCILVAINE: It meant you had to be careful. You had to make sure you were right. you couldn't be sloppy or the Israelis would be calling you on it.

Q: Did you get any pressure reflecting the political process back in the US, where Israeli influence is profound?

MCILVAINE: Not at that... This was not politically charged. The only political question was, would this hold? Would the Israelis really withdraw? Would the Egyptians take it over and behave? Both were answered, yes. The Israelis really did withdraw. The Egyptians really did behave. To this day, 20 years later, the Sinai is-

Q: When you were first there, did you have the feeling that the 2 armies were on hair trigger?

MCILVAINE: That was fascinating. We got there a month before the accord was to go into effect. We started out at this camp that was right next to one of the passes, that had been a battleground. There had been an observer camp there as part of an earlier agreement and that was where we started and then we were moving with the agreement to the permanent camp, an Israeli air base near the Gaza Strip in the northeast corner of the Sinai. So, we were at that camp when they had the ceremony there at the camp for the accord in April 1982 with Egyptian army officers and Israeli army officers meeting for the first time. It was a revelation that the army officers understood each other and wanted peace. They were the peaceable ones. Later you see this in Israeli politics, the obvious exception being Sharon, but the peacemakers in Israeli politics usually were former generals. They had been there. They had seen their friends die. They had been through it 4 times on this front and they didn't want to do it again, either side. That was really clear. They understood each other. There was a kinship there that certainly wasn't there with the politicians. Obviously, Begin and Sadat had no kinship whatsoever and nothing in common. Jimmy Carter just sort of wrestled them together.

Q: What happened? You were there around the Israeli army... It's still astounding that you have the prime minister of Israel being Ariel Sharon when he conducted essentially... He took the Israeli army and moved it up to Beirut without authorization without hindrance from his political leaders.

MCILVAINE: Certainly without hindrance.

Q: What were you getting from the Israeli officer corps when they watched this go on?

MCILVAINE: I remember hearing a lot of dismay within the Israeli body politic, the Jerusalem Post and other newspapers. But the army that we dealt with wasn't like our army. These were not career army folks. Particularly on our side then, we had the reservists because the shock troops were on the other side. And there was much complaining about it. Israel certainly has its faults, but it does have a vigorous debate amongst Israelis, amongst Jews. The Arab population of Israel doesn't seem to be able to get into that debate much or be accepted into that debate much. But in the Jewish community, they debate everything vigorously.

RICHARD L. STOCKMAN
Multinational Force and Observers
Sinai Desert (1984-1985)

Richard Stockman was born in 1940 in Kansas City, Missouri. He went to seminary at Cape Girardeau in Missouri, and was then drafted into the U.S. Army in 1963, where he spent most of his tour in Germany. Mr. Stockman entered the Foreign Service in 1966 as a communications specialist. He served in Brazil, Honduras, Singapore, Togo, Switzerland, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, Canada, and the Soviet Union. Mr. Stockman was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Then you went off not exactly off to a remote area, you went to Ottawa.

STOCKMAN: Well, in between that I went off to the Sinai.

Q: Oh, yes, tell me about the Sinai, the Multilateral Forces and Observers.

STOCKMAN: I did that primarily for two reasons to be very truthful. One was that I was kind of burned out after four years in Washington doing basically two full time jobs. Again the career promotional track settled down after some quiet success in the beginning. I said I would force the issue. And I frankly just wanted to compete in another whole new area. The Office of Communications had initially been responsible for the Camp David implementation process out in the Sinai. In the transition of that operation it then became the task of the MFO based in Rome, an international group of eleven countries to carry out this mandate. And therefore when this invitation appeared in the Department, I bid on it and qualified and spent a year out there.

Q: What were you doing? Will you explain what this force was?

STOCKMAN: The MFO was established to, I believe, invite other nations into the peace making process to make it more diplomatic, more appealing to the two factions, Israel and Egypt. And, of course, out of the foreign aide given to both Israel and Egypt to the tune of almost \$3.5 billion both countries had to pay the cost of the MFO operations, so it was not for free. There were

eleven countries participating in the peacekeeping operation in the northern part of the Sinai desert.

Q: What was your main task?

STOCKMAN: My task and that of the other civilian observers, was to do reconnaissance work by air in each of the four divided zones of the Sinai. One week we would do that by air and the second week we would follow up on the ground physically examining, inspecting, the various sites within a given zone. This would go on week after week. The whole intent and purpose was to assure both parties and our government that the Camp David peace treaty would be kept in tact and therefore any violations that were witnessed or sighted would be immediately discussed and there would be no military arms build up in the Sinai again. It has worked very successfully.

Q: Dealing with communications, what particularly were you doing?

STOCKMAN: I was truly out of cone, other than the actual gear we used. My role was strictly to this international organization as an observer.

Q: So you were going out either flying or in a jeep and inspect a place?

STOCKMAN: Yes. We worked in teams. There would be always two observers and a minimum of one Egyptian or Israeli accompanying us within that zone of operations. But I was completely divorced from my previous work in communications.

Q: I have talked to some people who were in one phase or another of this. Could you talk about your impression of how the Israelis treated this and operated and also the Egyptians?

STOCKMAN: Well, it was a very interesting operation, I thought. The procedures were clearly established by the Camp David Peace Accord, the treaty that was signed by both parties. It was basically a very simple process in terms of the reconnaissance work and the examination of sites. There was a short advance notice given of where we would be at a given specific time. There was no question of what we were doing and why. There was very little lack of cooperation on either side, both parties understood the nature of the missions. They also understood that if this thing was to be successful they would have to cooperate. I don't think there was any deliberate, malicious attempt by either party to ever violate this treaty or slow us down in our work. They understood what their role was and the importance of it. It was really, truly a unique experience to be able to go out there and do this. We would be on assignment for a one-year leave of absence with full reemployment rights. Some people extended who would retire out there. But we were basically not identified with the State Department at all. We consisted of 12 former military officers and 12 civilians on loan or secondment.

Q: I have interviewed some people who were there when this was first set up and at that time there was a feeling that whereas the Egyptians were kind of going along with it, the Israelis kept pushing, trying to slip things in. It was kind of a game for them. There were some showdowns, etc. But I take it by the time you got there it was a fairly mature process and the games had already been played.

STOCKMAN: I can appreciate what you are saying and in the time frame I was there these difficulties had been ironed out. I know specifically what you are referring to because there is still evidence of what took place out there. Keep in mind as the Israelis retrenched back towards the original borders and gave up reluctantly or otherwise the territory in the Sinai, they did it in phases which I think is exactly what the treaty called for. They obviously were reluctant to give up the territory for obvious reasons. I think today if you were to ask them they are perfectly at peace with this, especially as they have negotiated a peace with the PLO now. They have matured, obviously. In those days, however, the very base on which the MFO is located on was a prior Israeli air base. The process of releasing that and trying to come to what they considered a fair price on that air base and its value, there were a lot of disagreements. They were unhappy. But that is not uncommon with the Israelis. They are not an easy people to please. They never seem to get enough. They are always second-guessing everyone. They always know better.

Q: This is a pattern one has seen. A small country and if you are not aggressive you can get ground under.

STOCKMAN: I wouldn't call it insecurity, it is just aggressiveness. But they literally blew up some facilities on that base. They knocked out some windows, destroyed trees, unnecessarily because they didn't get their way. It was restored to some extent. Yes, it may have slowed up the process a little bit. Did they gain anything from this? I doubt it seriously. It was just an act of stubbornness. However at this time they can travel to and from Egypt and vice versa so it was only a question of time.

The original site, though, of the State Department's communications operation when this all began was up on the Giddi Pass, one of the famous strategic points. There were very important tanks battles and other confrontations that went on in that area. That is where they located the communications sight, it was perfect for this. There were contract operators out there implementing the security zones called E-Systems. They did the actual monitoring. But then they were replaced by the MFO.

Now the civilian observers who actually do the physical sites and inspections are all Americans, exclusively Americans. All the other contingents simply support the operation.

Q: Then you came back to the Department for a little while and then off to Ottawa. Is that right?

STOCKMAN: Right.

ROBERT S. STEVEN
Multinational Force and Observers
Sinai (1984-1986)

Mr. Steven was born in Massachusetts and raised there and in Rhode Island. He graduated from Brown University and served in the US Army before entering the

Foreign Service in 1957. Mr. Steven became a specialist Latin America, where he served in Mexico, Chile and Argentina. He also served in Burma, Vietnam and Japan and had several senior assignments at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Steven was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Well, in '84 you went where?

STEVEN: In '84 I heard about the details of a strange organization that I had known about vaguely. The '67 war between Israel and Egypt resulted in the Israelis holding the Sinai right up to the Canal. The Israelis agree effectively to withdraw from the Sinai in return for its demilitarization, largely. They didn't want military forces right up against the Israeli border, because they need the warning time. If you start a military attack on Israel from the western Sinai, the Israelis have time to react and they can mobilize. If you start it from the border at Gaza, they don't have time, so they had to have that demilitarized. And the treaty, largely with US insistence and refereeing and working on it, put together the demilitarized Sinai. It's certainly not worth going into here; anybody's who's interested can find plenty of written material on it. But the Sinai was divided in three areas, degrees of militarization, going down towards Israel, and as a token they threw in a three-kilometer-wide strip along the Israeli border which was also supposed to be demilitarized, just so the Egyptians can claim that the Israelis have taken some of the burden too. And a force was needed to enforce these things, to be present on the ground. At the beginning the Israelis had made it clear that the United Nations was not acceptable. The United Nations had been in the area for a long time, had been in the Sinai. They had not been able, or in the Israeli view, willing to stop the Egyptians from attacking them, so the idea of a UN presence in the Sinai was not acceptable to Israel.

Q: Well, of course, I guess the '67 war was precipitated by Nasser expelling the United Nations Emergency Force from the Sinai Peninsula.

