

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

### COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

Brooks Wrampelmeier	1968-1974	Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
William A. Stoltzfus	1972-1976	Ambassador to UAE, Kuwait
François M. Dickman	1972-1976	Arabian Peninsula Country Director, Washington, DC
Michael E. Sterner	1974-1976	Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
François M. Dickman	1976-1979	Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
Brooks Wrampelmeier	1977-1980	Deputy Chief of Mission, Abu Dhabi
William D. Wolle	1979-1981	Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
Brooks Wrampelmeier	1982-1984	Deputy Director/Office Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs, Washington, DC
George Quincey Lumsden	1982-1986	Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
David M. Ransom	1983-1985	Deputy Chief of Mission, Abu Dhabi
Marjorie Ransom	1983-1985	Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Abu Dhabi
Andrea Farsakh	1983-1985	Political Officer, Abu Dhabi
Michael J. Varga	1985-1987	Consular Officer, Dubai
David L. Mack	1986-1989	Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
William A. Rugh	1992-1995	Ambassador, United Arab Emirates
George Quincey Lumsden	1994-1997	General Manager; Gulf South Asia Gas Project, United Arab Emirates

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Arabian Peninsula Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1968-1974)**

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

*Q: I would have thought there would have been a certain conflict from your perspective of Saudi Arabia and Iran, which was our major ally, on the Persian Gulf because the Iranians had claims or eyes, at least, on some of the Gulf states and off shore islands.*

WRAMPELMEIER: There was a problem. Some of it was worked out in a median line agreement at the end of the '60s between Saudi Arabia and Iran to settle conflicting claims to various islands and oil fields in the Gulf. The relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia was at least officially friendly but not warm. The Saudis, being Wahhabis, don't like Shia very much at all and there were some problems because of that but not serious state-to-state problems. I think the general thought was that the Shah is important and he is going to protect the Gulf to some extent from the Soviets and also counterbalance the Iraqis. We were concerned about what he might be trying to do on the Arab side of the Gulf. Certainly we were concerned about the Shah's action in November 1971 in seizing for Iran the islands of the Tunbs and Abu Musa that were claimed by Ras Al-Khaimah and Sharjah, respectively. But, again, there were problems between Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Abu Dhabi, too, over borders.

*Q: Had the Buraimi crisis been solved?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Yes, long before. It hadn't really been solved, but it was in abeyance. That is, the Saudis' effort to seize and hold parts of the Buraimi, or Al-Ain, oasis had been frustrated in the mid-'50s when British-officered Omani Scouts came in and kicked a small force of Saudi policemen out of the oasis. But the border between Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi had not been resolved and when the smaller Gulf states became independent in 1971 there was a period of several years during which the Saudis did not recognize the United Arab Emirates (UAE) because they were holding their recognition hostage to get Abu Dhabi to agree to a border agreement on Saudi terms. A border agreement was reached in 1974, but it was never published.

*Q: Did we get involved in that?*

WRAMPELMEIER: We didn't get involved in the border issue per se. I think we were concerned that the Saudis recognize the UAE and help stabilize the situation, but we didn't get involved in the nitty gritty of the issue.

Our focus in the early '70s was on the emergence of the nine Gulf states and Oman as independent actors and on the question of our diplomatic presence there. We started off with accrediting our ambassador in Kuwait, William Stoltzfus, also to Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman. Up to that time, Consulate General Dhahran had been responsible for our consular affairs in these emirates. About 1972 we also established small diplomatic posts under chargés in Bahrain, Doha, Abu Dhabi and Muscat. That worked for maybe a year or so until it became obvious that each of these countries wanted to have a resident U.S. ambassador. By 1974 we

were appointing resident ambassadors to all the Gulf states. Mike Sterner was our first ambassador in Abu Dhabi. The late Joe Twinam, who had been desk officer for the Gulf states in ARP, went out to Bahrain as ambassador. Bob Paganelli was sent as ambassador to Qatar and Bill Wolle to Muscat.

**WILLIAM A. STOLTZFUS**  
**Ambassador to United Arab Emirates**  
**Kuwait (1972-1976)**

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

*Q: And how long were you posted to Jeddah?*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Q: Who was your DCM?*

STOLTZFUS: Walter McClellan was my first DCM. The first order of business was to present credentials of course. I did that in Kuwait fairly promptly. Issa Sabbagh, who was with USIS, was in Kuwait at that time. As I have already mentioned, he was a very interesting character. He was of Palestinian background and had been with the BBC and then Voice of America. He spoke impeccable English and could mimic the British accent to the nth degree. An absolutely perfect British accent; he didn't use it officially but he certainly could put on the act.

He was also extremely strong in Arabic. He had a fabulous knowledge of classical Arabic and so he translated all the speeches that I made in my ultimately five presentations of credentials into classical. I was able to read in Arabic; my Arabic is by no means impeccable - fluent, but not

impeccable. But to be able to read in classical Arabic was very effective with the various Rulers. Issa accompanied me on these presentations. The first one was in Kuwait. And then I went to Bahrain. The Ruler, Sheikh Isa Al Khalifa, speaks good English but was pleased to have me speak in Arabic. Then to Qatar. Then to the UAE for Sheikh Zayed al Nahayan, the Ruler of Abu Dhabi and also Ruler of the UAE Federation.

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

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

*Q: Not your wife?*

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

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

**FRANÇOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**Arabian Peninsula Country Director**  
**Washington, DC (1972-1976)**

*Ambassador François M. Dickman was born in Iowa in 1924. He graduated from the University of Wyoming in 1947 and received an M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. He served in the U.S. Army during both WWII and Korea. Ambassador Dickman joined the Foreign Service*

*in 1951 and served at posts in Columbia, Lebanon, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. He served as the Arabian Peninsula Country Director until his appointment as the Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Stanley Brooks beginning February 2001.*

*Q: You said you had already received your assignment to Washington, DC.*

DICKMAN: Yes, we had. We left at the beginning of March of 1972 and returned directly to Washington for my assignment as Arabian Peninsula country director. Dick Murphy had left a couple of months before with Joe Twinam ably filling in during the interim. The directorate also included Quincey Lumsden and David Ransom. All three of these officers later became ambassadors. A few months later, after Joe Twinam left for his next assignment, he was replaced by Brooks Wramplemeier. Joe Sisco was the NEA assistant secretary and Rodger Davies was the NEA deputy assistant secretary, to whom I reported.

My assignment in the Department coincided with the end of what had been a major policy review of what role the United States should play in the Persian Gulf in light of Britain's Labour government's decision to end its security role in the region. Our policy had been to try and create a Federation of Arab Emirates, which would include Bahrain, Qatar, and the seven emirates in the lower Gulf. However, both Bahrain and Qatar opted for independence, leaving a fragile confederation of seven small emirates that had been formed in the last days of 1971 by Britain's chief negotiator at the time, Sir William Luce. The outlook for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had not been helped by the Shah's forces seizing the islands of Abu Musa and the Tumbs belonging to the emirates of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaima respectively. This had resulted in an attempted palace coup in Sharjah and had delayed Ras el-Khaima's decision to join the UAE confederation. With the emergence of these small, vulnerable new states, we did not want a repetition of what had occurred in 1967 when Luce had negotiated the withdrawal of British forces from the former Aden protectorate. It had been anticipated that the pro-Nasser Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY) would take control following the departure of British forces. However, following a fierce political battle, the Marxist National Liberation Front led by Abd al Fatah Ismail managed to take control and create what came to be known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), otherwise known as South Yemen to differentiate it from North Yemen.

Shortly thereafter, the PDRY became the base for supporting the insurgency in Oman's Dhofar Province. It also began to promote a political movement known as the People's Front for the Liberation of the Occupied Arab Gulf (PFLOAG). In 1969, PDRY forces had also made a couple of forays into southern Saudi Arabia. This became one of the reasons why the Saudis finally decided to drop the Yemeni royalists and to recognize the Yemen Arab Republic. In many respects, what had happened to the former Aden protectorate was a reflection of the Cold War. The PDRY had become a Soviet base with Russian warships regularly visiting the port of Aden with Russian submarines reportedly operating off of South Yemen's island of Socotra.

At the time of the Persian Gulf policy review, the United States was still very much involved in Vietnam. It was decided that the United States would not try to replace Britain in the Gulf, but it would maintain its small Middle East naval presence in the Gulf which was known as

MIDEASTFOR. The force consisted of a command ship berthed in Bahrain and two destroyers that were peeled off from other fleets and assigned to Gulf duty for six month periods. It was also decided that Bill Stoltzfus, our ambassador in Kuwait, should also be accredited as the U.S. ambassador to Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, and Oman, and to establish a very modest diplomatic presence in each of these countries. So, John Gatch in Bahrain, Phil Griffin and Nate Howell in the United Arab Emirates, and Pat Quinlan and his wife in Oman single handedly established a diplomatic presence as Chargés. Because of a lack of funds, no one initially was assigned to open an embassy in Doha, Qatar. I soon found myself trying to assuage the newly arrived Qatari ambassador, who could not believe that the State Department could be so penurious, believing instead that we had some dark motive.

**MICHAEL E. STERNER**  
**Ambassador**  
**United Arab Emirates (1974-1976)**

*Ambassador Michael E. Sterner was born in New York in 1928. He graduated from Harvard University in 1951. He served in Aden, Beirut, Cairo, and Washington, DC, and was ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.*

STERNER: Going from the policy maelstrom of the Arab-Israeli problem out to one of the most remote parts of the world took quite a bit of psychological adjustment. Mind you, I remembered this part of the Arab world having started there many years before. But that was twenty years earlier. And I really wanted to go back. I had a good time when I worked for ARAMCO and I liked those Bedouin types. I was the first resident Ambassador in the UAE and the country had achieved its independence only a few years before, after more than a century, as a British protectorate. There was much to do. There was first of all a lot of question as to whether this rather shaky federation between the emirates...

*Q: Are there seven or five of them?*

STERNER: Seven of them, a couple of them so tiny one could hardly spot them on the map. The Sheiks were nevertheless rulers who were dealt with as rulers of territory by the British. Maybe sovereign is too strong a word for that in legal terms. In any case, when the British made the decision to withdraw east of Suez in 1969 they had to work very fast to put these people together. They knew they couldn't survive as individual entities and they finally stitched something together in which the seven agreed to form a kind of confederation with a federal government responsible for banking and currency and foreign policy. So you had an unusual situation which was like dealing with the American States under the Articles of Confederacy. The individual Emirates had a great deal of authority, particularly over economic matters. If for example you were interested in an oil concession in Dubai, you didn't waste time by going to anybody in Abu Dhabi which was the Federal Capital, you went directly to speak to the ruler of Dubai, and he had an exclusive say as to who would get that oil concession. He maintained his own armed forces. So one question was whether the Federation would hold together and who

was on top; who would emerge as the effective leaders. And that gave you scope for a certain amount of political reporting. Another major commission was commercial work. The area had been, as you remember Stuart, from your own early days travelling there, totally dominated by British companies. That was part of the deal. The Sheikdoms got British protection, but in return they didn't deal with foreign companies. The oil companies were the Iraq Petroleum Company, a British-run consortium that had the oil concessions down there, and all the big engineering and infrastructure projects were carried out by British companies. I saw it as one of my tasks to try to get some American commercial activity going down there. There was a desire to diversify on the part of the rulers but it was a difficult process. They were very used to, for example, British consultants and British engineers, which drew plans that favored British construction companies. So a major part of our battle was to say, Listen, give us an even playing field here commercially. Gradually they did. Fortunately, I had a very effective economic and commercial officer...

*Q: Who was that?*

STERNER: Dennis Finnerty. He did a good job.

*Q: Well, let me ask, because I speak as someone who was a very lowly Vice Consul was the commercial officer for the Persian Gulf back in '58-'60. We couldn't get American firms to give the time of day to make bids and to look at this. Now I assume this had changed? Had you found this?*

STERNER: Oh, it has changed completely now. But at the time I was there it was in the process of being changed and relatively early in the change. So the situation you knew was much the reality that we were fighting against. As you say, the British just had it locked up.

*Q: Also the American firms weren't giving much time or trouble.*

STERNER: Well, they weren't for good reason, because they knew if they were invited down there at all it was generally as a stalking horse to enable some British firm to prove that it was really the lowest bidder. They thought, and with good reason, that the contracts down there were cooked in favor of British companies. Gradually it changed though. Nowadays I think American companies have a good crack, at least in some areas. Of course, in some areas we are simply not competitive. Like road building and bridge building and that sort of thing. The Koreans can do these things so well and so much more cheaply, but now even the Koreans are being undercut by Turks, Paks and Yugoslavs. The third area which was so interesting at the time was oil affairs. Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates as a whole was the sixth largest oil exporter of the world at the time. And one of the countries that have major reserves, unlike Libya, for example, whose reserves are not expected to last very long. So there was a good deal of interest on the part of Washington in oil policy, in OPEC, in the United Arab Emirates role within OPEC at the time, in concession affairs, who was getting the concessions. We had a small staff, but a pretty busy staff working all these fronts. When you got tired of the people in Abu Dhabi, you could travel to one of the other Emirates and get a completely different set of characters with a different set of problems that you could deal with. Of course some of these places were the smaller and poorest Emirates that had no oil. You couldn't spend much time there and justify it.



*Q: Fujairah was not on the top of the list.*

STERNER: It was not on the top of the list. That's right. The main work was in Dubai and of course Abu Dhabi, which were the two biggest oil producers. The rulers in my day didn't speak much English so I was forced to bring my Arabic up to speed which I benefited from and enjoyed. I thought I was going to spend a third year down there but I was summoned back to the Department again to work on more Arab-Israel stuff.

**FRANÇOIS M. DICKMAN**  
**Ambassador**  
**United Arab Emirates (1976-1979)**

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

DICKMAN: In August of 1976, my days as Arabian Peninsula country director were finally coming to a close. I had received my promotion to class 1 a year earlier and my name had been submitted to the White House to be the next ambassador to the United Arab Emirates replacing Mike Sterner. I appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on September 7<sup>th</sup>. The hearing on the nomination of Graham Martin to be the next ambassador to Micronesia preceded mine. The Martin appointment was very controversial. He was grilled mercilessly by the committee over his performance as our ambassador to Vietnam. I wondered if my nomination would receive the same scrutiny. Fortunately, it did not. Much of the questioning was friendly, coming largely from Senator Percy of Illinois. In response to the question on the possible arms race in the Gulf region, I believe I reiterated what we had told the Hamilton committee. In adhering to our arms policy for the lower Gulf states, I contemplated no significant arms sales to the United Arab Emirates. In mid-September, I received news that the Senate had approved my nomination. It came as I was concluding a speaking tour on U.S.-Middle East policy in Arizona and New Mexico. It caused me to change my return travel to stop in Laramie to see my mother for a couple of days. She had been living alone in Laramie since the death of my father in 1969.

*Q: You were ready for a change of pace. Did you get one?*

DICKMAN: Yes, I did. After a couple of days in London, Margaret and I arrived in Abu Dhabi on October 19 to be met by Sam Peale, who was the chargé. It was quite a change. The phone wasn't ringing all the time. I could write my own telegrams that I didn't have to clear with anyone. It was a very pleasant change. Sam would remain as the DCM for several months until his assignment to Nepal. He was replaced by Brooks Wrampelmeier.

The embassy was small with a staff, including locals, of about 25 employees. It was located on the top floor of a circular building. The economic officer was Dan Dolan and the Public Affairs officer was George Naifeh. A separate branch office had been established in Dubai, staffed by a single officer, Charles Currier. There was no Marine security detachment. Our move had been an easy one in the sense that we had furnished quarters in Abu Dhabi. As I said, we had left Christine to stay in our house in Washington.

Upon my arrival, I soon learned that Sheikh Zayid, the President of the United Arab Emirates, was very relaxed about ambassadors presenting their credentials. So, I started making calls on UAE officials whom I had already known, having squired several of them around when they visited Washington during my days as ARP country director. Among these was Mana Said al Utayba, the oil minister for the emirate of Abu Dhabi, and his very able deputy, Abdulla Ismail, an Iraqi exile. When Utayba visited Washington, I had arranged for him to make courtesy calls on Treasury Secretary Shultz, Deputy Treasury Secretary Simon, Roy Atherton, and others in the Department. While the Abu Dhabi emirate was a minor league oil exporter, producing about 1.6 million barrels a day, and Utayba did not have the political importance of his Saudi counterpart, Zaki Yamani, he was flattered by the attention he received. A month before I presented my credentials, my presence in the emirate had become known as a result of a lengthy three part interview by Edmond Gharib, which appeared in the Arabic and English papers. Actually, the interview had taken place just before I left Washington. Among the questions asked was the meaning of Secretary Kissinger's threat that the United States would use force if its oil supply was strangled. The question reflected on the continued sensitivity of the Secretary's statement to "Business Week" made almost two years before. I pointed out that the Secretary was responding to a hypothetical question which I felt had been misconstrued in the Arab media.

At the time of our arrival in the United Arab Emirates, pressures were growing among OPEC members for a 10% increase in oil prices when they next met in Doha, Qatar in December 1976. After six months, it would be followed by an additional 5% increase. The outgoing Ford and incoming Carter administrations were strongly opposed to any increase and called for OPEC to delay its meeting. The world's economy was finally beginning to recover from the effect of the quadrupling of oil prices during the last three months of 1973. I had conveyed these feelings to Utayba, which were repeated a few days later during a dinner for visiting Senator Abourezk of South Dakota which was hosted by Sheikh Zayid and attended by Utayba. The ruler had recently returned from Pakistan, where he had hunted bustards with his falcons. Reflecting his informality, Zayid tore off meat from roasted bustards with his huge hands and handed it to Margaret and me. The taste of bustard vaguely resembled turkey. I should have added that Mrs. Abourezk was with the Senator during this visit and attended the dinner.

During the dinner, Senator Abourezk made the point that an increase in oil prices coming just before a new American president took office could be used by elements in Washington who were opposed to improved U.S.-Arab ties. Sheikh Zayid seemed interested and implied that the Emirates would follow the lead of Saudi Arabia rather than the OPEC price hawks. Since the Saudis were hesitant to go beyond a 5% increase, I enhanced my credibility as an oil reporter by predicting the UAE would do the same. At the December OPEC meeting in Doha, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates held to a 5% increase while the other OPEC members raised their prices by

10%. Because this two price system was the first break in the OPEC front since October 1973, my report on what Utayba told me of what had occurred at the meeting in Doha received a good bit of attention in Washington. Both Saudi Arabia and the Emirates were singled out and praised by outgoing President Ford for their advocating restraint on oil prices.

When we arrived in Abu Dhabi, construction was well underway for the ambassador's residence, which was situated on a plot of land that had been gifted to us by the ruler, Sheikh Zayid. The construction was being done by a Cypriot company. The Department's Foreign Building Operations had nothing to do with it. My predecessor, Mike Sterner, had obtained a \$400,000 loan from the Bank of Commerce and Industry for the construction of the residence and its furnishings. By using the gifted piece of land as collateral, the funds normally set aside for renting an ambassador's house in Abu Dhabi was sufficient to pay off the loan over a period of years. It took nearly six months before the residence was fully completed. It was encircled by a high wall with a guard post at the entrance, manned by local police. Since the loan did not cover landscaping, Margaret and I planted all the trees, bushes, and grass. This required removing the sand in bags and replacing it with dirt. It turned out to be a lovely residence which fit well into the desert landscape. There was a small swimming pool which we shared with everyone in the embassy. About a year after its completion, we had the visit of FBO officials. They had some end-of-year funds and asked if they could pay off the BCCI loan. The bank had no problem. I think Mike Sterner deserves credit for his innovative way of getting the building constructed, which otherwise would have taken years if FBO had been involved.

Among my first activities as chief of mission was to invite members of the fairly sizeable American business community along with the principal of the American school to meet with me on a monthly basis. The American community in the Emirates was made up mainly of oil company personnel or bankers. The meetings were either at the residence in Abu Dhabi or at the house of our very energetic and sole representative in Dubai, Charlie Carrier. The purpose of the Dubai office was mainly for commercial promotion and reporting on political developments in the smaller of the seven emirates. Some years later, the Dubai office would become a consulate general. I believed that having good rapport with the American community was just as important as having good relations with the host country. I should add that Margaret helped in this regard by inviting wives in the American community and the embassy for tea or lunch at the residence.

In my monthly meetings with members of the American community, I would summarize what I considered to be the recent key political and economic developments in the Gulf region and I would listen to their concerns. Aside from making sure that we had an effective warden system, the two most prominent issues that came up at every meeting was the legislation intended to curb the Arab boycott and changes in U.S. tax law which was affecting the earnings of American citizens living and working abroad. Passage of the anti-boycott provisions in the Export Administration Act had not occurred in 1976 before Congress had recessed. However, Senator Abe Ribicoff of Connecticut had sponsored an amendment to the 1976 Tax Reform Act which applied tax penalties against U.S. companies found to be cooperating with the boycott. In 1977, legislation to renew the Export Administration Act was reintroduced with its anti-boycott provisions and was signed by President Carter. The two acts, the first administered by the Treasury Department and the second by the Commerce Department, resulted in a blizzard of complex instructions and guidelines which I tried, though not always successfully, to explain to

the American businessmen. They could not understand why Congress was imposing such a counterproductive commercial policy. Eventually, we did receive some flexibility in 1978. Until then, American firms could not provide negative certificates of origin that the goods had not originated or been shipped via Israel. Under the modified rules of the Export Administration Act, it became permissible for a U.S. firm to issue a positive certificate for goods that they were exporting to an Arab country that applied boycott rules. This certificate would say that the goods are of purely indigenous origins.

As if boycott regulations were not enough, the U.S. tax laws had been changed, affecting private American citizens working abroad. It involved two issues. One was the amount of income that Americans could exclude from taxes and the other was a requirement to include benefits such as housing and education as taxable income. Until the passage of the 1976 Tax Reform Act, Americans living abroad for at least 18 months were exempted from having to pay U.S. income tax on foreign earned income. But this rule had been changed by the 1976 Tax Reform Act. Now American citizens working abroad were only allowed to deduct \$20,000 a year in foreign earned income for the first three years of residence abroad and \$25,000 a year thereafter, and their housing and education allowances were considered taxable income. These rules hit Americans living in the Emirates especially hard. The cost of housing, education, and transportation was very high. It caused a number of American families to leave, only to be replaced by Europeans, whose earnings abroad were generally tax free. We cited examples of American workers whose cost of housing alone was greater than their deduction on foreign earned income.

As a result of public pressure and extensive reporting by our embassies in the Persian Gulf, the Congress finally voted to postpone the effective date of the changes of the 1976 Tax Act for several years. Finally, in 1981, President Reagan signed new rules which eliminated the tax liability for about 90% of Americans working abroad beginning with an exclusion of \$75,000 a year in foreign earned income as well as housing costs above a base amount and softening the required physical presence in the foreign country from 12 to 11 months.

Although much of Embassy Abu Dhabi's reporting and diplomatic interventions dealt with economic subjects, we did not neglect political reporting. Except for Sheikh Zayid, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, who I would see quite often, I would regularly pay calls on the rulers of the other small emirates, namely Sheikh Rashid of Dubai, Sheikh Sultan of Sharjah, Sheikh Saqr of Ras al Khaima, Sheikh Rashid of Ajman, Sheikh Ahmad of Umm al Qawain, and Sheikh Hamad of Fujairah. Since the call on each Emir generated photos and publicity in the press, I had to make sure they were all called upon at about the same time. Except for Sheikh Sultan of Sharjah, whom I had squired around when he visited Washington in my stint as ARP director and who had a degree in agriculture from the University of Cairo, none of the other rulers had more than a primary level of education.

My assignment to the Emirates was also facilitated by the fact that the UAE leadership sought to distance itself as much as possible from the unresolved Palestinian question. Unfortunately, the UAE was not always successful. One occasion was when a Lufthansa plane was hijacked by Palestinian guerrillas and landed in Dubai. There was a standoff that lasted for nearly 48 hours as the UAE sought to gain the release of the passengers while camouflaging the arrival of a German swat team. However, before the German team could mount its operation, the plane took off and

landed in Aden, where the copilot was murdered, and then proceeded to Somalia. In Mogadiscio, the swat team finally caught up, killing the hijackers and freeing the hostages. Another was the tragic death of Saif Gubash, who was the minister of state for foreign affairs whose wife was Russian. Saif had come to the airport to greet visiting PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat only to find himself in the crossfire of a Palestinian gunman who tried to kill Arafat.

During my meetings with the rulers, the Palestinian question was almost never raised. The focus instead was on narrow parochial issues, which made for interesting discussion. Each ruler had very ambitious ideas for the development of his particular emirate and each competed against the other in seeking financial resources. But except for Dubai, where CONOCO operated a major offshore field, none of the other small emirates at the time were oil producers. They were almost entirely dependent on the aid they received from Abu Dhabi, the largest of the seven emirates. On every call, I would emphasize the importance that we placed on maintaining the political unity of the Emirates. Given the UAE's difficult birth in December 1971 and its delicate infancy, I would emphasize to the rulers the importance that the United States attached to the emirs working together in order to achieve political cohesion. Each year, I prepared my evaluation of the prospects for the continued unity of this loose-knit federation, which really amounted to a confederation.

During my stay in the Emirates, Sheikh Zayid was elected for his second five-year term by the UAE national assembly, as was Sheikh Rashid of Dubai as vice president. Sheikh Zayid, I think, is now either in his fifth or sixth five-year term. Although Sheikh Rashid of Dubai often acted independently of Abu Dhabi and petty rivalries existed among the other small emirates, I felt the confederation would hold as long as Zayid maintained his generous aid to the poor emirates. Over time, I felt that native inhabitants would begin to identify themselves as Emirians rather than being Sharjahns or Dubaians, Abu Dhabians, etc. I pointed to the promising developments, such as steps taken by Sheikh Zayid to establish the Emirates' first university in Al Ain, and his efforts to convert the UAE Monetary Agency into a central bank. The UAE dirham, which was pegged to the dollar, was the Emirate's common currency.

Among other factors that helped bind the Emirates together and which immediately struck visitors was the extent of the construction activity that could be seen even in the poor emirates. Much of it was for infrastructure, especially modern four-lane highways which joined all seven emirates, as well as airports, seaports, electric power and desalination plants, manpower training facilities, and the latest in modern telecommunications. Of all the major projects, the largest and most ambitious was Jebel Ali in the emirate of Dubai. It involved excavating a cubic mile of earth for an extensive port complex. Included in the complex was the largest dry dock in the world, a state-of-the-art aluminum smelting plant using associated gas from Dubai's offshore field, and huge warehouses used to store goods in transit.

When Dubai was poor, it had lived as an entrepot, smuggling gold to India and manufactured goods to Iran. It now continued to live by its wits, but with many more resources. All of this activity had brought in a large number of foreign workers, primarily from Pakistan and India, who outnumbered the indigenous population by a ratio of six to one. One effect of this large expatriate population was a greater tolerance for non-Muslim religious worship as well as the availability of alcoholic beverages. There were no restrictions against women drivers.

During my stay, the UAE began to be discovered by different official visitors, beginning with Admiral Crowe, who was commander of MIDEASTFOR at the time. We had several visits by MIDEASTFOR vessels and they would call on different ports in the Emirates. One that I remember well was the Emirate of Fujairah, which is the eastern part of the Emirates and which did not yet have a suitable port. It required going back and forth on a dhow. But the crews liked the stop, which was different from the ordinary. Some parts of Fujairah are very beautiful, especially as one drives north along the coast to the mountains of the Musandam Peninsula, which is Omani territory.

We also had the visit of former president Ford, Brent Scowcroft, and former Under Secretary of State George Ball. We even had the visit of the Queen of England aboard her yacht, the Britannia. By now, the Emirates had also become a stop for a number of cultural presentations sponsored by USIA and organized by our public affairs officer. A number of these events were held at the residence, which was always followed by a reception with Margaret doing most of the cooking.

We enjoyed our posting in the Emirates since it allowed us to do a good bit of traveling by car, not only in the Emirates but in neighboring Oman. One frequent stop was to go to Al Ayn which was located next to the Buraimi Oasis, an oasis which had been contested between the Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. During the time of British protection, the British forces held Saudi Arabia's demands over Buraimi at bay. But with independence, Sheikh Zayid decided not to make an issue of it with King Faisal. Al-Ayn became the location of the University of the Emirates. It also became the main entry point into Oman. Travel by car to the interior of Oman had become possible thanks mainly to UAE economic aid, which had financed the construction of several highways and opened up this interesting and fascinating country. We visited Oman on two occasions. Once was during the Christmas holidays of 1977 when Christine and Paul came to visit us. Their visit was also an occasion for us to fly to Das Island, which is the collection point for producing liquified natural gas in much of the Persian Gulf. At the time, Das Island represented the state of the art in collecting associated gas from a number of offshore fields in the Gulf and liquefying it for shipment to Japan aboard huge, bulbous shaped tankers.

Thanks to my good contacts with Oil Minister Utayba and his assistant, Abdullah Ismail, I was able to do a good bit of oil reporting and anticipate what OPEC members might do when they met every six months. At the next OPEC meeting in Stockholm in July 1977, the two pricing system that had occurred as a result of the meeting in Doha would last six months and would end at that point. Saudi Arabia and the Emirates agreed to raise their price by 5% on condition that the other OPEC members forgo their scheduled 5% hike. Although this move restored OPEC unity, Saudi Arabia and the Emirates continued to exercise restraint when OPEC next met in Caracas in December 1977. By then, we were faced with another issue which concerned a push by several OPEC members to abandon the dollar as the currency of payment for oil exports. Some suggested that the cost be denominated in German marks or Japanese yen.

With the quadrupling of oil prices, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve had simply expanded the nation's money supply to cover the higher cost of imported oil as well as many other imports, all of which resulted in an ever growing U.S. balance of payments deficit. But this

right of seigniorage, which the U.S. enjoyed over all other countries, could not last forever without weakening the dollar particularly in relation to strong currencies like the mark and the yen. At one point, Oil Minister Utayba talked about an “OPEC dollar which would base the cost of oil on a basket of currencies that included the dollar, the yen, the mark, and perhaps the British pound. It was an idea that I tried to discourage the minister from pursuing.

Late in the summer of 1978, we had the visit of Treasury Secretary Mike Blumenthal, who had supported this easy money policy. The purpose of Blumenthal’s visit was to discourage moves away from the dollar while urging continued price restraint at the next OPEC meeting which was to take place in Abu Dhabi in December of 1978. Until then there had been an 18 month freeze on oil prices. But when OPEC met in December 1978 in Abu Dhabi, I expected that the freeze could not continue because of the deteriorating situation in Iran which was beginning to affect Iranian oil exports. Despite our entreaties, the Saudis and the Emirates went along with the price rise of at least 10% in order to maintain OPEC unity.

By the spring of 1979, two factors were complicating the oil picture. The first was the unhappiness in most of the Arab world over the Camp David Accords and the anger engendered when Egypt and Israel signed their peace treaty in March 1979. The treaty caused the Emirates and virtually all other Arab nations except Oman to break diplomatic relations with Egypt. During the first six months of 1979, the Emirates and Saudi Arabia cut back on oil production. The cutback amounted to about one million barrels a day for Saudi Arabia and 300,000 barrels a day for the Abu Dhabi emirate. To avoid criticism from the United States, the reason given by Utayba for cutting back on allowables was because recent reservoir studies had indicated the danger of over pumping. The second factor was the impact of events in Iran with the departure of the Shah in mid-January 1979 and the return on February 1 of Ayatollah Khomeini. Iranian oil production had plummeted from five to one million barrels per day. Because of the sizeable Iranian community, especially in Dubai, the Emirates had become very concerned over what was occurring in Iran as well as the Ayatollah’s attacks directed against traditional monarchies. For the first time, the UAE government became concerned about my security by assigning me bodyguards each time I left the chancery or the residence.