STEVEN: But also allowing, you might say, Egypt to blockade the Gulf of Eilat going up at the Straits of Tiran. Israel, as I have always understood it and I've seen some of the inside stuff on this, essentially went to the UN and said, "Put up or shut up. He's closed the Strait at Eilat, he's running your people off. You said this wouldn't happen." And my understanding was they went to our government and said the same thing: "Are you going to allow this? Are you going to permit these people to break all these understandings we've had?" And the answer they got in both cases apparently was fairly unsatisfactory. The UN pulled its people out, and we did not go in openly and publicly and tell the Egyptians to move out. So the Israelis decided to take things into their own hands, which they did. The UN not being acceptable, how were you going to establish a peace force? So we proposed the idea of a multinational force and observers, and this was in the original document in small capital letters. It was a multinational force and observers would be put into Sinai. When the time finally came to form an organization, nobody apparently could think of a good title for it, so they said, "All right, let's call it the Multinational Force of Observers," so that's what it became. They already had within a couple of years after things quieted down after the peace treaty. By the late '70s/early '80s they had a group called the Sinai Field Mission, SFM, Sinai Field Mission, established by the State Department, and we sent out a group of observers to Sinai - they were originally in western Sinai, whose job was to go around and observe and make sure nobody was exceeding the limits of their military obligations, make

sure the Israelis were pulling back and the Egyptians were not advancing forces, etcetera. By '82 when the peace treaty was put into effect, they needed a permanent organization to do this, and there was the question "How do we do this?" Well, we finally said, all right, the United States would undertake to organize such a force, and the expense of that force would be shared and the governing of that force would be the United States, Egypt and Israel together, a tripartite controlling group who would finance it theoretically. In actuality, of course, we gave the money to them and they put it back in the pot. The force was finally constituted originally, I believe, with 13 countries, an interesting group. The United States was the predominant one. We provided two battalions, a battalion of infantry and another battalion of logistic support troops, and we provided a squadron of helicopters, 10 helicopters. We got another helicopter squadron from Australia. They sent up 10, which was quite astonishing, because something like a third of their helicopter force was committed to the Sinai. The American helicopter force was in southern Sinai, and the Australian in northern Sinai. The force itself of 13 countries with their troops was split into two main camps, the main camp in the north up towards Gaza, towards the Israeli border, and the other camp in the south at Sharm el Sheikh at the entrance to the Gulf of Eilat. Where do you find a place in the Sinai where you can put a military force of Western nations which require comfort for their troops? And it has an air field and has other resources. Conveniently, the Israelis had built airbases in the Sinai when they were there, so the main force headquarters was in what had been an Israeli airbase in the north, and then another Israeli-function area in the south at Sharm el Sheikh. There were about 3,000 people altogether, three battalions of infantry, one American, one Fijian, and one Colombian battalion of infantry, spread through the Sinai in lookout posts. Then they had to have an observer force, and there was the question of what sort of observers. Somebody made the suggestion, "Well, we've already got an observer force on the ground that's working and doing things. Let's get that one." So they brought the State Department group down to the base in northeast Sinai, and it became the observers in the Multinational Force of Observers. In '84 when I got involved, they were looking for a new chief of the observer unit. The turnover was supposed to be yearly; it was a one-year term for each observer; you had a one-year contract, including the chief. So I became interested in this and thought it would be a useful thing to do, that it would be a good possibility to learn something about a different area of the world, so I put my name in the hopper and, somewhat to my surprise, seeing that I had no Middle Eastern background of any sort, I was selected as the chief of the observer unit and only then really found what I was getting into. I had 31 people: 30 observers, a secretary, and me, 32. The observer unit had been translated down from the old Sinai field mission. I always say "translated down" because they used to be on a mountaintop out in western Sinai. Fifteen of them were retired or at least former US military personnel. The idea was to have professional advisors who knew things. By a coincidence of where they had done their initial recruiting and how they organized it, most of them were special forces people, Army Special Forces veterans. The majority were 20-year retirees; about a third of them at least were people who hadn't done a full 20 years but had years of experience, probably somewhat between half of them former senior noncommissioned officers, the other half majors and even lieutenant colonels in the Army. The State Department element was very, very interesting. The original proposal had been for Foreign Service Officers, probably not at the entry level, probably people who'd already been in the Foreign Service at least five years, had a tour or two tours behind them, lower middle-grade officers, to come in. And the chief of the unit would be a Foreign Service Officer of roughly O1 rank.

Q: About that time, equivalent to colonel.

STEVEN: Yes, colonel, 06. I learned the military numeral system; I was an 06. The initial people going out there, as I understand it, up in the Sinai field mission and then the first year or two in the MFO, were indeed Foreign Service Officers, but very quickly it became a plum to be dispensed to others, and very quickly the State Department element was heavily infiltrated with civil service people and not just people at the civil service officer level doing an excursion tour but clerks and secretaries. The secretary to some influential person who was in the Rome headquarters had been a secretary in the State Department and thought this would be a great idea, so she was appointed as an observer and came out to the Sinai with absolutely no Foreign Service experience of any sort and also no experience at all in any of the skills that even a Boy or Girl Scout might have, basic map reading and things like this, nothing. When I got there, I would say at least half of the people in the State Department element were not Foreign Service Officers and in several cases were not even officers, they were clerks and secretaries, people with backgrounds that seemed entirely inappropriate except for the fact that they knew people in the hierarchy of the MFO who got them out here. Of course, there is an office in the State Department which supports the MFO contingent, and they had friends and people who would be recommended for this. The personnel situation, as I say, when arrived was very interesting in its makeup. The other factor I noticed was that, out of the 15 State Department observers, two were female, and the only other female in the unit was my secretary, so I thought why are there only two females here? It was made clear to me in the beginning here in Washington - in the MFO headquarters in Rome, the Director General of the MFO and the headquarters staff were in Rome, because they couldn't be in either one of the two treaty countries, so they were in Rome - and it was made clear to me by the senior staff at the MFO headquarters in the Sinai that this really wasn't a job for women or a place for women on the observer unit. It was not stated in those words obviously - people are far too subtle for that - but it was crystal clear that they didn't need any women out there and, if I could figure out some way not to have even the two token ones who were there, I should try to do that. They had two women in the group, I think tokens. We had to be able to point and say, "Hey, we aren't prejudiced." I realized, having been there for a while and seen the actual work that was being done, that there was nothing there that couldn't be done perfectly well by females. The whole concept that we were bouncing around in the desert in four-wheel-drive vehicles or we were flying in helicopters leaning out open doors and so on and it was unladylike, I guess, was nonsense. Women were flying helicopters. In fact, one of the American helicopters that I flew in had a female captain, a pilot. So I began to question increasingly why we were limiting ourselves to essentially males in most cases and got the usual evasive sort of answer, one of the standard ones: "Well, women, you know, wouldn't be able to change one of those big tires on a vehicle if they got a flat tire." Number one, there would almost always be a male and a female; the observers worked in teams of two, so we could easily enough insure you weren't going to have two females on the same team if that was a concern. Then we discovered that some of the men couldn't change the tires either because they were so difficult, so that became quickly discredited. You always had a liaison officer with you - if you were in Israel, you had an Israeli officer with you; if you were in Egypt, you had Egyptian army officer with you - so there was always a male in the group at a minimum, and you were never that far away from help. Even if you were out in the middle of the Sinai Desert, just down the road somewhere there's an Egyptian military camp, and they looked after us. A couple of times they pulled our vehicles out of the sand when we got bogged down. So this was sort of nonsense.

Then, of course, "Well, they have to live in a military base." Well, we had quite a few women living on the military base. The American logistics battalion had any number of female officers and enlisted. So I worked at one of my goals the entire time I was associated with this, which was much more than a year, as you will hear, to reduce that prejudice, and I think I did, the best example of that being when I finally left.

Q: You were there from 1984 to...

STEVEN: '84 to '86, then I left, finishing two tours. I had already broken the record, because I had not had one year, I had two years, so I then left, and, as I will get to later, I went back again in 1987 and stayed for another two years.

Q: We'll do the '84 to '86.

STEVEN: On that point I'd like to make about women, not belabor it but I think it's worth recording, when I finally left in the second tour, the State Department observer group was very neatly divided into half female and half male, and I consider that an accomplishment of a fairly important goal. I always found, an interesting fact, that the female observers, if they were carefully selected, if they were the right kind of people, basically experienced Foreign Service Officers, made even better observers than sometimes the men did, because the Egyptian officers were fascinated by the idea of women doing this job. When a woman shows up at your little bungalow out in the middle of Sinai Desert wearing a bright orange suit, because the observers all wore bright orange - my motto was "We'll never be shot by mistake" and you could see us a mile away - so a woman shows up wearing one of these bright orange suits to get the count of his tanks and guns and his men and this sort of thing, and stops for tea, of course - you always had to have tea; I drank more tea in the Sinai - they were getting information given to them freely. They'd just talk and talk and talk. A male went in, you and I would go in, and using all my supposed skills, I would get, "Yeh, yup, here's my count. Nice to see you again," but the women they didn't want to let go, so they would talk and talk and talk. And they were extremely successful at the job. The best of the State Department observers that I ever saw out there in my four years was a woman, and I'll put her name in the record because it's highly complimentary: Carol van Voorst. Carol is today in the Department. I've seen her name somewhere. She's an office director, I believe. Carol van Voorst came out for a one-year tour and was probably the very best observer we had, certainly of the entire State Department contingent and as good as any of the military. She learned what needed to be learned: how do you recognize a T54 tank versus a T62 tank, and how do you look at fortifications, and how do you get ideas of counts of troops and so on; dealing with the liaison officers, dealing with the entire situation. The job could not have been done better. She was superb. I made the point to everybody I could, with her as an example, again to overcome this natural, built-in sort of military resistance that was still evident in those days against women.

Q: Were you able to weed out the people who were getting these jobs as rewards with no particular qualifications?

STEVEN: Not at the initial point; I was not able to weed it out in Washington, the recruiting. Interestingly, for most of my time there, the recruiting was done with absolutely no reference to

me. The recruiting was done in Washington and by the headquarters staff. They simply sent us the list, saying, "Here's the people who will be coming this year to replace vacancies." I was never consulted or asked, "Do you think this would be a good person?" I just was told, "Here's your staff." I began to influence it the best I could, because I'd go over to headquarters at least a couple times a year and I would talk to the people there and work on trying to influence the recruiting that was being done. I was also able to influence it because I wrote an evaluation of each observer towards the end of their one-year contract. It was, from the point of view of the manager, an ideal situation. They had absolutely no rights. I wrote a report on them which they did not see, which went just to the MFO headquarters. They really didn't have an appeal, because once I got the confidence of the headquarters staff, which I was able to do, they never questioned my recommendations. I could say, "This person has done a one-year tour. Thank them and send them home." Or I could say, "This person we really ought to try to hold onto, because they're so good. I'd like to extend them for a second contract." In that sense I was able to quickly do some weeding, because there were people who had there, in some cases for some time, both on the military and on the State side, who should not have been there that long and it was time to begin to move them. I was able to do that and, again, get enough confidence of the Director General and his staff so that they didn't question my decisions, they accepted them, and that made it easy to begin to turn the unit over at least. But on the people coming in from the State Department, I never had any input; I simply was given a list and here they came. I did in one case, I think, later in my tour when the deputy was being nominated, and again they came up with list of possibility for deputy. I happened to be in Washington - I was back in Washington on a consultation - so they had me interview these people. I think I interviewed about four, three of whom were civil service officers; only one was a Foreign Service Officer, and this was even at the deputy level. Two or three of those civil service they had picked were people who to me seemed completely inappropriate, did not have area experience, brought nothing to the job that would say this is a good reason to have this person here. They hadn't have overseas tour, they hadn't been in embassies, they hadn't had negotiation experience - we had a lot of delicate relationships with the liaison systems and so on - and it very quickly became clear to me that probably their primary qualification was that they knew the people who were doing the recruiting. I think we finally settled on the Foreign Service Officer, who turned out to be a fine choice, but I'll tell you frankly I recommended him primarily at the beginning because he just was Foreign Service and they were not. In that sense, we did it. But the work was fascinating, and the fact that it is not a United Nations operation was very, very rare. I believe it's the only peace-keeping force, except for the NATO forces now, but basically it was the only peace-keeping force of that nature that was not United Nations sponsored; it was a privately sponsored...

Q: You talk about your impression of the Israeli and then of the Egyptian sides and what they were doing. Had people pretty well settled in? Was either side testing the bounds?

STEVEN: No. Both sides wanted us there. The Israelis regarded us as their warning alarm system. The Egyptians, of course, had gotten Sinai back, so obviously no country wants to have foreign troops on its soil, but they recognized that we in effect had regained Sinai for them, and so they put up with us. Neither side was looking to provoke problems. The problems tended to be what I call unintentional or accidental or misinterpreting the terms of the peace treaty. Israel is a tiny little country, and when they have the supersonic jet fighters flying around, it's very easy for

one of those supersonic jet fighters to swing in over Egyptian territory. The Egyptians very quickly complained every time it happened, and our people reported it. We had observation posts. We would look up and we'd see this thing going to the west then back, and we'd report "Violation by Israeli aircraft." There was a poor pilot up there who's got 20 square miles of space to maneuver in and a jet that takes 20 square miles to turn, so it happened. Egyptians on a few occasions did things, brought in, shall we say, a system or something that was questionable, and we would go look at the treaty and we'd go talk to them, and usually they'd say, "Well, yes, I suppose we could look at it that way. All right, we'll move it out." Or if they didn't, we'd issue a violation notice. We discussed in meetings between the liaison systems which they held regularly, and they'd hammer out a solution to it. I don't recall when I was there a single instance in the entire four years I was associated with the MFO where either side deliberately provoked a violation. It was accidents, misunderstanding of the terms. I think I can give you one example without violating any confidences. One of the sides once brought in for training purposes hulks of tanks and artillery pieces - and these were artillery pieces without breech blocks, meaning, of course, they were just useless, they were no more useful than the one sitting in front of the American Legion post - or a tank which had been burned out but the hulk was dragged in, to a training area so that the troops could train on them or their aircraft could see them on the ground and they could say, "That's what a tank looks like on the ground." We found this and realized what they were, that they weren't active elements, but that in our view they were provocative in that they could be misinterpreted and, therefore, shouldn't be there. They were in an area where they weren't allowed to have tanks, and it arguably could be said they looked like a tank.

Q: There's always the possibility that somebody could substitute it.

STEVEN: Substitute it; or, you know, the breech block might be kept somewhere and, when you're ready, you could put the breech block back on the artillery piece and we're back in business. It was this type of question raised. So we issued a violation to the country involved, and they were quite indignant and insisted we come out and look at these things, which we did. I looked at them and said, "Yes, I fully agree with you. That's not an operable tank. But..." I found out that they actually then called a meeting of their senior people and thrashed the whole thing out and finally came to agree that we were right, because if they did it and the other side did it, before you know, nobody would be quite sure what people had, and it wasn't a good idea. So they towed the stuff out again. This was the type of activity and atmosphere.

Q: I was wondering. You had a young Egyptian or Israeli captain who's stuck out in the middle of the desert and gets a little antsy, and I would think every once in a while they'd try something just to show that they had some vigor, or something like that.

STEVEN: I honestly don't think I saw that as much. Each side was anxious not to provoke the other. Things were done, which I wouldn't talk about even today, which were misunderstandings. Shall we say, a system brought into a zone which might be interpreted as something of value to a combat force being brought in, laying out something in advance so when you did bring in your troops in a war you'd have the system on the ground; and we shook our heads at this and said, "Look, the treaty doesn't specifically treat this, but here's how it can be interpreted by an objective observer," and we would go over to the government in question - it happened on both sides - and say, "Look, people, this isn't something you can clearly say beyond

a reasonable doubt violates the treaty, but we believe it could be provocative, it could be disruptive, it's a bad idea." And I'm happy to say that they accepted our judgment in each case. I think we, the force, came to be trusted enough so that if we said, "This will be seen by your treaty partner as provocative and dangerous, they would pull it out and stop doing what they were doing," which I thought was an excellent idea. In the entire time I was there, I never saw or heard arguments where one of our people was attacked or injured in any way by either side. I had a couple of stones thrown at my vehicle out in the desert at times by boys, but they do that in this country. You know, a big, moving, white vehicle, a great big white vehicle, is just a great thing to throw a rock at.

Q: Were there sort of bedouin wandering around?

STEVEN: Yes, there were bedouin out there. The Egyptian government was trying very hard to get them to settle down, and had been trying very hard to get them to settle down for years. I found an interesting cultural factor, and this I saw in Sinai and I've also seen it as an inspector. I was up by northwest Pakistan and out in Baluchistan doing inspections at one point on the refugee camps, and the same thing happened to the nomadic populations there too. In each case, the governments were trying to settle these populations by providing basic services, and the Egyptians were doing it in exactly the same way as the Pakistanis were doing it. If you provide these people with a water source, electricity, and a way to make a living, they pretty much give up the old ways quite willingly. I had one Pakistani officer explain to me when I was there that it's a myth that these people are bedouin and it's a way of life that they never want to give up. The bedouin way of life is terrible. It's on the edge. They starve, they die, they're endangered, and particularly in places like the Sinai where the place is loaded with minefields. He said, "If you provide the basic elements of life, they're pretty willing and happy to settle down. I saw it in Pakistan. They were trying to do it up there with the people, and it was working in the Sinai. The bedouin were increasingly settled. They still had their flocks and so on, but they'd settled down, and it was because they provided basic services to them. The Israelis, of course, had long before done that. There are bedouin in Israel and they wandered to a certain extent but nothing like they do elsewhere. One of the more fascinating recollections of my time there was overhead photography. It's published photography in color of the Middle East. If you look at the area of what is essentially the Israeli-Egyptian border in Sinai, all the way down the border, you can see the border, because the Israeli side is quite green and gray and the Egyptian side, like a knife cutting it, is gray and white. The goats on the Egyptian side are out there; they eat everything, leaving sand. On the Israeli side they're not permitted. The Israeli side has got ground cover and looks like access to water, and then on this side it's white. It was a fascinating cultural experience just to see these things.

Q: Did you see any interchange between the Israelis and the Egyptian troops?

STEVEN: Not the troops, no. The troops never saw each other; they were kept back. But liaison systems did. There were parties regularly at the border station. The one I dealt with mostly was at Rafah. There were other border places, but Rafah was the main headquarters. The two liaison systems had their field headquarters in that area, the Egyptian side on the Gaza side and the Rafah side which the Israelis were controlling. It was a 50-yard walk across between the fences and you were there, and they would have parties and invite each other, and they would go. You

would go to a party and you'd find a dozen Egyptian liaison officers and a couple of dozen Israelis and everybody enjoying life, and some big Muslim was stretching the limits on alcoholic intake at times. And they would invite us. I was usually invited as chief of the observer unit, so I would go, and these were friendly discussions. They all spoke English, which was a requirement dealing with the force, so therefore you had no language problem of any sort. And everyone got along fine. It was fascinating. Incidents which would show, I think, how well this worked. There was one sort of sad incident where, after an international negotiation between them, they were making some adjustments on the border, and these adjustments would be 100 yards. It's the principle of it: "That 100 yards is ours." Well, the Israelis had established border markers and in an effort to keep anyone from moving it, these border markers were big, they weighed a ton. I think they were about 2000 pounds. They were concrete pyramids with a metal post on the top and a number on the top. This is Marker #53 and it was set down right on the border, and it could not be moved except by heavy equipment, so there wasn't the question of somebody sneaking out at night and shifting the border. You couldn't move these things. But after the agreements were made about arranging the border, some of these stones had to be moved. Most had to be moved further into Israeli, because the Israelis had sort of taken a little bit more than they should have. But to move these things - they're way out in the sand out there - you needed to get a truck out to do it, so the Israelis volunteered a helicopter. I think they had one of those big American Chinook helicopters, big double-rotor affairs, heavy lift; they'd use this. And both sides agreed and both sides sent out their liaison teams. I wasn't physically present, but other people from the force were at this time. And these stones were lifted by the helicopter, these pyramids. The helicopter would get the big straps on it and lift it up and move it over to where you wanted in and set it down again, both teams cooperating. As they picked up one of these stones, something went wrong - I read technical descriptions of it; I don't know - something went wrong and the helicopter crashed right on top of the pyramid and burst into flames. An Egyptian liaison officer who was nearest, a young major that I knew, instantly dashed into the flames to the cockpit, ripped open the cockpit doors, got both pilots out somehow, who were strapped in their seats, got them out and dragged them out into safety, burning his hands rather severely and burning his face somewhat in doing it, but rescuing these two people. There were only those two in the helicopter. Instinct, I suppose. He didn't stop and think to himself, now, this will be good for Israeli relations, or something; he just went in and rescued them, saved their lives very clearly. Well, the Israelis couldn't do enough. They gave him a presentation plaque from the squadron in appreciation of their comrade, Major So-and-So. It was a big moment. He was still wearing bandages, I think, for a month or two after. I remember going to one of these parties, and the Israelis were holding drinks for him because of how popular he was. Another fascinating picture which I think is worth recording: Further down on the border in my very earliest year there, when things were still a little tense, we were going to two posts on opposite side of the fence but where a road used to go through, and the Israelis and the Egyptians, had their little outpost, six or eight men in each, but they weren't connected anymore. The fence was there, and they just sort of watched each other. I went down to the Israeli side one day talking to the Israeli commander, a young lieutenant. I looked over at the fence, and I realized at the fence there was a card table - it was actually a wooden table but like a card table - set up straddling the lower rank of the barbed wire, and on it was a chess set and a chair on each side. I looked at this and looked at the lieutenant. He laughed and said, "Oh, that's Morsch. Morsch is a chess champion at the university in Tel Aviv, or something; of course, he is an active-duty soldier, he's a corporal; but he loves to play chess and there's nobody good enough for him here in the little detachment we