Before leaving the Emirates in August 1979, I recall having several meetings with UAE foreign minister Ahmad Suwaidi, who would ask how the U.S. viewed developments that were unfolding in Iran. By this time, at our urging, both the Emirates and Saudi Arabia had reversed the oil policy earlier in the year of cutting back production and had started to increase their oil output to help offset the sharp reduction in Iranian oil exports.

During my last year in the Emirates, the question of arms sales came up. Abu Dhabi had an air force composed of a dozen or so Mirages that the French had peddled to the Emirates. With no native pilots available, the planes were flown by Pakistani air force officers who were delighted to fly state-of-the-art aircraft that their country could not afford to buy. The planes would be proudly displayed doing acrobatic flying on national holidays. Not to be outdone, Dubai had purchased six military jets from the British. On several occasions, I discouraged various informal approaches by members of Sheikh Zayid’s family about buying arms and I had been critical with the ruler of Dubai for buying the aircraft from Britain. I asked Rashid what he was going to do with these aircraft. He really couldn’t answer the question. Since Abu Dhabi had them, I could

only assume that Rashid felt he had to have some, too. I pointed out that if Abu Dhabi and Dubai started buying a lot of military equipment, the other emirates would feel obliged to do the same thing. So, who was the enemy? The Emirates' security lay not in buying sophisticated arms, which would require a lot of foreigners to operate, but in having good relations with the Saudis and continuing economic assistance to Oman in light of its success in quelling the Dhofar insurgency.

However, sometime in the early summer of 1979, I was asked to meet with Sheikh Khalifa, Sheikh Zaid's eldest son, who was then the commander in chief of all Abu Dhabi's military forces. This time, the request was formal. I do not recall what equipment Sheikh Khalifa asked about, but I did reiterate the same arguments that I had made earlier. I reported the meeting leaving it to my successors to decide how to respond. Personally, I thought we should say "No" and maintain our current policy.

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

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

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

The GCC fit well with U.S. policy of promoting regionalism in the Gulf. We were careful, however, in how we gave our support, lest we give it the kiss of death. In private discussions, it



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

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission,**  
**Abu Dhabi (1977-1980)**

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

*Q: So then, in 1977, you got to the United Arab Emirates.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Finally I got to the UAE. François M. Dickman, who was my office director for the last two years I was in ARP in the mid-'70s, was by this time ambassador in Abu Dhabi. I spent three years in Abu Dhabi as DCM and found it a fascinating place. The United Arab Emirates at that time was only about five years old as a federation. There were still a lot of growing pains. Tensions persisted between Abu Dhabi, which had the money and was essentially financing the federation and who's ruler, Sheikh Zayed, was and still is the president of the federation, and some of the other emirates, particularly Dubai, whose Sheikh Rashid was pushing for a more independent role. Dubai's oil production was declining but Rashid had invested in other projects that brought in a steady income. Although Rashid's son Muhammad was nominally federal Minister of Defense, Dubai kept control of its own army, under a British contract commander. There was often there was a good deal of strain between Dubai and Abu Dhabi over the role that Dubai would play within the federation. Most of the other rulers had little choice because they didn't have the money to go their own way. This included the rulers of Sharjah, Ras al Khaimah, Umm al Qaiwain, Ajman and Fujairah. While they were not always happy with Abu Dhabi's domination of the federation they really were dependent upon Abu Dhabi's wealth.

*Q: Now, the border problems. The Buraimi business was settled by this time.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, it hadn't been settled entirely but it was over as an issue. It wasn't until 1974 that Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi even established relations. I think it involved on the

part of Abu Dhabi the giving up of some territory. There was an agreement that was never published and I don't know that anyone has officially published any maps showing what was agreed to in 1974. It also got tied up with where the Omani border would be because it was an area where Saudi Arabian, Abu Dhabi and Omani claims all came together. But, as a main issue of dispute Buraimi was over. The Saudis tended to look down on the Abu Dhabians. I remember raising with some UAE army officers why they sent their people for training in the U.S. or in Europe. Why not send them to Saudi Arabia? They replied that the Saudis didn't pay much attention to the UAE military and even asked why the UAE needed an army since Saudi Arabia could protect them. That was a minor symptom of what was going on between them. But, it was not a major factor. There was a Saudi ambassador in Abu Dhabi at this point.

I would say that, while I tried to follow inter-emirate politics, our primary focus was on what was going on in the Gulf. While I was in Abu Dhabi the Iranian revolution occurred and that had an impact.

*Q: You have seven different entities. How did you deal with them?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, the ambassador did travel occasionally to visit the other emirates, but most of our dealings obviously were with the federal government in Abu Dhabi - the Foreign Ministry, Ministry of Finance, Petroleum Ministry, etc. We had a consulate in Dubai and the consul there, Charles Currier, spent a great deal of time visiting the various emirates up there. I would go up occasionally to join him on calls on the rulers of the smaller emirates. Also, I used to run what I called "the seven hour, seven emirate tour." Starting in Dubai I would drive visitors to all seven emirates, ending up in Abu Dhabi by nightfall.

*Q: All the way across...*

WRAMPELMEIER: All the way up to Ras al-Khaimah on the Gulf side and then down to Fujairah on the Indian Ocean side and back across the peninsula. There was a good highway so I would take visitors on this trip. We did see a growing interest on the part of the Abu Dhabians in getting technical assistance from the United States. We had no military attaché so I became the military assistance officer as well as DCM and political officer. I even flew up to European Command headquarters at Stuttgart, Germany, for a week-long military assistance training program. We tried to develop an undergraduate pilot training program for the UAE air force, but there weren't enough pilots with sufficient English proficiency to come to the States and enter this program. Many UAE air cadets eventually went to Italy where they were first trained in English by the Italians.

We had a number of naval visits in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. I got to know the Middle East Force admirals very well, especially Sam Packard who had married a woman from Cincinnati.

We also, of course, followed closely what was happening in the UAE oil industry. Although the federation had a petroleum minister, each emirate with oil largely handled directly relations with its foreign concession holders.

*Q: How did they respond? Obviously Abu Dhabi was pretty small. From whom were they taking their lead?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: The Saudis were the ones who set the pace in oil at this time simply because they had so much of it and they would raise and lower the production rate and set the price of oil accordingly. Saudi policy, under Petroleum Minister Ahmad Zaki Yamani, had been to make sure that OPEC held together. Yamani's policy was that the Saudis, as the OPEC member with the largest surplus production capacity, would act as OPEC's swing producer, raising or lowering its production as needed to maintain OPEC's agreed production levels. That changed when Hisham Nazir replaced Yamani. Nazir's view was that the Saudis should do what they could to hold on to and even to expand their share of the world oil market. They would therefore be willing to increase their production if that would improve their market share. That policy lasted well into the '90s.

Mohammed Otaiba, who was the UAE federal oil minister as well as director of oil matters for the emirate of Abu Dhabi, was concerned principally with making sure that each oil concession holder produced as much oil as it could. There were always rumors of Abu Dhabi cheating on its OPEC-assigned quotas. It was at this time that we were spending a lot of time and high-level interest in talking to the OPEC countries because of their importance for our oil supplies and the placement internationally of their large financial reserves. We had annual visits by the Secretary of Treasury, accompanied one year by Senator Lugar and two members of the House Banking Committee. Dick Cooper, then Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, once came to talk to Otaiba and to the directors of the Abu Dhabi Fund.

*Q: Where was the money going?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: A lot of it was coming to the U.S., especially into Treasury notes. The Kuwaitis also put a lot of money into developing Kiawah Island off South Carolina as a resort and were buying up other property in the United States as well as oil companies in Europe. The Kuwaitis formed a large retail oil company in Europe known as Q-8. Abu Dhabi and other Gulf Arabs with surplus revenues established funds to give money to less-developed African and other countries. They obviously had more money than they could easily spend at home and various investments were made abroad although not always wisely. A few years later Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi found that one of his trusted employees had been embezzling money from Zayed's personal accounts and playing the commodities market in Chicago, unsuccessfully, via a front company in Panama. Zayed had lost, I don't know, a billion dollars. Our concern was to try to keep up with what was going on in the financial and oil spheres and to be responsive to Abu Dhabi in improving the UAE's security.

The UAE did have some security concerns. Shortly after I arrived in mid-1977 a Black September gunman tried to assassinate the visiting Vice President of Syria at the Abu Dhabi airport. He missed and instead killed the Under Secretary of the UAE Foreign Ministry, a very nice man named Sa'id Ghobash. From then on there was a greater concern in Abu Dhabi about security issues.

Another incident involved a Lufthansa airliner that had been hijacked by Palestinians and taken to Dubai where it stayed for a couple of days. We learned there was at least one U.S. citizen on board. Our consul in Dubai, who had good contacts with the Dubai authorities, arranged for me to go up into the control tower and monitor the negotiations with the hijackers. The UAE Minister of Defense, Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid, who was also in charge of Dubai security, handled the negotiations. I thought he managed the negotiations very well. At the end Sheikh Muhammad was prepared to prevent the plane from taking off by shooting out the tires. However, he was told by UAE president Sheikh Zayed to let the plane depart. It went to Aden, where the pilot was killed, and then on to Somalia where the Germans were able to board it and rescue the passengers. That was a very interesting illustration of how effectively the UAE could hand security situations like that.

*Q: Were we thinking about using that area as a strategic point at this time - stockpiling, etc.?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: Dubai was building this huge port at Jebal Ali. It was like scooping out a giant swimming pool in the middle of a desert. We obviously recognized its potential value to our navy but we saw it primarily as a significant commercial project aimed at capturing much of the transit trade in the Gulf region. However, I don't think we were thinking at that time that we were going to get any sort of naval storage facilities there. That came later.

*Q: Well, let's talk about the Iranian business, both externally and internally. There were a significant number of Iranians in the area.*

WRAMPPELMEIER: Yes. There were a number of Iranians, particularly down in the markets - the suqs - and Dubai had a very sizable Iranian community. In fact, we found out during the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979 that our consulate in Dubai was located right in the middle of the Iranian Shia district. By and large we had no problems with the local Iranians. I recall that shortly after the Iranian revolution the Shah's picture came down in a lot of the little Iranian-run market stalls and Khomeini's picture went up. Dubai, of course, depended very heavily on trade with Iran, so the ruling family and merchants were inclined to take a slightly different view of the revolution than did Abu Dhabi which was less involved commercially with Iran. I think there was certainly dismay at the official level about what was happening just across the water, but I don't think the UAE leadership saw the Iranian revolution as threatening to its interests as it seemed to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, for example. I think Abu Dhabi was somewhere in the middle on this.

*Q: Did we see a whole different equation? Our concern was obviously with oil but all of a sudden were we seeing a sort of hostile Iran populating the entire northern coast?*

WRAMPPELMEIER: Well, yes, we certainly saw the end of our Two Pillar policy and realized that we could no longer rely on Iran to share our security interests in the region. The British had already left the Gulf and we saw that in the future we would have to play some greater role in the area. The difficulty was that the Gulf states themselves wanted us to play it from over the horizon and did not really want to see a major U.S. military presence in the area, although occasional naval visits were acceptable. We did have a DOD team that came out to look at the

UAE's military requirements and eventually that led to some military sales programs but that was well into 1980s.

*Q: Did we see an Iranian threat to the UAE at all?*

WRAMPELMEIER: We saw Iran as a general threat but I don't recall that we felt that there was a great deal of Iranian subversion going on in the UAE. No, I don't think we felt that the UAE, itself, was threatened by Iran.

*Q: After the embassy was taken over in Tehran, did that have any repercussions on how we operated?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, of course, most of our dependents were pulled out for several months and we operated from the end of 1979 well into 1980 with fewer officers. Not only did the dependents leave but our female commercial officer was evacuated.

*Q: Were there screams and yells about doing this? A number of posts wondered what the hell we were doing.*

WRAMPELMEIER: Well, we felt that but we were not pressed as much as some of the other posts because we had given our share and some wives did stay. The ambassador's wife stayed and also the admin officer's wife. My wife had already gone home to deal with a schooling problem involving one of our sons. But we didn't feel particularly threatened. I remember we were put on alert at the time of the abortive hostage rescue attempt in March, 1980, but we never really felt terribly threatened. I must say that the embassy at the time, and the consulate as well, were not very secure. The embassy was in a crumbling structure on the top floor of an apartment building while the USIS office occupied a ground floor apartment. There were third-country people who lived on the floors in between and the building was open in the center at ground level. You could have driven a truck underneath and blown up the whole place. We had some police guards down there but this was before the destruction of our embassy in Beirut ushered in the age of the suicide bomber. We were not able to leave that building then because the Department did not have the money to build a new embassy building in the projected diplomatic quarter. My successor as DCM, Pat Theros, once cabled the Department that after a rain storm he counted 58 leaks in the roof and we needed to move urgently. The Department then erected a prefab temporary building in Abu Dhabi and they were at last able to move out of that apartment building.

*Q: I'm surprised that you mentioned you had a woman commercial officer who was taken out of deemed danger's way. Why?*

WRAMPELMEIER: It was put in terms that those who were not essential to the operation of the embassy should leave. It was decided that the commercial officer was not essential and should go. I don't remember whether we sent any other officers back or not. I think the feeling was that we had to send somebody back. Talking later with Joe Twinam, who was then Arabian Affairs country director, I learned that Secretary Vance insisted upon the evacuation because not only had there been the Iranian hostage taking but it was followed almost immediately by the attack

on and burning of our embassy in Islamabad. At that point the Secretary was no longer willing to accept NEA's assurances that the Iranian situation would not repeat itself elsewhere in the region.

The Commercial Officer, FSO Diane Markowitz, did reasonably well in the UAE. We had other women officers at the post in the consular and admin sections and they also functioned effectively in the Abu Dhabi atmosphere. There were no problems for women employees like pressures to wear the abaya or a ban on women driving as there were in Saudi Arabia.

*Q: You said you had another story that took place while you were in Abu Dhabi. Let's get that in here now.*

WRAMPELMEIER: I mentioned that while in Abu Dhabi we'd had a visit from Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Dick Cooper. We had arranged for him to meet with UAE Minister of Petroleum Otaiba. However, when we showed up at his office we were told that the minister was in Al-Ain, about a hundred miles away, for his marriage to some teenage girl. After some discussion, his office said they could arrange for us to see him in Al-Ain. We all piled into a car and drove for two hours to Otaiba's house where we were greeted by a bevy of his hunting falcons. The minister was out at his wedding feast, so we waited and waited while somebody went to get him. Finally he came in and, after apologizing to Cooper for the mix-up, they had a useful chat. As we were getting up to leave, Otaiba said, "Why don't you come out to my wedding feast and you can see our young girls dance?" So, we followed him out into the desert to what looked like a huge used car lot. There were lights strung up on polls and a lot of vehicles. There were many bedouin out there doing their dances, rocking back and forth with arms over the shoulders of the person on either side. Ed Morse, who was Dick Cooper's staff aide, and I were watching the dancing. All of a sudden Ed looked around and Cooper had disappeared. Where was the Under Secretary? Otaiba had grabbed Cooper, handed him a camel stick, and shoved him into one of these lines of dancers. There was Cooper, a diminutive man, standing next to this huge bedouin with his arm wrapped around Cooper's shoulder and rocking him back and forth, back and forth. The sheepish look on Cooper's face made me wish I had my camera. Anyway, we finally rescued the Under Secretary and drove him back to Abu Dhabi.

The next morning, after a couple of other meetings, a UAE official and I accompanied Cooper and Morse to the airport to board the Gulf Air flight to Bahrain. We were able to drive right up to the gangway. Cooper and Morse started to board when a stewardess came out and said, "I'm sorry, you can't come aboard; we already have six people standing in here." We were there for an hour trying to get Cooper and Morse on that plane. Finally Gulf Air managed to persuade enough other passengers to disembark and we were able to send Cooper and Morse off to Bahrain.

**WILLIAM D. WOLLE**  
**Ambassador**  
**United Arab Emirates (1979-1981)**

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

*Q: Then you were appointed to be Ambassador...?*

WOLLE: In the spring of 1979 I received a call asking if they could put up my name to be considered to go to the UAE to replace Fran Dickman who had served three years there succeeding Mike Sterner, who had been our first resident ambassador. I nodded my head and figured that there was some competition for this, but within two or three weeks the word came down that I was it. I left in September for Abu Dhabi.

*Q: Of the United Arab Emirates, the capital is in Abu Dhabi?*

WOLLE: The capital is in Abu Dhabi. Dubai is the main commercial center, but Abu Dhabi is by all means the capital and is the seat of Sheikh Zayid who since the inauguration of the Federation in 1971 has been the UAE President.

*Q: There are seven Trucial States, is that correct?*

WOLLE: There are seven Trucial States. Those two that have been mentioned are by all odds the most important. Sharjah is number three. It is small, but it is adjacent to Dubai and has had more of a history as a settled populated city. The other four are off to the northeast. Two very tiny ones, Ajman and Umm al-Qaiwain, and larger sheikhdoms of Ras al-Khaymah and Fujairah.

So essentially it is Abu Dhabi, Dubai and the five smaller sheikhdoms with Abu Dhabi financing the Federation for the most part.

Actually the two years I spent there were years when things were going well as far as the Federation is concerned. There had been a lot of skeptics once the British put the UAE together in 1971, the skeptics thinking it would soon break up and everybody would go their separate ways similar to the Federation the British tried in Central Africa at one point.

But in 1979 Sheikh Rashid of Dubai who long had been the overseer of that small principality agreed to be the Prime Minister of the Federation. So I got to the country and found out that he was literally traveling weekly from Dubai to Abu Dhabi, close to a two hour trip by car, to chair the cabinet meetings. This continued much of the time that I was there, although Sheikh Rashid suffered a physical setback in either late 1980 or early 1981 and his role was diminished after that.

Also Sheikh Rashid had agreed to help finance the Federal budget. Now I don't know if he ever did kick in much money, it was kept pretty quiet, but he was cooperating much more than had been the case in some of the earlier years. Perhaps because of my experience that first year I

became quite an optimist as far as the future of the Federation was concerned. Almost every reporter who happened upon the scene or some visiting non-resident ambassador, whatever, would ask whether there was a viable federation. They realized there were vast differences among the members. But I became an optimist. I felt that Zayid was a respected, hard-working individual, who had a very good image. Rashid focused more on the commercial possibilities and developments in Dubai, but was spending some time on Federation matters.

Militarily there was a down side because Dubai, in particular, was still maintaining its own military force. Theoretically its armed forces were part of the Federation military...this was in name only.

Oil production was going well. Climate for business was excellent. Compared to the very small American business community in Oman, there was a much larger presence in the UAE, particularly in Dubai and related to the oil industry.

*Q: The oil, was it mainly Abu Dhabi and Dubai?*

WOLLE: Yes. While I was there Sharjah made some discoveries but it had not been developed. Some of the smaller sheikhdoms were seeking their own oil. I thought at the time, and perhaps in a way still do, that it was good for the Federation that the smaller sheikhdoms were not discovering oil or gas to any extent because if they did they would want to break out on their own. That certainly was going to be true up in Ras al-Khaymah where the ruler had a couple of drilling companies busy and wanted nothing more than to be independent at some point. But financially he had no prospect of it.

The bulk of UAE economic development consisted of new ports, new highways, new petrochemical plants, etc. in and around Abu Dhabi city and in Dubai.

*Q: Historically in these areas succession was usually by assassination...*

WOLLE: Yes, and that had happened in Sharjah not long before I arrived. My two years seemed to be a stable period in terms of that sort of thing. Within Abu Dhabi, I might say, Sheikh Zayid was trying more and more to turn things over to his son, Sheikh Khalid. He was put in charge of affairs of the city of Abu Dhabi, and of military matters. But he didn't seem to be someone with a lot of capability or real interest and I am not sure what has developed there. Sheikh Zayid, I think, wisely was trying to delegate to Khalid some of his own duties and test him, perhaps.

The succession question loomed in Dubai if Sheikh Rashid's illness became serious. He had two or three sons actively engaged in matters of state as well as business and military in Dubai and there was some thought that there would be a real falling out eventually.

In reflecting back at some of these assignments I had in places in the Arabian Peninsular the stages each of these small countries has gone through one after another is an interesting phenomenon.



For instance, Oman in the 1970s was really beginning to develop for the first time in a modern way, Sultan Qaboos having ousted his father in 1970. Well the UAE had gotten into that stage very heavily throughout the 1960s. Kuwait had been on that path in the 1950s. And Saudi Arabia didn't get into the stage of full development until the mid-1940s. Although oil was discovered in the 1930s, World War II came along before very much could be done with it. So you had the Saudis in the 1940s showing the way. Kuwait trying to learn a few things from the Saudi experience in the 1950s, the UAE in the 1960s and Oman in the 1970s.

And in each case, I think, if you look back you will find that about 10 to 15 years after the expansion really got started each of these places ran into a real downturn. They couldn't pay their bills, they got over-extended, contractors got mad and left the scene, etc. The pattern seems clear, though with varied timing.

*Q: How did the down fall of the Shah, the crisis with our people being taken hostage in the Embassy and just the rise of Iranian and Shiite fundamentalism play in the UAE when you were there?*

WOLLE: Dubai has always been very close to the Iranians, tradewise. There is a fairly large nest of Iranian citizens and Iranian descendants resident in Dubai, particularly. The Department was always concerned that we would have security problems, particularly for our branch office in Dubai. (We had a small one or two men branch office in Dubai.) In fact, in my years and until I left when we got new premises in a modern building our branch office was located right on the edge of the Iranian commercial section of Dubai. But we didn't have any problems. The focus was on business as it usually is in Dubai. But there were pictures of Khomeini and so forth hanging from every window.

Sheikh Zayid and the Federation tried to take pretty much a hands off policy. They didn't want to say or do anything to stir up the new Iranian government, Khomeini and company, and didn't want to go out on a limb with regard to the Iranians. They wanted our hostages to be freed. They knew Iran was on the wrong road in terms of holding diplomats as hostages and in some other respects as well. But they weren't going to make a show of their feelings. I suspect that pretty much remains the case today.

Part way through my first year in the UAE, there was the outbreak in the Mecca Mosque.

*Q: Could you explain that?*

WOLLE: A group of radicals, without going into the details, attempted to storm, did storm and took over, occupied the Mosque at Mecca and caused a furor throughout the Muslim world. In Pakistan the word was that the US was at the root of this evil and therefore our Embassy was stormed. That was a disaster in itself. Then it led to a certain panic in Washington which urged the evacuation of all dependents and non-essential personnel in the Gulf posts, one of which I was serving in, while at the same time not ordering or encouraging such movement in Saudi Arabia. Those of us in places like Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Doha and Bahrain felt that if anybody was going to have a problem here it is going to be the Americans in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia where Shiite Muslims are numerous.

We felt that the wrong Embassies had been downsized and there were a lot of bitter cables that went back and forth on this subject. But in any case, many, if not most of our dependents chose to leave and were gone for a few months...it wasn't too long a period. There were no repercussions in Abu Dhabi that affected our Embassy or our Embassy's business. The only thing that stands out was that for about six months thereafter the UAE armed forces kept a couple of armored cars down below near the front door of the building in which we had the Embassy.

*Q: Were you given instructions from time to time from Washington to go in and try to get the UAE to support us and this type of thing? There was a lot of pressure on our whole diplomatic establishment to try to come to some sort of resolution to the holding of our hostages in our Embassy, which went on for 444 days.*

WOLLE: Not too often. We were asked to discuss it a lot, but we weren't under a lot of pressure to get results. I think Washington correctly realized Abu Dhabi would not carry the weight that was needed to make an impact on any government in Tehran. That must have been the thinking because we weren't by any means a focal point of discussion with host governments toward that end.

There was quite a bit of concern in Abu Dhabi and Dubai that the Iraq-Iran war, which had been kicked off the late summer of 1980, would somehow spread to parts of the Gulf below Kuwait. But except for a couple of overflights of one kind or another in the first few weeks of the war...even that didn't cause us any real problem at all. The war was a leading item on most news broadcasts, but we didn't really have any problems because of it.

*Q: Did you sense a change in attitude towards the Persian Gulf as now becoming more critical to us because there was concern that the Soviets may intervene, that Iran might win and this might have repercussions, and that we were beginning to think about using that area as a place where we might have to put troops in?*

WOLLE: We were not burdened very much with that sort of thing, no. The Department seemed to be more interested with regard to the UAE in following petroleum developments closely to see that Mani Otaiba, a long time oil minister in the UAE, didn't suddenly change his conservative policies. He was a regular and frequent contact of mine. He seemed to be making his decisions quite "correctly" from our point of view.

*Q: Where did the UAE fit in with OPEC? Were they with the moderate side?*

WOLLE: Pretty much the moderate side. Pretty close to the Saudis. They hesitated to let any real chasm develop between Saudi Arabia and the UAE on oil matters.

*Q: The Buraymi problem had long been settled, I take it?*

WOLLE: Yes, years before. The Omanis were still carefully manning their border points around Buraymi but the UAE was not bothering with any nonsense like that. They weren't afraid of the Omanis. In fact, it was interesting that most of the UAE military consisted of Omani men. The

Omanis would come across the border and join up and send their remittances back to Oman. Maybe they are just better soldiers than those of the UAE. But, of course, there are a lot more Omanis than there are natives of all the Trucial States put together.

*Q: The Trucial States were basically smugglers, they are sea people.*

WOLLE: And the overall population of the UAE is only 20-25 percent native UAE. Most of them are workers who have come in if not from Oman and other Arab countries, from South Asia.

*Q: What was the attitude of the government toward foreign workers? Was this something we monitored?*

WOLLE: We just tried to keep abreast of it. We really didn't play any part in that. It is a major problem for the UAE, of course. Just like in Kuwait. For the UAE perhaps the problem doesn't have one aspect that is serious for the Kuwaitis, because the Palestinian presence in the UAE has never been proportionally as large as it is in Kuwait. So many of the expatriates, if not Omani are from Pakistan and increasingly from East Asia, Thailand, the Philippines, etc. That is a long term problem, there are not enough native people to do all the work and if there were they might not want to do it anyway. (It is the Saudis' problem too.)

But for us our activities were a pretty standard mix of just normal reporting, though we were about to get into the military sales business. We had an air survey team come in at one point during my tour to look at the UAE air force to see what they might need. In fact the UAE had gotten nervous enough about the Iran-Iraq war to want to upgrade their military considerably. While I was there they filed a number of shopping lists for military hardware, but none of that had really come to any decision by the time I left. In part it was delayed by our sending a survey team to get our own estimate of what they could use, could handle. Then we were also still skeptical about the ability of Sheikh Zayid to get Dubai to go along with him on military matters. We didn't want to arm an Abu Dhabi force which would then take on Sheikh Rashid's forces up in Dubai.

**BROOKS WRAMPELMEIER**  
**Deputy Director/Office Director, Arabian Peninsula Affairs**  
**Washington, DC (1982-1984)**

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

*Wrampelmeier was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.*

*Q: Let's turn to arm sales to the Saudis. I imagine you came up against AIPAC. Could you talk about your 1982-84 period?*

WRAMPELMEIER: Initially, I wasn't really responsible for Saudi Arabia. Somebody else handled that. Come to think of it, in those two years we were sort of in between major arms sales. I think the AWACs issue had been resolved and we were not yet into the political debate that accompanied the major new Saudi requests for aircraft and missiles in 1985. We had, of course, a very large ongoing military sales program with the Saudis which continued throughout this period. Oftentimes these issues involved rather exotic and little-known types of radar, certain air-to-ground munitions, etc. that did not create the same public relations issues as had the AWACs and F-15s, but which still, were matters of some concern to those who knew what it was all about.

We spent a great deal of time with the Pentagon people and the political/military people in the Department trying to move these issues through the bureaucracy and Congress, when that was necessary. Again, in thinking back on this period what I particularly remember are the efforts we were making trying to get agreements on access and pre-positioning issues.

*Q: When dealing with the UAE, which has seven sheikdoms which have to come to an agreement, what were our arguments for our saying it was a good thing to do this?*

WRAMPELMEIER: In some respects the UAE had approached us first. I remember while I was DCM there, they had approached us because they were getting tired of having to deal with the French or the British and wanted an alternative to dealing with the Italians. But they were not able to produce enough qualified candidates who spoke English to send to our pilot training programs. As time went on, their educational system began to produce more people with enough English to allow them to benefit from some of these programs. We began to have a lot easier time in finding ways in which we could be helpful to them. So, we did get eventually into undergraduate pilot training and into some sales of military equipment, etc. We certainly had reasonable access, in Dubai particularly, where the Navy was fascinated by this huge man-made port that had been created at Jebal Ali. Certainly by the time 1990 came around, the UAE had indeed completed several military airfields that were used by our people. During the Gulf war one of my nephews flew an F16 out of an airfield on the Abu Dhabi mainland.

*Q: Did they see that the Gulf war was a menace to the UAE and that we might have a role to play later?*

WRAMPELMEIER: I think the UAE was divided on this. Obviously, Abu Dhabi felt that the UAE had to support Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Dubai and Sharjah, which had reasonably large Iranian minorities and also did a lot of cross-Gulf trading, were more ambivalent about their relations with Iran. Ras Al Khaimah, of course, was very unhappy with Iran because of the Tunb islands. Sharjah, in addition to the trading business, also had to get along with Iran because they shared Abu Musa island and the offshore oil concession around it. I would say the UAE's position probably was more ambivalent than that of other Gulf Arab states.

*Q: Our mind set then was looking towards protection from aggression from Iran wasn't it?*

WRAMPELMEIER: That's right. In the '70s I think we saw Iraq as more of a threat, particularly because of Iraqi support for dissident movements in Bahrain and the southern Dhofar province of Oman. In those days, of course, the Shah was regarded- (end of tape)

*Q: You were saying that after the Iranian revolution in 1978-79 that all changed.*

WRAMPELMEIER: That all changed and we now saw Iran as being the major threat in the Gulf, particularly when Khomeini started taking off after the Saudis. Iraq now being an opponent of Iran was seen not so much as a force for stability but at least as a force that would balance the Iranian threat. That influenced very much our thinking about what should be our relations with Iraq during the period of the Iran-Iraq war. We saw U.S.-Iraqi relations improving throughout that period. Towards the end, with the Halabjah massacre where Saddam Hussein used chemical weapons against his own Kurdish population, we were beginning to have a lot of voices raised in this country as well as elsewhere about the wisdom of cooperating with Saddam.

**GEORGE QUINCEY LUMSDEN**  
**Ambassador**  
**United Arab Emirates (1982-1986)**

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

*Q: We're coming up to when now? You've gotten your telephone call.*

LUMSDEN: I've gotten my telephone call. I was nominated.

*Q: Had you known this was in the offing?*

LUMSDEN: I had first known it was in the offing actually... Joe Twinam, who was the deputy assistant secretary then, a great friend of mine and a great guy... I think earlier on I mentioned his hilarious confirmation hearing to be ambassador to Bahrain.

*Q: Tell it just in case.*

LUMSDEN: This would be about 1979. He was nominated to be ambassador to Bahrain, this small little country that we have the Navy based in and finally decided we could let them have 12 Hawk missiles. His confirmation was completely routine, with a number of senators there. Joe is

a southerner and when things go bad he tends to say, "Well, it's not bad, but it ain't Chancellorsville." He was going through his hearings and everything was fine. Just as they were about to close the hearings, another senator arrived coming in through the back. He obviously wanted to get his say so into the record. A staff aide handed him some papers. Clearly, the senator had not really prepared much of anything for this. The senator said, "Mr. Twinam, I see that you're going to be our ambassador to Bahrain. Fine. I understand the U.S. Navy has a base in Bahrain." "Yes, Senator, it does." "But Mr. Twinam, I also see here that you can speak the Arabic language. Is that true, Mr. Twinam?" Joe said, "Yes, Senator, I've graduated from the Foreign Service Institute's language school in Beirut and I have a 3+4 in modern Arabic." He said, "Oh, that's good. Now, tell me, if you speak Arabic, can an Arab understand you?" He said, "Yes, Senator, he can, just so long as he grew up in eastern Tennessee." The session broke up hilariously and he was confirmed. That is what people like to hear on Capitol Hill. He just won them over. I found out from Joe, who made up the short list, that I was the bureau's preferred candidate to be ambassador to the UAE because this was one of those things that they brokered with the White House. There were certain political appointees coming in and they wanted the UAE because of its manifold problems plus the fact that it was not a frontline country to be in professional Foreign Service hands - not that people like Governor John West weren't doing a superb job.