have, but they've got a very, very good chess player on the Egyptian side, so they get together every day to play chess, sitting on opposite sides of the barbed-wire fence. If I had only had a camera, that would have been the shot of the century, but, of course, we didn't carry cameras. But they met every day and sat opposite each other. Apparently one day the Israeli would bring tea and coffee or something, and the next day the Egyptian would bring it, and they'd push cups back and forth to each other, and they'd play chess. Fabulous possibilities.

Q: Did you have anything to do with other troop contingents, like the Fijians and others, Samoans?

STEVEN: Yes. The three big contingents were the American battalion in the south. I should mention their situation briefly. They were responsible for the southern sector. They were drawn from army units, the 81st Airborne and 101st, and they took a battalion at the time. The Army was very unhappy with this, because when you take a battalion out of a brigade, you cripple that brigade; it's only two-thirds strength. The battalion itself is not going to get proper training. They can do small arms and individual unit training, but they can't do the big stuff that they need. They don't have any tanks to work with, no artillery, nothing. So six months in the Sinai depreciates their training, and the Army was unhappy with it, because, of course, these people were supposed to be the firemen who rushed off to war if needed, and here they were sitting in the Sinai losing their edge. So the Army very quickly tried to start substituting other kinds of units, and then they brought in others of the so-called elite, the 10th Mountain Division, for example, and some of the others. Eventually, I understand, after I left they even tried provisional units of Reservists, called up Reservists, National Guard people, for volunteers to do a six-month tour out there. I gather, and this is strictly rumor, it didn't work so well using those people. I believe now they're back to sending regular Army units out there, but the present administration has already said publicly, Rumsfeld's already said publicly, he wants to get the Americans out of there because it's tying up a battalion that they really could be using somewhere else. The Fijian army has always maintained itself in modern times by peace keeping. There are three battalions, were three battalions in my time, in the Fijian army. One was in Lebanon under the UN auspices, the second was in Sinai under our force, the third is back in Fiji where they train and recruit and so on, and then they keep moving these units around, and that supports the Fijian army. Without those contracts or in effect being paid to do these peace-keeping duties, they couldn't afford more than maybe one ragtag battalion. The Colombians, for some reason, wanted to get involved in this national peace keeping, so they put a battalion out there. One cynical way of looking at it, I've been told and I sort of got some feeling that the Colombians themselves recognize this, is conscription in Colombia. When a young man is conscripted, he may very well end up in combat, because they have these wars going on down there. Things can get dangerous and a guy can get hurt. So the better class of young men from the wealthier and well-to-do, influential families would be sent off to do a peace-keeping tour in the Sinai, which was reasonably comfortable and quite safe. The worst thing that might happen to you is you might get stung by a scorpion. So it was a very high-quality battalion. They provided ample interpreters. I remember working with a couple of very young interpreters who'd been educated in this country. Their English was at least as good as mine if not better. The officers tended to be tough. They were good, they had seen combat, they'd been fighting for years in Colombia, and this, I think, was seen sometimes for them as a sabbatical, to go off to Sinai and make money, because while they were in Sinai they were paid at American rates, so it was a very popular way to go. So those

were the three major combat units. We had Australian helicopters in the north, American in the south, 20 altogether. I used the helicopters a great deal in my work, because my observers were carried around on the missions by helicopter, and we'd have three or four, even five, teams out on rotation doing their missions going here and there. We did half our missions in aerial reconnaissance and the other half went on on the ground, reconnaissance versus verification of going out and actually visiting the people on the ground. You'd use your reconnaissance missions to identify things you wanted to see; then you'd get your vehicle and go out and look at them on the ground, the logistics battalion for the US. We had Norwegians. The force commander during my entire time except for the last six months was a Norwegian lieutenant general, and it was quite interesting in that my understanding was when I was there that the relationship with the observer unit and the command of the force in the field had not been ideal for any number of reasons. I'm not saying anybody was to blame. It just had not been a terribly harmonious relationship, I gather. I set out to try to improve that and was successful because - and I discovered this within the first year - towards the end, apparently, of my first year - I've only had this third-hand - the State Department began to press to have a political advisor from the State Department appointed to the force headquarters in the Sinai to advise the commander. They had a lawyer, the force lawyer, out there; the counsel was a State Department lawyer. He was in the headquarters there, but there was no sort of designated political advisor. When they started to press this, the commanding general - I only found this out sometime later - went back to them and said, "I already have a State Department advisor, my chief advisor, which I took to be evidence that we had overcome the concern, so I ended up as time went on spending at least as much of my time and effort as what amounts to a political advisor and counselor to the force commander as I did running my own unit. The unit, of course, was able to run nicely without me most of the time, because we had a deputy and good people running it. So I would end up going to the meetings with the force commander, liaison meetings.

Q: What type of issues would come up?

STEVEN: Frequently issues such as the introduction of a system into the Sinai. I don't want to be coy about this, but there are so many things that the military had these days which are not actually weapons but things that they might bring in, mapping systems, markings, that in themselves do not appear to be offensive except when combined with other elements. If you set everything all up and then you bring in the weapon to use it, you've violated things. There was a great deal of discussion of this. Small issues, the Egyptians regularly would get very, very unhappy about the Israeli overflights, violations of Egyptian air space. Well, the violation may have been 100 yards, then the poor pilot found out what he was doing and got out again. The Egyptians were very offended by this. There were problems occasionally with our soldiers. We had one incident I remember very well: a Colombian officer, young officer, going between two of his outposts. Essentially the Americans had southern Sinai, the Colombians had middle Sinai, and the Fijians covered the north with the outposts. In the center section, which was the most barren section, there were more bedouin moving around in villages there - called villages or encampments. We had been told by our cultural advisor, who was a British officer there who had had a lot of experience with the Arabs and the bedouin, "Stay away from their women. Just don't even talk to them. Stay away from them." Well, apparently this young Colombia captain had made the mistake of thinking he was doing something humanitarian. He found a bedouin woman, I think with her young child, what he thought was out in the middle of the desert in

distress. So he stopped his jeep - I guess he had a soldier within him - and invited her into the jeep to give her a ride on to wherever she needed to go, get her safely home. Well, it was sort of a misunderstanding. She was waiting for her husband who was eventually going to arrive on his camel and pick her up. But they couldn't communicate, and here was this foreign military officer telling her to get in the jeep, so she was terrified and got in the jeep. It was just misunderstanding from start to finish. But in the end word got out very quickly that it would be a good idea to move that Colombian officer out of there fast before her husband caught up with him. So we did. He was transferred off to some other duty. But this takes time and discussion. One incident I got involved in: I was on a mission out near the Suez Canal, as a matter of fact, when I got a radio call - all our vehicles, of course, were equipped with radios - that I was needed back at the main camp and they were sending a helicopter for me, which I thought was quite an honor. So I started back, and soon enough a helicopter landed on the road and picked me up and took me back, and I was taken up to the Rafah border where the Israelis had discovered a tunnel under the border. It was a very clever thing. I saw the tunnel. They had dug it out with an excavator, right across the border there. It was a concrete framed square tunnel about this big, big enough for a man to crawl through, with an electric light cord running through it so it could be illuminated. They showed me the Israeli end of it. It ran into a house about 75 yards back from the border, where they had dug through the floor and had dug down, then dug the tunnel that way. They said, "That house over there on the Egyptian side is where we believe the other entrance is," although they hadn't been over there. The Egyptians then took us over to their side and, yes indeed. The tunnel altogether must have been, I'm going to guess, 200 yards right under the border, and it was down between six and eight feet. It was really quite an excavation, not something somebody dug out with his bare hands. It had concrete lining for the walls, so that was a construction project. The Israelis were dumbfounded and embarrassed. They said, "How on earth did we ever go past that place? Where did they put the dirt? How did they get the concrete in there?" It was a good job. So that had been discovered and they wanted the MFO to come and see it and so on. Essentially there was nothing we could do about it. It wasn't in the treaty. That was something between the two countries. The treaty didn't cover building tunnels under the border. Again, I spent two or three days probably involved and working on that situation.

Q: What was the tunnel for?

STEVEN: Smuggling.

Q: Oh, smuggling.

STEVEN: People or goods or weapons or cigarettes or whatever. The Israelis told me they privately thought that it probably was a very well financed smuggling operation to smuggle stuff from Gaza into Egypt, cigarettes and other things that were taxed highly in Egypt.

Q: It wasn't only for criminals. I served in South Korea, and we had tunnels which were getting discovered, but this was for troop movements.

STEVEN: No, but these concerned the Israelis. They didn't really care that much if the Palestinians were gouging the Egyptian tax collectors, but the thing could also be used for smuggling in weapons and for espionage purposes, so they wanted it stopped. A lot of my time

was spent with individual issues and problems of people in the unit. It's an unusual situation to take a State Department civilian and put them in a military camp in the desert. There was not an awful lot to do when they weren't actually on duty. The actual duties that we had were not onerous and didn't take that much of our time. I would say that people had ample free time to do other things. We gave courses. When the new observers came out, we had courses arranged to teach them how to read maps and use compasses and handle the vehicles and how to live in the desert, emergency survival training, all this sort of thing. That took time, and the treaty, of course, itself, and then each one had to make up his or her own maps, because this is the only way you learn how to use it, when you have to get the map out and do your own markings on it and draw in everything you need to have. It helps you to focus on using a map. And we tried to get them to the point where they knew the treaty backwards and forwards, so if they saw something, they knew whether it was a question. But then there'd be individual difficulties. Drinking is always a problem when you're out there with not much to do. For a force of 3000 there probably were 300 women altogether, and that included everything from the American women in the logistics battalion to the few I had to some civilian secretaries who served the force. The liquor was far too easily available. Not only was there an officers' club and enlisted clubs, as you would find at any military base, but the contingents also had formed their own clubs, so the Australians had a club and the French had a club. The French was particularly popular. My observers didn't have a club, because there weren't enough of us. We used the regular officers' club or went to one of the contingent clubs, which had an open house. I had one interesting advantage there because I was the only senior officer in the force who spoke Spanish, so I became unofficially a liaison with the Colombians and the Uruguayans. There was an Uruguayan engineer unit there, about 50 men, who did heavy engineering, and I could talk with them in Spanish. The problem the Colombians had was that their young interpreters, boys 18 and 19 who had been educated in the States in many cases, would also then, after heaving some juicy stuff going on, go back and talk to their friends about it in the battalion. If an officer who didn't speak English or spoke very little really wanted to have a private conversation with the force commander about problems, he had to use his own interpreter, who then probably, despite being warned that he would be tortured to death, was going to go back and talk about it. So they discovered that I spoke Spanish, and a couple of times I ended up in some very sensitive sessions with the commander of the Colombian battalion and our force commander and me with me as the interpreter, the go-between, which meant that I also, of course, got to know them very well and became accepted by them in their club, so whenever they had a ceremony or party, I'd get invited to it because I spoke Spanish. It was handy. When I went out there, my wife, of course, stayed back. It was an unaccompanied tour for me. She was here. My daughter was in her last year of high school, the last child at home, and my wife wanted to be here for that period. But then when it became evident that I would be welcomed for a second year and, after discussing with my wife, decided there were enough advantages to this that it was worth it, and also finding that she could come out and join me. It was one of those situations that the Europeans probably insisted upon, that American commander might have a little more difficulty with. The 06's and the commanding general were allowed to have a spouse on the base, no children but the spouse, and only those, so that meant six colonels at my time, three battalion commanders, the six battalion commanders, a couple staff officers, me and the general, six, seven, something like that - it varied - could have a spouse, and I had a bungalow. There had been an Israeli air force base, so I had what had been an officer's family's bungalow, and my wife could come and join me. So when I was offered and took the chance at a second year tour, the question came for my wife.

Well, my daughter was going off to college; I had two sons who then were grown, older than she was; and there was absolutely no reason why she shouldn't come, so she moved out to the Sinai with me for the second year. She spoke fluent Spanish and became sort of a substitute mother for the Colombian battalion, who had, say, 17-/18-year-old boys, many of them for the first time away from home, who didn't speak English at all and who just were delighted to find somebody whom they could substitute for their mothers and who spoke fluent Spanish. So my wife would go to the swimming pool on the weekend and there'd be a number of these young Colombian troops, and I would actually walk over and find my wife sitting on a lawn chair surrounded by a circle of as many as a dozen of these young Colombian soldiers all sitting on the cement around her and chatting away. She said, "Oh, this is wonderful." She loved it. But life was difficult in that people who didn't have resources of their own to fall back on, they didn't read a great deal or something, didn't have hobbies, didn't have anything really to occupy them, particularly some of my retired US military, the temptation was to get drunk, to drink and abuse alcohol. I had two or three cases where we had these extremely difficulty heart-to-heart talks that we Foreign Service Officers usually aren't prepared for. Military officers are, but to have to call in some retired lieutenant colonel, close your door, and really go at it, you know, "You're drinking too much. It's becoming embarrassing or something. It may be affecting your duty," etcetera, etcetera. This was tough stuff, and some of these guys, as I say, were Special Forces veterans, real killers. In a couple of cases, I found out they were killers. They were guys who had fought hand to hand with knives in Vietnam, that type of thing. All I could think of as I'm lecturing this guy, what if he gets made at me? But, of course, it never happened. But this is the type of thing that was exaggerated and exacerbated in the desert environment that I had to deal with occasionally. As I said, I spent two years out there with the force, having a wonderful time, doing what I think was useful work, and learning a great deal about them. At the end of that two years, I went back to the Department. The system was a strange one. I had to resign from the Foreign Service to do this. It was like our foreign service people at the Institute in Taiwan. I resigned from the Foreign Service, although I kept all my rights. I was getting credit for promotion and all that sort of thing, and I paid my retirement benefits in, but technically I was a private citizen off the roles. They had a difficult time because I had to see certain classified information that involved our mission, and that meant that we had to keep my security clearance, of course, current back here, so I was sort of 'of' but not in the Department. And then when I went back at the end of my two years, I was back on duty and released back into the Foreign Service. I was amused because when I went out I found out only later than I should have turned in my building pass because I was a private citizen now, but no one ever bothered to ask me for it. So when I went back at the end of my two years to go back into the Department, just for the heck of it I took my building pass and ran it through the thing which they had just put in, and it worked fine. They'd never disconnected it.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. So in '84...

PAUL H. TYSON
Sinai Multi-National Force & Observer Mission
El Gorah, Sinai (1985-1986)

Mr. Tyson was born in Virginia into a US military family and was raised in army posts in the United States and abroad. Educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University he entered the Foreign Service in 1974. As a trained Economic Officer, Mr. Tyson served in a number of foreign posts, including Bonn, Dhahran, London and Kuwait City. His Washington Assignments were primarily in the petroleum and international economic fields. Mr. Tyson also served with the Sinai Multi-National Force & Observer Mission. Mr. Tyson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

TYSON: It was a grudging type of thing and I ran across another econ officer who had virtually an identical experience and had done the same thing – just pulled the plug, and I think the Asia Bureau and others were going, “This is not good.” So I ended up going on to a year in the MFO in the Sinai.

Q: MFO stood for what?

TYSON: Multi-national Force and Observers.

Q: Let’s talk about that. You were doing that from when to when?

TYSON: I ended up going out in April of 1985 to El Gorah in the Sinai, and stayed there until basically April or May of ’86.

Q: Why did we have something there, and what were you doing?

TYSON: This went back to the Camp David Accords and the Israeli staged withdrawal from the Sinai. It was finally completed in 1983. Initially there had been something called the Sinai Field Mission. Let me back up a bit. I think there had been an attempt to have a UN [United Nations] force out there, but the Russians were difficult about it. So we created the Sinai Field Mission, or maybe that came later, but the Sinai Field Mission was there to monitor...

Q: Also I don’t think the Israelis would, having been burned by the UN before, they weren’t going to take anything with a UN label.

TYSON: I think that’s true, although they still had some vestigial UN observers present in the Sinai even when I was there. The Sinai Field Mission had been there and they had been running a lot of monitoring sites at Gidi and Mitla Passes. And then, I think at the actual time of the withdrawal, it reconfigured itself into the Multi-National Force and Observers. So we had the U.S., the Brits, the Dutch, the French, the Italians, the Anzacs, the Colombians, and the Uruguayans, and the Fijians out there all doing this. And the civilian observer group at that point was about twenty-six people. The process was that you resigned from the Foreign Service and you were employed by the MFO, but you had reemployment rights. The observers were commanded by a Foreign Service Officer, Bob Steven, while I was out there. His deputy was Lou Kachanic. About half of the people were retired or ex-military and the other half were Foreign Service Officers.

Basically what you did was monitoring and verification in the Sinai. You had a three kilometer long strip inside Israel along their border, and then the entire Sinai. There were different zones as to what the Egyptians were permitted to have where, and a number of other things. You'd look for violations like they had a tank here when they shouldn't or they had heavy artillery here when they shouldn't. That's what you did. You ran around in stunning orange uniforms - the orange jumpsuit was particularly fetching, which really made you stand out. It was interesting because the garbage sweepers in Saudi Arabia wore that. But you had your orange jumpsuits with your American flag on it and your MFO seal and stuff like this.

Actually it was one of the great adventures. You know, you were out there in sort of a paramilitary organization, you had a huge fascinating portion of the world, you had vehicles and aircraft at your disposal, and minefields and stuff. It wasn't all beer and Skittles. And a tough environment, but quite an adventure. Quite an introduction to the Middle East. You know you'd do the Israelis in the morning and the Egyptians in the afternoon, so you got a chance to see both sides. You had access through the border so you literally could drive into Tel Aviv or Jerusalem for the weekend. It was quite interesting. I think you had, I fit the profile coming off a divorce, but you had divorce-wounded or people paying for kids in college or this was a good way to get the hardship post requirement out of the way in the year.

Q: What was your impression of first, the Israelis, and then the Egyptians, and how they were reacting to the situation? I mean, was this really active or had we gone quiet?

TYSON: It was pretty much sort of quiet. Every now and then you'd get a hard-liner on the Egyptian or the Israeli side with a real hard-on about the other side and your presence there, and you'd sort of have to slap them down. But a lot of the Israelis, actually, were reservists. And also what happened is both sides tended to pick people with foreign language ability to deal with us. You know, Egypt had a draft and all of these poor French literature or English literature majors from Alexandria or Cairo ended up in their equivalent of East Coffee Cup, Mississippi. You know, serving beyond the beyond, dealing with these foreigners. Some really nice, sweet kids, but there they were butting up against Gaza and stuff. And you know, they're all twenty-two. They're all far from home. That was the Egyptians who we tended to have more contact with. If you went into Israel you'd often get someone who is a diamond dealer in Netanya and he's got a branch office in New York and he's got the BMW in Herzliya. It was no real problem dealing with them.