*Q: He was ambassador to Saudi Arabia.*

LUMSDEN: Former governor of South Carolina, who by the way is now marching to get the flag removed from the capitol down there. Then Senator Warner had a constituent who decided that he would make a good ambassador to the UAE.

The UAE people knew me and I had entertained their delegations for several years as this relationship was being built up. So, the UAE ambassador said, "Quincey, I don't know how this is going to work out, but we want you to know that you're our preferred candidate and we're considering the other." Not to name names, it turns out that with the other they found a conflict of interest here in Washington. The UAE was never called upon to play its non-agreement threat on it. This took from the end of January to the beginning of June for all this to work its way through. I had my hearings in June and left shortly thereafter for the UAE. To this day, to the credit of the Foreign Service, that post rose in importance and has been reserved for Foreign Service officers. It's very good. The chain there started with Mike Sterner, Fran Dickman, Bill Wolle, myself, David Mack, Bill Rugh, and now Ted Kattouf has been a straight Foreign Service professional. That's good. This type of chain in a country that is growing in affluence and is a nice place to live and is getting more important with \$8 billion Lockheed sales and things like that is commendable. I wish I could say that it were the rule rather than the exception. You will find in most places as attractive as this that continuity is beginning to fray.

I arrived in the summer of 1982.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

LUMSDEN: I was there from midsummer 1982 through late winter 1986. Actually, by the time I left in '86, almost four years, I was for about the last six months there the longest serving

ambassador in any Arab country. That is how rapidly we were changing them around. I looked forward to getting back into the oil fields and really getting with my old love, the producer-consumer relations in energy production levels, refinery margins, OPEC meetings, etc.

It didn't work out that way. Fortunately, I had quite a competent economic officer who could get me the stuff to clear. I had precious little time during those three and a half years to spend actually doing oil stuff. My time was taken up by political-military affairs, strategic discussions, and of course security intelligence work, which grew as the Iraq-Iran war dragged on and we instituted the famous or now infamous Iraq tilt. That was a very natural policy choice given the way things had gone with Iran and the fear that Iran would break through under the Arab side of the Gulf and that they would have a military presence on our territory to match their continuing growth of propaganda with all of the Shiite minorities, particularly around the Qatif Oasis and in Bahrain, which is the center of the largest oil field in the world. Saudi Arabia is a country which is about 94% Sunni Muslim. The remaining six percent are sitting right on top of the Dahar oil field and they're Shia. This is a big internal security problem. For Saudi Arabia, it's of course one of the reasons that the FBI can complain that the Saudi police have not been that cooperative in investigating the Khobar Towers bombing incident because of this perception that we will go and do something that will leave Saudi Arabia to face the internal turmoil that results from the Americans having done this. I don't think there is any question that people know how that thing worked its way out. It's just a question now that you know, what are you going to do about it and who is going to do it? That is going to be a continuing difficulty.

My particular problems, speaking personally, began... We got there in '82. The first year there was really quite wonderful. I even got to spend a little bit of time on oil.

*Q: Could you describe a bit the government and the population?*

LUMSDEN: At this period, the government of the UAE is not far from what the United States government was under the Articles of the Confederation. Less democratic in each one of its component parts, where you have traditional sheikhly rule and Bedouin egalitarianism. I could go up to talk to the ruler. However, the ruler is the ruler. It is seven entirely separate emirates which to this day retain control over their natural resources and their defense and financial policies. Although a lot of them take money from Abu Dhabi, they dispose of it pretty much as they wish. Those sheikhdoms are the ones that used to be called the Trucial Sheikhdoms or the Trucial Coast and before that the Pirate Coast. The Pirate Coast because this area first came to the attention of the West during the late 17th and early 18th centuries when the imperial power of Great Britain was extending itself to the jewel in the Crown, India.

The British East India Company started particularly in the 18th century building up a tremendously profitable trade between the home country and the newly established Raj in India. However, there were some bothersome pirates who raided the ships of the British East India Company, which caused the Royal Navy to make a succession of raids for suppression of the piracy. This drew them gradually into the Gulf and all the way up to Kuwait. As time evolved, Great Britain took over the defense and foreign policy roles of those countries particularly as the 19th century rolled on and started to get towards the Industrial Revolution, World War I, and all that. That is how they came in there. Not all of these seven constituent emirates were pirate

emirates. The pirate emirates were the Callosum tribe. They were the great pirates. They were mostly in Ras al-Khaimah, in Sharjah, in Ajman and Umm al-Qaiwain. Dubai and Abu Dhabi were not really pirate sheikhdoms. They were peopled by tribes called the Bani Yas who were more land oriented Bedouin tribes. Then over on the Indian Ocean side, you had one last emirate, Fujairah, which they call the "Shockdayeen," which is a mixture of Bedouin Arab, Omani, and a group of indigenous people in the mountains of that part of the Arabian Peninsula... Actually, these people really aren't Arabs. They are historically something else. They all relate from the mountains of northern Hormuz sweeping right down through to highlands through the Hadramut there. They speak very funny dialects. They have their own little language which really isn't Arabic. I forget what they call it now - "Jahar" or something like that. They form a lot of the population of this final emirate, Fujairah. In Oman and in Yemen, they're more significant in their breakdown in that group. So you've got seven: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ajman, Ras al-Khaimah, and Fujairah. The ambassador's job really - if he wants to know what's going on because these are very loosely confederated states - is to get in his darn car and go and visit each one of those places at least once a month to find out what's going on. I spent a lot of time in the car. I did a lot of work in the car.

Humorous incident. In the car one day coming back from Fujairah, having visited Sheikh Hamid bin Mohammad Asharkdi, who was a very well educated (at Exeter or someplace like that in Great Britain) man whose father used to bury his enemies in the ground and put honey on their head and let the ants eat them, we decided (It was a wonderful day) instead of going back on the main road to go through the Masundum Peninsula to see the mountains in the spring and the flowers coming up, which was a great idea. We got in the car. There was one section of this secondary road that no one ever bothered with that runs through Omani territory in the north there, which had never been a problem before, except that day, it was a problem because there was a military post up there. The Omanis were having some sort of military maneuvers on it. It was not my country. I had no right to go into Oman. So we had to take the wadi route around for about 25 kilometers to catch the road when it was back in the United Arab Emirates.

*Q: These were paved roads.*

LUMSDEN: These were paved up to the point where I had to take the wadi road and then it became track and track down to stones. At one point, the car got stuck in those stones. The driver and I were there. I said, "Well, we've got to get out of here somehow." I was dressed in my nice French double breasted suit and my Gucci loafers with the tassels on them. We got out and started to grunt with the car. Of course, I left the door open. Our audience at that point was about six goats. As I was pushing the car, cursing my suggestion that we do this, I turned and noticed that one of the goats had gotten into the back of the car and was munching my position papers. So, that was an ambassadorial experience in the Masundum Peninsula. The government of the UAE is the supreme council of all the seven rulers. That is the real power over the whole area. But each one of those rulers remains pretty much sovereign in his own territory. Then there is a government which functions depending upon which ministry you are talking about. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery does quite well in administering programs throughout the seven emirates. The Ministry of Defense does not. There is still too much residual uncertainty about relations between these various families that have had occasions to have at each other over the years.



*Q: I was there in the 1950s when I was in Dhahran as the vice consul. We covered that whole area. As I recall, I don't think there was a ruler there who had gotten his position by not having killed an uncle or something like that - or a father.*

LUMSDEN: Your point is very well taken. There is a bloody history of transition of power. We've had it just as recently as... Before I got there, they had one in Sharjah where there was an attempt to overthrow the ruler. Then he was overthrown. He was killed. The Brits threw him out. They brought another fellow in. Then subsequent to that, there was an attempted coup against him. That was as recently as after I left, 1987. It did not succeed. But the point is there. These very traditional societies have not moved forward politically in the face of tremendous wealth and economic development. I remain concerned about the transition in Abu Dhabi, which is the lynchpin of the whole thing. The time is coming up because Sheikh Zayid is getting very elderly. He probably would have liked to relinquish power to his eldest son before now if it had not been for his uncertainty at what the other sons might do when that happened. Sooner or later, it's got to be faced. But I stray. The foreign ministry has sort of a 50/50 record. Rashid Abdullah from Ajman is the foreign minister and he is well schooled and well known in international circles and presents himself well as a representative of the country, as do the ambassadors of the country in various leading capitals like Washington, London, Paris, etc. However, when it gets to really working out positions on gutsy issues such as the UAE's dispute over the free islands of the lower Gulf which were invaded by Iran in 1971/1972 then because there is a difference of approach between various emirates on how to treat this problem, then you get back into what happens in the United States, back into local politics as to how to treat it. That is an unresolved issue, one which I'm sure the UAE will at some point wish to take up with the evolving new more liberal government in Iran. I don't see anything happening very soon. The official UAE position is that they wish to submit it to binding international arbitration at the international court in the Hague. The Iranian position is, "Oh, no, no, no, no, no. This is simply a bilateral issue that we can solve between us." On that basis, if you just go eyeball to eyeball, hand to hand with the Iranians, they've got all the power and the UAE has zero. It won't work out satisfactorily. The second brother to Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayid, who I spoke about before, Hamdan bin Zayid, is the "number two" person in the foreign ministry. As a matter of fact, the foreign minister wouldn't do anything that might touch upon one of these politically sensitive issues without clearing it with number two first because number two is the son of Sheikh Zayid. As you go up the coast, the positions vary on this. Abu Dhabi's position is - and legally it's backed up - that traditionally these have been UAE territory because the Callosum tribes were maritime tribes and they inhabited Abu Musa, the main island, and the Greater Tunbs. The Lesser Tunbs are not much more than a bunch of rocks. Sharjah, however, does not want the issue pressed in any way that might conceivably turn out disadvantageous to its continued operation with shared oil concession with the Iranians. That is a Callosum emirate. Rasa Hein, which is another Callosum emirate, which claims the Two Tunbs, resisted the Iranian takeover. Actually, a couple of border guards were killed in this. They want it all back and believe that an international UN expeditionary force should go in there and drive the Iranians off the island, which is a total non-starter, but that's their hardened position on it. So this issue, which is one of the chief foreign policy things facing the UAE - that and its OPEC quota fulfillment - is not likely to see much change in the immediate future. But it demonstrates how on local issues the foreign

ministry has to be local in its approach. On major Arab issues or world issues, then the foreign ministry can speak for all.

*Q: How did you deal with the foreign ministry?*

LUMSDEN: Hamdan bin Zayid, the young man that I mentioned was number two, was not there when I was there. He came back and has been put in this position following 1986. I dealt in the foreign ministry with Rashid Abdullah, who was the foreign minister. The three islands issue was pretty quiescent during my period there. It became very active when I was working on the natural gas pipeline project. I probably knew more of the background than the fellow in the foreign ministry who was working on it, so I helped him draft some letters to the Department of State stating the UAE's position. He said, "Quincey, this has your fingerprints all over it." But it was helpful. It clarified the various positions that were already in stone. I worked with the foreign minister. As I mentioned before, most of our business dealt with defense, political-military affairs, and security and terrorism. We had a number of incidents beginning in the latter part of 1982 subsequent to Israel's invasion of Lebanon.

The security situation started to get bad and the government there was starting to get pressured by organizations like Abu Nidal, who basically wanted money from them. Then the Iraq-Iran war kept dragging on and getting worse. We had the Israeli invasion of Lebanon putting pressure on and a buildup during '83 as the Iraq-Iran war joined the Israeli occupation of Lebanon. When it got to the point that it looked as though the Iraqi initial advantage in the war had been lost and the Iranians with their teenagers sacrificing themselves as martyrs with plastic keys around their necks were going to break through what's called the Howaiza marshes in southern Iraq, we began an active Iraq support program. We were in the unusual position of assisting Iraq in certain ways.

*Q: I have read, for example, that there were photographs exchanged about positions and all that. This has been in the press.*

LUMSDEN: Okay. I was one of the mailmen and suddenly found myself being invited to the Iraqi embassy all the time and we were just great chums. Well, the policy, of course, ended up not working. Some people wished to charge those of the people that cooked it up - not the ambassador for simply carrying out instructions - as having engaged in criminal activity. It's not criminal activity. It's a policy that didn't work.

*Q: One can debate a little on this. A full Iranian victory might not have been a very salutary thing.*

LUMSDEN: A full Iranian victory would have resulted in exactly the situation that we did not want so much that we ended up assisting the Kuwaitis to free their country from Saddam Hussein. A single country would have had a dominant military position in the Gulf and a resultant ability of picking up the telephone and telling each and every country in the Gulf how much oil they were going to produce. That's the rub of all this. When a few years later we saw Saddam Hussein had built up and had supposedly 56 divisions - and not all republican guards -

but the same adage held true. As you can see from the steaming around now about high oil prices, this is a buzz button issue here in the United States.

*Q: How did you feel about this cooperation with Iraq at the time? Was Iran seen as the main threat?*

LUMSDEN: Yes. This is contextual. You have to go back now to 1983. Iran was seen as the threat. The rhetoric of the revolution, the way the hostage crisis was played out, then it really started to get nasty in December '83 when Iranian agents, Shia martyrs, started blowing up American embassies as in Kuwait. It happened, I think, in December 1983. Luckily, the martyr, when he broke through the gates, instead of turning right and hitting the ambassador's office and the political and economic officer, turned left because there were two buildings and hit the Administrative Section. By the way, all of the embassy's alcoholic beverage storage went up in flames. I believe two people died as a result of that, the martyr himself and some unlucky grounds worker. If he had turned the other way, it would have been a real disaster.

I will now embark on an interesting story. 1983. The Christmas-New Year's season arrived. The intelligence community in Washington, through Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service, and their good infiltration into Lebanon immediately following the Kuwait embassy bombing, noted the first rising of Shia radicalism because the Shias had been fairly lethargic up to the point. Under the aegis of the Iranian ambassador in Damascus, a hardliner named Hashi Mupoor, the southern Lebanese Shia were being organized away from the Islamic Jihad group to form a new pure Shia group which is known as Hezbollah. This would have been in '83. We know how that has developed. They picked up that the Kuwait embassy bombing was step one. Step two was to be the assassination of a major American figure in the Gulf, an ambassador. Not only that, they were going to get a French ambassador, too. France for obvious reasons of its own interest was very happy that the Iraq tilt was being worked out. France had flown Khomeini back to Tehran and didn't get anything for it. Plus, they had a lot of interest in Iraq and still do. I didn't know anything. I find that armored limousines are being flown from Washington to Abu Dhabi (I didn't have an armored car) and that special American bodyguard details from the State Department are coming to live with us because the intelligence said that the best target was Abu Dhabi and the French and American ambassadors there were the targets. They knew the weapons that they had, the serial numbers, the silencers... The whole smear came through the intelligence community. So, wow! Here we are. Christmastime. My kids are visiting from college. The American security moves in. The halftrack gets parked in the driveway. A platoon of UAE infantry digs in around the residence. My ability to move about the country becomes very, very inhibited. The foreign minister is terribly worried. The Kuwaiti ambassador picks this up because it was our embassy in his country. He is terribly worried. So, everybody is sweating. We get the kids out as quickly as we can. Helen and I have to go out to be trained on how to use an Uzi and a .38 caliber, the whole smear. We have that in our room and we have U.S. security agents sleeping outside our door. It's not so much fun with these kind of things.

*Q: Was the French ambassador-*

LUMSDEN: He got the same thing. They made him wear a bulletproof vest everywhere and he looked ridiculous. I had it on once and said, "I just can't do this." They all packed around me

when we went in a building for a meeting. This is a bittersweet story. Nothing happened. New Year came. New Year went. We were now into January 1984. All this tension was still there. About the 10th of January, the signal came through and they left. The local government knew the group was there. However, they hadn't done anything. The UAE government was very afraid to apprehend all these people that had the Iranians' backing when they hadn't done anything or demonstrated any malicious intent. But the security wall apparently convinced whoever was orchestrating this thing - probably Hashi Mupoor - that it wasn't such a soft target after all.

What happened? On the 19th of January, the president of the American University in Beirut, Malcolm Kerr, was assassinated. The bullet markings jived with this group. We became a hardened target. They said, "We've got to get a prominent American who's gettable." They got Malcolm Kerr, who I had seen in Abu Dhabi fundraising for the American University of Beirut about three months before.

Now, it gets really bittersweet. Malcolm Kerr I had known since he was 13 years old. He was a class behind me at Deerfield Academy and was a class behind me at Princeton University. Coming to grips with this took me quite some time. I have only recently begun to speak about this situation. Through roommates and things I have just tried to figure out when, if ever, I should talk to his wife and son about this particular incident. Maybe somebody has told them.

As an extra added postscript, the son involved is a young man named Steve Kerr. Steve was substitute point guard for the Chicago Bulls-Michael Jordan dynasty. You may have seen him on television. I think he's out of the League now, but that is just apropos of nothing except my interest in sports. But my story is probably not atypical. I bet there are many Foreign Service officers who have served in hazardous duty positions that find they are left after they've retired with these kinds of bittersweet memories about friends that were in one way or another enmeshed in the type of activities in which they were. I haven't told many people this story. Actually, it's sort of a catharsis for me to get rid of some of this stuff.

*Q: How did this security affect your working?*

LUMSDEN: I think it affected it a lot. I was not able to do my Hail Fellow, well met thing with everybody. I was able to have the essential contacts needed to conduct the work of the Department of State, to carry out my instructions, and to make essential reports on how the power structure was working. I was not getting deep down. Unfortunately, this security situation lasted from December 1983 all the way through the end of 1984 for two other subsequent things. These are sort of the highpoints of what I was doing there. The Shia bombing of Kuwait and the assassination attempt at the end of January/beginning of January 1984 were apparently a closed chapter. However, as they were considering removing the tight security - and remember, the Iraq-Iran war is still going on through all this - the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to France was assassinated. The vindication claim came from the Abu Nidal group. It said, "This will pay you back for letting the Americans have that influence in Abu Dhabi." This was when I was negotiating agreements to permit the U.S. Navy to refuel along the coast there so they didn't have to go all the way to Diego Garcia or back up to Bahrain to the smaller ships to get refueled for dry-docking in repair facilities, and for leave and recreation for the crew. Small steps considering what came thereafter. This had a very profound effect on the UAE. They said,

“Look, we’re the nice guys. Why would anybody assassinate our ambassador?” Of course, it made them very leery. They didn’t want to incur so much wrath. But this was not the Iranians. This was Abu Nidal. Of course, what he wanted was money. They were disturbed by the French reaction to this incident. I can remember being lectured by the foreign minister on this, that the French did not seem to care as long as it’s just an Arab killing an Arab. They said, “Well, that’s your business. You take care of that.” They’re not willing to pursue this like we are members of the international diplomatic community. That is one of those kind of imperious European reactions to people which you still find who don’t read it right. We, for all of our faults and for all of our naiveté, have an openness and a “let’s get to know each other” kind of attitude that people in the third world I find appreciate very much. They may try to accuse us of being post-colonial. In some ways, maybe we are. But in personal relationships, I think we have one up on some of the European traditionalists here as far as making friendships is concerned. But in any event, that caused the security to be maintained throughout the summer. The negotiations did move forward. We did get the refueling. We did get the leave and recreation. We did get the repairs both in Dubai and out of Fujairah.

*Q: Did you have to have separate agreements with each?*

LUMSDEN: In principle, yes. I had an agreement with the government of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi. But I didn’t have that agreement without a lot of coffee drinking and a lot of eating meals with the rulers of the various places where this was to happen. Until they gave their nod and said “We want to do this...” Of course, one of the reasons Dubai wanted to do this was, they wanted to charge us for repairs to the ships, which was fine with us. But that is the way you had to operate. You didn’t do it formally at the government level first without making sure that all of the local ducks were in a row. That was good. We made our first step towards getting the U.S. some sort of logistic support in the lower Gulf. So, the summer wore on.

Then a real doozy hit. These were the things that preoccupied me tremendously. In the second week in August 1984, I decided that, “It’s looking pretty good now.” The security people were still there, but they were getting more relaxed and getting ready to phase out. I said, “Look, I’m going to take my family and we’re going to meet the kids. We’re going to Greece.” My wife was a naturalized American citizen, Greek-born, and has family there. So, we took a two week vacation and went off to a little town called Khamanavorla and then out to the northern Sporades islands of Skopelos, Skiathos, and Alonissos. We got back from the island. My wife’s parents said, “They’ve been trying to get you from the State Department.” I said, “Oh, God, I’ve only been gone 72 hours. I’m on my vacation.” So, I called them. It was Dick Murphy. He said, “We’ve got a real problem here with this hijacking.” “Hijacking? What hijacking?” “You’re probably not with this, Quincey. Let me explain to you. An Indian Airlines plane (a domestic flight) en route from Tamilnadu down in the southeast to Delhi has been hijacked. The plane landed in Pakistan where it is alleged that the hijackers received logistic support and more arms but were told to take off because they didn’t want to start a war with India. It’s been flying around. Forty-eight hours ago, almost out of fuel, it landed in Dubai. There it sits with the hijackers on board. We have been negotiating.” I said, “Okay, I’m ready to go back. How are the negotiations going?” He said, “They’re all screwed up.” This happened at the very time that Republican National Convention was taking place in Texas and President Reagan was being nominated for his second term. So, all of the biggies were in Texas for the balloons, the naming

of the President for his second term. The hijack took place. The reason for the hijack was the intrusion of Indira Gandhi's government into the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the Sikh shrine, and the hijackers were Sikhs. During that military intervention into Sikh resisters, a man who was the high priest of the Sikhs named (Jarnail Singh) Bhindranwale, had been killed. This was the payback. The hijackers were threatening to start killing Hindus and start throwing them out of the plane.

As incredulous as this may sound, we got involved because as the five or seven hijackers, all young men between their late teens and mid-20s and tireder and tireder, they said, "All right, we will release. Our point has been made. Just so long as the conditions for our release are to go to the United States of America, where we know that Bhindranwale still lives with the large Sikh community located outside of Indio, California, where they raise fruits and vegetables." There is a huge Sikh community there. There are about 15-25,000 Sikhs that live in this valley in California. They're very wealthy and very prosperous, growing pears, tomatoes, cabbages, and everything else. By God. The State Department during the Republican National Convention - and I feel sorry for Kenneth Dam, who was left in charge of the State Department - finally said, "Okay, to prevent loss of life, we will permit the hijackers to come to the United States just so long as they realize that the instant they set foot in this country they are subject to full U.S. law and we have laws about this sort of thing." Well, of course, the Sikh community in the United States was following all this word by word. As I left to go down to Athens to get my instructions, the Sikh community had restraining orders at every conceivable airfield and Sikh lawyers there so that the Sikhs would get full due process when they got here. It would serve as a platform to rail against the government of India. That was Sunday. Monday, I headed down to Athens to get my instructions. Monday morning, Ronald Reagan and George Shultz came back. They in effect said, "What the hell is this? We never negotiate with hijackers. Now, we don't care what it is might have been said in the past three days. We ain't doing it and we're not letting these guys come to the United States. Get that back to the ambassador. Send him some instructions and tell him to call this whole thing off." I arrived in Athens and got my instructions from Alan Berlind or Roger Berlind (One is a Broadway producer and one is a Foreign Service officer.). I guess it's Roger. If it's not Roger, it's Alan Berlind. He is the producer of Kissing Kate, Amadeus. That is not the guy. It's the other guy. It's his brother. He said, "Quincey, I've read over these and these are the damndest instructions I've ever seen." There were 14 semi logical points to give to the UAE negotiator, who was Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid of Dubai, not of Abu Dhabi, because that is where the plane was. At the end, he said, "Tell them that if they're unable to accept this, we're not going to permit these guys to come to the United States anyway. So there. Period."

So, back I go. By that time, the Indians have gotten Indira Gandhi's top trouble shooter, Bandavi, there. A very helpful guy from security... I got back and I went in the first day to see Mohammad bin Rashid. I sat down and looked at him and said, "Well, Your Excellency, what I've got here is a whole lot of reasoning that says we're not going to do what we said we were going to do. So let's just forget that. I know that you value your relations with the United States. We've just negotiated some important agreements to your benefit and to ours. I know that neither one of us wants to see all this stuff come unraveled. Let's sit down together (using the Lyndon Johnson term), join hands, and reason. I just can't do that." He smiled and said, "You know, I kind of had an inkling this morning you were going to tell me something like that. What can we do?" Well, what we did was, we hired - with the wonderful assistance of this guy whose name I can't

remember - a plane from a private company in Kansas City, Missouri that had an American flag and flew it to Dubai and taxied this thing up to the plane with some American agents on it. They opened the plane up and said to the hijackers, "All right, here is your plane." Let the Americans out there. They by that time were totally exhausted. They got off the plane. Nobody got shot. They surrendered their weapons. They got on the plane. The Americans disappeared. Indian security guards got on the plane and flew to India. Nice trustworthy fellows. For a moment then, our relations with India skyrocketed except that I had a problem with Harry Barnes as the ambassador. He was much higher an ambassador than I was. I had worked out this deal on this. One thing was that Mohammad bin Rashid wanted to announce the successful conclusion of this. The Indian foreign minister insisted that he wanted to announce the resolution first. It was not to come out of Dubai. It was to come out of Delhi. He kept calling me on the phone saying, "You've got to let us do it." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I respect you, but I can't do it that way. I've made pledges here and there is a gentleman here who has his political reputation to look out for." "Darn it, Quincey, this is not good." Slam. Instructions from Washington. "Ambassador Barnes has called us. We wish you would consider the relationship with India, which is one of the large democracies in the world, blah, blah, blah." I called back to NEA/ARP. Dick Murphy wasn't there. I said, "Robin, I've got the instructions here. I understand why you have to clear them and send them to me, but please tell Dick that this is very important, that I am not going to follow those instructions and if the result of me not following them is not satisfactory to the Department of State, you have my resignation." So, I did it my way. They took off, talked to Bandavi, who was Indira Gandhi's troubleshooter. This was not the Indian foreign office. This was the power guy next to Indira Gandhi. He said, "Get this plane off the ground and headed toward India. Don't worry about the details." So, I felt fairly safe. It took off. I think Ambassador Barnes was ticked off. The foreign ministry was ticked off. Bandavi got back to India, spoke to Indira Gandhi. The next thing I know, it is about five days later and I had a letter from President Reagan, a commendation thanking me for the resolution of the hijacking without loss of life. But that is the kind of thing you every once in a while face. Your reputation, the reputation of the people that you're accredited to, and your respect for their willingness to negotiate with you under unusual circumstances where they have made some considerable concessions under duress is worth thinking about. I was lucky. I lucked out. Of course, that put me on the bad guy list for the Sikhs. So, the tight security continued throughout the rest of 1984 into the spring of '85, particularly as the war was going on. I never got completely free, but it was reduced. The U.S. bodyguard who accompanied me everywhere was finally (This was getting expensive) called off in the spring of '85. Then that first day when it was called off, I felt this great stone lifted. I could actually go to the job without somebody standing behind me. I got in my car and I drove from central Abu Dhabi out to the international airport with country western music blasting on the radio waving to everybody. By the time I got back, they said, "Where were you?" I said, "Well, I was just breathing the air a little bit. It felt so great to start functioning."

*Q: I would like to stop at this point if we can.*

LUMSDEN: We're coming to the end of my tour as ambassador. You may have some specific questions about the UAE, how the UAE has developed. It has become a very close ally in strategic thinking of ours. We have all sorts of defense arrangements with them. They go way beyond those little first steps.

*Q: I would like to ask next time how you felt they were absorbing their great wealth. I saw them when they were fishing villages. We're talking about 1958/1959. Dowels pulled up on the beach. I'd like to know how you felt they were managing their money and their society and relations with Saudi Arabia, Buraimi, and all that sort of stuff. Then we'll move on.*

LUMSDEN: And even the BCCI scandal.

*Q: Good.*

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*Today is the 8th of May 2000. Okay, oil money, border, and BCCI.*

LUMSDEN: Let's start with my understanding. Unless something unbeknownst to me has happened fairly recently to the border situation in the area, it involved basically four countries - Saudi Arabia, the biggie; the Sultanate of Oman; the United Arab Emirates; and Qatar. What has happened is that by sort of tacit agreement, these countries are not going to formalize their borders bilaterally or trilaterally - possibly even not quadrilaterally - until everybody's agreed to everything. In the negotiations to date, certain concessions have been made and certain liberties taken by the more powerful player that people don't want to acknowledge until it's a done deal because of the likely tribal political fallout. Starting with Qatar, formally, the last recognized agreement was that the United Arab Emirates has a common border with the state of Qatar. De facto through negotiations between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in order to solve the Shayba Zararra problem in the aftermath of that as much as 15-18 years ago, Sheikh Zayid of the United Arab Emirates acquiesced in a Danzig Corridor for Saudi Arabia through the area called the "Sabhat Makhdi," which is basically quicksand, the Sabha, which you don't want to get into if you're in the Middle East. You sink right into the damn thing, but where a pipeline from the Saudi exploitation of the oil fields south of the oasis there would take place. Nobody deigned even tell the Qataris formally - of course, the Qataris knew damn well what was going on - that they were changing neighbors. Qatar being a very small place and not being in much of a position with its total of at that time probably less than 100,000 native citizens to do very much about anything. So, that corridor remains in confidential papers held certainly by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates and certainly having been conveyed to Qatar and Oman by this time.

Moving on, as a settlement of the Shayba Zararra disputes, Saudi Arabia and the UAE did agree on a demarcation line which would be sort of a southern border of Abu Dhabi going all the way from this Danzig Corridor all the way over to the Buraimi Oasis and a bit beyond. That line, which has not been formally agreed, terminates at a mound in the Rub al-Khali called the "Oma Zumah," which is recognized by everybody as the point at which the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman come together. What has not been agreed is how the lines emanate from that point, except for this one agreed between Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The main problem is that, suspecting that there are more hydrocarbon deposits in the area, Saudi Arabia, treads on little sheikdoms to the south.

*Q: We call that a "radfahrer" in German.*



LUMSDEN: Yes, “bicycle.” So, the Saudis have not deigned to agree with Sultan Qaboos on a demarcation line between Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman. Indeed, they have gone so far as to push their view of, “Well, the last real agreement we had was with your grandfather at Fuad Hamza Bay,” which is a line which would chop off 50-60% of the western part of the Sultanate of Oman. Of course, that is politically unacceptable. As far as I know, no forward movement has been made on that.

Of course, coming down out of that, whenever you do get a line, you run south going into the Hadramut and the Omani-Yemeni-Saudi situation. I am not very conversant with where that stands right now. After the “unification” of the Yemen, there may be some action there which I am not aware of at this time.

*Q: I would hope we were keeping out of this thing as much as we could.*

LUMSDEN: I did my level best to simply be aware of what it was and say nothing whatsoever about what Uncle Sam thought should be done. We had gotten ourselves very close to being in a mess when the oil companies tried to drag us in on either side of this in the ‘50s. It was terrible!

*Q: But Aramco was acting as technical advisor to Saudi Arabia and the British political agency was acting as technical advisor to Abu Dhabi.*

LUMSDEN: Yes. At one point, I can’t remember whether it was Shakput or Zayid who asked Faisal, who was either King or negotiating for the Saudis, “How far does your border go?” He said, “Right up to the cushion on which you’re sitting.” That is the way the Saudis treated these guys. So, I don’t believe you’re going to have a ready formal definition of that boundary until everybody is quite sure they know exactly where all the hydrocarbons are and can make arrangements. In the meantime, the way things are in that part of the world, there is no real urgent pressure.