Some of the verification was done in vehicles, some in helicopters. A lot of our ex-military guys were special forces. There was a tendency to do the macho thing of "how quickly can I do it from lift-off to touchdown at the airfield?" and the operations director was Andy Biotus. He was a retired army colonel, I think. One day he called me in and he said, "I will see you six hours from now. You are going to do the 'tea tour'." One of the reasons that they had FSOs along on this, was for the cultural sensitivity. There were some of these remote little Egyptian army units in the center of the Sinai that God had long ago forgotten and they were so pathetically grateful to see you that, they would invite you to, "Come sit, come have tea. What do you want to see? We'll show you everything." And Andy's point was, get there, shut the copter down, sit and have tea, chatter about this or that, and then go on. There was a real importance in terms of that contact and the familiarity.

One of the funniest incidents that I had was with my teammate on the day who was John Mayhew and is now working over in the Department. We had our Egyptian escort officer along and we were at a bakery near the Suez Canal. So we go in, and I mean it's a bakery, fine, sometimes they give you fresh bread, we had food with us so that wasn't the problem, but the major ushers us in and we sit down. We've got our twenty-two-year-old Egyptian there and the guy is very, very pleasant and what he wants to talk about is contraceptives. He's married, wife has just had a child or something like that, and he wants to talk about contraceptives and he's making this absolutely young Egyptian lieutenant who is probably a virgin and absolutely dying and blushing, translate - and fairly graphic translations. We basically said, "Well actually, what you should probably do is have your wife get in touch with a female obstetrician at the American University in Cairo. They'll be able to take her through all of the options," and stuff like this. At that point, okay, he asked both of us whether we were married and I said, "Well actually I'm divorced, but John's a father," and all of that, and this poor lieutenant was just dying. And of course we'd gotten the cultural training here saying the Arabs never talk about sex. Well, that's all they talked about.

Q: Were there violations that were playing games? You know, sometimes with troops they've got to do something.

TYSON: It was more than playing games. There were some times where there were even more than overt violations. The Egyptians were pushing the envelope now and then. The Israelis had a tendency to over fly Egypt. It wasn't just bored troops in some cases, although there was a bit of that.

Q: What happens if you found a violation?

TYSON: We wrote it up.

Q: Wrote it up. Both sides would respond, I mean if there was...

TYSON: Yes, pretty much. I think ultimately the best description I had is that we were the lubricating oil between the gears. Both sides needed some dead Americans there if anything ever broke out. But you know, if the level of complaint about our unfairness was about the same on both sides, we were probably doing the job that was needed.

Q: How about within your own units? How did you all get along?

TYSON: At first, not well. There was a real division between the military types and the State types when I first got there. And I think Bob Steven and Lou Kachanic worked on this. A lot was personalities. My perception of some of the State officers when I first got there, and a number of them are my friends, was that even though we were the same chronological age, they were just younger. The military guys, I think, tended to be contemptuous of them for that. There wasn't necessarily a lot of understanding on both sides, and then what happened is we got some retired military officers in who had done embassy duty and then FSOs like me who'd grown up around the military, or people who had served. So there was more of a convergence in the middle as to,

“Yes, I know what you do, you know what I do,” and I think it was just more of a change in the personality mix that, you know, you sort of respected your colleagues.

Also, when I first got there, you were supposed to make up your map and there was a lot of these games of, “I’m not going to tell you,” from the military guys. Well I had taken drafting in high school so I went into the operations center and I knew how to use tracing vellum to copy maps, so the first time I did it, I did it on vellum and punched through various checkpoints and sites. I got criticized by the military because one location was wrong and I pointed out to them, “If it’s wrong on my map, it’s wrong in the op center, too.” But I kept the vellum and after that when an FSO came in they’d get the drill, “You’ve got to figure it out,” and I’d say, “Come on over to my hooch. Here’s the overlay on the map. Punch it through this way, mark it up this way.” But it was a lot of the “boys stuff,” the macho type of thing and sort of once you “made your bones” and showed that you could do the stuff, you could write the reports and you knew what you were looking at, you were okay.

Q: I take it the units were essentially American units, French units, British units, what-have-you. They didn’t intermix?

TYSON: Well, they had different functions. Actually, in a sense, there was a bit of a mix in the headquarters. The Brits were the headquarters unit, the Dutch were the cops, the Uruguayans were the truck drivers and engineers, the Fijians and the Colombians were the ground-pounders - the infantry troops manning the various outposts, the American troops that we had at North Camp were more logistical support and technicians for our headquarters units. South Camp was where they had the airborne units which were more our straight-leg troops, or infantry troops; airborne is not straight-leg. There was sort of a division of labor. The French had the fixed-wing aircraft; the Otters and the Transalls, the Anzacs did the rotary-wing. So I mean it all sort of fit together because we knew all the helicopter pilots because they were always flying us. We were one of the reasons they were there.

The other unifying thing was the strip of bars on the base. The Dutch had a club, the Brits had a club, the Uruguayans had a club, the French had a club, and you’d go bar-hopping. The Anzacs had the Surf Club. So it was very interesting because Al Gorah which was an ex-Israeli airbase, and quite correctly the headquarters and the commander had very strict drunk driving rules and it was a small enough base you could walk. They never really said much about drunk bicycling, so everybody had bicycles. As a matter of fact, there was usually a rash of bicycle thefts just before the Anzacs went home. It was a small enclosed base with that and you tended to actually get to know people better through the bars.

Q: Were there problems with Bedouin going back and forth?

TYSON: The biggest problems we had with the Bedouin were them tapping into our water pipes periodically. The stuff about the Bedouin was very interesting because actually what we were hearing, and I don’t know whether you’ve interviewed Chester Pavlovski, but you should on all of this - he’s an ex-consular officer, but he was an observer and then sort of the resident archaeologist, the line was that actually the Bedouin, the real Bedouin, preferred the Israelis more. The Israelis basically stayed out of a lot of their internal family matters, but if you had a

sick kid or something they'd take care of it. It used to be very interesting because the Bedouin actually knew a lot of Israeli products, food products, very well. We were trying to share the expenditures between Israel and Egypt. The only way the tally ever came close was when they bought a lot of gold in the market in Egypt. You know you could go to Israel and say, "I need ten cases of tomatoes six weeks from now, grade 2." "Fine." You know, you'd go to the Egyptians and, "I need tomatoes," "Well, if God gives us tomatoes, you'll have tomatoes." So a lot of the actual food on the camp was Israeli, including stuff like packaged yogurt – fruit-flavored stuff and all.

I remember you'd go out on the patrols where you had the vehicles and you'd get these big green Coleman coolers and the mess hall would make up meals for you. When you had the Egyptians along, they were very careful that it was "halal." But you'd have ice in there, you'd have bread, you'd have sandwiches, you'd have apples, you'd have oranges, and probably more than six people could eat. Sometimes the Egyptians officers who didn't like the Bedouin would throw the stuff away, because you'd be sitting there parked beside a road or on an overlook and a Bedouin would just sort of appear and be fifty meters, seventy-five meters away from you and just sit there. So you look at them and they look at you. That's fine. Very often what we would do was, having eaten what we wanted, we would then gather up the stuff, you know the extra bread, the this, the that, and the ice, and either leave it there or walk it over to them. The Egyptians always thought we were nuts for doing this. I remember in the middle of nowhere one of the Bedouins, because we had Israeli fruit-flavored yogurt, I think we had apricot and something else, through sign language made it clear that the next time he came he preferred the apple to the apricot. *(laughs)* Okay, fine. But we'd hand them the ice and stuff like that, and sometimes we'd also give the extra food to the Egyptian interpreters who lived right outside the gate.

Q: What was your impression of Israel? I take it that's sort of where you went for the weekends or R&R (Rest and Relaxation) and that sort of thing?

TYSON: Well, Israel was fine. That is where we went for the R&Rs. I tended to prefer Jerusalem to Tel Aviv. I'll fast-forward a bit by saying that my mother and sister came out in January and got to Tel Aviv a day or two before I did and then I came in and met them. There were three or four bars, one of them was like the MASH [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] bar and the other was the Belle at the end of Dizengoff Street where the MFO and the UN guys and others all showed up. It's a typical military thing, you know, bars with girls and whores. My mother and sister were there, and you know my mother has been around army bases her entire life, so there we are in Israel and I said, "Okay, let's go out. I'll see some of my buddies at the bars," and you know, my mom and sister walked in and everybody is there including the working girls and I said, "This too is Israel. Tomorrow we'll do Jerusalem."

Israel was fascinating in many ways; the archaeology, the country, the people. It was a mix of things and I enjoyed it. Tel Aviv was fine, but I sort of found Jerusalem, as a city and a place, much more appealing. So there would be groups that would go into Tel Aviv and then groups that would go to Jerusalem. And then somebody was always going up to Tiberius or Yafo or something like that. So it was a chance to see the country.

ROBERT S. STEVEN
Multinational Force and Observers
Sinai (1987-1988)

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

STEVEN: ... But it was a difficult time in IG, and towards the end of that year that I was there, I think the spring of '87, I had kept in touch, of course, with friends in the MFO and people who were involved in it, and I heard that the situation with the civilian observer unit of the MFO had deteriorated very badly. It was always difficult to run a civilian unit in the middle of a military camp, but my successor unfortunately - I'm not going to use his name - turned out to be an alcoholic. This was apparently known to many people in the Service, but it was not known to the Personnel people who assigned him to the job or to the MFO who accepted him, or at least apparently did not know. If you put someone like that in the Sinai 100 yards literally from an officers' club with lots of cheap alcohol, constant parties going on, and he was not accompanied by his wife, at least much of that time, I gather, so it showed and the unit's performance began to deteriorate. I gather the force commander complained, and they were looking to release him at the end of his one-year contract and replace him. I gathered that they weren't terribly happy with what they were getting in the way of applications, so again, consulting with my chief counselor, my wife, she said, "Well, I've never known you to be happier than when you were out there playing boy general running around the Sinai. Why don't you see?" So I called Peter Constable, who was the Director General in Rome at the time, with whom I had served earlier, and said, "Peter, would you consider another tour, somebody else coming back?" He said, "Yes, yes, yes." We talked for a bit, and I indicated, yes, that I'd be happy to go back out again, and he said, "Let me call you back," because obviously he had to clear it with the powers that be in the Department, and very quickly I was notified that, yes indeed, I would be welcome back. So I told Bill Harrop at the time, and Bill was in a quandary because he had had a position in his office for someone to be sort of a staff manager, to reform the inspectors' manual, to guide the whole operation and keep it together - it was like a chief of staff position - and the fellow who had been in it who'd done a wonderful job - his name was Mack Adams. Mack had been in my entering FSO class, and Bill Harrop wanted me to take that position. I had to explain to him that I knew I'd signed up for a tour and I was only there one year, but this opportunity to go to Sinai was being offered to me, and would he mind terribly. And Bill, being the wonderful professional that he was, said, "Of course not, Bob. You must go out there if that's where you want to go." I think he realized, as probably any of us would, that if I were kept back doing a job that I wasn't happy with, I wouldn't be terribly effective. So I went back on out to Sinai, where I was welcomed by the force commander, who didn't need the headaches of the civilian observer unit. I brought my wife with me, and the two of us were right back to doing what we had been doing, but my role had been reinforced, I think, even more as a political advisor to the force commander. I had established that at the beginning. It had not been the role of the chief of the observer unit earlier,

but the Norwegian lieutenant general in charge, who was there through my entire time, and I got along very well. I was able to counsel him and to help him do things that he needed done. I think he was very pleased to have a civilian who was not in this military chain of command. The European military are quite formal, and it would have been more difficult for him to unbend and talk freely with a colonel, particularly one from another nation, British or Italian or something, whereas in my case I was a civilian set to one side and hopefully diplomatic and trustworthy and not talking about his secrets. So I ended up having more of a role as counselor than I perhaps would have had earlier. And it went on for another year.