*Q: No. Even if you end up with finding hydrocarbons, you can very easily end up with a neutral zone a la Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.*

LUMSDEN: You could. In the meantime, the danger is irritating the tribes, which have difficulty comprehending the western sense of formal boundaries anyway. They have a concept of “dar,” which means “house” or “area.” “Our people come from here. We roam all around here.” It’s very vague. Everybody would know who had priority interest in the water well.

*Q: Oh, yes, and whose date palm trees...*

LUMSDEN: Yes.

*Q: How about nomadism? How were things at the time you were there?*

LUMSDEN: Times are changing. I first went to Kuwait back in 1970 and 1971. It was very much a nomad society. At least it was in Abu Dhabi. When you got up into the northern

emirates, the tribes in Dubai were from the same Bani Yas group as those in Abu Dhabi. However, they had a certain mercantile sense. Then you went even further north and you got into the Callosum, which were maritime people. They were the pirates and raiders.

*Q: And there wasn't much room to maneuver around in anyway.*

LUMSDEN: No. That is my understanding of where the border situation out there stands. It could stand that way for some time.

As far as money absorption, to paraphrase Lord Acton, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Money corrupts and unlimited amounts of money corrupt absolutely." They have done marvelous things physically to this area. You would be astounded, as you have been there back in the '50s and '60s, that it is really remarkable. It was done. It couldn't have been done without corruption. That is how money flowed. Conflict of interest things that our minds would be boggled at go on there. It is also in that the Bedouin is not necessarily a very generous person when he gets his hands on money. Whether it's one dinar or 20 billion dinar, his attitude stays somewhat the same. They have driven some western businesses quite nutty in paying up on bills and things owed, thinking, "The world needs us so badly that they'll let us just hang off on this until we've put the company through the ringer four more times and get more out of them." A good example of that. You can see in the Wall Street Journal, which I happened to bring along because this is my valedictoire here. April 20th. "How a Gulf Sheikhdome Landed Sweet Deal with Lockheed and Martin." See how they evolved on this eight billion dollar F-16 sale. By the way, I was three times interviewed for this article here as long as they didn't use my name. It shows how once they get you into the demander position, they can really grind you up. The fact of the matter is though that they have come to grief several times with all their money.

The prime example, of course, would be the BCCI mess. It was a bank started by expatriate Pakistanis with the idea that an Islamic-run bank can be one of the biggies of the world - and they were sort of infatuated with this. They started to acquire more. As a matter of fact, BCCI gave Michael Sterner a loan to build the residence that the embassy has in Abu Dhabi. This was done and paid back long, long before the scandal ever hit. We're talking back in the mid-1970s. The scandal didn't hit until 1991 when it came loose. But what was happening there, for example, was that these very persuasive Pakistanis were corrupting foreign bank officials, making deals with Latin American drug dealers to launder their money, getting all sorts of sweetheart loans and things out to people in governments who may or may not have been good loans, and most egregiously from our point of view, the takeover of the First American Bank shares in Washington. That was when I was the desk officer back in 1972-1974... Faisal was emir of Kuwait. Khalid Mahfuz of Saudi Arabia and a group of others (I can't remember all the names now.) tried to purchase First American Bank shares. I was interested in this mainly because First American Bank shares is the Bernard F. Saul empire. Frances Saul, B. F. Saul's daughter, long since passed away, was my mother's bridesmaid. So, I knew a little bit about the family history. Well, it was quite clear that U.S. banking laws did not permit this group of foreigners to take over this bank. Don't press me on exactly how the law read, but it didn't work. It was an ugly duckling.

However, I came back as deputy director of the area in 1979. By that time, Clark Clifford and Altman had gotten involved.

*Q: Clark Clifford had been Secretary of Defense and advisor to the President. But at this point, he was a distinguished attorney, but quite elderly.*

LUMSDEN: Yes. A senior statesman and advisor. Of course, with the entering of those people into it, what I had thought was an ugly duckling - and everybody agreed back in 1970 - suddenly became a soaring eagle. One of the things is how domestic politics here can simply crush foreign policy considerations. It's unbelievable, particularly now that we have no real threat out there. So, the thing went on. I will be frank to admit that during the period 1982-1986 when I was actually in Abu Dhabi, I perceived nothing, absolutely nothing, out of the ordinary in the activities of BCCI. As a matter of fact, when people like Andrew Young and Muskie and others came to visit, BCCI was one of the big entertainers.

*Q: BCCI was active in Abu Dhabi?*

LUMSDEN: It had offices there, but the government of Abu Dhabi owned about 70% of the bank. Because of that 70% ownership, when all of this broke loose, the government of Abu Dhabi tried to say, "Oh, we're the victims here. We should get 70% of any money that comes back." This totally abrogated the fact that they were responsible for oversight of the actions - in particular, a friend of mine named Zanu Madruli, who was the head of the private purse. But showing the sophistication and corruption of the BCCI leadership, they knew where every single target person they had had a weakness. It was either money itself, alcohol, women, drugs... Zanu Madruli was above all that, absolutely righteous, an extremely righteous Muslim, and was sold on the fact that this is a pure Muslim operation with which we will show that Islam can be one of the banking greats of the world. Of course, as head of the private purse, he had influence over the Abu Dhabi investment authority. One thing led to another. All of a sudden, the whole thing collapsed. The New York State attorney, Morgenthau, indicted the ruler. They had to work out a deal. They had to give up any claim they had to paying back the creditors and in Abu Dhabi. I can't remember if it was 1 or 2 billion dollars to pay back all the poor little creditors, mostly not in the United States but in Britain and Europe where a lot of Pakistanis and others had put their life savings into this thing.

*Q: This was after your time.*

LUMSDEN: This was afterwards. I left in '86. The scandal didn't break open until '91. It was in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

*Q: Was anybody asking... Here is a bank being run in a very small country. It comes across like an offshore bank really.*

LUMSDEN: Oh, they had Cayman Islands, too. Abu Dhabi, Cayman Islands, some place in Luxembourg...

*Q: But normally all sorts of signals are emanating from this. But were you getting anything from the Treasury saying, "Hey, look out for these guys?"*

LUMSDEN: We said, "Look out for these guys" in 1972, but in 1979 and '80, no one was interested in listening to what some dumb little deputy director of NEA/ARP had to say. We're talking big time now.

*Q: Within this power structure, you had people like Clifford and Altman, and I suppose there were a lot of other people who were-*

LUMSDEN: This is just one example of the way things tended to operate on that island. It's too bad that the Foreign Service, being sort of an unknown quantity to the body politic of Americans, doesn't really have an impact and can be easily excluded.

*Q: I was just wondering whether anybody coming around even jokingly said, "Well, I'll guess they're not up to any good" or something like that.*

LUMSDEN: Oh, yes, there was considerable "Boy, this looks like a slick deal here that's going on." But nobody was going to stop the Limited coming down the tracks.

*Q: Nobody was going to put that money into...*

LUMSDEN: The final resolution of First American Bank shares I knew at one point. They had to get \$400 million or something like that that had been bilked out of that bank. I don't think they got the whole sum, but they got 70 cents on the dollar or something like that. This was a great event.

*Q: Was BCCI playing much of a role other than corruption? Was it sort of the investment bank or the bank one went to to build up a port facility and all that?*

LUMSDEN: They did. They weren't the only bank doing this, but there were a number of big banks in the area. They did participate in a lot of infrastructure development loans, quite a few. But the point I'm trying to make is that this aura of money corrupted the government to the point where they thought, "Well, we're totally innocent on this. People come in and tell us these things. Well, gee, we're just a poor Bedouins." They said, "No, that's not the way it works, fellows." When they threatened to indict the ruler of Abu Dhabi and have him subject to arrest if he ever came to the United States, the pennies sort of dropped then. But they had to take a strain on it. And they did. It's a learning process. That is the kind of thing that happens.

*Q: There you are. As the American ambassador, did you feel that there were not just these Pakistanis, but other slick operators coming from the United States and everywhere else? When there is money and the smell of money and the smell of oil.*

LUMSDEN: Endless numbers of them. Americans, Europeans, Japanese, Chinese, all in there looking to cut one sort of deal or another. Like moths to the light they came in.

*Q: Obviously, it didn't work in the BCCI one, but was there a body or a person or something who was sorting out these things? Were you ever turned to and told, "What about this Elmer Gantry operation that says they'll put in a communications network or something?"*

LUMSDEN: I have on several occasions both promoted and demoted business propositions that were floating around. But on BCCI-

*Q: This was not at your pay grade.*

LUMSDEN: No, no. People would come in with scatterbrained ideas. Then people would have something going on in the States and hire a lawyer. Suddenly, the law firm would fly 12 lawyers out to Abu Dhabi just to run up the billable hours and things. It was egregious. Anybody was doing this to them. That's why they had really forced their native Bedouin defense mechanism that you've got to watch everybody; they're all out to try and stick you. But of course, the ultimate ones that they were suspicious of were other Arabs from the area. Really, the idea of negotiating with another Arab who might get the best of you was a real problem for them. With the oil companies, they would ultimately come around. The oil companies had a certain way of working with these people. It was the slick operators who would come in with their attaché case and flip open the thing and bring out a contract when they only just met someone twice or something like that.

*Q: Oil companies are there to stay. I watched Aramco evolve. They burrowed their way into the society. They realized that if they're going to be around for awhile... "We're not here just to milk money out. We want to get the juice for a long time, but we have to share and slick stuff doesn't work over the long haul."*

LUMSDEN: I don't know whether I've mentioned it or not. I can no longer remember; I've talked so much here. The oil companies were highly enough thought of in Abu Dhabi that they were never nationalized. They took 60%, but they left 40% equity with the major oil companies operating there, which is one of the wisest things that they ever did.

*Q: How were the Kuwaitis seen at this time by the powers that be in Emirates?*

LUMSDEN: The Kuwaitis were considered slick and arrogant, always willing to tell you what you ought to be doing. One of the main problems with the development of the Gulf Cooperation Council's unified market is... The borders are supposed to come down, labor and capital can move. There is not that much native labor. Most of all the labor comes from the subcontinent anyway. But capital? Do you think Dubai and Abu Dhabi want about \$30-40 billion of Kuwaiti money coming down there and starting to buy up stuff? No, no, they don't.

*Q: When you look at the transcript, you may want to add more. Let's go to '86.*

LUMSDEN: There is one thing I think I probably should mention. We talk about the Iran-Contra situation. Iran-Contra broke in the spring of '86, I guess. However, during the last few months that I was in Abu Dhabi, strange stories started to come out first from the local Abu Dhabi CIB (their radios). They told me they were picking up some American voices in plain English - and it

had been relayed down from Dubai as well, which was even closer - of American flights headed into Iran. What was all this about? I said, "What?" We had been pushing the Iraq tilt, which I think we did talk about. Murphy and I. George Shultz. Me at the bottom of the totem pole. We did have an NSA group with green ears in the embassy. Now, the NSA never tells the ambassador squat about anything.

*Q: The NSA is the National Security Agency which listens to a lot of people. It's very curious.*

LUMSDEN: It's very curious. They do all the super sophisticated stuff. But what I was talking about was hardly super sophisticated. It was Citizen Band radio. I did ask. They said, "You know, we did get some funny stuff coming over just on our little side readers." You would think they never told them anything about what they were really doing up there. So, I asked the Department what it was. I got a nice little friendly NODIS saying, "Quincey, this is not for you to worry about. Just be quiet." I asked the station chief to go back to Langley. He got the same kind of message: "This is nothing for you to worry about. Just shut up." About a week after that, a gentleman named Albert Hakim... You may remember him. His name was mentioned along with Secord and others as setting up the arrival with the birthday cake, the key, and all that. They had to talk to go get the planes in. I had seen him several times before. He said, "Mr. Ambassador, you do understand, don't you, that there has been a fundamental change in U.S. arms sales policy towards Iran?" My response was, "Possibly, Albert, but not as far as I'm concerned. There has not been." This was probably the smartest thing I ever said in my life.

Soon after that, it got to be '86. I left. The thing broke in the spring of '86. I was asked to Geneva to address a conference on oil pricing. I got down there to the hotel in Geneva and who was the first person I should meet? "Hell, Mr. Ambassador. It's Albert Hakim." People are looking at me. Of course, it was the time that he was slushing the money from one account to the other so he wouldn't be caught. I out of dumb luck said the right thing. Murphy and the Secretary of State were in the agonizing position of really knowing about this, but formally were totally against the policy, having to say, "We know nothing about it" and playing dumb. A couple of other officers pretended that they knew something about it and got themselves in hot water. I stayed stupid and stayed out. But the sofa is still in the embassy in Abu Dhabi. We call it the "Albert Hakim Memorial Sofa" where he sat.

**DAVID MICHAEL RANSOM**  
**Deputy Chief of Mission**  
**Abu Dhabi (1983-1985)**

*Ambassador David Ransom was born in Missouri on November 23, 1938. He received his AB from Princeton University in 1960 as well as a BA from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1962. He served in the US Marine Corps from 1962 to 1965 as a 1rst lieutenant and entered the Foreign Service in 1965, wherein he served in Yemen, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and Bahrain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 2, 1999.*

*Q: In 1983, whither?*

RANSOM: Once again, Marjorie and I decided on a post where we could both serve. We had done this once before when I came out of the National Security Council and went to Yemen from 1975-1978. You will recall that we had worked it out at that time for me to be DCM in Yemen and she to be the public affairs officer. Having set that example, we went on to Abu Dhabi. I've often thought that leaving my post in Defense where I had been fairly prominent in my area and going off to be DCM in Abu Dhabi might be seen by some as a demotion that I would not have taken if I had not been part of a tandem couple. I can tell you that we once again thought that we were very lucky to have good jobs and good jobs together.

*Q: You were in Abu Dhabi from when to when?*

RANSOM: 1983-1985. We had a wonderful ambassador, Quincey Lumsden, whom we liked very, very much. He was a thoughtful, cautious man with a great deal of charm and generosity. He was well versed in the area. He had served in many different places. He and his wife were magnificent hosts and hostesses and Marjorie and I got along with them extremely well. The post was not an easy one for people who were interested in being active, as Marjorie and I were. Frankly, it was difficult to make contacts with Abu Dhabi citizens. They were only emerging from a very simple state to racing through an oil boom which brought tons of money into the area.

*Q: Was Dubai in that area?*

RANSOM: Yes, Dubai was in that area. They also were very cautious in foreign policy, deferring in some ways to Saudi Arabia, in some ways wary of Iran--not too certain how much they wanted to be involved in the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council]. In any case, they were not interested really in cooperating with us on military or security matters because of Vietnam and their perception of our inability to commit forces in large numbers overseas. We had a small force in the Gulf. One of the things I tried to do was to raise the number of ship visits from two a year in Abu Dhabi to six or eight. While we succeeded, the difficulty was astounding when you compare it to the Gulf War when we put 500,000 troops into the area with the support of all the local governments.

So, the first year in Abu Dhabi was in many ways a slow one. We tried to get around the country. There are many sheikhdoms. We traveled up and down. We visited ruling families. I often thought that we had more contact with the ruling families than the ruling families had with each other because we were always asked about the others that we had visited.

*Q: What did Abu Dhabi consist of?*

RANSOM: Abu Dhabi was one emirate among eight which called themselves the United Arab Emirates. The constitution made it very clear that each emirate had veto power and independent judgment on all matters of foreign policy and defense. Essentially the UAE had a customs unit, a common currency, and one member, Abu Dhabi, who was prepared to pay the bills of all of

them. So, through financing of roads, schools, health facilities, and such, Abu Dhabi government gained a considerable sway which made it look like there was a unified government. In fact, in Dubai, you saw the fallacy of all of this. In Dubai, all of those bills - the roads, schools, and health - were paid by the Dubai government, which had an independent oil income. They counted that as their contribution to the UAE federal budget. In fact, they operated very quietly and politely in a completely autonomous and independent fashion. To do anything in Dubai, you went to Dubai authorities and worked it out with them. In fact, it was easier for a U.S. Air Force plane to get a landing clearance in Dubai (I could do that with a telephone call.) than it was for a UAE labeled helicopter or plane to get landing permission in Dubai. But in the canny ways that Arabs have in this part of the world, the system worked because they were not willing to make a fuss over anything, beyond preserving their family, tribal, and regional independence while holding up their system to the world empathizing bonds of friendship with their neighbors. In any case, there was so damn much money flowing in that it would have been amazing if disputes had emerged.

Abu Dhabi was also very lucky in having as its leader a man who everybody in that part of the world liked and respected, Sheikh Zayed. It had basically a very tolerant political system. After Abu Dhabi, I was to go to Syria, where the jails were filled with political prisoners. There was no political prisoner in the UAE – then or now. There is a fair amount of dissension that is known and tolerated, but the government focuses almost entirely on the threat to it from outside forces, not on inside forces. So, that made it a rather nice place to live and work.

*Q: How about succession? When I was in Dhahran back in the late 1950s, I don't think there was a single one of the ruling houses where there hadn't been coups, assassinations, all kind of inter-family disputes as far as successions went. Had they sorted this out pretty well by your time?*

RANSOM: There is in place now in Abu Dhabi a succession scheme which is likely to work. It involves the oldest son of Sheikh Zayed, Khalifa, who would take over from his father. But that does not really sort out the UAE succession because it doesn't address who will be the president of the UAE, who will be foreign minister, defense minister, etc. I think it also does not sort out the longer term succession issue -- what portfolios will be run by what sons, what cousins. These systems decisions are reached within family and tribal councils with a fair amount of sophistication. I would be surprised if there would be either no surprises or much dissent. It will work, but not quite the way we think it will. We don't know exactly how it will come out. But in the end, I think all of those countries are going to end up looking and acting pretty much the way they do now.

*Q: How about the relations with Iran? There has always been this trading back and forth. How did the UAE view Iran and also Iraq in these days?*

RANSOM: This is a complicated question. Dubai had very strong relationships with Iran based on trade and entrepot services and they were never going to reduce those. In fact, they have expanded them. During my tour, it was strong and growing. The UAE was always much more cautious about Iran. Trade didn't exist and many of the oil producing islands in the Gulf that belonged to the UAE were impossible to defend against Iran. The sense of threat on the part of



the UAE government was very great. There was also a genuine and strong tension between the Persian speakers and the Arabic speakers in the Gulf. There was an even deeper tension between Shia and Sunni. There was a tension between tribal families and non-tribal families. There were many Arab families in Abu Dhabi and in Dubai who were Sunni Muslim Arabs, but of Iranian ancestry. They were not part of the tribal system which rules in the Gulf countries. So, they were always slightly on the outside and trying to fit in. The jigsaw puzzle was very complicated. But there was a consensus in those countries on the way business would be conducted and by and large it worked.

*Q: What was the impact of the Iran-Iraq War at this time?*

RANSOM: The general feeling on that part of the rulers of Abu Dhabi, of Dubai and of the other emirates was that these two countries deserved their war with each other. The important goal was that neither would win. If there had been a predominant power in that part of the world, either Iraqi or Iranian, that would have posed a very large security threat.

That is, of course, what eventually happened and it led, as these rulers feared, directly to the invasion of Kuwait. The Iraqis eventually defeated the Iranians. The Iranians were forced to withdraw from the battlefield and end the war. They could not sustain combat any longer. The Iraqis then turned around and invaded Kuwait. I believe they would have invaded other countries eventually to take over even more of the oil resources of that part of the world. The balance of power in the Gulf - and I think that's the only way to look at it - rests with two predominant states, Iraq and Iran; the other GCC states cannot maintain defense against either of those two in any kind of contest. Therefore, the balance between the two powers seems to them to be critically important. The other states, so much smaller, want to accommodate the bigger states rather than confront them. Their traditional policy is one of appeasement of both Iraq and Iran rather than confrontation. That is why the situation in the Gulf right now is so unnatural. The GCC is in a state of confrontation with Iraq. What they really want is for Iraq to be a strong state, so that it can balance Iran.

*Q: At this time, 1983-1985, what were we trying to do in Abu Dhabi and the Gulf states?*

RANSOM: I think our policy was to get in on the oil boom as much as possible. It was to make sure that the fragile state system that had been established in the aftermath of independence, which came in the early 1970s, did not break down with squabbles over borders and things like this. It was to attempt to create a stronger American security presence. That was very difficult because we really couldn't make commitments and states in the area were reluctant to accommodate us when they didn't think that we were wholeheartedly involved. So, that was difficult. Our security efforts, for instance, as illustrated by the sale of weapons was hobbled by concerns that we shouldn't sell them too much sophisticated and high tech gear. If we had a military aircraft that we would sell to them, we would try to sell them five, but that was totally unacceptable to them. So, that part of the effort was largely unsuccessful, but we worked away at it. Then we caught the backlash in many of these states by their dissatisfaction with our Middle East peacemaking process. We were fitfully involved in that through that whole period. The goal was to shore up what support we could get in that part of the world for a general peace process

policy and to tamp down negative reactions as much as possible. In that, I think we were successful.

Finally, we tried to maintain a watching brief on Iran from the UAE. That meant talking to UAE officials who might know something about Iran and talking to people who were coming out of Iran for one or another reason. We had an imaginative and innovative program of meeting people from Iran, picking them off our consular line, and getting them to talk about their cities and their local situations. What little Foreign Service reporting there was on Iran we did from the UAE. It got generally high marks. It was not like having an embassy on the ground in the capital city where you're in touch with officials, but we didn't make many mistakes in our reporting and we were able to send Washington a great deal of firsthand impressions. That was good work. Our efforts eventually became a model for similar activities in Istanbul and to some extent in Syria. We bolstered Foreign Service reporting on a country with which we did not have diplomatic relations.

*Q: What about Oman? About this time, weren't we working on some major investments in Oman?*

RANSOM: I had been directly involved in the military delegation led by Reggie Bartholomew of the PM bureau in State; that went to Oman and negotiated a facilities agreement. We did the same thing in Somalia and in Kenya. This was when I was in DoD. These were some of the most important projects that I was involved in. They came with a great deal of money for the building of facilities and for maintaining pre-positioned supplies. That was about as much as we could get done in light of Congressional attitudes and in light of the atmosphere in the area. In fact, it was quite surprising that we succeeded in getting that much done. These three countries were picked because we thought they would cooperate. I was the one who suggested the names of the countries and I was glad to be able to follow up afterwards by actually participating in the negotiating of the agreements. We had not tried to arrange for such an agreement in the UAE because we thought that we could not get it done there. While I was in the UAE, I worked very hard with one of the emirates, Ras al-Khaimah, to set up a similar program. It caused a fair amount of neuralgia in Abu Dhabi which did not want to see the UAE or any part of it dragged into military and security cooperation arrangement. In the end, the Department decided that the willingness of Ras al-Khaimah to go ahead with the storage facilities was not sufficiently important to risk negative reactions from other members of the UAE and the GCC. So, we never developed those facilities, although I spent a great deal of time on the road going down to Ras al-Khaimah talking to everybody about how to do it, what it would mean, and negotiating, in fact, a very long set of specifics as to what would be stored there and how and how it would be maintained, etc. I spent two years on this project.

*Q: Before we move on, how did you find our commercial interests were served there?*

RANSOM: We had a good commercial officer with a good office. We worked very hard to introduce American businessmen who were coming to the country to some of the leading families and merchants. American trade was quite large. I guess it is true that I spent much more of my time on political and security issues than on commercial activities, and certainly later in my career, I had reason to rue that decision. But it seemed the right thing to do at the time and it

was the best use of my experience at the time. The general commercial goal was to help Americans get in on the oil wealth. The Gulf Arabs, of course, were very interested in the same thing but were not generally successful. In the Middle East, commerce was usually carried out through third parties, often Lebanese or Syrian; they could sometimes be difficult for American companies. The oil business was a fractious business. A bunch of Algerians had come to dominate the Abu Dhabi Oil Company. The management of the business was run through Paris rather than through American oil companies. There were American oil companies working there. We got our share of the pie, I would say.

*Q: Were the restrictions on "bribery" that we had legislated a few years earlier an inhibitor?*

RANSOM: I think it was almost certainly an inhibitor. But my view, which has grown up over many years of watching this policy at work, is that it was the right thing to do and we had been right in trying to persuade other nations to follow our lead rather than being pressed to mimic other nations.

We certainly lost a lot of contracts when the legislation was passed. As I said, a lot of business was conducted in the Middle East using middlemen and agents from the Levant; they didn't understand or appreciate why our companies were so reluctant to pay a bribe. As far as they were concerned, bribes were part of the price of doing business. The French, Italian, British, German, and Asian companies had no such inhibitions and openly admitted their practices. But if you look at the trade figures, we certainly didn't do badly.

*Q: In 1985, where were you assigned?*

RANSOM: In 1985, Marjorie and I had completed two years in Abu Dhabi; we were doing quite well. One day, I got a call from Dick Murphy, the assistant secretary for the Near East; he thought that I would be a good DCM in Damascus. He thought that that was a bigger and a more important post than Abu Dhabi. We worked out assignments for Marjorie culminating in her appointment as PAO a year later. She wasn't going to be able to do that for the first year because there was an incumbent, but she would be able to follow his activities and in the meantime, do other things on a regional basis for USIA from Damascus. So, off we went to Syria.

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*Q: What is the time frame you are describing?*

RANSOM: It must have been 1991, maybe 1992. In the lead-up to the Gulf War and during the war we had many conversations with Turgid Ozal, whom President Bush admired as a leader and as a friend in a time of need. There were more than 52 conversations by telephone between George Bush and Ozal. I had developed a relationship with the people in the White House while serving as a country director. I suggested calls, ideas, words, that the president might use; in return I got playback from them on these conversations. This was enormously useful both for myself and for Mort Abramowitz in charting a course in American relations with Turkey. Ozal was eager to have his friend George Bush come to Turkey; he was losing support of the Turkish population. He had gotten too far out in front of his countrymen. His relations with the military

were strained. He had coalition problems in parliament and he thought George Bush's trip would give him a great boost in popularity. It did, but it wasn't enough to stop the steady descent in public opinion and he eventually was voted out of office in new elections.

The trip to Istanbul and to Ankara with the President was wonderful. It was quite unusual that a country director should be taken along on a presidential trip. Usually, no one below an assistant secretary would be invited. But by this time, I had become pretty much "Mr. Turkey" in the Department of State. The European bureau chiefs were quite willing to see me step into the role of trip coordinator. Every stage of the visit was something that I had planned, choreographed, and scripted. The themes and talking points had all come out of my office, usually working with Nick Burns, now our ambassador in Greece, who was in the NSC at the time, and Jane Howell, an Army officer, who was a very talented NSC staff member.

I had used the NSC communications channel, which was outside of the Department of State. I think I put it to good use on many occasions, but never so remarkably as at the end of the war when I drafted letters for George Bush to send to the leaders of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait, asking them each to fund a Turkish purchase of F-16s at a cost of \$1 billion each. In the lead-up to the war, I had been very busy trying to put together various aid packages. We got aid specifically designated for Turkey from Germany, Britain, Japan, and many other countries. We used the oil pipeline closing as the issue that framed the request, but, in fact, I managed to get the issue of Turkish aid onto the agenda of many international meetings at a time that we were putting together the coalition. The totals of U.S. and other aid to Turkey came to over \$6 billion. The Turks never really like to acknowledge this, but it was an extraordinary windfall. As I said very plainly to their chief of staff, their foreign minister, and their prime minister, if it hadn't been for American assistance, they wouldn't have gotten any of it. The assistance from Japan may as well have come from the United States. They understood that and appreciated it, but they didn't really want to acknowledge it.

The aircraft sale was something which appeared to be a presidential initiative. In fact, it had to go through Scowcroft. If he checked with anybody in the department of state, I don't know about it. He may have talked to Eagleburger. But the letters were sent and they caused a considerable amount of distress in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait because it was such a large sum of money coming at the end of a war which had already cost all of these states a great deal. Chas Freeman in particular regarded it as a travesty of American diplomacy. He had no idea how the letter was written or from where it had come. But he didn't want to deliver it. For that, he won a rebuke for himself in James Baker's book about diplomacy. Baker said that one of our best ambassador's had been afflicted with clientitis. But despite all reservations, these countries delivered. It didn't come out to be \$3 billion, but it was \$2 billion. The F-16s are now in Turkey. They were actually built in Turkey and that was another achievement that we claim that benefited Turkey.

**MARJORIE RANSOM**  
**Public Affairs Officer, USIS**  
**Abu Dhabi (1983-1985)**

*Marjorie Ransom was born in New York in 1938. She received her bachelor's degree from Trinity University in 1959 and her master's degree from Columbia University in 1962. Her career includes positions in Jordan, India, Iran, Yemen, Washington D.C., Abu Dhabi, Syria, and Egypt. Mrs. Ransom was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 2000.*

*Q: Today is April 12, 2001. We're off to Abu Dhabi. I'm one of the few people who could say I was in Abu Dhabi. I was there back in the late '50s.*

RANSOM: What were you doing in the 50s?

*Q: I was a vice consul in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. We had the whole Persian Gulf save Kuwait. I used to travel and do visas and go around and kind of report in Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, and the Trucial States (That was before they became the United Emirates).*

*How did you get the assignment and how long were you there?*

RANSOM: David and I had had one tandem assignment to Yemen from '75-'78 and we were looking for another tandem assignment. So, we were paying close attention to people who were rumored to take ambassadorial positions in the Arab countries so we could go lobby. We learned that the ambassadorial candidate for the United Arab Emirates [UAE] was going to be Quincy Lumsden, Jr., someone David knew quite well. I remember going to call on Quincy. He was in that awkward position which people get into when they know that their name is on the State Department's list. It might well have gone through the White House; I'm not sure. But he certainly had not had his hearings. So, everything that he said was conditioned on his confirmation by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But he welcomed the idea of a tandem couple in the DCM and Public Affairs Officer positions. Both were opening at the same time, which was a minor miracle. It worked. He was confirmed. We went on our second tandem assignment to Abu Dhabi. We had always worked in Arab countries where Arabic was spoken on the street and where Arab civilization had a very strong cultural presence that made its impact on you every day. But I remember, when we went to Abu Dhabi, we went through a big transition. It was the first time we had worked in a wealthy Arab country. It was the first time we had worked in a country where it was difficult on a daily basis to find somebody to speak Arab with. It was a very young country.

*Q: When you say a "country," are we talking about Abu Dhabi? When I was there, it was a sheikhdom. Now we're talking about it as the capital of the UAE.*

RANSOM: Yes, Abu Dhabi is an emirate, but it is the capital of the seven emirates. It was very much and is the capital of a loose federation of emirates. The central government spends a major part of its time focusing on the coalition of emirates and particularly the emirate of Dubai, which is a very economically strong emirate that competes with Abu Dhabi in many ways. There were always delicate negotiations going on on that front. Of course, the UAE became a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC], which was in its early days when we were there. That is another type of federation of powerful, rich states of which Saudi Arabia is the strongest

member. But Abu Dhabi also had to engage in constant negotiations with the members of the GCC to make its will felt. That made it an extremely interesting place to work.

*Q: You were there from '83 to when?*

RANSOM: From '83-'85. It was a differential post because of the strangeness of the working conditions. It was a two-year tour then. Toward the end of our two years, we were ready to extend for another year. It really took us as Arabists a year to get used to the Emirates, but we then became quite enthusiastic about it and wanted to stay a third year. We left because we got another interesting tandem assignment.

*Q: How did you find this different?*

RANSOM: The natives of the Emirates comprised roughly 15% of the total population. The workers that you came into daily contact with were not from the Emirates. They were foreign. In many cases, certainly the blue-collar workers were not Arabs. They were primarily from South Asia, from India, and they didn't speak Arabic. They spoke Urdu or Hindi. We could not communicate with them except in English. For us, that was a source of some frustration. The radio broadcasts often were in other languages. It was a tremendous challenge for everybody in the embassy to get to know people who were naïveté's of the UAE. Many of our important interlocutors were advisors to the government and not themselves natives – often Arabs, but not natives. That was a daily challenge. I finally figured out in my own work that my best vehicle for getting to know people from the Emirates was to find out who had studied in the U.S. and to find a way to connect with them through their studies. Also, in a country as small as the United Arab Emirates, the number of people who really were powerful was quite small and there was a lot of competition with other diplomats for their attention. It was always a challenge to find areas of common interest with the people who were powerful. One of their favorite pastimes was going hunting with falcons. It's not an interest that any of us were born with. So, I think we had to develop some new skills. It didn't happen overnight. It took us about a year.

*Q: As PAO, you are supposed to reach out. Did you aim strictly at the UAE people as far as your target or did you figure that the guest workers there were also people with whom you might want to keep in contact?*

RANSOM: Our target audience was, we had a few, but we in the media field dealt with several expatriates, primarily Arabs – I remember a Bahraini editor in particular – but also a South Asian or two in the English language media. On the university side, in the academic area, our primary dealings were with expatriate professors. There were almost no UAE professors. My primary target was a member of the ruling family who was the chancellor of the university. He was my most interesting contact and was someone that the ambassador was kind enough to let me deal with directly. He was a young sheikh, much younger than I was, probably in his late 20s, and was seized with the responsibility of developing a university that would be a federal institution to bring together the youth of the seven emirates. He was a fascinating person to deal with.

In the media area, also two UAE brothers in Sharjah owned the newspaper that was my biggest challenge, but the editor and the real power in the newspaper was a Palestinian.

My list of UAE contacts was surprisingly small and certainly had the smallest native content of any country I ever worked in.

*Q: What were we trying to do in the UAE?*

RANSOM: In terms of the media, the challenge was to encourage accurate news coverage of issues involving U.S. policy towards the area and also to get the U.S. point of view across. It was a considerable challenge. My two biggest problem newspapers were the *El Ittihad* in Abu Dhabi, which was really run by the Bahraini editor, and the *Al Khaleej* newspaper in Sharjah, which was and is still extremely critical of the U.S.

On the academic side, we were pleased that many people from the UAE went to study in the U.S. One of our big challenges was to do all we could to make sure they studied in reputable institutions. There are a number of fly-by-night American universities that advertise easy degrees and try to attract students. Of course, you walk a very sensitive line between – you have to be careful how you couch your criticism of these institutions. That’s something we struggled with always. And working with the university. We were interested in seeing them develop academic excellence. I was keen to have this young chancellor experience... He was educated himself in the UK. I was anxious to have him experience the excellence of American institutions and the variety of programs and techniques that we offer. I think I did so.

*Q: Were you able to get a visitor pass for him?*

RANSOM: The visitor grant I got for him gave me early gray hairs. I tried on several occasions to persuade him to go to the United States. We talked about the kinds of things he could do and where he could visit. He just kept kind of putting me off. Then he saw me at a diplomatic reception and said he wanted to go to the United States in one week – would I please take care of the trip for him? I persuaded him to wait 10 days and we put together the most extraordinary visit imaginable. But it was unbelievably complicated and challenging.

*Q: Did you find that when you were able to tap the ruling group there, were they knowledgeable about the U.S. or did they look more to Europe?*

RANSOM: They were more comfortable with Europe and especially more comfortable with the British. But the challenge with the ruling elite was to develop a relationship where they would be frank with you. We sent Sheikh Nahayan to the United States. He changed his itinerary several times. He took his own airplane and then he decided to take the Concorde. He changed his point of entry into the United States on two days’ notice. I only learned after he embarked on this trip to the U.S. that his previous trip had been disastrous. He had gone into the U.S., entered through New York as an ordinary citizen, and for some reason aroused the suspicions of the customs officials, who treated him very badly. He had vowed then never to return to the United States. Then he asks me to arrange a trip on the spur of the moment for him, and never tells me of this previous experience. It was only through the diligence of some people in USIA who worked on the weekend that I was able to arrange a reception committee for him in New York, because he

was supposed to come in through Washington, DC. The problem was lack of communication in general, an inability to plan ahead.

*Q: Did you find our relations with Israel were a constant burr in your saddle on news accounts?*

RANSOM: I think that the Arab-Israeli issue was always a factor, but it was not something that you talked about or thought about every day. It would depend on events at the time, what was going on. We have a very good relationship with the UAE and many areas of common concern, such as Iran across the Gulf. But there were a number of Palestinians living in the UAE at that time and they were very sympathetic and still are to the cause. So, it was an important issue, but not always the overriding issue.

*Q: What about Iran? We didn't have relations with Iran. This wasn't that long after the Iran-Iraq War was on, was it?*

RANSOM: Yes. Their relationship with Iran is a very complicated one. They have a large number of citizens of the Emirates of Iranian origin. The distance across the Gulf is very close. They had good reason to be concerned about them, but they were not as openly critical of Iran as they became later. They were very happy to have Iran engaged in a war with Iraq. That's the only thing that one gets in the Gulf in general. They're very happy to have these two giants occupied with each other, rather than focusing on the little gulf states. But they had the problem of the islands with Iran, Tunb and Abu Moosa.

*Q: At that time, were we doing anything as far as basing supplies or anything like that in the area?*

RANSOM: In the area we were, but we were not prepositioning any weaponry in the UAE. One of our goals while I was there was to increase the frequency of ship visits. We had ship visits both in Dubai and in Abu Dhabi. We were able to increase the publicity of these ship visits and had some receptions on board. That was a new move in our relationship.

*Q: How was living in Abu Dhabi?*

RANSOM: Oh, living was very comfortable. Living was very easy for expatriates. There was a very active social life and a lot of parties, but nobody from the UAE – it was primarily expatriates.

*Q: Did you find yourself in competition or scrambling with the other embassies to make UAE contacts?*

RANSOM: Oh, we were in competition absolutely. But there were some tricks to it. It took me a while to learn them. We would invite people from the UAE for dinner. We would try to invite people who knew each other and we would tell them who was coming so they would feel comfortable and we would invite them in small groups. But the trick –and I learned this one day by walking into our ambassador's office – we were quite chagrined to find that Quincey an Helen Lumsden had considerable success in getting people from the UAE to come to their house.



I walked in to see the ambassador one morning and found that he was very busily engaged on the telephone. He finally confessed to me that he was calling every UAE guest that was invited to his house that night. That is what he did for every single function he had. He would invite them seven or 10 days before, but then he would call them several times before the dinner and absolutely the day of to remind them. They had large extended families and lots of family obligations, no matter who they were, so they tended to react to the last invitation they got. It was very labor intensive.

*Q: As you made these contacts, were they meaningful dialogues? Was there much interest in what we were concerned about?*

RANSOM: I think there was considerable concern about U.S. policy towards the Gulf and towards the UAE in particular. One of my most successful public diplomacy programs involved new technology. It was probably my second WorldNet. It was a televised telephone interview with Geoffrey Kemp, who was the Middle East person on the National Security Council at the time. The dialogue was with three key advisors to the government. They were all from the UAE, but two of them were advisory and one was in an important position on his own. They had a wonderful dialogue with him. He presented U.S. policy toward the UAE and then they left the dialogue with cassettes in their hands, which they took immediately to the ruling family. A day or so later, we were able to make a televised copy available to them. They absolutely loved it. The entire transcript was published in the newspaper. Excerpts were put on TV. The beauty of using that kind of technology was the way we were able to personalize U.S. policy towards the UAE specifically.

*Q: Did we have a library there?*

RANSOM: We had only a library of student counseling materials and a wealth of material on special training and educational courses in the U.S. That's what they were interested in. We could do online information searches for any of them who wanted that kind of thing, but it was primarily student counseling at that point. After all, that was 1983 and they discovered oil in 1971. Their wealth was 12 years old. So, they didn't have an educated base that would call on such materials.

*Q: What was your impression of the relations with Saudi Arabia? There had been at one point a big dispute over the Buraimi Oasis back in my day, in the '50s. Obviously, Saudi Arabia is the big boy on the block. How did things go there?*

RANSOM: The relationship was very delicate. The border issue had not been settled when we were there. We could drive into Buraimi from UAE. There was not a separate territory. They were certainly the big brothers in the GCC. They were a very conservative influence in the area. Sheikh Zayed was known for his moderate leadership. He was very supportive of a women's organization in the UAE and hosted a women's conference while I was there. Kuwaiti women came. All the women came, but the women from Saudi Arabia were denied permission to go. In general, in foreign policy, the UAE often followed Saudi lead.

*Q: Were there any incidents or problems or crises that came up?*

RANSOM: I'm sure there were. For me, one of my biggest crises was a fight I had with the *Al-Khaleej* newspaper. They had published one or two editorials that were very bad. They personalized their criticism of the U.S. They were very inflammatory. One of them praised the bombing of the Marines in Lebanon. I forget the second one. The third one carried a personal attack on Ronald Reagan, on his personality. It had nothing to do with policy. It was a diatribe against him. It was very upsetting. We had a lot of security concerns at that time in the Middle East and this kind of journalism was very dangerous. I had made verbal protests to the first two. In the final instance, I wrote a letter, sent it to the newspaper, and they published it with a long response. Their response was highly inflammatory and they referred to me all the way through as a man. That was one of the most frustrating things: "Mr. Marjorie Ransom objected to the article." The FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) at that point was headquartered in Bahrain. They published the whole article in English and sent it to every embassy in the area, but did not publish my letter, which had appeared at the beginning of the article. They simply published the response of the newspaper. It was very frustrating for me. But the letter had an impact on the newspaper. The publicity forced the government to put an end to this kind of campaigning. That was the last time we had that kind of inflammatory press coverage. So, it accomplished the purpose, but it was highly embarrassing for me.

*Q: Was the editor of the paper a Palestinian?*

RANSOM: Yes.

*Q: So this was more than a personal thing.*

RANSOM: Well, the guy who was writing the article was an Egyptian Nasserite who worked for the newspaper. It was bad journalism. If they had a beef against the United States, they could have written a reasoned, thought out argument and that we would have accepted. That's what I told them. But this was a personal attack that promoted violence as a response. It was quite irresponsible.

*Q: Did the government of the UAE express any concern about this type of thing?*

RANSOM: They paid very close attention. They expressed in private sympathy with our arguments. They felt that the journalism was irresponsible, but they maintained that they allow freedom of the press and they didn't want to tell the newspaper what to publish or what not to publish. But as a result of this – and they told us this again in private – they did put out some guidelines for all the newspapers and held them to it after that. They characteristically did not like confrontation and they would have preferred to handle it in a different way. But I had approached the Minister of Information several times to complain about this type of journalism. We had complained to other people in the government. So, they couldn't say that we had not tried previously to change the thrust of the newspaper's writing. I had gone to see the editor I don't know how many times. The owners would not meet with me, but I met with the editor several times. The only way to get their attention was by writing our objection. This letter that I wrote, the newspaper editor and the owners obviously thought that it was to their advantage to write such an article, but in the end, I think it came down against the newspaper.

*Q: Was there much interest in VOA broadcasts and that sort of thing or was it pretty much BBC country?*

RANSOM: We always had competed with the BBC. It's a question of signal. It was hard to hear the VOA in UAE. You could get the morning news broadcast, but I'm afraid that the majority of our interlocutors listened more closely to the BBC.

**ANDREA FARSAKH**  
**Political Officer**  
**Abu Dhabi (1983-1985)**

*Mrs. Farskh was born and raised in New York City and educated at Mt. Holyoke College, John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and the American University in Beirut, Lebanon. Joining the Foreign Service in 1978 she pursue a career dealing primarily with issues concerning the Arab World. Her overseas posts include Dhahran, Jeddah, Abu Dhabi, Alexandria and Tunis. Her assignments at the Department of State in Washington also involved Middle Eastern issues. Mrs. Farsakh was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2010.*

FARSAKH: To Abu Dhabi. I finally got my job in Abu Dhabi.

*Q: A new ambassador?*

FARSAKH: That's right.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

FARSAKH: Quincy Lumsden, a very nice guy.

*Q: And who was the DCM?*

FARSAKH: David Ransom, my dear friend who recently passed away. He and I went to graduate school together so I had known David for a very long time. We studied Arabic at SAIS together.

*Q: You went to Abu Dhabi. Explain where Abu Dhabi is.*

FARSAKH: The United Arab Emirates is the largest emirate; it's the one with the most oil, and quite conservative. Because it is the richest, the president of the country always comes from Abu Dhabi. It seemed as if I had died and gone to heaven because it seemed so progressive and free compared to Saudi Arabia. It was beautifully green; Sheik Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan had thrown a lot of money into making the place beautiful. There was a gorgeous cornice along the Persian Gulf and traffic circles with trees and flowers. The place was clean and pleasant. And of

course, the main thing was oil, which the Emirate of Abu Dhabi had in abundance. I was the only political officer and I worked closely with the economic officer. We used to take trips together and do combined reporting, so we went all over. Also, the consul general in Dubai was afraid of the large Iranian community there so he didn't want to do reporting on them. I would go down there and work with the vice consul. We would take Iranians off the visa line, and there were plenty of those. There were two flights a week from Tehran – we only interviewed people we gave visas to. We didn't interview "refuseniks" but we did a lot of reporting on what was going on in Iran. At the time, the Department had almost no information on internal Iranian affairs, and I think that's why I got promoted on my next tour.

*Q: Let's talk about the structure, there are seven emirate states?*

FARSAKH: Yes, seven: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras al-Khaimah, Fujairah, Ajman and Um al-Quwain.

*Q: As I recall they're just little.*

FARSAKH: Yes, some of them are very pretty like Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah. Um al-Quwain and Ajman are nothings. Sharjah was the big souk and not much more.

*Q: How did this all fit together?*

FARSAKH: First of all our consular district was Abu Dhabi, which was the biggest and by far the richest and the most important. The Dubai consulate, which started out as just a consulate and became a consulate general, had the rest of the emirates as its consular district. Dubai became the principal Iran-watcher post, which it still is. Each emirate was ruled by a sheikh and there was a royal federal council of sheikhs who made all the decisions. Now they have a partially elected advisory legislature but it doesn't have real power.

*Q: Was Abu Dhabi sort of the center of where things were being done?*

FARSAKH: Well, yes and no. It was certainly the center of the oil industry. The commercial capital has always been in Dubai, which got its start smuggling gold from India and was very much a conglomerate of different nationalities, very heavily Iranian, Iranians with UAE citizenship. So Dubai was the loosest, socially, where you had really good restaurants and entertainment, and could have a really good time. Now Dubai has become a huge tourism and shopping hub for the region.

*Q: Sharjah?*

FARSAKH: Sharjah is separate, on the border of Dubai. You drive from Dubai and you are in Sharjah.

*Q: I recall Sharjah being a big city.*

FARSAKH: I don't know about that, but they built a big modern souk where we used to go shopping.

*Q: When I was there it wasn't modern but it was big.*

FARSAKH: I think what you probably saw was the old souk, which I am sure was a lot more interesting than the new one which is one huge building that has all the shops in it. But it was interesting enough.

*Q: You were mentioning in Dubai the consul general there didn't want to do reporting on Iran and Iranians.*

FARSAKH: The consul general in Dubai didn't want to talk to the Iranians.

*Q: Why?*

FARSAKH: He was afraid that they would do something to him. As a matter of fact, the vice consul, with whom I became very friendly – and he lived there – I was a commuter from Abu Dhabi – the vice consul had a threat against him and we had to stop reporting for a few months to wait for things to blow over. We used to go out and meet the Iranians who lived in Dubai, we used to meet Iranians who were visiting, and we once met a mullah who lived in Dubai. The Iranians had institutions in Dubai – a hospital, schools, a whole system and network for the Iranian community. There was a business community which had UAE citizenship and they were very, very rich, and then you had the Iranian Iranians who were very well established there. The ambassador was a high ranking clergyman and of course, because Iran is so close, – workers mostly – would come over by boat at night from Iran, and the minute they got there they were immediately absorbed. They were given jobs, had places to live, everything they needed. We never knew how many Iranians really were there but we knew it was a considerable number.

*Q: Was there concern on our part about an Iranian fifth column?*

FARSAKH: The Dubai Iranians, the ones who had citizenship, so probably not, because they had too much to lose, I would think. But the others, the transients who were the more numerous Iranian Iranians, sure.

*Q: Were we taking steps at our embassy not in Abu Dhabi about a possible attack on our embassy?*

FARSAKH: Well, we always had two APCs in front of the embassy.

*Q: Armored personnel carriers.*

FARSAKH: Yes. Of course, when we were there, in '83, the attack on the American Embassy in Beirut and then the attack on the Marine barracks and the attack on the French soldiers took place. That all happened while we were in Abu Dhabi and Hezbollah, obviously Iranian inspired, was found to be responsible. So yes, we were very aware. As a matter of fact, one Christmas we

had to scrap our plans for a holiday celebration because there was a threat against the ambassador.

*Q: You were a political officer there?*

FARSAKH: Yes.

*Q: What politically were you looking at?*

FARSAKH: I was looking at external relations because I was the only political officer – with the U.S., Europe, with China, with Russia. The UAE established diplomatic relations with China about six to eight months before I left. I covered the internal politics, the way the different emirates sort of got along or didn't, obviously, demarcating the foreign ministry on a regular basis. I had my friends and contacts there. I often went with the ambassador and DCM on meetings.

*Q: Was there much in the way of political movement?*

FARSAKH: Internal political movement? No. The interesting action was on the econ side. The Gulf Arabs, – and I think it's true of the Saudis to some extent – remind me of baby birds. They are just sitting there with their mouths open, waiting to be fed. What motivation would the Abu Dhabians have for doing much of anything? In all of the emirates the citizens are maybe 20 per cent of the population. The foreigners –80 percent – do all the work. The UAE nationals don't have to work, they don't have to do anything. This is the leisure class. You don't see much of them either. Even in the foreign ministry, most of the people I knew there were from Dubai and of Iranian origin because the Abu Dhabians were insular Bedouin types, very wealthy, while those from Dubai were cosmopolitan, outward looking. The Abu Dhabians spend their time hunting the bustard in the desert with falcons.

*Q: Did they have much in the way of foreign relations?*

FARSAKH: Oh, yes. The UAE was active in the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Arab League.

*Q: What were they doing?*

FARSAKH: The President, Sheik Zayid, was a prominent person in the Arab world.

*Q: How did the Palestinian Israeli conflict play there?*

FARSAKH: I remember a meeting with one of my main contacts on the Americas desk who was an Iranian origin Dubai citizen. I went in on a demarche on human rights somewhere and he said, "What about the Palestinians? Don't they have any human rights?" And I said, "Well, you know, I'm here in my professional capacity. We're not talking about that right now." Sure, it would come up all the time. People knew that my husband was Palestinian. The UAE gave a few Palestinians citizenship and these tended to be very wealthy people. In one case, one of my

Palestinian contacts invited me and my husband to dinner. We arrived, and there was the chief PLO representative, sitting in the living room – and we were prohibited from meeting them at the time. I took the host aside and said, “You know, you shouldn’t have done this. I am not supposed to be in the same room with this person.” He said, “Well, I thought it would be nice if you met him.” I said, “No, I am sorry. I can’t.”

So we had a quick dinner and we left. The next day I went to my DCM, David Ransom, and I told him that I had been set up. I asked him what to do. He said, “Just write it up. Make a memo to the files. You’ve told me and if it ever comes up with anyone, if anyone ever finds out, you’re OK.” I naturally followed his instructions.

*Q: Did the emirates do anything for the Palestinians? Were they supportive?*

FARSAKH: Oh, yes, especially Sheik Zayid. As a matter of fact, in my husband’s hometown, Bir Zeit, the university has a building that was funded by him and named for him. The UAE gives quite a bit of money to the Palestinians.

*Q: What was it like living there? I mean one sees these hotels that are put up and you are charged \$2,000 a day or something.*

FARSAKH: Well, that’s now. That was not the case when I was there.

*Q: But why would anybody go?*

FARSAKH: Well, that’s mostly Dubai. I was in Abu Dhabi for an Iraq conference about three or four years ago, and stayed in the Abu Dhabi Intercontinental, which was there in my time and it is still a beautiful place. I don’t know how much they were charging then. We actually stayed there for a few nights before we left the UAE in 1985. As you know, the post allows people, after they pack out, to spend the last few nights in a hotel. In Abu Dhabi, we lived in villas rented by the embassy and we all had pretty nice housing. I got picked up every morning to go to work by an embassy shuttle van; sometimes I drove to work. I had a nice life there.

My husband, of course, was in Saudi Arabia, so we commuted. Mostly he came to see me, I would say, once or twice a month, as the UAE was far pleasanter than Dhahran.

*Q: As you were there looking at this, wither Abu Dhabi or wither the emirates looking towards the future?*

FARSAKH: We didn’t get the sense that there was any dissatisfaction among the citizens. Where there was dissatisfaction was in the foreign workforce who were not treated very well in general. There was a rumor that one of the wives of an important sheikh owned the taxi cab company and that most of the taxis were driven by Afghans, mostly Pashtuns I think. They were very tall, handsome guys with blue-green eyes and it was rumored that these men had come to the UAE to earn money to pay off blood feuds because they had killed someone. That didn’t exactly make you feel comfortable in those little crappy taxi cabs that we had to use.

It was hard to get a sense of any kind of political opinion among the Abu Dhabi nationals because there were so few to whom you could speak and they really weren't interested. They were focused on their lifestyles and making money. In Dubai there were businessmen whose main interest was making money. They were apathetic about politics. They were just happy with their comfortable lives, getting supported by their government.

*Q: One gets the feeling that whole area, including the Americans at Aramco, keep your head down, work for twenty years and get a good pension and get out. When you look at it, the great majority of the population, this seems to be the case.*

FARSAKH: They were working so that they could buy an apartment in Egypt or a house or apartment in Jordan, or build a house in India, send money to their families. They all had goals and they were working toward these goals. The Americans had good, secure lives with good schools for their children. They really had a great existence at Aramco. People did not want to get into trouble, save for some who were really badly used. If you saw the recent George Clooney movie, "Syriana," it was a fairly accurate portrayal of the way things probably are among the most abused and exploited third world manual laborers. And there have been some strikes in the UAE and Qatar in the last several years among the disenfranchised labor force.

*Q: You were there from '80?*

FARSAKH: '83 to '85.

*Q: Was Iraq at all a presence there?*

FARSAKH: The Iran-Iraq war was on. As a matter of fact it started when I was in Dhahran and I remember the night it started. When I was in Abu Dhabi, it hadn't yet gotten to the point where we were escorting the Kuwaiti vessels through the Gulf. We faithfully kept up with what was going on. Donald Rumsfeld came to Abu Dhabi in his capacity of Middle East envoy at the time. He was traveling around the region, and on one of his trips he went to Iraq and embraced Saddam. We were all aware of the kind of regime that Iraq had and what Saddam was like – this was no secret. When Rumsfeld came to Abu Dhabi, he had scheduled a meeting with the ambassador. David Ransom told me to attend; Margery was also present. We all sat there and heard him spout off really racist comments about Arabs. I was really very offended; I thought he was just a nasty man from the get go.

Another thing I remember about my time in Abu Dhabi is that the intel community was sending intelligence teams who would come to the UAE, brief the UAE officials and then go on to Baghdad to brief the Iraqis about what was going on in the war, via satellite intelligence. They would inform the Iraqis about the Iranians and what they were up to.

*Q: At the time was the feeling sort of well, we don't really want the Iranians to win?*

FARSAKH: Well, I think we liked the idea of the two countries fighting and exhausting each other. The longer it went on, the better off everybody would be, we believed. We didn't care about the thousands of casualties or the types of weapons that were being used. I was in INR a



bit later when the chemical attack on the Kurdish civilians in Halabja took place. We didn't care very much at the time.

*Q: What about the American military? Did they come often?*

FARSAKH: They visited Dubai a couple of times. We had a military office in the embassy headed by a full colonel, there were half a dozen people working there and we worked very closely with them. They really bulked up later on. When I was there it was pretty small office but it became very large over the succeeding years.

*Q: You left there in?*

FARSAKH: The summer of '85.

**MICHAEL J. VARGA**  
**Consular Officer**  
**Dubai (1985-1987)**

*Michael Varga was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1955. He received his bachelor's degree from Rider University and his Master's from the University of Notre Dame. He served in the Peace Corps in Chad. He joined the Foreign Service in 1985. His overseas posts are Dubai, UAE; Damascus, Syria; Casablanca, Morocco; and Toronto, Canada. Mr. Varga was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2014.*

VARGA: Yes. I was in the 28<sup>th</sup> class for the A100 course after the Foreign Service Act of 1980. And so during that summer of 1985 I completed the A100 course and by October I was off to my first assignment in Dubai as a vice consul with responsibility basically for the consular function at Dubai.

*Q: Well, let's talk a bit about the A100 course. What was your class like? Composition, male/female, minorities, education?*

VARGA: I would say it seemed about 50/50 male and female, minorities I'd say there were about 15 to 20% minority. I would say age-wise there seemed to be a number of us who were in our late twenties, and then the greatest majority of people seemed to be in their early twenties. There were a couple in our class who were older entrants. Maybe they were in their forties. But there were just a couple of them. The class was about I'd say maybe 40 people. I could be wrong about that number. But in my recollection it seems about 40.

*Q: Did you have any Vietnam veterans?*

VARGA: I don't recall any. There may have been, but I don't --

*Q: But it didn't stick in your mind as being --*

VARGA: No.

*Q: Did you have the feeling that they were trying to indoctrinate you, or just get you to understand the system?*

VARGA: No, I didn't have any sense of being indoctrinated. The emphasis seemed to be on learning the ropes of navigating the bureaucracy. Beyond that, since for our first assignments almost all of us were going out to consular assignments, there was a sense that you needed to succeed in the consular training so that you could function well out in the field. And so there was very serious training for consular work. Memorizing relevant sections of the Foreign Affairs Manual, the FAM, as we called it. It was very professional and very effective. The running joke during our training was, whenever a question arose about anything—sports, history, the arts—someone would say, “I work with an open FAM.”

*Q: And did you want to go back to Africa?*

VARGA: I felt that since I spoke French, and I just spent two years in Africa speaking French daily, and my French was very good, so when they asked about our first assignments I put in for all French speaking posts and I thought it would be natural for the State Department to send me to a French speaking post. And I was quite shocked when they said, “No, we're sending you to Dubai,” *(laughs)*.

*Q: All right, I, I knew Dubai back in the 1950s.*

VARGA: Ah-ha.

*Q: When I was in Dhahran. And we covered Bahrain, Qatar, and, at that time the Trucial States, including --*

VARGA: Right.

*Q: -- including Dubai.*

VARGA: Right.

*Q: But what was Dubai like when you were there?*

VARGA: Well, Dubai was obviously not the big chic place that people talk of today. It seemed to be a city that really functioned almost primarily, in terms of the economics of the city, on its trade with Iran. And the whole city seemed to be focused on the relationship with Iran. And of course the hostage crisis with the United States had happened in '79 and I was there in '85. So it was only six years after the hostage crisis. And so, relations with Iran weren't very good. And yet, at the consulate almost all the visa applicants were Iranians, flying in from various cities in

Iran to Dubai and coming directly from the airport to the consulate and lining up for an American visa.

*Q: What --*

VARGA: So that was a little bit overwhelming, to deal with hundreds of applicants daily and I was the only consular officer at post.

*Q: So what were the instructions regarding Iranian applicants' visas?*

VARGA: I was encouraged to be quite strict, quite tough with all visa applicants because of the 214-B provision in the law that said a visa applicant is presumed to be an intending immigrant, and they have the burden to prove otherwise. And so, because all these folks were coming from Iran and presenting documents about their residency in Iran, none of which I could check on because there was no way to know whether these documents were legitimate or not, my refusal rate was quite high. And they used to joke in Dubai that the United States was the great Satan. But they had a nickname for me. I had a little goatee beard and they used to call me "Shatan Kuchek" which in Farsi means "the Little Devil."

*Q: (laughs) Did it bother you that you were caught in this refusal mode?*

VARGA: No, it didn't. Because this was the mid-'80s and the hostage crisis was still fresh in many Americans' minds, including my own, and there were a lot of demonstrations in Tehran even then where a lot of Iranians were saying, "Marg Bar Amrika," you know, "Death to America." And that was very common at that time. So I didn't have any problem with a high refusal rate for the visas.

*Q: Yeah. It's -- I -- my last job overseas was in Naples.*

VARGA: Uh-huh.

*Q: And after the hostage crisis had just finished. And we were getting a number of students and all coming around shopping, trying to get visas. And we were pretty hostile. This is --*

VARGA: Yeah.

*Q: We weren't very understanding.*

VARGA: Sure.

*Q: Who was your ambassador?*

VARGA: When I first arrived in Dubai it was a man by the name of Lumsden who was the ambassador. Then by the time I finished my tour in Dubai it was David Mack.

*Q: Ah-ha. Yeah, I've interviewed David.*

VARGA: Uh-huh.

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

VARGA: It seemed very prosperous. I mean it was politically stable, economically seemed to be thriving. Of course the greatest majority of people you'd see in Dubai were third country nationals who were employed in building all these construction projects that you saw around Dubai. But I understand from people who have visited Dubai in recent years that it looks much different than when I was there in '85 to '87. So I guess there may even be more third country nationals employed there now.

*Q: When you say third country nationals, where were they coming from?*

VARGA: Mostly from Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

*Q: Were many of them applying for visas?*

VARGA: Yes, many of them were applying for visas as well. And unfortunately, my refusal rate for them was just as high as the Iranians because they were often presenting documents that to me didn't show that they were not intending immigrants to the United States, so I had no qualms about refusing many of them.

*Q: Well, did you get any chance to get involved in the politics of the area, or was there much in the way of politics?*

VARGA: I did a fair amount of political reporting because the U.S. was very interested in any information on what was going on inside Iran. And here I had this flood of Iranians coming through my visa window every day. So I did get involved with some of the political analysis that was going on about the situation in Iran, and in fact I earned a number of kudos cables during that time period. They meant a lot to me because I was kind of overwhelmed dealing with hundreds of visa applicants daily and finding time to do political reporting as well during my first tour seemed exceptional.

*Q: Well, did you have much contact with people in the area? I mean other than work?*

VARGA: I immersed myself in life in Dubai. All my friends were local folks, and I didn't spend a lot of time with the Americans there in Dubai. I spent most of my time with the Emirati and a lot of Iranians too.

*Q: How did the expatriate Iranians feel towards developments in their country?*

VARGA: A lot of them had fled Iran after the Khomeini revolution. So they were quite -- at that time they were quite negative about the Mullahs having taken over the Iranian government. And so they were quite vehement in their critique of Iran at that time.

*Q: Were they overt, or was this sort of among themselves, or what?*

VARGA: Mostly among themselves. It was common knowledge in Dubai that the Iranian government, because of the strong economic connections between Iran and Dubai--it was common knowledge that there were plenty of "watchers" for the Iranian government there in Dubai. So they were quite circumspect in making critiques of the Iranian government in public. They wouldn't share their honest appraisals openly. But when you were in someone's home for a dinner they were quite open about their critiques. But walking around the streets of Dubai they weren't likely to say anything publicly about the situation in Iran.

*Q: What was your feeling about the government of Dubai? Was it responsive?*

VARGA: No, it didn't seem to pay much attention to the people in Dubai. At that time the ruler of Dubai was named Sheikh Rashid, and he was believed to be in a coma. The government never was admitting what his true situation was regarding his health. There was a sense that nobody knew what was really going on, except for insiders within the government. So the government seemed very disconnected from the day-to-day reality of life in Dubai.

*Q: What was going on oil-wise at that time?*

VARGA: I don't remember much about oil at that time. The Iran-Iraq War was occurring during those years. So the great emphasis was on protecting U.S. freighters in the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War. In fact, at one point during my time in Dubai I had to go to one of the northern emirates because an American flag vessel had been boarded by the Iranian navy and the U.S. government was concerned whether the crew had been abused while it was under the control of the Iranian navy. So I was the point person who drove up from Dubai to the northern emirate to interview the crew about how they'd been treated by the Iranian navy.

*Q: And how had they been treated?*

VARGA: Fortunately the crew said that they had not been mistreated, that the navy had held the vessel for a couple of hours and then let it go. But it was all part of this chess game that was going on between Iran and Iraq in their ongoing war, and the Persian Gulf was just the playing field on which they were trying to play tit for tat among different vessels that were cruising through the Gulf.