Q: That would be '87 to '88.

STEVEN: '87 to '88, and I was able to, I think, clear up some of the problems that had developed. It required letting some people go and doing some work on recruiting the proper people for the unit. I had to tighten it up a bit. There were some complaints that this was not supposed to be a military unit, it was a State Department with some military advisors attached to it, the retired military section of CLU. But I had to institute a few things because of the criticisms and the concerns of others in the force. It had to be slightly more professional, and I did what I think was the minimum required, but there were some who didn't like that. They expected to be completely on their own except when they were actually required for a mission, and that just wasn't going to work. In any event, at the end of that third year...

Q: I'd like to talk just a bit about that. Working as sort of unofficial advisor to the general in charge, what did you see were the political pressures that came on from Tel Aviv or Cairo or State Department or Oslo or what have you?

STEVEN: I can give you an example first of pressures from the State Department. At one point, and I believe it was in that third year although it might have been the fourth - it makes no difference - we had an officer, a State Department officer, actually a civil service man, who had been in the security part, DS, the diplomatic security element of the Department, and suddenly we received a telegram ordering him back to the States for debriefing on some case that he had worked on. I said, "No, wait, we can't have this. He no longer works for the State Department. He was required to resign from the Department formally, which I also had done." And I said, "At least technically he is a private American citizen working for a foreign organization, an international organization. He cannot be ordered back to Washington." I also needed him because I think we had somebody sick, a couple were on leave, and we had missions to do and I really needed all my bodies there. And the force commander backed me fully on this. I told him what my situation was. I said I intended to resist the situation. So I prepared a message and sent it back to the Department through the Director General, through Peter Constable, who forwarded it on to the State Department unchanged, and pointed out to them that Mr. So-and-So was not their employee, he was mine, and that he was needed at his job and, while we were prepared to make him available at our convenience or perhaps have him go to Tel Aviv or Cairo to be interviewed there, that would be a possibility, but at this time I was not going to permit him to be ordered out of the country. Well, I gather that diplomatic security back here was stunned by this. This was defiance. I never actually got anything in writing, but I got the sense that they were prepared to come out and arrest me or something for obstruction of justice. But better, cooler heads intervened apparently back here and indeed he was told, "Oh, okay, we'll work something

out,” and eventually he went to Tel Aviv and was interviewed there by DS, and that was perfectly satisfactory. But it was this type of pressure from the government. There were also the requirement to keep the force independent. The US paid a third of the costs. We were by far the biggest contributor, the Director General was an American officer, etcetera, etcetera. There was always the feeling that we had to be shown to be independent of Washington, of the State Department’s or the Defense Department’s orders. We were an independent international organization, and it was a little touchy keeping that proper distance, at the same time acknowledging that we wouldn’t exist 24 hours without that support. There were occasional problems with other countries. Colombia provided a battalion of infantry, Fiji provided a battalion of infantry, there were other units out there. Individual countries had problems about how their forces were treated or used, or we wanted them to take on something and their country might not be prepared, and so on and so on. The primary difficulties, of course, were with the two parties, Egypt and Israel. We had a peace treaty, an arrangement, to keep the force in the Sinai, but it was never possible to foresee everything that might develop, and irritations would develop. I’m not sure if this is repetitive from the previous time we talked about my service there, but either one of the countries would want to introduce some new system...

Q: Yes, you were mentioning that.

STEVEN: We have to make a decision really and talk with them. Is this really going to affect things?

Q: It’s not prepositioning.

STEVEN: It’s not prepositioning, or is this system you want to bring in something that would normally be used by the division that you were allowed to have? The Egyptians were allowed essentially to have a division in the Sinai, but if they wanted to bring in artillery, which was not normally assigned to a division - it was at the corps level - was this possible? How much ammunition could they stock in these zones? The treaty had to be constantly interpreted, and I contributed to those discussions and tried to help when I could. We had to deal with the liaison systems. And it was a fair amount of politics involved in it. The blessing was that they both wanted the thing to work.

Q: One of the things that has been sort of a constant throughout our relationship with Israel is, in a way, the people are kind of feisty and they’re challenging all the time. They do it to each other, so it’s part of the thing. Also, if the Israelis feel that they’re not getting their way, they have no compunction about immediately going to Congress, the American Congress, and launching a complaint, and the government usually jumps to their will. This is being oversimplified, but it’s a fact. I was wondering whether you ever ran across that sort of thing.

STEVEN: Of course, also at times from the Egyptians. The Egyptians could put a good deal of pressure on as well for their own ways of doing things. But, yes, the Israelis are the tough guys of the neighborhood. I might suggest that’s how they have survived. Without that attitude they would have been overwhelmed and pushed into the ocean, and that would have been the end of that. So, yes, they constantly pushed at the limits, but it was always in a manner, I found, that was open. There was no effort to sneak something past us. When they did something, it was right

there. And then if we went in and said, "No, this is wrong. You can't bring that equipment. You can't do that. We won't accept this position," they would argue with you vociferously. You'd have hot discussions. But in the end when a decision had been made, if we prevailed in our opinion on it, they would immediately comply. There was never a question of saying, "Yes, we will stop doing something," and then continue to do it. It was always straightforward in the way they handled it. During the time I was there, I was never aware of a situation with the MFO or the Egyptian treaty with Israel that they went in effect behind our backs to Congress. I don't think the average Congressman knew we were there. It was a low-profile force. Most Americans even today that I talk to assume that it was a United Nations force, and then I have to explain that it was not, and they're completely baffled at something that was not a United Nations peace-keeping force. The force was unusual. One of the questions we often had asked of us was would this be a model for other peace-keeping operations. It appeared to be so successful. We had a couple of injuries, but they were accidents, stupid people doing things. Why couldn't we use this somewhere else, in Lebanon for example. We talked about this and I argued strongly that this should not be a substitute for UN forces. UN forces can bring in political support from all around the world. Ours was clearly a US effort, and the countries that had contributed were US allies. Today I understand that there are some strange ones out there. Hungary is out there now. I believe they're providing military police for the force, because, let's face it, they're now NATO members, they're allies, and so there they are. This is a little strange, but it was the type of a force that would not have stood up very, very long politically if other Arab nations, for example, had begun to condemn it. It was clearly an American tool, and it would not have worked. We're also fortunate in being able to stay out of the Israeli-Palestinian argument. For example, I was required to verify in the zone of Gaza, in Rafah right along the Egyptian-Israeli border, which was very dangerous. We would have to go in and meet the Israeli liaison officers and travel through this zone. I went through the places today, sites of gunfights and so on. And we had to be flexible about that. I credit the Israelis. At one point when they were having a great deal of difficulty in Rafah, I talked to the Israeli liaison and said, "Look, we're supposed to do a verification mission in there a couple of days, which means getting into a vehicle and driving through the streets and up and down the roads and so on," and he said, "Well, if you do it, I, of course, will accompany you myself and I will have lots of armed guards, but," he said, "I wish you wouldn't because it could be very dangerous." Not that they would shoot at us - nobody was unhappy with the MFO. We wore those bright orange uniforms. I always said that, if somebody shot us, it would never be by mistake. But he said, "I wish you wouldn't do this but, of course, if you insist, we will do our best to protect you." So we compromised and we got a helicopter, one of our helicopters, and with the colonel and I and one of my observers as a team we flew the thing at very low altitude, and every time I wanted to see something, they would actually hover and I could look right down under roofs and things like that. Hopefully, nobody would shoot at our helicopter. It had our big symbol on it. This type of thing you could work, and with the Egyptians the same. There were some instances where the Egyptians wanted to do something that they interpreted as being permitted under the treaty that we felt would cause difficulties, and it was our job to try to work with them. We had to be extremely careful because the Egyptians were very sensitive about our getting approval from the Israelis for them to do something. Otherwise, if the Egyptians wanted to do something, they didn't want us to go to the Israelis and say, "Would it be okay if we do this?" They said they had the right to do this and they would argue with us, but they weren't about to have the Israelis veto it. So we had to be extremely careful about the relationship between the two sides, that we couldn't go to one and say, "Look,

the other folks want to do this. Is that okay with you?" That wouldn't work. So it required some diplomacy and some initiative.

Q: What were the Egyptians doing with that big hunk of desert there? All I can think of, it's a good place to maneuver, have military maneuvers.