*Q: Did you feel any particular pressure of that war in your daily life?*

VARGA: I can say one of the things I was a little bit shocked by of course was subsequently when all the information came out about the Iran Contra Affair during the Reagan administration. We had been making demarches about weapons getting into the hands of the Iranians, because of all that trade between Dubai and Iran.

*Q: Yeah.*

VARGA: We had to make demarches on a regular basis about trying to impede the flow of weapons to Iran. And only later when the Iran Contra Affair was revealed, it became clear that people in the White House were conducting these off-the-books operations behind the scenes. So I was a little bit chagrined, shall I say, in terms of being part of the U.S. government to discover that that had all been going on. Made us all look like hypocrites. Those of us doing yeoman's work out in the field.

*Q: It was not a great moment in American diplomacy.*

VARGA: Right.

**DAVID L. MACK**  
**Ambassador**  
**United Arab Emirates (1986-1989)**

*Ambassador Mack was born and raised in Oregon and educated at Harvard University. Joining the Foreign State Department in 1965, he studied Arabic and devoted his career dealing with Arab and Middle East issues. His foreign posts include Baghdad, Amman, Jerusalem, Beirut, Tripoli, Benghazi and Tunis. In Washington from 1990 to 1993, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. During this period, the major issue was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the military actions that followed. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.*

*Q: So in '86 you finished the Senior Seminar.*

MACK: I finished up the Senior Seminar in the summer of '86. In the spring of the year, the White House announced my nomination as ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. The announcement was preceded by a phone call from President Reagan, his graceful custom in dealing with new ambassadors. He told me with that very memorable, warm voice and with a tone of great sincerity how much he would appreciate it if I would accept being his ambassador to the United Arab Em-i-ra-tes. He was obviously reading from a cue card, as he tried to pronounce the name. I had no reason to suppose he was familiar with the country, but the great communicator could read his lines with polished expertise, and he knew how to impress an ambassador-to-be in a brief phone call that was economical with his time.

*Q: Obviously you were forewarned about the presidential call. Had there been any negotiations, or anything like that involved in getting your ambassadorship?*

MACK: I knew that the Near East South Asian Bureau wanted to send me to Abu Dhabi, to the United Arab Emirates. The Director General told me that they would like to put me up for either Khartoum or Abu Dhabi. I said I would much prefer Abu Dhabi, because at that time Khartoum was an unaccompanied post.

*Q: Means your family couldn't go.*

MACK: That's right, my family couldn't go to Sudan, and it didn't seem like that was going to change very fast.

*Q: Did you have any problem in confirmation?*

MACK: No, confirmation was an absolute breeze. I had prepared perhaps excessively for it. I knew facts and figures, and personalities, dates. For my confirmation hearing, there was a single member present, a senator from Virginia, who was a one-term senator, whose name I've forgotten. He asked me only one question. I had made a very carefully crafted little opening statement that I thought would sound well in Abu Dhabi, as well as to the Senate. He said, "That was a very eloquent opening statement, Mr. Mack. Tell me is your family here with you today?" That was the only question he asked me. I remember all too well that I actually muffed the response. I turned and said, "Yes, here is my wife Catherine," pointing to my eleven year old daughter, who glared back at me. The senator questioned a couple of the other nominees present for the hearing, there was a quorum call for a floor vote, and the senator announced that he was satisfied with his interrogations of us and we'd hear back from the committee. There was a long delay before final committee action, but no further questions about either the UAE or me.

*Q: Before you went out to Abu Dhabi, one almost goes to a post as ambassador with a sort of an agenda, and a perception of a place before one gets there. I wonder if you could talk about how you felt about that?*

MACK: I had never been to the UAE, although I had visited Saudi Arabia and Kuwait each a couple of times. The Gulf was not a part of the Arab world where I had traveled much. I talked to a lot of people who had been out there. I was very much aware that the UAE was a fairly unique political creation, a confederation. In its own way, the UAE was a successful experiment in Arab unity but on a rather restricted scale. It had a weak central government, and a considerable amount of authority remained in the hands of the rulers of the seven individual Emirates.

*Q: They were Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah, and Fujairah.*

MACK: You're one of the few people who could name them.

*Q: This is only because this was part of my consular district back in the '50s.*

MACK: I knew that it was a country that had come from grinding poverty just a couple of decades ago to a very high per capita income. I also knew the UAE had a very small citizen population and large expatriate population. UAE nationals were a minority, and other Arabs were a minority of the expatriates.

I should mention, before we get too far away from the confirmation issue, that although I was confirmed with no trouble, there was considerable delay. By the time the Senate confirmed me it was about September 20, 1986. My daughter was in a private school already, and my wife had

her own professional interests. We decided for the first year they wouldn't join me in the UAE. I'd go out by myself, in single status. I was very enthusiastic about the job, and I didn't believe at the time that I would miss my family that much, because there would be so much to do and so much to learn. It turned out I missed them an awful lot, but I did spend my first year at post doing very little besides working in one way or another. My recreation was to run or swim. I ran with the Marines in the early morning, which was a nice way to get acquainted with that part of the mission and good for my physical fitness as well. I was very heavily focused in the first year on the job. This was during the latter stages of the Iraq-Iran war, the so-called Tanker War was just beginning with Iranian attacks on oil and gas tanker traffic in the Gulf. There was also the occasional Iraqi attack on tankers headed into Iranian ports.

*Q: Before we get to your getting there, when you went out was there anything that you were ready for. I mean, were they talking about this in Washington?*

MACK: The U.S. government was not really ready for events that were already unfolding in the region. I had been down to the Central Command at Tampa twice for briefings. The first time with a Senior Seminar group, but the second time I was on my own or with a couple of other people who were involved in the area. I got a lot of very helpful attention from the then Commander in Chief of CENTCOM, General George Crist, and his staff. He had a very good J-5, Plans and Policy, Rear Admiral Hal Bernsen. Bernsen later became Commander of the Middle East force out in the Gulf, so it was fortuitous that we had met. U.S. policy at that point was based very much on a Cold War perspective, viewing the Gulf as part of Cold War strategy. I don't blame CENTCOM for this particularly, because Washington set the parameters for the policy. I remember well the regional threat briefing that I had seen by this time twice from General Crist. He was one of the U.S. Marine Corps intellectuals, who really tried to integrate military strategy with broader concerns. The briefing started off with the typical large map of the area of operations. The Soviet Union up at the top was colored red. The map didn't have a bear crouching up there, but you get the idea. After the map, the next slide to go up was a picture of Peter the Great. So you start with a false premise that the threat is going to be coming out of the Soviet Union to the oil resources of the Gulf, and then you give a sense of historical perspective to the false premise.

*Q: A search for warm water ports. If you want warm water, what the hell, the Persian Gulf's got the warmest around.*

MACK: The focus was very much on this. By this time, however, because of the deterioration of U.S. relationships with Iran, U.S. strategy had dropped the idea that Iran was a bulwark. The new strategy was to try to attrit Soviet forces coming through Iran, while establishing strong points for defense of the Gulf region on the southern, Arab side of the Gulf. The CENTCOM strategist envisioned a particular role for UAE territory. Along with Oman, the UAE lies at the mouth of the Gulf at the Strait of Hormuz, the choke point for moving the bulk of the world's crude oil. The UAE also had numerous airfields and ports. CENTCOM actually hoped to set up a forward headquarters in the UAE, and they pressed that notion pretty hard.

It was apparent to me even then from talking to knowledgeable people in Washington, and it became much more apparent after I got out to the UAE, that the immediate problem was going to



be an Iranian threat to the area. The idea of a Soviet threat was cold war thinking that was rapidly becoming less important than threats from regional powers. There had not been much thinking about how to deal with that.

*Q: Were there any UAE-U.S. relations problems that we were going to have to deal with?*

MACK: The foremost problem was that the UAE, like most of the Gulf states, tended to keep us at arm's length as far as security cooperation. The Gulf Arab perspective was that it was a good thing to have the U.S. fleet in the Gulf, and that they would pick and choose the form of cooperation on an *ad hoc* basis, but most of the time they wanted us to be "over the horizon". Near by, so we could come to their assistance, but certainly not in the kind of relationship that would identify them as being a close ally of the United States. This was true of other Gulf states, although not as much for Bahrain and Oman. In the case of Oman, the Sultanate had entered into an access and pre-positioning agreement with us as far back as 1980, in the wake of the Iranian revolution. Bahrain, although they had no formal agreement with us, provided port berthing facilities for the U.S. Navy, along with some facilities ashore. It would be stretching things to call it a base, and technically the Manama facility was called the Administrative Support Unit for the Mideast force naval command. It was a facility that supported the operations of our fleet in the area.

*Q: COMIDEASTFOR has been there since the early '50s.*

MACK: COMIDEASTFOR, the primarily naval U.S. military command, had existed in one form or another since 1949. In general, we had had no official presence in the area prior to 1971. That was true for all the countries, except Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where diplomatic relations had been established for some time. In the other Gulf states, formal diplomatic relations began in 1971 when the British withdrew from their treaty relationships in the area. The U.S. presence was basically diplomatic and commercial. The military presence was rudimentary. First of all, there was COMIDEASTFOR. We're talking about two to four naval warships most of the time.

*Q: When I was there it was a seaplane tender which used Greenwich Bay and something else which would alternate, and that was it.*

MACK: By the time I got to Abu Dhabi, we had a submarine tender with the admiral's headquarters staff aboard, and a couple of frigates. It was a very modest presence. U.S. military presence ashore on the whole Arabian Peninsula was limited to the small administrative support unit in Bahrain, and there was extensive pre-positioning or pre-po, to use military slang, of equipment and supplies for the U.S. Air Force in Oman. In terms of U.S. military forces globally, that amounted to basically no U.S. military presence on the Peninsula in 1986.

The UAE was known for being very diffident about having close cooperation with the U.S., partly because it was a weak federal structure. It was believed that the Emirate of Abu Dhabi was a little more interested in having a closer relationship. The Emirate of Dubai, however, the second most important of the seven emirates, much preferred to have the lowest possible profile in global politics. Dubai wanted a primarily commercial relationship with the U.S., along with a very strong trading relationship with Iran and other countries. Some of the other emirates, like

Sharjah, also had extensive Iranian trade relationships. There was an acceptance of the idea that there would be a maximum of twelve U.S. ship visits per year, but that these should be spaced throughout the year and to various U.A.E ports. Each visit had to be agreed on a case by case basis. In point of fact, we hadn't been coming near the limit of twelve. This was both because we didn't have that many ships deployed in the area, and because of the nervousness from time to time of UAE authorities. One of the things that CENTCOM wanted to do was to see whether they couldn't develop a closer working relationship. Washington was basically supportive of that. However, Washington's main concern was to keep the oil moving. The U.S. oil companies, and other U.S. business activities in the area, were far more important parts of our presence than the fleet in the view of most Washington policy makers.

There was a modest, longstanding U.S. cultural presence at various points in the area. Dutch Reform missionaries had been in Basra, Oman and Bahrain from early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were not proselytizing so much as they were providing medical services and in the case of Bahrain also some educational services. They maintained a hospital at the UAE interior city of Al Ain. Because of such work and the generally good reputation of U.S. companies, Americans were rather popular, as long as we didn't get too close to these governments militarily. Both the public and most government officials in the region viewed our politics toward the Arab-Israel issue with a lot of unhappiness. It was a constant subject of discontent and complaint. It was also the general opinion that we would be a very unreliable ally against the Iranians. Our close relations with the Shah were in people's minds, and the current U.S.-Iran estrangement was not viewed as a long term feature of U.S. policy. People were aware of the trauma that Vietnam had brought to the U.S. global outlook. In this part of the world, there was also a feeling that we had been unreliable in keeping what President Reagan had described as a vital military commitment to Lebanon. In their view we had reneged on the commitment as soon as we started taking casualties. Basically, the view was and remains that Iran was a permanent feature in the area, and they had to learn how to deal with Iran in some way. The U.S. would come and go as it suited U.S. convenience, and they really couldn't depend on us.

For the first year I was in the UAE, the dominant issue was the Iraq-Iran war and how it might affect their interests. As I arrived in late September of '86, the tanker war was getting underway. The Iranians seemed to have a full head of steam against the Iraqis, and many people viewed them as being unstoppable. I had had enough experience with the Iraqis to believe that once the Iraqis were fighting on their own territory, as they were at this point, they would prove very, very tenacious in defending against the Iranians. I was not as concerned as some people with a successful Iranian push into southern Iraq from where they could then threaten Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

I was very concerned, however, with the Iranian navy, the strongest in the area. It gave them a capability to disrupt the flow of oil in the area and to intimidate countries like the UAE. I could see Iran pressuring the Arab states of the Gulf to restrict their own production in order to raise the price of oil and the revenues that the Iranians would get from their production. The Iranians could not increase their exports significantly, at least in the short term. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait, on the other hand, were producing under their near term capacity. They had very different oil strategies. For the Iranians, it was to export every drop they could in order to maintain their revenues. They were trying to fight this war without borrowing, which

had a lot to do with the economic views of the late Ayatollah Khomeini. They needed all the revenue they could get from oil, and they felt that the price was unnaturally low, as they saw it, due to over-production by these little under-populated Arab states. The Gulf states, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait foremost, were providing political assistance to Iraq. More important, they were providing under the table financial assistance. It seemed obvious to many people I talked to after my arrival in the UAE in late September 1986 that the Iranians would be prepared to use intimidation as well as overt military measures in dealing with the Arab states of the Gulf. They could use subversion, as well as overt military measures, to intimidate states like the UAE to curtail their support for Iraq and to lower their oil production. It wasn't a question of stopping the flow of oil entirely, but of restricting it to Iran's benefit.

*Q: We'll come back to the tanker war, but let's talk quickly about your relations with the government. What was the structure of the government? Here you have these seven sheikhdoms, which had confederated, how did you deal with them?*

MACK: The UAE was a confederation, the loose structure of the thirteen U.S. states prior to adopting our constitution. Although I was accredited to the federal government in Abu Dhabi where we had the embassy, one of the interesting peculiarities of the system was that the sovereign body of the confederation was the Council of Rulers, composed of the rulers or amirs of the seven emirates. I was supposed to be dealing in some sense with all seven rulers. Although I only presented credentials to the UAE President, Sheikh Zayed Al Nahayan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, I was also required to then make formal calls on all the other rulers before I officially met with federal cabinet members. So it was an awkward system. It was not a cabinet government, or to use the Arabic term a *diwan* government. It was a government by consensus. It was more of a *majlis* government where you had to get a lot of people to agree to an issue through different meetings before anybody would be prepared to take a decision. The federation government had primacy in foreign affairs, but in fact each one of the rulers tended to conduct a little bit of foreign affairs on the side. This was particularly true of Dubai and Sharjah, who often went their own way on foreign policy matters.

There were UAE armed forces, headquartered in Abu Dhabi, but in fact headquarters had no authority at all over the armed forces of Dubai, located right next door. Dubai had its own military force, as to some extent was true of a couple of the other emirates. The Dubai military force was completely independent from the federal military headquartered in Abu Dhabi for equipment, as well as command and control, intelligence, and everything else. So, for example, if you wanted to have a U.S. navy ship visit into Dubai, you had to get approval of the foreign ministry in Abu Dhabi. But before they would give you approval, the foreign ministry would have to get a clearance first from the GHQ, or general headquarters of the federal armed forces. That was easy enough. But then the foreign ministry would have to get approval from the ruler of the emirate where you wanted to make a ship call. If it was Dubai, our preferred port of call for refueling and shore leave, it would require approval from the authorities there. Curiously, the federal Minister of Defense was Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum, the commander of the Dubai armed forces and a senior sheikh of the ruling family there, the Maktoum family. As the Minister of Defense, his federal cabinet position, he had no real authority over the federal military establishment. This mixture of federal and local authorities meant that I was constantly shuttling back and forth among the different emirates, trying to stitch together little agreements. In

practice, if the U.S. navy wanted to have a ship visit into Dubai, we would broach the subject with the Dubai authorities informally. If they said okay, then we would make a formal request in Abu Dhabi and wait for the foreign ministry to go through the formal clearance process. This was terribly cumbersome and time consuming.

*Q: And I'm sure you had very impatient U.S. Navy people saying, what the hell, we're just coming in to get some fuel.*

MACK: The U.S. Navy was impatient, and I could understand why. CENTCOM in Tampa also pressed their case. Shortly after I had arrived and before I had even presented my credentials, I learned that the Commander in Chief of Central Command, George Crist, was planning a visit which would include all of the various emirates. Already, virtually at the time of my arrival, we had a port call in Abu Dhabi by the COMIDEASTFOR flag ship, the La Salle, which was the submarine tender. Admiral Bernsen, the Commander of the Middle East force, was aboard. So I had already had a major military visit even before I was credentialed, and before I could attend official bi-lateral functions aboard the ship. Fortunately, before Crist arrived, I was able to present my credentials to Sheikh Zayed. That made me finally official, so I was able to go along with General Crist on his round of calls. This does give some idea, however, that the U.S. regional military commanders tended to push pretty hard to get themselves and their concerns to the top of our diplomatic agenda in the region.

In this connection I also want to say a little something about the credential ceremony. I was on Sheikh Zayed's agenda along with the new Lebanese ambassador, the Soviet ambassador, and a couple of others. It was to be the first Soviet ambassador to the UAE, and as it turned out he and I were right together in the protocol order. Since the Soviets were still in Afghanistan, I was prohibited by U.S. regulations from having a close formal relationship with him. I couldn't go to his national day reception, and I wasn't supposed to invite him to mine. In fact, of course, we were right side by side in all the protocol functions. He was also a very effusive, jovial, senior Soviet diplomat. Abu Dhabi was his fourth embassy, and his last one had been Damascus, their most important embassy in the Middle East. So I knew he was very senior. He was also a good deal older than me, and he seemed to have discovered *glasnost* before Gorbachev.

*Q: Glasnost being an openness.*

MACK: Yes. Ambassador Felix Fedotov very much wanted to promote a personal relationship between the two of us and see better relations between our two countries. His whole purpose for being in Abu Dhabi, it became apparent, was to convince people in the UAE that the Soviet Union had changed and was no longer a threat to them. The wider target for Soviet policy was the rest of the Gulf region, including the Saudis who would see him in the UAE, even though the Saudi government had not allowed the Soviet Union to have an embassy in Riyadh. Fedotov was good at this. He had a good sense of humor, so he played the likeable and harmless buffoon to some degree. But the U.S. had many advantages over the Soviet Union in the UAE. Although neither one of us played up the competitive aspect, the cold war was not over. The Abu Dhabi based media liked to focus on it in the sense of showing Fedotov and Mack standing side by side, along with the latest news from Afghanistan.

My Arabic was reasonably good at that point, and I wanted to make brief remarks in Arabic, as I presented the credentials. I asked the advice of the president's interpreter, Zaki Nusseibeh of the famous Palestinian family, and he encouraged me to do so. What I said as well as how I said it must have made a favorable impression on Zayed, who proceeded to talk to me for something like twenty-five minutes. Fortunately, I had prepared some things to talk about in Arabic, as we sat there together on the couch in this huge *majlis*, with all the other senior members of the ruling family and cabinet members watching. So I got off to a very good start, and couldn't complain at all about my reception on the official side from that point on.

That was well, because I had to promote a military relationship for which the UAE was unready. Moreover, official Washington was uncertain about how fast to proceed and how far to go. We had the Central Commander in Chief coming in, and he had a definite agenda. I was still feeling my way toward what the overall U.S. agenda should be. I had, before I came out, drafted the letter from the Secretary of State to me, so I pretty well knew what my instructions would be. And sure enough, when I got my letter it was almost word for word as I had drafted it. I had goals of improving security cooperation and increasing the levels of trade and business. I'd have to check, but I think the third principal goal was something like obtaining support of the U.A.E government on international political and economic issues, particularly the Middle East Arab-Israeli peace process where we had some problems. The UAE was nearly half way through its turn as a member of the Security Council. Obviously, this had some particular importance to us, but it could help or hurt our overall relations.

General Crist wanted to have a full press on not only the federal government, but also on each individual ruler, in order to establish a close security relationship. Together, Crist and I went calling on not only the Abu Dhabi military authorities, but on the civilian authorities, the rulers in the various Emirates, and in Dubai on the nominal Minister of Defense. While Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum wasn't a minister of defense in our terms, he certainly was the number one security official for the Emirate of Dubai. For that matter, he was the most important economic-political decision maker in the Emirate, as his two elder brothers, the ruler and the deputy ruler, seemed to defer to him. Crist and I had a good series of calls, giving me a very quick look as an observer at some of the people that I would deal with during the coming year. As a result, when I made my own official calls on them they had already met me in the company of the Commander in Chief of the Central Command. This was useful, but I had to make sure it did not lead to misunderstandings.

During the course of that trip, Crist pressed very hard to get the forward headquarters established in Ras al-Khaimah. RAK was one of the poorest of the Emirates. It would be stretching things even to call them least wealthy. By UAE standards, RAK had a good size indigenous population and a rather modest per capita income.

*Q: Because oil revenues did not go to everyone. They went by state.*

MACK: It is helpful to contrast the U.S. and UAE federal system. In both, certain things are very centralized, but the government functions that are centralized or decentralized differ considerably. In the Emirates, public education during my time in the country tended to be centralized, with a common curriculum and a single UAE university, unlike the highly

decentralized U.S. system of education. In both countries, the police are decentralized. Defense was a central government function in the U.S. from the beginning, unlike in the UAE. Over time, the U.S. has developed centralized government economic functions, but in the UAE economic matters were almost totally decentralized when I arrived in the country. Anything dealing with the extraction and sale of petroleum and minerals, from exploration to the marketing of petroleum products, was controlled and sometimes managed by the individual emirates. To the extent that they met their agreements for providing some of their oil revenues to the federal treasury, the oil contributed to the welfare of all. In fact, however, the federal treasury depended on hand outs from Abu Dhabi for adequate resources. There were often chronic budget problems on the federal level, whereas the individual emirates that produced oil and gas, like Abu Dhabi and Dubai and to a certain extent Sharjah, had very well funded local authorities and government activities.

One consequence was that Ras al-Khaimah was in continual need of revenues. As it was located near the Strait of Hormuz, it had been identified by the Central Command strategists as being the key point in the Gulf where they wanted to have a position. RAK was rather desperate for some kind of relationship that would be remunerative. For historical reasons, it was also anti-Iran and wanted U.S. support of its grievances, and the U.S. had more recently started viewing Iran as a potential adversary. Crist, without so far as I am aware of any support from Washington, rather forcefully advocated the idea that a big empty hotel the RAK had built a couple of years ago and had never been able to open because it wasn't economically feasible, would make a dandy headquarters building for the Central Command.

While this idea would have made the UAE federal government nervous, Crist had an attentive audience in the RAK. Sheikh Saqr bin Mohammed al-Qassimi, the ruler of the Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah, was a delightful old pirate. Saqr told me quite cheerfully that his ancestors were pirates, something the ruler of Sharjah, from another branch of the Al Qawasim, had published a book trying to refute. Saqr had been the ruler since 1947, had many sons from several wives and was an old style Gulf ruler.

*Q: I met him in a call on him.*

MACK: Saqr had been the ruler of RAK since 1947, and he had entered the federation somewhat reluctantly. He thought of himself as sovereign in matters of foreign policy, as well as security and the economy, whatever Sheikh Zayed down in Abu Dhabi might think about such matters. Left on his own, Saqr would have probably liked to make a deal with CENTCOM. But Saqr was economically dependent on Abu Dhabi and knew that he had to get federal support if he was to do this. It appeared there was a mutual interest there between Central Command and this one emirate. Indeed, there were a couple of other emirates sufficiently desperate enough for some kind of remunerative activity under their control that they might have been tempted to enter into a special relationship with the U.S. But the ones that really counted -- Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah -- were all for keeping the U.S. military at arm's length.

*Q: Was there a large Iranian expatriate community?*

MACK: There's a large Iranian origin population in the UAE, particularly in Sharjah and Dubai. The nature of the community was very heterogeneous. It included people who had come from Iran, starting back in the late 19th century. These Iranian settlers before the oil boom and in its early years tended to be native Arabic speakers of Arab ethnic origin. The southern Iranian coast line and offshore islands had been settled by Arabs in the early centuries of the Islamic period. To the extent they spoke Persian after emigrating to the UAE, it was as a second language. This part of the Iranian origin population was thoroughly integrated with the local people of Arabian Peninsula tribal origin. Then there were some primarily Persian speaking peoples, who had settled in the emirates for commercial reasons. As a result, there was a merchant class of Iranian origin, both Arabs and Persians, particularly in Dubai, Sharjah, and Ajman. These merchants were fully bi-lingual, even though they might trace their origins variously to either Arab or Persian roots. During the '50s and '60s, there were Iranians, some of whom were anti-Shah, who had tended to settle in this area as the oil boom got underway. A lot of Iranians were attracted into the area because of the oil boom, so many of them were anti-Shah, but not all of them. Finally, a few years after the Iranian revolution in 1978-79, you started getting anti-Mullah Iranians who were leaving Iran. They came to the UAE both because of the economic pull of these booming economies in places like Dubai, but also because they didn't like the kind of cultural-political system that was being set up in Iran. It was hard to generalize about the Iranian community.

*Q: Were there the equivalent Mullah agents, many proselytizers?*

MACK: There were, in effect, agents of the new Iranian regime in the UAE. In addition to the Iranian ambassador in Abu Dhabi, who with his staff was rather active, there was a representative of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Dubai. He had a big hospital and educational institution at his disposition. The Imam Khomeini's representative was believed to be engaged in subversive activities of various kinds, particularly with the not insubstantial Shiite population in Dubai. There had been some rather minor security incidents attributed to Iranian subversion. Moreover, there had been what the U.S. government considered to be a very plausible security threat against my predecessor as American ambassador.

*Q: Who was that?*

MACK: My predecessor was Quincey Lumsden, George Quincey Lumsden. Quincey had left nearly a year before my arrival at post. During that time, Fred Gerlach, an Arabist colleague, had served as charge d'affaires, and he continued with me as DCM for the following year. It was thought that the known threat to Ambassador Lumsden continued after his departure, so I inherited quite a lot of security. Maybe it's just as well my wife and daughter didn't arrive with me. It was plausible that there was a hangover of the security threat, which would have worsened with the continuing Iraq-Iran war and my involvement with the improving relations of the U.S. and Iraq. By this time, Iran identified both the U.S. and the UAE as tilting toward Baghdad. The UAE government was subject to subversion because of its political and economic support of Iraq. Its vulnerability also resulted from the economic openness of the UAE and its substantial Iranian origin community. There were two UAE military APCs with machine guns mounted on top in front of the U.S. Embassy and another at the gate of the U.S. Ambassador's residence. They were manned around the clock and, presumably, ready to fire.

*Q: That's armed personnel carrier.*

MACK: The UAE government had stationed the APCs to protect us, but it did not give the best impression to visitors. Both the American embassy and my residence already had what appeared like fortress-like walls. It all looked fairly ominous. I was followed wherever I went. The security people had obligingly supplied a Land Rover with sub-machinegun toting troops as a follow car to my official vehicle. From my first week in Abu Dhabi, I recognized the need for security, but I also wanted to reduce the profile. I didn't want to be followed around town by this Land Rover full of gun toting people. Frankly, I was just as frightened that one of them would let off a round by accident. And, of course, it was hard to invite guests to the ambassador's residence when they would have to pass by this armed personnel carrier. It was not very welcoming.

One of the early things I did was to commission my regional security officer and DCM to come up with security that would be adequate but not quite so high profile, and eventually that was done. Eventually, we improved the nature of our gates so we'd have a proper kind of barrier to vehicles at both the residence and the embassy. That enabled us to get rid of the armored personnel carriers. We got the UAE government to assign a single bodyguard who would accompany me in the ambassador's vehicle as a way of doing away with the need for a follow car. That was much more satisfactory from my point of view. I also had to solve a problem related to my running habit. The regional security officer had heard that I was used to road running in both Tunis and Washington. He told me I couldn't run in the UAE. I told him that he'd have a cardiac case on his hands, so we worked out a compromise. I agreed to vary my times and routes, and I usually would run with the Marines, who were doing it as part of their regular workouts. This was fine with everybody concerned.

It's fair to say for the first two years I was there, while the Iran-Iraq war was underway, security in some way or another was my major concern. That included security for U.S. warships in Gulf waters and in UAE ports, security threats against U.S. government installations, security of American private sector companies and citizens, and the potential vulnerability of the American Community schools in both Abu Dhabi and Dubai. We spent a lot of time on security issues, and my personal security was a tiny part of it.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

MACK: I was there from September 1986 to October 1989. The Iraq-Iran war comes to an end in August of 1988, when the nature of my job changed considerably.

*Q: I guess we'll move on to the tanker war.*

MACK: The tanker war could have a direct and immediate effect on the economics of the UAE, but also on the global economic situation. Iranian attacks on tankers had already caused the Japanese labor unions to refuse to crew any of the tankers coming into the area. Of course, that didn't stop the tanker companies. They just started hiring Filipinos, Indians, or Bangladeshis to crew the tankers. But there had been successful Iraqi air strikes against the Iranian tankers as far



down as the eastern gulf, very close to the UAE, which showed the reach of their air force was considerable. The Iranian navy managed to intimidate a lot of shipping, and they prevented any neutral or Iraq-bound shipping from going on the Iranian side of the gulf median line, the line that runs smack dab down the middle of the Persian Gulf. The Iranians declared that any traffic on the Iranian side of that line would be considered in a war zone, since they'd been subject to Iraqi attacks there. So they would consider either air or ship traffic in the area to be fair game. The Iranian navy pretty well tried to control that side of the Gulf, even though it was mostly international waters in a legal sense.

Surreptitiously, the Iranians were mining other portions of the gulf that could contribute the flow of supplies into Iraq. Small, fast ships with small missile launchers and rocket propelled grenades began making sporadic attacks on neutral shipping and laying mines in the shipping routes on the southern side of the median line. These vessels were the so-called bog-hammers, which I guess was a Norwegian made small boat. They were harassing and attacking ships headed toward Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, or the UAE. The un-flagged, anonymous nature of the craft gave the Iranian government a certain amount of deniability. These were Iranian revolutionary guard controlled ships, obviously operating under the security umbrella of the Iranian navy, but the Iranian navy was coyly saying they couldn't be responsible for such small craft. This was causing a significant increase in global oil prices and the constant threat of a real curtailment of supply. A couple of times there were prolonged periods when there would be no traffic through the Straits of Hormuz because of the scare that the Iranians had mined the Straits. In fact, I don't think they ever did.

*Q: Obviously the UAE had control of the tip.*

MACK: In fact, control of that international waterway is murky. The tip of the Musandam Peninsula, a narrow extension of the Arabian Peninsula at the Straits of Hormuz is Omani territory. There's a curious bit of geography there. A lot of the national territories in that area are not contiguous. The U.A.E has territory on both the Persian Gulf side but also on the Gulf of Oman on the Indian Ocean side. However, a disconnected portion of Omani territory lies at the tip of the Musandam Peninsula with UAE territory on either side. So there were basically three countries involved at the Straits of Hormuz -- Iran, most notably; and Oman; and the UAE. As an international waterway, the Straits of Hormuz are supposed to be free for commercial shipping and for so-called innocent passage of the warships of all nations. It was of great interest to our armed forces, the U.S. navy in particular, that they be well placed in both the UAE and Oman to check an Iranian effort to close the Straits. The portion of the UAE closest to Hormuz is the emirate of Ras al-Khaimah.

Gradually, I felt I was making some progress during October and November in getting a closer U.S. relationship with the UAE on such matters. I was not pushing the full CENTCOM agenda, since I knew Washington did not support the idea of moving the CENTCOM headquarters out to the UAE. But there was inter-agency support for me in seeking much easier and increased access for U.S. ships to make port calls, to use UAE refueling and re-supply facilities, and for encouraging joint training and joint exercise activities. We seemed to be making a fair amount of progress.

Both a serious threat and real opportunity arose in November. (I would need to check the exact date.) There was an Iranian attack on an offshore installation of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, an oil production platform that was just on the UAE side of the median line. A little oil facility called Abu Bakhoush was strafed from the air by Iranian aircraft. Although the Iranians did not acknowledge the attack, we had plenty of reason to believe that it was Iranians that had done this, presumably as a way of intimidating the UAE and the other Gulf Cooperation Council of States to stop their support for Iraq. The basic Iranian position, not illogical, was that if the Iraqis were making it hard for them to ship their oil out, they were going to make it hard for anybody else to ship their oil out of the Gulf. They had already stopped Iraqi oil, which they could do because the Iraqi oil export terminals were in range of Iranian artillery. Iraq was shipping oil out in other ways, such as their pipelines through Turkey. But the Iranians were now putting the pressure on neutral shipping to and from the Gulf Arab states, and this seemed to be a part of it.

Hamdan bin Zayed, the Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry and one of Sheikh Zayed's sons, called me in directly after this attack on Abu Bakhoush. Sheikh Zayed had made it very clear that Sheikh Hamdan was to be my main point of contact on foreign policy matters, rather than the foreign minister. Foreign Minister Rashid Abdullah was an older man and a very savvy diplomat, but I was told I was to deal more with this relatively inexperienced son of Sheikh Zayed. In some respects this was awkward, but on matters of direct concern to Zayed, it could be an advantage. Hamdan received me for a late evening meeting. He said that the UAE was feeling very isolated, as they were not getting any expressions of political support from other countries at this hour of need. They had been attacked by aircraft they believed were Iranian, and they felt very vulnerable to Iranian military pressures. Since roughly half of the UAE oil production was from offshore fields and wells not that different from Abu Bakhoush, they saw it as a warning that the Iranians could easily close down half of their production. In addition, through control of the sea lanes the Iranians could threaten the other 50% of their production that was from onshore wells.

Using the plural form which suggested he was speaking for Zayed, Hamdan said they wanted to know what kind of support they could get from Washington.

It was not entirely a surprise that other governments had been slow to express support for the UAE regarding this event. Most governments were viewing it as an ambiguous situation, unsure who staged this attack. Through our intelligence sources, we believed the attackers were Phantom aircraft, which were not in the Iraqi inventory. They had to be Iranian, and Iran had the motive. Most people, including official Washington, were not very keen on volunteering a statement. However, I knew from reading the telegrams from Washington that the State Department had prepared a reasonably supportive statement for contingency use if asked. It's just that the question had not come up in the press conference that followed this attack, and then by the next day, people in Washington had forgotten about it.

There was a reason why the U.S. government was being so cautious about saying anything with regard to Iran. The media were already broadcasting stories that the U.S. had a secret arms supply relationship to Iran. The Irangate rumors were already circulating.

*Q: You might explain Irangate.*

MACK: A newspaper in Beirut [possibly linked to Syria] had broken a story, officially denied by Washington, that there was a secret arms supply from the U.S. to Iran. Supposedly, the purpose of the arms transfers was to obtain the release of U.S. hostages that were held in Lebanon by an Iranian-backed militia group, the Hezbollah or a similar forerunner. It turned out to be true, but it was denied at this point, and I certainly hoped it was untrue. That was the big focus in Washington, and nobody paid a lot of attention in the media to this attack on a small UAE oil installation. But there had been some discussion between myself and people in Washington on the secure phone. I suggested that it was a likely subject for a media question to the Department, and they had arranged a rather supportive statement. In the end, no question was asked and the Press Office did not volunteer the statement. But I took the initiative of saying, Your Highness, if you would like me to make a statement about our meeting, I'll do so. I'm prepared to do so because I know what the Washington position is, it just hasn't come up in public. But I'll be happy to make the statement here. In fact, I had the text in my pocket, thinking that this might be the reason for our meeting. When I showed Hamdan the text and helped with my extemporaneous Arabic translation, he brightened up. He went out of the meeting room and made a phone call, presumably to his father. When Hamdan came back he indicated they would like such a statement.

It had been my habit to avoid making statements to the press. After every meeting with an official, the press people would be waiting outside, and some of my foreign diplomat colleagues liked to make their views known in this way. It was my view that the UAE government would make its own statements on the meetings if it thought it was useful to have public coverage. Ordinarily, I would just smile, say it was a great meeting and walk away. This time I came out and said that I had a statement to make. Because of the late hour, the only person staking out the meeting was from the official Emirates News Agency, and he was absolutely stunned. This agency normally reported official government releases and little else. I made the statement to him, and he took it down on his tape recorder. At about 1:00 in the morning, I had a call from Peter Hellyer, editor in chief of the English language Emirates News, the government daily paper. Peter, a long time U.K. resident employee, was cautious and asked whether they could really use my statement, which had been passed to them by the Emirates News Agency. I indicated that was why I had made it. He said, okay, we'll check it with the Under Secretary's office. As a result, a statement appeared in the Emirates News the next morning. After that, the foreign media and local Arabic papers picked up the story. There was some curiosity as to why the statement was made in Abu Dhabi and not in Washington, but at least the U.S. had responded publicly and privately by criticizing an attack which targeted economic resources of great importance to the UAE and of strategic interest to the U.S.

Soon after that, however, the local atmosphere turned sour. The Irangate crisis broke, and all kinds of doubts arose about the nature of our support to the UAE and the nature of our relationship with Iran. This was a problem for the U.S. all over the area, and a much greater problem for our ambassador in Baghdad than for me. But it also created a lot of doubt as to whether General Crist and David Mack knew what they were talking about when we said we wanted a closer military relationship with them. If such a relationship wasn't to be defense against Iran, what was it for?

*Q: How could you explain the Irangate? We were both sitting on it, it was pretty obvious that it had happened. We'd supplied some guided missiles, tank type missiles to the Iranian - not a lot, but enough. How did you explain this?*

MACK: To begin with, Washington officially lied to us in the field. We had an instruction from Washington in the form of a NODIS cable, in principle the Secretary of State's direct channel to U.S. ambassadors and other senior officials. It started off right at the top: The White House has supplied us with the following statement that you are instructed to use with host governments, if asked. And, of course, we were being asked everywhere. The statement was a bald-faced lie, which had been drafted by Howard Teicher, an NSC staffer. When I read the cable, I thought that it looked great. But it seemed to contradict flatly the media reports out of Washington, raising all kinds of suspicion that the alleged arms arrangement was true. So I made a secure phone call to John Craig, the director for Arabian Peninsula Affairs, who told me that the statement had been drafted by Howard Teicher, it had been sent over to them, and that's all they had to go on. He couldn't give me any more instructions. He didn't tell me it was true, but he didn't tell me that it was in any sense to be dismissed either. So the NODIS cable was the only instruction that I had to use, and I did. That did a lot of harm to my personal credibility, as well as the credibility of the U.S. government.

This came at a bad time for the U.S. government in its relations with the UAE. Increasingly, the Emirates authorities worried about how they were going to protect the half of their production that was offshore, and how they were going to protect tankers coming in to upload oil from terminals along the coast. The responsibility for this fell to the federal military authorities, which is another way of saying the Abu Dhabi controlled military authorities, known as the General Headquarters or GHQ. They realized they had to have a closer relationship with us to make up for the UAE military weakness, but they had doubts about U.S. intentions and reliability. They became more interested in U.S. Navy ship visits as a way of demonstrating their closeness, something that responded to the needs of our navy.

The UAE also asked us to supply them with Stinger missiles. The Stinger is a small man-portable ground to air missile that can be used against an attacking aircraft. These were the same kind of missiles that we had been supplying through a covert program to the mujahideen in Afghanistan. Although this was widely known, it was something that I could neither confirm nor deny at the time. Rumor even had it that U.S. Stinger missiles were available in the arms *souk* in Peshawar, Pakistan. True enough, we had provided quite a lot of the missiles to the mujahideen, and accountability was loose.

One of these missiles had found its way back to another small gulf country, Qatar. The armed forces of Qatar had been so unwise as to show it on a military parade. This led to congressional restrictions on the sale of any man portable missiles, like the Stingers, to countries in the Gulf, the so-called DeConcini Amendment, named for Senator Dennis DeConcini. An exception had been made for sale of a limited number to Saudi Arabia, and the second exception was made for a sale of limited number to Bahrain. Both required a presidential waiver. Representatives of the UAE armed forces had raised this with people in the Central Command, asking whether this would be an appropriate kind of air defense for them to use out on these exposed oil platforms.

In addition to the various minor platforms, the UAE had a huge oil gathering and gas liquification facility, together with an export terminal, on Das Island, which is way out toward the middle of the Gulf. Looking at the map, Das Island appears to be a very vulnerable installation. The Iranian attack on Abu Bakhoush had shut down production at that production. It was a relatively small site in terms of overall UAE production, and they could live with and indefinite delay in getting it back on line. But the UAE could not live with what they thought might follow, such as an attack on Das. As a senior Abu Dhabi sheikh told me, it would go up like a nuclear explosion. With the gas liquification plant, in particular, I could imagine the destruction would be huge. The UAE asked us very specifically to provide them with Stinger missiles, which they could use as a defense of these vulnerable points. We would supply the missiles and train their personnel to use them.

Although there had been military to military discussions in both Tampa and Abu Dhabi, the UAE made the official request to me. I received it both from the commander of their air force, President Zayed's third son Mohammed, and from the Under Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, President Zayed's fourth son Hamdan. Mohammed and other UAE Air Force officers had already had discussions with U.S. military officers. We already were selling them Hawk air defense missiles, which was fine for defense of their land territory, but now they needed something to defend these oil installations out in their Gulf economic zone. These points were well out of the coverage area of the Hawk missiles. In any case, the Hawks were for higher altitude and wouldn't be effective against an attacking aircraft such as the Phantoms which the Iranians had used to attack Abu Bakhoush from a low level flight across the Gulf.

I told Sheikhs Mohammed and Hamdan that I would certainly submit their request to Washington. I expressed personal sympathy with their needs, but I said that I knew this was going to be a difficult thing to sell in Washington. There would be Congressional opposition. They said the Administration had ways to deal with the problem, and if we cared about the relationship, we would surely find a way to do this. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed had been encouraged by people in the Central Command with whom they had discussed the matter, and who believed this was the right kind of air defense system for this purpose.

Washington turned down the request and instructed me to convey the bad news back to both the UAE Air Force and the Foreign Ministry. I did so in meetings with Zayed's sons, the Air Force Commander and Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry. They were both very disappointed, and we argued back and forth. The matter escalated, and the next step came when I was called in by the Crown Prince, Zayed's first son Khalifa. He and I had a long discussion about this and about the damage Irangate was causing the U.S. regional reputation. Khalifa urged me to seek reconsideration from Washington. He was not only the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, but he also had the title of Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. It was clear to me that this was a defining moment. The most I could get from Washington in return was that they recognized there was an air defense problem, but that Stinger missiles were not the appropriate means for dealing with this. Washington said they would instruct Central Command to put together a survey team to visit the UAE, look at the problem, and come up with the appropriate answer.

Since the people in Central Command had been the ones that had originally fed this notion, I knew that Central Command had had their arm twisted on it. Now they were going to have to

come up some kind of military answer that from a technical point of view would be second best but would address the issue. We went through all of that. When the CENTCOM team arrived, their UAE hosts really opened up to us in a way they had never done before about the nature of their vulnerabilities. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the air force commander, personally escorted the survey team and me to Das Island and to Abu Bakhoush. He also described their readiness to put their top personnel into defending these points out in the offshore economic zone, given its importance to UAE national interests, but they needed the right kind of armament. CENTCOM produced a thick report, which I presented to Sheikh Mohammed. It prescribed a combination of radar, communications and a type of fixed missile that could be installed on the offshore installations. This was an older missile system that could be made available to the UAE, but it was a crew-served missile that wouldn't have the same application to terrorism. By contrast the Stinger is an ideal weapon for terrorists, and this is what had worked so well against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, and we didn't want them to have these missiles around the gulf. The UAE argued they could be trusted to control them, but it was clear that Washington had another view. Moreover, it seemed implicit to me that UAE defense of the offshore areas would in the end require close cooperation with the U.S. fleet in the Gulf. Unfortunately, the shock of Irangate naturally undermined the trust the UAE would be willing to place in us for such a vital matter.

As we reached late December 1986, relations between the U.S. and the UAE were troubled. When I had arrived in September, we were entering a fairly high point -- a visit of the Commander in Chief of the Central Command, a growing recognition by the UAE that they needed some help in dealing with the Iranians, and very good basic economic relationship. Political relationships when I arrived were not particularly strong, but they were not bad either. The area where there seemed to be room for real long term growth was in military cooperation. The Irangate scandal, however, injected a real problem of credibility in the U.S. political position. Who were we with, and who were we against? Since President Reagan had dismissed Admiral Poindexter, the director of the National Security Council staff, along with Colonel Ollie North of the staff, it seemed to me that Secretary Shultz and Secretary Weinberger were back in charge of Administration policies regarding Iran and Gulf security. I felt reasonably confident of where we were headed on this. But the rest of the world, and particularly a cautious little country neighboring Iran like the United Arab Emirates, still thought the U.S. was hopelessly muddled. From my own perspective, we were still getting a lot confusing talk out of Washington, including from President Reagan.

This was the setting in which the UAE government had come to us with what they felt was a very reasonable request, and we had turned them down. Before the CENTCOM team arrived for the offshore security survey, I had a climactic meeting with President Zayed in late December. I decided that I needed to have a discussion with him to convey what I understood to be the real situation with regard to U.S policy toward Iran, that Irangate had been a terrible mistake. Mistakes were made, as President Reagan had said, but we were now on the right course. The UAE government could have confidence in us, and we could have a frank discussion about security strategy in the area, the Iranian threat, and what we could do together to meet it. It would also be an opportunity to tell Zayed directly about the survey team that was prepared to assist with this problem. This would answer their question as to how to handle the problem of defense of the petroleum installations, in cooperation, of course, with the U.S. Navy.

After I learned of my appointment to call on Zayed, I had a call from Sheikh Mohammed, the commander of the air force, Zayed's third son. Speaking in Arabic, he said, "Mr. Ambassador, you have a meeting with my father." I said, "yes, that's correct, Your Highness, I hope you'll be there," because he very often was there when I met with his father and could help both of us in understanding technical military issues. Mohammed said, "no, I won't be there. I'm leaving the country." I replied, "when you get back I will of course report to you on the meeting, but I'll also go right away to see Sheikh Khalifa, the Crown Prince, and give him a full report on the meeting." To my disappointment, Mohammed said, "actually Sheikh Khalifa won't be here. Sheikh Khalifa and I are leaving to go hunting in Pakistan. Mr. Ambassador, are you going to tell him about the Stinger missiles?" I said, I thought the U.S. response on the Stinger matter probably would come up since I would be telling Zayed about our proposal for a survey team, and that we hoped very much they would all support this idea, which seemed to be a good way of dealing with the problem. After a pause on the line, Mohammed said, "Mr. Ambassador, we haven't told him about the missiles." This should not have surprised me, given how much Zayed's son's feared that he might blame them for failing to persuade the U.S. to meet the request for Stingers.

So, I went into the meeting with foreboding. It fell to me not only to discuss the wider political issues, the dialogue that I had intended, but also to break the news that they could not have the Stinger missiles they believed would meet their security needs and for which they had made a formal request. It was a very, very tough meeting. I earned my money for Uncle Sam on that occasion. Zayed had with him his second son, Sheikh Sultan, who did not hold an official position at the time, although he had been Chief of Staff of the UAE armed forces at an earlier time. I neither expected nor received any help from Sultan. Whenever the president would say to me something like isn't it true that you did this and did that, and isn't it true that you said you would support us in our security needs? – Sultan would chime in, "Yes, Your Highness, yes, Your Highness."

Zayed had a very forceful, appealing and straight forward way of presenting the case for the missiles. He was a semi-literate Bedouin who is now the president of this very wealthy, but very weak and essentially defenseless country. Zayed took great pride in the tribal military traditions which, unfortunately, do not have great relevance to the UAE's modern security problem. Zayed had been a fighter in desert warfare when he was young. He talked to me about how the UAE young men were not highly educated, but they know how to aim. He even showed me how they would aim the missiles at aircraft, using line of sight with the naked eye. Eyes like those of hawks, he said. Zayed had been sold on the idea that the Stinger was going to be the silver bullet, the answer to their problems.

Given the fact that my own military advisers had told me that the Stinger was probably the best weapons for the UAE to get for this specific purpose, I was inwardly sympathetic. Outwardly, however, I had to make the case for another alternative, making the best use possible of my rather tight instructions from Washington. That was perhaps the low point of my time as the ambassador. The political problems stemming from Irangate created political doubts about relying on the U.S., and then we rebuffed this key military request.

*Q: Shall we pick it up the next time. You finished seeing the president, told him that we weren't going to be able to give him Stingers but that we would send out a survey team. So we will continue after that on...*

MACK: ...on the survey team, but also on Operation Earnest Will. This was the program for protecting shipping in the Gulf, and it began to restore our situation. We'll continue another time.

*Q: Today is the 5th of September 1996. David you heard where we were the last time. So we'll talk about the survey team, and then Earnest Will.*

MACK: We did get a survey team out from CENTCOM. Many of them were the same sort of U.S. experts who had earlier, and informally, told the United Arab Emirates' military that the Stinger missile would probably be helpful to them. But the team came with firmly circumscribed parameters. They produced a fairly predictable and probably a fairly sound set of recommendations, including much greater cooperation between the U.S. Navy and the UAE armed forces. It included training possibilities. It also included a proposal that the UAE buy a different kind of ground to air missile, one that we didn't really have in our inventory. It would be a ground to air missile that both the French and, I believe, the Swedes produced, a crew operated missile rather than a single man shoulder-held fired missile like the Stinger. The idea in Washington's mind was that this crew operated missile would be less of a problem for falling into the hands of terrorists. On the other hand, the response from the UAE military was that they had already considered that system and were not interested.

Having the survey team come out did provide me with one very interesting experience. General Mohammed al-Badi, Chief of Staff of the UAE armed forces welcomed us very cordially. Then, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed commander of the air force and the son of the UAE president took charge of showing us around and provided us with first rate briefings on the UAE military and the threat to the country as they saw it. Sheikh Mohammed was in charge of the air force, but he also had responsibility for air defense, so he was the logical person to take charge of this group. They really did open up a lot of their military to us in a way that they hadn't before. The survey team personnel from CENTCOM were quite impressed by the degree of access they had and what they got to see. Among other things, we were taken out to a couple of off shore points. The primary one was Das Island, a huge petroleum processing and storage facility. It lies north of Abu Dhabi and very close to the median line of the Gulf between Iran and the UAE. It was vulnerable to an Iranian attack, and there were about 4,000 people working and living on the island. Until I visited this small island, I did not appreciate the extent to which it was a very concentrated and sensitive industrial area.

We toured those facilities as an example of what the UAE had to protect. The Iranian attack on the Abu Bakhoush platform, an installation of far less value, amounted to a warning shot. We then visited Abu Bakhoush. While Das was close to the median line, Abu Bakhoush was right at it. The sensitivity of this location was illustrated by the fact that you could actually look out and see a similar Iranian off shore oil installation in the distance. Since the time of the attack, Abu Bakhoush had remained shut down and un-repaired.



I spent a lot of time on this trip talking to Mohammed bin Zayed. I was trying to persuade him that a closer relationship between the UAE and the U.S., regardless of the kind of military equipment that we sold them, would be their most important guarantee for protection against attacks of the kind they feared. Our Navy could be very active in the area. It would be much more effective, however, if it was working closely with the UAE armed forces. This would involve communicating on a very intense and regular basis, engaging in cross training, and conducting joint exercises with both the UAE air defense and their navy. Sheikh Mohammed took all that in. He seemed convinced that we had the capability of doing that, but he asked the critical question. What is it for which the UAE can really count on the U.S.? He made it clear that he understood the capability of the U.S. military, but he seemed to share his father's question as to U.S. motives. In various ways, Sheikh Mohammed made clear the UAE could not put its security or the security of its vital oil installations in the hands of somebody else who might have a different agenda. This was a particularly hard issue to deal with coming in the wake of the Irangate controversy. There were real doubts about the nature of whatever relationship we might be planning on developing with Iran. This was a fairly strong argument that could be made in counter to my arguments, and it would take more than U.S. promises to settle the issue.

The upshot of this, as I said, was a set of military recommendations from CENTCOM that was almost predictable. While we went through the motions of being open minded and listening to UAE ideas, the end result was pretty empty for them as they saw it. But it was the first little step toward closer cooperation between our two militaries. For the first time, the UAE had really opened itself up to this kind of give and take with the U.S.

*Q: Two things as you're talking. One, you're saying at that off shore platform you could see an equivalent Iranian platform. Weren't the Iranians pretty vulnerable to something happening to what they were doing? I would think it would keep them from messing around. That's one, and the other one was, in these things did the fact that we had promised strong support of South Vietnam, only to withdraw at a critical time...this was back some time ago, were the Emirates aware, or were they raising the specter of our Vietnam...*

MACK: In the geo-political background during this whole period of time were three developments. One was the whole Vietnam experience, and the message it sent throughout the world that there were real limits to the degree to which the United States could be depended upon in a crunch. Second, and much closer at home, was the perception of a lot of these conservative Arab regimes that we had not provided adequate support to the Shah of Iran, or that our criticism of the internal situation in Iran had undercut the Shah, and the consequent feeling that the U.S. could be a treacherous ally. Third was the most recent event and one that in a way tended to be most on peoples' minds -- what happened in Lebanon. That was a situation in which President Reagan had declared very strongly and assertively that we had vital national interests, and then within a few months we had pulled our forces out of the country. Against this background, the Irangate scandal topped it off. Arms for hostages discussions had taken place in Tehran, and the supply of weapons to Iran was against everything we had said and been preaching. Taken all together, these things created an atmosphere where trust in the U.S. was in short supply.

Let me respond to your other question. You said, wasn't it apparent that the United States could, in effect, provide deterrents by the fact that the Iranians would be very vulnerable to our military efforts. There was no doubt that we had the capability. In fact, less than two years later did take military action against that very oil platform at Sirri, the same one that I had seen from Abu Bakhoush. We said our actions were prompted by the use of this platform as a base for Iranian attacks on neutral shipping in the area. We certainly had the capability. But the question for the UAE in early 1987 was, what were our intentions? And what would be our willpower in a situation in which we would take, and in the end did take casualties. These were the three questions: intentions, sustained willpower, and a willingness to take casualties to protect an ally's interest.

*Q: Can I ask here because I think it's important for historians who depend so much on the written record - we're talking about the perception which you as a trained political observer seen, and people looking at the backing down in Lebanon, the Irangate, both of which are administration not showing the judgment, or stamina, in situations in the Middle East, and raising doubts. This is an important thing for policy planners back in Washington to understand as part of the framework. Yet it's a little bit like explaining to someone that they have bad breath. It's embarrassing to the administration to be told this. Did you feel constrained in your reporting the atmospherics?*

MACK: I did not feel constrained. At this point, there was a general acknowledgment that the commitment that was made in Lebanon was a commitment made for political purposes. Whereas, the kind of commitments and interests we had in play in the Gulf were strategic. I did not find a problem about giving a sense of this kind of background to Washington. I did not mind telling Washington that policy failure on our part had led to a lack of confidence on behalf of allies and trading partners around the world. The Department did not seek such analysis, but no one ever told me to keep such views out of my reporting of host government attitudes.

During this post-Irangate period, I think all of us in the field were looking for some way to restore the tattered credibility of the U.S. A couple of things were underway. One that I'd like to talk about at some length was a proposal from the Kuwaitis that we provide protection to their ships. As I recall, this dated from the summer of 1986. By asking that we re-flag some of their tanker fleet as U.S. ships, the Kuwaitis tried to make it look as if it was not really a political alliance, but simply a commercial deal. They would make the necessary financial commitments in order to get their tankers flagged as American tankers, and therefore when we protected the tankers we would be protecting ourselves, rather than Kuwaiti shipping. Initially, there wasn't a great appetite in Washington for making this commitment. But I think all of the ambassadors out there were looking for various ways to do things, and after the Iran arms for hostages' scandal, this proposal was revived. [See several pages below for more on re-flagging.]

Washington had become more interested in initiatives with the Gulf Arabs. Another example, at this very low point in U.S.-Arab relations, was to invite President Zayed to make an official visit to Washington. There had been no interest in that when I'd had my pre-arrival consultations in the summer of 1986. I had raised the idea with the Chief of Protocol, Selwa Roosevelt, who dismissed it by saying, "He doesn't sound like much fun. I don't think Nancy would go much for this kind of a visit." Now, when I requested an invitation for Zayed in early 1987, I took the

following line: the current perception of the United States out here is about as low as it has ever been. We are perceived as being an undependable ally, unwilling to stand up for our true interests, and of being anti-Arab. The U.S. comes across as both pro-Israeli and pro-Iranian. The symbolism of a state visit by President Zayed would reverse that perception. Visually, and by reputation, Zayed was about as Arab as you can be. It's hard to be more Arab than that guy. He won't come across as some westernized Levantine Arab. This will be a pure Arab visiting the United States. Since there was not a lot going on between us right now in active relationships, the visit would be mostly a matter of formality. The more ceremony, the better, and the Reagan White House kind of liked ceremony. A visit by Zayed, I argued, would send a signal, not only to UAE officials, but to a many Arab officials elsewhere, that there was an interest in Washington in having closer relationships with Arab governments.

I got an almost immediate positive response back from Washington. They were this desperate at that point. This was a straw, and they clutched at it as a way of trying to restore the reputation of Washington. Mind you, it helped that this point, Poindexter and North were out, and Shultz and Weinberger were very much in the driver's seat, particularly George Shultz as far as our policy [toward Iran and the Gulf].

*Q: We're talking about Oliver North and John Poindexter for the National Security Council who were responsible for the Irangate fiasco.*

MACK: However, when I presented the idea to the UAE, first at the Foreign Ministry to Sheikh Hamdan, the Under Secretary and a son of Sheikh Zayed, and then later when I mentioned it to the Crown Prince, it never got a positive response. I might just mention that when I had my farewell call on Zayed, over two years later, he told me that he appreciated the fact that he had the invitation, but he simply couldn't accept it in 1987 because the attitudes towards the United States in the area, and in his own country, made it undesirable. It would not have been in the interest of the UAE for him to do visit Washington. As he said in a very colorful phrase in Arabic, people would say that Zayed is the tail of American imperialism. Although it seemed like a clever idea to me, it obviously wasn't timely from Zayed's point of view. Unfortunately, it turned out to be one chance of getting him to the United States for an official visit. After that, the next time there was an opportunity, we had the BCCI controversy.

*Q: A bank fraud controversy.*

MACK: The BCCI controversy of the early 1990s involving a Pakistani bank with ties to the UAE raised reasons why neither Zayed nor the U.S. found it to be an appropriate time for him to come. Zayed is now a much older man, and I fear he will never make the trip except perhaps for medical care at the Mayo Clinic. [This proved true.] But the more important initiative in U.S. relations with the Gulf Arabs was this question of re-flagging Kuwaiti ships.

*Q: When that first came up, how did it struck you?*

MACK: It struck me as an artificial device, but I never doubted that we should protect neutral shipping. If you couldn't move the oil, if the oil tankers were going to be subject to random Iranian supported piracy and harassment, then our most vital interests would be in jeopardy. But

there was a lot of opposition in Washington to another military commitment. Would this be like Lebanon? There was real opposition to new military commitments, and particularly for governments with which we did not have very close relations. Kuwait had been a difficult government to deal with. It had given us endless trouble on the Arab-Israel issue. On security matters, Kuwait had kept us at arm's length, not even permitting ship visits.

*Q: You're talking about military ships?*

MACK: In the UAE, unlike Kuwait, at least we had some dozen U.S. Navy ships visiting per year. So there was not a lot of sympathy for Kuwait. However, people in Washington, and the President included, still saw things in terms of the East-West dynamics. They had not yet figured out that the great threat to the area was no longer the Soviet Union, which was in a state of rapidly increasing decline. For top Washington leaders there was still an overriding concern about keeping the Soviet Union out of the Gulf. That was almost the number one objective that Washington continued to stress in major policy papers regarding the Gulf area. As a result, it did get people's attention when the Soviet Union offered the Kuwaitis protection for Kuwaiti shipping. Being bargainers, the Kuwaitis began playing the U.S. and the Soviet Union off against one another to see what security benefits they could get out of the cold war rivalry.

The Kuwaiti proposal got an airing in Washington during a Chiefs of Mission conference for the Near East and South Asian ambassadors. I believe it was in early February of 1987. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy, along with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Marion Creekmore, convened the U.S. ambassadors from the Gulf states in a small group in Murphy's office to consider how the U.S. government should respond to the re-flagging proposal. Creekmore had been opposed to this idea all along, had argued very strenuously against it and was partly responsible for the long delay in answering the Kuwaiti government. Every one of the ambassadors from the region argued for it, mostly in terms of our long-standing commitment to support the flow of oil and stability in the region. In the end, the decision was positive. As one result of this meeting of the ambassadors, the NEA Bureau submitted a paper for a decision by the President. I heard that in the President's mind, the aspect that weighed the most heavily was the Soviet counterproposal to protect Gulf shipping. For at least part of official Washington, the major issue became how to trump the Soviets and keep them out of the region? In effect, the decision was very probably taken for the wrong reasons, but it was the right decision.

*Q: Where was Marion Creekmore? What was his background, and where was he coming from?*

MACK: Marion was a South Asian specialist and an economic expert. He had not had much Gulf experience. He was not, if you will, one of the little fraternity of Arabists. He did not see the importance that we did of having a close political relationship with these rather peculiar governments. One reason that I was pretty sure it was the Soviet issue that made the difference was because Marion told me afterwards that he had changed his mind once the Soviets made their offer. In fact, he did not shift his position until he found that the ambassadors in the region were unanimous and until it appeared that the Kuwaitis would accept the Soviet offer. That didn't change anything as far as I was concerned, but I realized that Marion was feeling the policy vibrations from the White House, and perhaps from George Shultz.

*Q: What was your estimation at the time that you were getting about what the Soviets could do if they wanted to do this?*

MACK: I don't really remember in detail. We certainly didn't think the Soviets had the naval military capability at hand. They would have had to bring a fleet into the area, whereas we had maintained a naval presence for decades. I'm sure there was skepticism in Washington about the Soviet capability. Washington wanted to avoid the possibility that the Soviets would respond to a U.S. negative decision by telling the Kuwaitis they were moving ahead positively but needed a refueling and re-supply base in Kuwait. I could see why these kinds of arguments would be fairly compelling in cold war terms. To me, however, the compelling argument was that you had to protect the oil out of the Gulf from whatever predator, and at the time the most likely predator was Iran.

*Q: Were you getting any feed in from the Asian bureau, the European bureau, particularly Japan depended heavily on this oil and I was wondering if this was a support, or not? Or was this kept within the bureau.*

MACK: I honestly don't know much about the wider internal policy making on this. The point I want to make is that every single ambassador in the Gulf felt we should do this, felt that it would go down well with their host governments, felt that their host governments would provide support in terms of access to their ports, refueling, overflight arrangements, etc.

*Q: This included our ambassador at Saudi Arabia?*

MACK: Yes. I returned to post in the spring of 1987 feeling a lot better about U.S. strategic resolve, and confident in my own mind that this decision was coming. I still met a lot of skepticism from the UAE government as I tried to begin developing ideas with them for a closer strategic relationship, without having gotten yet a clear go-ahead from Washington. We started the process of consulting. We brought a CENTCOM team out to brief the UAE officials in late 1987 on the military plans for what was to be called Earnest Will. There was an underlying skepticism from the host government that the U.S. Navy would actually do more than simply sail around and try to deter interference with shipping by its presence. The question from the UAE officials was whether we would be willing to fire back if the ships were fired upon. It's fair to say the UAE government was also skeptical about what other GCC governments, particularly the Saudis, were likely to do. They knew we had very close relationships with Saudi Arabia, and part of what we had to get in the way of support and assistance from the UAE for effective Gulf security was the ability to over-fly their territory with Saudi based AWACS.