STEVEN: Oh, they did. They had military maneuvers there and I observed some of them. They were fascinating to watch. They were firing rockets and tanks were maneuvering, and they had a bombing range with their fighters. But more interesting is that the Egyptians began to develop Sinai during the years I was there. The place has resources. There are minerals, theoretically some oil under there. Nobody found any yet, but there's a good possibility. And they ran, for example, water lines out from the Nile all the way out across the desert along the northern coast to support settlements out there. They had the tourism industry, for example, down on the Red Sea. The Gulf of Eilat and Sharm el Sheikh was very heavily developed while I was there. I had always to keep an eye on my observers because they always wanted to go down and observe the beach to make sure that nobody was building fortifications when all the lovely young Scandinavian girls were down there in their topless suits. So I had to make sure that we didn't overdo the inspection of the beaches. It was being developed, and the military aspect of it was very, very interesting. The zone closest to the Israeli border was allowed only police, but the Egyptian police out there wore the same uniforms as the army, and sometimes frankly it was difficult to say is this particular patrol an army patrol that's violating the border or is it police. Sometimes I wonder if they didn't just change places. The central zone was light weapons. They couldn't bring in tanks or guns. Then there was a big zone closest to Egypt where they could have roughly a division. Does an Egyptian division have three tank battalions or four tank battalions? And when suddenly a fourth battalion showed up, there was a great deal of soul searching and looking at records and Egyptian military history to see what was a legitimate division. It was an interesting experience for a Foreign Service Officer. Many people said that it probably should have been a military officer heading this unit, and I objected to that, not just on personal grounds but I thought basically what you needed was somebody with diplomatic experience and a diplomatic train of mind. If there were military questions, there were plenty of military to talk to, but basically it should be run as a diplomatic operation rather than a military operation. Anyway, towards the end of my third year in the Sinai, the question came up further what do we do about a fourth year, and, I'm happy to say, they asked me to stay for another year. By this time the Department's career management people didn't even answer my messages. They just said, "Oh, Steven, forget him, do what he wants." So I talked to my wife. The commanding general was extremely anxious that I stay on. We were having a wonderful time out there, and I thought it was useful work, so we signed up for a fourth year. Now, this was unheard of, two two-year tours. Now, by the way, I have found that they are now advertising the chief of the civilian observer unit as a two-year assignment. I had strongly recommended this, because it made sense. You needed that time. I also strongly recommended something to take place after I left, of course. No one heading the civilian observer unit was a Middle Eastern specialist. The Middle Eastern Bureau, NEA, inexplicably was uninterested in this unit and the job, and my predecessors - I guess there were only a couple of them - they had both been people from other areas and other experience, and I came in with background, if anything, in the Far East and Latin America. I spoke good Spanish but didn't speak a word of Arabic or Hebrew, and suddenly I'm in the Middle East. So I began fairly soon to say, always with the caveat 'after I leave', that the

NEA Bureau had to pay some attention and use this. It's a marvelous opportunity for one of their officers to get experience.

Q: To know the military side.

STEVEN: Well, even less the military side, because it's almost impossible now to find a Foreign Service Officer with military background at that level. They just don't exist. There aren't any anymore in the lower levels. So I said, "Get somebody out here who speaks Hebrew or Arabic, who has experience in the area and who's going to stay in the area and use this as a basis for training and experience," which they did. When I finally left at the end of my fourth year, they appointed Frank Ricciardone, who had been the political officer in Cairo, and Frank's replacement - I forget now who these people were in later years, I've lost touch, but they tended to be people with NEA Bureau experience. I also fought very hard - and we've been over this in my earlier talk - to get the Foreign Service element or the State Department element of the civilian observer unit back to being Foreign Service Officers who could profit from experience like this.

Q: Yes, rather than...

STEVEN: ...rather than a place to send somebody who had influence back in Washington who wanted to make some money and have a good tour. We don't like to talk about it that it was a lucrative assignment financially. The arrangements were very good, so it attracted people who sometimes were perfectly fine observers, but it undermined the purpose of having diplomatic personnel out there. So I finished up my fourth year out there.

WAT T. CLUVERIUS IV
Director General, Multinational Force and Observers
Sinai (1988-1990)

Ambassador Wat T. Cluverius, IV was born in Massachusetts on December 4, 1934. He graduated from Northwestern University and then went onto serve as a Naval Officer, from 1957 until 1962. He obtained an M.A. from Indiana University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1967. He served in Jeddah, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and as ambassador to Bahrain. He also served in Washington, DC in the Near Eastern Bureau. He retired in 1988. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 31, 1990.

Q: Did you retire then? When did you retire?

CLUVERIUS: June of '88.

Q: You've been concerned with the Middle East process since that time haven't you?

CLUVERIUS: Only had one small piece of it called Peace Keeping.

Q: Could you explain, as long as we're covering, it's not just professional within the Foreign Service, but what have you been doing since '88?

CLUVERIUS: The Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel was to be observed and monitored by United Nations peace-keeping force according to the Treaty. It was pretty clear at the time of the Treaty signing that the Arabs were outraged by Egypt making a separate peace with Israel. They would be supported by the Soviets and that the Soviets would prevent the UN from providing this peace-keeping force. So at that time Carter provided separate letters to Sadat, to Begin saying that if the UN cannot do what you ask it to do in your Treaty, the United States will undertake to find an alternative multinational force. And ultimately that was what the United States had to do. And that force was put together, it was set up, it was on the ground by March of '82. Ready to monitor the terms of the Peace Treaty when the Israelis made their final withdrawal out of the Sinai. It was a separate protocol that had to be negotiated which was in the Summer of '81 as to what this alternative multinational force would do and how it would be run. And the negotiators found 11 countries to take part. They set up a structure in which the Force Commander in the field would be one of the nationalities that was participating in the organization but that his boss would be kind of a mini-Secretary General, a mini-Secretariat so that the General didn't have to deal in the political, the financial, the diplomacy stuff. He could run the Mission and he would have a boss and it was agreed that the boss would be a retired American of Ambassadorial rank. The first one was Ray Hunt who was assassinated in Rome, 10 years ago, February of '84.

Q: Why was he assassinated?

CLUVERIUS: No one really knows for sure. At that time of course the so-called Red Brigades, the bad guys, were riding pretty high in Italy. Some Italian intelligence sources believe that as Director General they thought he was a military general. And about that time, if you recall, they had kidnapped an American General Dozier, who was safely rescued. It was in that environment. No one knows if Ray was targeted because he was a General or because of his job. It didn't make a hell of a lot of difference to poor Ray, he was killed. So I was running that since the Summer of '88 replacing Peter Constable.

Q: What does the peace force consist of now?

CLUVERIUS: I've got 11 countries. On any given day about 2800 people go to work for the MFO, most of them in the Sinai. We have 2 locations, one near the Mediterranean end of the Sinai at El Gorah, one is at Sharm el Sheikh, the Strait of Tiran. I have 3 infantry battalions, one American, one Colombian and one Fijian. And they man some 33 outposts along the international border between Egypt and Israel and down the Gulf of Aqaba. An Italian naval unit of 3 ships patrol the Strait of Tiran to ensure that it's open to all navigation. And I've got some helicopters, from the Americans. I've got a fixed-wing aircraft from the French and I've got Canadian and Norwegian staff officers. Uruguayan engineers, Dutch signalers and military police. Have I named it? Canadian, Australian staff and it works. I've found it to be excessively expensive when I took over and I cut the budget about 30% in the last 2 years without any impact on the Mission.

Q: What do the troops do? I mean I understand what their job is, to sort of make sure that there isn't any intrusion, but things have been quiet for so long, how do they sort of keep their sanity?

CLUVERIUS: Yeah, the enemy is boredom. So what we do is spend a lot of money on recreation. Each camp has a gym that's open 24 hours a day and we try to make sure that all the soldiers get a tour to see the Holy Land, and to see the Pyramids. Extensive sports program and a lot of very good food. Young soldiers if you keep their bodies active and give them good food you've won the battle of morale. The actual mission can be relatively boring except in the few places where there's a lot of people crossing back and forth through the checkpoints, there's activity. But in some of these places they haven't seen anything in 10 years and they never will. Unless someone goes to war.

Q: I've talked to people who have been involved in the very early days of this and there was an awful lot of, sort of at the lower level but the Israeli, it's almost termed of being very pushy, trying to test out the system. You know trying to see how far they can go. I was wondering if this is pretty well ceased?

CLUVERIUS: Oh I think so, I'm sure. If it was ever there. The Israelis they did do some testing to make sure the organization does its work. Because we have all of these little provisions of the Treaty. The Sinai is divided into 3 zones. And there's a little zone on the Israeli side of the international border. And the Egyptians can only do certain things in those zones. And we monitor that. But it's totally routine. There's never been a serious violation of the Treaty by either side. Every year there's a couple of violations but they're rather minor and technical kinds of things. Serious violations have never occurred. At the same time that's the mission of the organization drawn in small letters. If you write it in big letters, I think the mission has been in recent years to provide a sense of security to the Israelis on their western front while they wrestle with the problems of peace in the north and east. That's our psychological mission, shall we say. It's a confidence building presence that the Israelis don't have to worry over here. And of course these days they're a little more worried about Egypt than they used to be. Because of this challenge to the Mubarak regime.

Q: We're talking now about Arab fundamentalism is getting stronger in North Africa.

CLUVERIUS: Including unfortunately in Egypt and it's very damaging.

Q: You don't feel that this is an organization that's going to wither away?

CLUVERIUS: No, I think we could change rather dramatically if there are some big breakthroughs in the Peace Process say between the Israelis and the Palestinians, with the Jordanians and the Syrians coming along as well. Then I think you might have quite a different structure. I think the Mission will stay in some sense for quite awhile. But you could do it lots of different ways. You don't need 2100 troops out there and 500 civilian employees, if there is an expanded peace. You could do it in different ways.

Q: Well, Americans use it for training, don't they? Desert training?

CLUVERIUS: No, not really. It depends on who you talk to in the American army. What the value of the Mission is. You talk to the battalion commanders, they love it. Because it gives a lot of small unit independence and training at the squad and platoon level. If you talk to the battalions division commander, he's not so enthusiastic because he loses the battalion. Both for the training right up to the mission, 6 months on site, takes them a couple of months to reintegrate them into the division. So it depends on your point of view. Yeah, we could do the mission differently. We don't do it differently because the Israelis right now really don't want a lot of changes in the MFO. Not that they don't understand there's other ways of doing this that could be equally effective and less costly but they just haven't got the psychic energy to deal with it right now. They've got other things on their agenda and they don't need it more crowded. And the Egyptians understand that. That's not a big problem.

End of reader