*Q: You might explain what an AWACS is.*

MACK: The AWACS is a 747-type aircraft produced by Boeing. It is configured for airborne radar surveillance of a very wide swathe of territory. Basically, you see everything that moves in the air in this swathe of territory. The AWACS system has a certain radius in which it's effective. Operating over Saudi territory, the AWACS range would not have been effective as far away as the Straits of Hormuz. You actually had to get over UAE territory before you had effective coverage to detect aircraft in the vicinity of the Straits of Hormuz.

There was a lot of reluctance on the part of the UAE partly because in the past the UAE had difficult relationships with Saudi Arabia, including border conflicts. The Emirates had been British allies in the original development of the oil industry in the Gulf. By contrast, Saudi Arabia had been close to the United States. There had been a major controversy over some territories out in the desert, areas shared by the UAE and Saudi Arabia, such as the Buraimi oasis.

*Q: In fact when I was there in the late '50s the British did not even have relations with Saudi Arabia over that, and when we visited there we couldn't go to the Buraimi oasis because we didn't want to stir up things.*

MACK: The struggle over the Buraimi oasis was a critical part of the early history leading to the founding of the United Arab Emirates. It concerned, as the UAE saw it, successful efforts to stop the encroachment of Saudi authority at the Buraimi oasis. This was done with British support, including British officered Emirate troops, the so-called Trucial Oman Scouts. In the late 1980s, there were still some old British advisers around who had participated in those events. They may have been retired or semi-retired, but the British advisers still had influence. Even without the British, many UAE leaders had suspicions about Saudi Arabia. Not quite on the same level of negative attitudes toward Iran, but they were suspicious. The UAE was particularly nervous about trusting aircraft which would be based in Saudi Arabia coming across UAE territory, with Saudis aboard as part of the crew. They were concerned that what the AWACS could they see and do would give the Saudis control over the United Arab Emirates. So there was this additional layer of concern, added to the concerns about the United States that we have already discussed.

Initially, we did not get agreement to everything the U.S. needed for effective operations. There had to be direct Saudi-UAE discussions, and in the end those two governments reached agreement on the degree to which the AWACS aircraft could cross into UAE territory and procedures for doing so. It was not easy for the UAE government to reach a decision. This was a confederation where Abu Dhabi would have to sell everything to the other emirates. There were concerns in Dubai that this was going to draw hostile Iranian attention without compensating security benefits. So it was also a difficult internal problem for the UAE to get agreement to these measures. It was only subsequently, once the operations got underway, that we really got full agreement to have overflights of UAE territory from our carrier out in the Gulf of Oman, which is the extension of the Indian Ocean, in order to conduct missions in the Gulf.

Mind you, at this time it was still U.S. Navy doctrine, and continued to be doctrine until late 1990, that you don't put a carrier in the confined waters of the Gulf. So anything we did in the Gulf from carrier based aircraft would require flights over UAE and/or Omani territory, unless you followed a very round about route over the Straits of Hormuz, avoiding land areas.

*Q: What role was Oman playing?*

MACK: In Oman we had much longer standing, formalized military cooperation. This included an access agreement and the pre-positioning of U.S. military supplies. That dated back to 1980, plus the British had very close cooperation in Oman. Of all the states in the area, next to Kuwait

I suppose, the UAE was the one with the least ongoing military relationships with the west in general. The U.S. had very close military relationships in Bahrain and Oman, and rather close in Saudi Arabia. The French and British had pretty close military relations in Qatar. Like Kuwait, the UAE tried to be as independent as possible from any great powers. Participation in Operation Earnest Will was a major step for them, and in the end it worked. We consulted very closely during this period. I got particularly close to Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, the commander of the air force and air defense, and to Mohammed al-Badi, the chief of staff in the armed forces. We had critical moments when I could see they were testing us, and watching our reactions. One of those moments arose prior to the beginning of Operation Earnest Will, the shipping protection operations, when there was an Iraqi air force attack on one of our ships in the northern Gulf.

*Q: You're talking about a tanker.*

MACK: No, [the Stark] was a U.S. Navy war ship cruising in the northern Gulf. It was attacked by an Iraqi Mirage aircraft armed with a French air to surface missile.

*Q: The Exocet, which had quite a reputation after the Falklands war, a very dangerous weapon.*

MACK: There was considerable loss of life, American Navy personnel killed in the attack. This ship had to go into Bahrain for repairs afterwards. It was a very troubling event. This attack took place at a time when the Irangate scandal was still fresh, and relations between Baghdad and Washington were marked with more than the usual mistrust. However, the Iraqis immediately said that it was an accident and offered compensation.

*Q: We're talking about an Iraqi, and the ship was the Stark, I believe.*

MACK: An Iraqi aircraft had been on a patrolling mission over the gulf. Iraqi aircraft had engaged very often against Iranian tankers. Everybody I've talked to who was knowledgeable about the attack on the Stark agrees that it was an accident. Since 1990, there has been a tendency on the part of some outside the government to look back at that incident and say it was intentional. In fact, discussions between both governments at the time did not bear that out. It was thought that an Iraqi pilot had misidentified The Stark as an Iranian warship, prior to launching the Exocet. The Iraqis were in the process of paying compensation when they invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

UAE leaders seemed concerned that an incident as serious as the attack on The Stark would cause the U.S. to disengage militarily from the Gulf. Especially since we were not even expecting an attack from the Iraqis, this kind of event would be a cause for us to leave the Gulf.

The news of the attack reached me when I was traveling up to one of the northern Emirates for some official meetings. I heard from the embassy that we had an expression of regret from the foreign ministry, but it was kind of a *pro forma* sort of thing. Then I got a call on my car telephone from Mohammed bin Zayed. Sheikh Mohammed gave me what seemed a very heartfelt expression of condolences. He said that if there was any way they could be of help, we could count on the UAE. I said that the U.S. Navy personnel and the ship would be cared for in Bahrain in this case, but we would appreciate the willingness of the UAE in the future to its ports

available for such unfortunate accidents. Sheikh Mohammed offered all their facilities, such as hospitals and ports.

He then added what I thought was a very revealing indication of the real background for their sympathy and concern. He said, "I hope this won't mean that you'll take the fleet out of the Gulf." For me, as I reported to Washington, this was a good example of what the really important tie between the United States and these countries meant. It was not a matter of sentiment or shared values, particularly. Certainly, it was not a matter of common political systems or common histories. It was a matter of shared interests. Arab states like the UAE needed to have us commit assets for the Gulf. We, and our democratic allies, needed the oil. It was really clear to me at that point, and from then on I began to formulate my own ideas about Gulf security strategy based on an objective and mutual assessment of shared interests.

*Q: When the Stark incident happened, did you, and did the other American ambassadors reporting around explain that this was sort of a test about whether we would stay in or not?*

MACK: I don't honestly remember. Frankly, I had no doubt that we would stay in the Gulf at that point. By this time, we had formal instructions that Operation Earnest Will was going to proceed. I was convinced by the instructions that I had received from Washington that our military planning was really serious and based on high level decisions. We were bringing extra aircraft into Saudi Arabia, extra ships into the Gulf, of which the Stark was one. For our allies in the gulf countries, however, it's fair to say that they were not really sure we were truly serious until the first U.S. Navy escorted convoy of tankers came through the Straits of Hormuz. Even then, our UAE partners wondered what would happen if we met with military resistance. We did meet with some problems. A tanker in the first convoy hit a mine in the northern waters of the Gulf as it approached Kuwait. It was clear that this was dangerous business. The Iranians had the capability from their small boats of at least harassing individual U.S. escorted ships. Initially, at least, Iranian ships and aircraft seemed to be prudently keeping their distance from the convoys. At the time of this first convoy, however, there was not much we could do about a mine laid in shipping channels in advance.

As Operation Earnest Will began to work out, eventually some people questioned whether it was more than a limited exercise. The original notion was that the U.S. Navy was only going to protect the few U.S. flag ships involved in merchant shipping to the Gulf. Even including the re-flagged Kuwaiti tankers, there weren't that many. Gradually, it became obvious to observers in the Gulf states that by protecting those few U.S. flag ships, and simply being present to do that, we were in effect protecting other shipping. This was one of those unannounced parts of our policy that people became aware of over time. Moreover, as operations developed, the naval elements involved in Earnest Will included the ships of other states, NATO partners like the French, the British, the Belgians, and the Dutch. U.S. diplomacy had brought them into this coalition, even though the U.S. Navy, backed up by the U.S. Air Force with assets like AWACS, provided the basic core. We all had rules of engagement that would allow us to come to the assistance of any neutral shipping that was under hostile fire. Gradually that became apparent, and confidence began to return to both our regional partners and to the world's merchant shipping.



There was another major emergency task which took place during the early months of Operation Earnest Will, and both the United States and the United Arab Emirates responded very well. One of our escorting war ships, the Roberts, hit a mine. As I recall, the incident took place north of Bahrain. The Roberts was almost split in half. It was the view of our Navy that the only place where it could be given adequate repairs was in Dubai. This became a test of the UAE assistance that Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed had offered after the Stark incident.

Injured people aboard the Roberts were evacuated to a hospital in Bahrain. But the ship itself began to limp toward Dubai, sailing at low speed. We went to the UAE right away both in Dubai and in Abu Dhabi. It was not enough to get the agreement with the federal government; we had to also get the agreement of the Emirate of Dubai. The idea of bringing a warship into the very modern and busy Dubai dry dock, one of the jewels of the Dubai economy, would be an unprecedented event. Moreover, given the civilian nature of this facility, there was going to be a lot of haggling over how we would unload the munitions from the Roberts once it got to Dubai.

Agreement for the safe haven and repair of the Roberts came quickly from the federal authorities. The Emirate of Dubai's agreement required a bit more time and some back and forth negotiating. We were getting behind the scenes help within the small group of UAE leaders who really counted in such matters. Obviously, there was a lot of consultation about these arrangements that took place between the federal authorities, probably Sheikh Zayed himself, and the principal sheikhs in Dubai. We had a history of successful and virtually trouble free U.S. Navy ship visits into Dubai, and that helped. But the main factor in getting Dubai's agreement was that by this time had there had been several months of protecting shipping in the area. The economy of Dubai was dependent on such merchant shipping, and Operation Earnest Will had protected it. Once again, and despite some concern in the U.S. about the losses flowing from this novel commitment, the U.S. government was proceeding to fill its role in Gulf security.

I might just say a word about the U.S. domestic support. It was very thin. The Reagan administration never went to the Congress to get authorization. Given the background of the Lebanon fiasco and control of Congress by the Democrats, I question whether the Congress would have agreed. Moreover, by the spring of 1988 we would have been in a primary season...

*Q: You're talking about American primary.*

MACK: Yes, for the American presidential election. There was great competition in the Democratic party to see which candidate would face what was assumed to be most probably a George Bush Republican candidacy. There were nine principal Democratic candidates. I think the media dubbed them the "Seven Dwarfs." During a public debate among these seven candidates, only one of them – Al Gore – supported Operation Earnest Will. The other six of the candidates expressed opposition. One of the candidates, Stuart Udall, very effectively ridiculed the ship protection program at this nationally televised event. For a U.S. domestic audience he scored a lot of points. Events like this in U.S. domestic politics made it all the more remarkable that the Reagan administration continued Operation Earnest Will.

*Q: Now our Vice President.*

MACK: Al Gore is now Vice President, but because of a family tragedy he did not continue in the 1988 primary race. Nonetheless, when May came, even though he had withdrawn from the race, and we had the May primary in Oregon and I voted by absentee ballot for Al Gore. So there was very weak support domestically for what was seen to be putting American forces at risk for the sake of oil. So there was obviously some concern there, and the administration had to handle it very, very skillfully which I think they did by and large. But we certainly were gaining credibility all the time with the Arabs.

I remember from time to time when Washington visitors would come out, and since I had preached long and hard during the Irangate period that we had lost credibility, I remember people saying to me, "Well, David, have we managed to restore our credibility out here?" And my response was, "Well, general, or senator, or Mr. Secretary, credibility is a little bit like virginity. Once you've lost it, it's really hard to fully restore it, but yes, we're doing lots better." And, in fact, I would say that as we came into the summer of '88, in the spring of '88 that's when we had the major clashes with the Iranians where our aircraft based on a carrier in the Gulf of Oman, took out a couple of Iranian warships, where we attacked a couple of platforms. We attacked a platform ostensibly in reprisal to the Iranian mining which had taken the Roberts as a victim. How did we know it was the Iranians? Well, we caught them red-handed. Obviously when the Roberts hit a mine we could only suspect that it was the Iranians. But later, I believe using infrared radar, one of our aircraft was able to actually catch an Iranian bog hammer, which was one of their small boats, in the act of laying mines in the ship channel that we would be using for our convoys and that another neutral shipping was using. So we actually caught them red-handed. In reprisal, as I said, we went against their offshore oil installations. Then when the Iranians - I forget the date, but it was maybe April of '88 - in a sort of tit-for-tat thing went after another UAE offshore installation. This was an installation of Sharjah at the Bubaric field. It was attacked by the Iranians more or less as a reprisal for the fact that we had attacked an Iranian installation. This was ironic because the oil from that Bubaric field, although it was under a concession to the Emirate of Sharjah, and the concession was operated by a U.S. company, but the proceeds went 50-50 to Sharjah and Iran because it was in the territorial waters of Abu Musa, an island in the middle of the gulf over which sovereignty was contested then, and is still contested between the UAE and Iran. It was revealing to us, we thought, of the degree to which the Iranian government did not act in a very coordinated and well thought out way, that they would attack an offshore installation that in fact was contributing to the Iranian economy. When they did that, however, we took it as a cause to respond with our U.S. carrier aircraft against the Iranian navy, and Iranian navy ships. I believe two of them were sunk in the ensuing engagement, and the Iranian navy did not venture out of port effectively for the rest of the period of 1988.

On the political side during this period, back in 1987 we had proposed at the United Nations a resolution for ending the war between Iraq and Iran. A resolution which turned out in the end, when it was finally accepted, it was Resolution 598. A complicated resolution which didn't assess blame. The Iranians were holding out for blame. A resolution that would blame the Iraqis for starting the war. This resolution did not assess blame, but it certainly...by this time Iraqi forces had successfully regained the upper hand against the Iranians after a period of time in which the Iranians appeared to be winning the war, the Iraqis had regained the upper hand, and were holding some Iranian territory. The resolution would have required the Iraqis to withdraw

to the international borders. The resolution was really a balanced one, and offered the Iranians more than they might have hoped for given the fact that at that point they were losing the war, and not very popular with anybody. But they held out. The Ayatollah Khomeini, who did not want to admit defeat. They held out for a period of roughly a year. The United Arab Emirates was on the Security Council. I remember that their permanent representative was Mohammed Sharar, who is now their ambassador in the United States.

The UAE during the period even after the ship protection program started, they hated to have to side with Iraq against Iran. They didn't have a lot of use for the Iraqis either, at least most of the Emirates didn't. They suspected them in the past of supporting terrorist groups in the UAE. They didn't have a great sympathy, but by and large they hoped the two would sort of fight themselves to a standoff. I think that was their view, which was the view of a lot of people in Washington. But I think the UAE gradually came to the realization that it could not continue to avoid voting for this resolution even though the Iranians were not supporting it. So in the end the UAE voted for the resolution. That was a critical vote that we needed, and I had lobbied long and hard for in Abu Dhabi. I think there had never been any doubt that when it came to a vote, they would vote for it but they were doing everything they could to avoid it. I can remember a UN vote when the UAE was simply absent. Their representative had to go to the bathroom. They just didn't want to take sides between Iraq and Iran if they could help it. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were much quicker to take sides with Iraq against Iran. But in the UAE they were very reluctant to do so. And that's partly due to their sort of weak federal structure.

But the war sort of ground on at a fairly low level with the Iraqis having the upper hand on the land. And after the engagements, as I recall April of 1988, with no subsequent serious Iranian threats to neutral shipping.

We knew so little about Iran. It was really hard to say why the Iranians were delaying. It seemed manifestly obvious to us that they needed the relief from the expenditure both of people and money to keep this war going. They clearly no longer had an ability to put the Iraqis back on the defensive, and it just seemed like it might have to wait until the Ayatollah Khomeini died. But then everybody wondered, with his reputation, how could any successor take the decision to stop the war. The atmosphere in the UAE became increasingly exasperated, I think, with the Iranians. The Iranians still had the capability of supporting terrorist activities. The UAE was still very open and very vulnerable. Security had been a big concern of mine as you might imagine for these whole two years. My first two years out there security and military concerns dominated, and we continued to worry about possible Iranian... We'd get reports about possible Iranian security threats, and terrorist threats, both against us and against the UAE government. We got progressively closer with the UAE during this period, and had much closer exchanges of information.

I was preparing to go on home leave with my family after the Fourth of July celebration in 1988. Here I'm going to be a little hazy on dates, but I believe on July 1 we got some startling news. First from public media - or actually, first, I started getting phone calls from the Chief of Staff, from the Foreign Minister, from the commander of the Air Force, as to what was going on, that there had been an Iranian civilian air bus shot down, the Iranians were claiming, by a U.S. Navy ship. From the media we learned that our government was denying this, and the Navy was saying

that it had shot down an Iranian warplane using a surface-to-air missile, a Standard missile it's called. We had an extremely capable guided missile cruiser in the Gulf at the time commanded by a Rear Admiral.

*Q: The Captain was Will Rogers, Jr. An Aegis cruiser, brand new to the Gulf.*

MACK: Okay, not a Rear Admiral, a Captain. It was a complicated situation. It was complicated on the surface with lots of small craft, everything from fishing boats to the Iranian bog hammer hammers, and they all kind of look alike. It was difficult sometimes to figure which was which. And it was complicated in the air, with our aircraft, other countries' military aircraft and civilian aircraft. What we were told initially... I could get nothing out of Washington, we got nothing. We did, by contacting the fleet in Bahrain, we began to get some information to indicate that we better be careful. The cruiser says this was an Iranian military aircraft, we are verifying that, we are trying to verify that it was an Iranian military aircraft that was attacking the Aegis cruiser. The Navy side of this has now been quite well documented by an article put out in a journal of the Navy War College, quite a good article because other U.S. Navy ships did not believe at the time this was an Iranian military aircraft. But the people aboard the Aegis tragically did. It was an Iranian air bus in fact, with a full passenger load going from Bandar Abbas to Dubai, not only with Iranian civilians aboard, but also with either 17 or 19 Emirates, mostly from Dubai and Sharjah, mostly from Dubai, and a few Pakistanis, a couple of Italians and Yugoslavs. But even Admiral Crowe, the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington, gave a public briefing backing up the version from Captain Rogers. It was much, much later, and long after we knew this was not the case from intelligence sources, that Washington finally acknowledged that a mistake had been made. Fortunately, President Reagan immediately...his personal instincts probably were extremely valid and useful at this point, he immediately offered to pay compensation to the victims. He did not offer to pay compensation to the Iranians for the aircraft, but did offer to pay compensation to the families of the victims, and acknowledged that it was an accident.

We, of course, had a number of decisions to make rather quickly. The first one, the easy one, was to cancel our Fourth of July celebration, which would not have been very appropriate at that point, and would have been a potential security problem as well. We also consulted very quickly with the Navy on ship visits, we had one in port in Dubai. The Navy felt it wanted to take the ship out, and not risk having it there, and we agreed that was probably prudent. I still had no instructions from Washington, nothing from Washington. I sent a cable to Washington, which as I recall, I informed them that I was postponing at least indefinitely my leave plans. I had my wife and daughter proceed as scheduled, postponing my leave plans until we find out whether this is going to be an ongoing security problem for us here. I told that that I thought this could be a very serious security problem on two grounds. Since there were UAE nationals involved, there could well be a popular hostile response, and particularly family members could feel that they needed to take revenge against particularly any U.S. military in Dubai, but for that matter, against our consulate general. We had to assume that there might be this kind of popular hostile reaction. Secondly, that it obviously provided the Iranians with an opening to use assets that they had already gotten into the country, or send new assets in, in order to stage the kind of terrorist attacks that we'd been worried about for the past two years that I'd been out there. This would be a situation in which there would be a certain amount of sympathy for them if they did this. So we had these two kinds of security threats.

I also told them that I had decided in consultation with the country team, that I would go down to Dubai to talk to the sheikhs and the American community, and to visit the family of the principal UAE Dubai victims. There was one family where five family members had been lost by the number three official in the Dubai police, who happened to be the person that usually arranged the security for our visiting ships, and I said my intention was to go down and pay a condolence call on him. I don't remember whether I ever got a reply back from Washington. I told them I was going to do it, and this is one of those cases where often it's best to simply state a course of action and say unless otherwise advised, this is what I intend to do.

When we discussed this in the country team, the regional security officer was opposed to me going, and definitely opposed to me paying the condolence call. That was one case where I simply said well, you're doing your job trying to look after my security, I'm doing my job and I think this is the right thing for the U.S. ambassador to do. As it turned out things went even better than I could have anticipated. I immediately got a meeting with the number one Sheikh in Dubai, Mohammed ibn Rashid, who is also the Minister of Defense. He received me very well, expressed full understanding, as the Foreign Ministry already had in a note, but he expressed understanding that this was an accident, and accepted our explanation. Then he went on, which was really something that I couldn't have expected him to say, that he wanted to assure me that we had no reason not to have future ship visits to Dubai, that the Dubai authorities would continue to maintain security for our ships. And I said, "And also Your Highness, may I also tell you that we're worried about our consulate general." "Oh, of course, we'll continue to provide full protection for your diplomats." And I said, "Your Highness, I do intend to meet with the American citizen leaders after this, with your permission, I would like to be able to tell them of your attitude toward protecting the American community, and American property." He said, "Absolutely, you can tell them that we'll provide full protection of the American community, and American property. We want to have more Americans here." As a result I had a good meeting with the American community, and settled them down, but not until that evening when I had paid the condolence call. The condolence call was, of course, very difficult. The man had lost his father, his step-mother, and three siblings, who were I believe half-siblings. It's not unusual, of course, that they would have been in Bandar Abbas, because a lot of these families, and his was one of them, were families of Arabs who had been living along the Iranian coast for centuries, and then had migrated back to Dubai during the early part of the 20th century, or during the oil boom, and his family was one of those. They were Shiite, as is the case of many of these families, but they were Arab Shiite. But they had very close connections to Iran, they spoke Farsi. So there was always a lot of questions, people never quite knew where people from this kind of background were coming from. This, of course, was a community that was very important in Dubai commerce, and was very much involved in the trade - both smuggling and legal trade to and from Dubai, Sharjah and Iran.

I went to his residence with the assistant regional security officer who was stationed down in Dubai...he went along with me to the condolence call. And, of course, it was two hours sitting on the floor - always a terrible toll on my knees, speaking Arabic, talking about everything from education in the United States, to God and family, etc. It was a draining experience for me. During the time, of course, there were crowds of people coming and going to pay condolence,

and they all saw the American ambassador there, and everybody in town by the next morning knew what I had done. That helped a lot over the long term.

I went back to Abu Dhabi shortly thereafter, all of our assessments looked positive, and I proceeded to join my family in the United States.

Now the reaction in Iran was stunning. Ayatollah Khomeini did not believe this was an accident. His assessment of our motives was so dire that I believe he thought this was intentional, a warning that we were prepared to bomb Iranian cities if necessary until they stopped the war. Shortly after the air bus incident, Khomeini stopped the war. He told the Iranian people that it was a bitter pill which they must swallow. Iran accepted Resolution 598, and this eight year war came to a close. There were a lot of good reasons why they should have stopped the war, but I think for the Ayatollah Khomeini this was a critical factor. He felt the United States was so absolutely ruthless and committed to damage the Islamic revolution in Iran that we would stop at nothing. Did he just seize on the incident as a pretext to stop a war that he realized was lost? To know that would take somebody who knew his internal thinking much better than me. In terms of timing, at least, it was a key turning point.

The U.S. Navy Department had its own investigation of the incident. It came out kind of murky, but there were a lot of changes made in the procedures that ships coming into the Gulf were to follow in dealing with the possibility of civilian aircraft. The event brought Captain Roger's career in the Navy to an end. It was a good lesson for me. Together with the Irangate scandal, the way the U.S. government handled the Iran airbus incident showed me I couldn't count on Washington to provide me with clear information. I got my best information by back channels from friends in the U.S. Navy and other agencies. I also benefited from good advice at the time from the military officers on my staff. For decision making, I got nothing but verbal pap out of Washington, and I had to make up my own instructions.

*Q: In a way it shows the clearance procedure is such in Washington: one, you have to be very careful you don't go against whatever the prevailing story is. I mean, you just can't. And the other one is that you're not going to get honest assessments. Just because of the clearance it has to reflect things.*

MACK: There was no way I could have gotten a clear intelligence assessment in any timely fashion. My station chief could provide me with some raw reports that he was seeing, and he briefed me on them. As you say, the Washington clearance process is cumbersome at best. I think it's also the case that, in the latter part of the Reagan administration, the inter-agency process in Washington had gotten worn down in many respects. Eight years of the Reagan administration were coming to an end, and things were not quite as crisp as they might have been in an earlier period.

In the region and for me, it was a relief to have the Iraq-Iran war over. My third and final year in the UAE was very different from what we've been discussing. The first two years had been consumed with internal security, security for the American community, military operations, and trying to build bi-lateral military cooperation. The third year was much more routine, a balance of political, military, and economic affairs. I took on a lot of commercial and cultural exchange

issues that interested me. It was a very productive and interesting year for the U.S. mission, but not with the historic drama of the first two years.

*Q: In matters of getting the UAE to join up with the tanker operation, allowing overflights. Here you have something which closely resembles the United States under the articles of confederation. Did you find that you had to go to all the Emirates and talk it up, and then go to the president? How did this work?*

MACK: Most of the hard work was done by Mohammed bin Zayed. More and more, he was acting on behalf of Chief of Staff Mohamed al-Badi and of Sheikh Mohammed's father, Sheikh Zayed, the president. I did go to the different emirate rulers, explaining what we were proposing, and talking to them about the rationale. It was important that they hear it directly from me, because I knew that in the end the other rulers had to sign off before the federal authorities in Abu Dhabi could agree formally. An agreement between Dubai and Abu Dhabi was critical. But still, the other rulers played a role. The Ruler of Fujairah had military training, and his emirate had a key geographic location on the Gulf of Oman. And the others all wanted to be consulted and to know what we were doing. The only place where support was more or less automatic was in Ras al-Khaimah, which predictably always took an anti-Iranian point of view.

*Q: They're the point people, aren't they?*

MACK: Ras al-Khaimah is near the Straits of Hormuz, and they also had a grievance against the Iranians. When the UAE was established in 1971, the Iranians under the Shah occupied the three disputed islands. Two of them were RAK possessions. Greater Tunb Island and Lesser Tunb are very near the Strait of Hormuz. The third island, Abu Musa, was a Sharjah possession. Whereas Abu Musa is right on the Gulf median line, the Tunbs are much closer to the Iranian shore. Ras al-Khaimah's claim for the Tunbs was adopted by the United Arab Emirates. The ruler at the time probably made this a condition of joining the federation. Sheikh Saqr is still the ruler. He's a very old man, a little older than Zayed, I believe, in his late 80s.

*Q: I probably met him in the late 1950s.*

MACK: Saqr is a little man with a forceful personality and penetrating black eyes. He feels a great grievance against the Iranians for taking his islands. He blames the British for, as he saw it, colluding with the Iranians. Which is true to some degree. The British wanted to tidy things up in 1971 and get the Iranians to accept Bahrain's independence, which Iran had been disputing. In return, the British were prepared to let the Shah have his way with the three islands. An anti-Iranian position always got enthusiastic support from Saqr.

The third disputed island, Abu Musa, is where the Mubarak field lies and was the subject of the Iranian attack in April 1988. Abu Musa, like the Tunbs, had been occupied by the Iranians, and there is still dispute over sovereignty. When I arrived in the UAE, there was shared administration, involving Sharjah police and administrative personnel, as well as the Iranian military forces. In more recent years, the Iranians have pushed the Sharjahs out. Sheikh Sultan, the Ruler of Sharjah was a real contrast to Sheikh Saqr in Ras al-Khaimah. Sheikh Sultan is highly educated with a doctorate from Exeter University and a conciliatory manner. He told me

that, if only Zayed would let him, he would be able to deal with the Iranians very well, because he knows how to talk to the Iranians. Like Dubai, Sharjah has a lot of commerce with Iran. Sharjah had worked out this system of shared administration for Abu Musa, including the 50-50 split in oil profits. Sharjah had its flag on one side of the island, while the Iranians had their flag on the other side. As a result, Sharjah had a somewhat different attitude regarding Iran and the disputed islands. Until, of course, their oil platform was attacked by the Iranian navy.

I spent quite a lot of time visiting the ruler of Sharjah to discuss U.S.-UAE security cooperation. He was probably the most difficult to convince within the Council of Rulers. It may have taken a fair amount of pressure from Abu Dhabi and Dubai to convince him. In the end, I think he would have been isolated from the others if he did not agree, but his unique economic relationship with Iran made it important for him to join the consensus that was developing.

*Q: Why don't we stop at this point? So what are we talking about, 1988?*

MACK: We're talking about the period from the summer of '88, when I come back from home leave, to October '89 when I finally leave. It will comprise, as I say, a lot of fairly routine diplomatic activity. For historical purposes I ought to mention how we were talking to the UAE and other gulf states about Iraq in this period. And I should also talk about our efforts to build on the military cooperation established during Earnest Will and expand on it with an effort to have repositioning in the UAE, ultimately partially successful. I should talk about that because in effect what historians in the future, I think, have to realize is that without operation Earnest Will, and the cooperation established at that time, and the reputation of the United States for meeting its commitments, we would not have been trusted in August of 1990 by these states in the way in which they did. There was very rapid, and in the case of the UAE, virtually automatic acceptance of what we needed in the way of cooperation. And a lot of that had to do with the background of Earnest Will.

*Q: The other thing is that as sort of an aside, I still think its important if you'd talk a bit about what you did as ambassador to foster commercial relationships.*

MACK: I want to talk about the cultural, commercial side, as well as the on-going military side, and the political consultations, particularly with regard to Iran and Iraq.

*Q: And also you want to talk about the reaction to the Palestinian Intifada.*

MACK: Again, during this period of time.

*Q: Today is the 14th of November, 1996. We have three main things. One, the growth of the military cooperation. We're talking about the time you returned from home leave in '88, you left in '89?*

MACK: That's right.

*Q: Why don't we talk about that first and then we will pick up about the cultural side.*



MACK: I had home leave and the period of time also chairing a promotion board. So I came back to the UAE in September 1988, came back to Abu Dhabi very much refreshed. The Iranians had accepted UNSC Resolution 598, the UN Security Council resolution ending the Iraq-Iran war. This was a resolution that the U.S. had been largely responsible for offering. It was a balanced resolution between Iraq and Iran, much better than the Iranians could have expected that they would get under the circumstances that they saw prevailing with the international community very much against them. In fact, I think it's fair to say that the resolution reflected the view of the United States that there really should be no clear winner from the Iraq-Iran war. I remember that one of the first things I did when I got back to the UAE, was to make a semi-public speech. It was before the American Business Council in Dubai. At the urging of my public affairs officer and some of the people at the Business Council, I agreed that on this occasion we could have members of the local media present. I think we billed it as off the record, but we also assumed there would be some reporting on it. To make sure they got it right, we even distributed my text to the members of the media who were there. It was in fact an occasion when we could talk with a fair degree of credibility about the way in which the United States could be supportive of Gulf security, and the importance in that regard of a willingness of the United States to use force, doing so for economic and strategic interests which we shared with GCC states such as the UAE.

I recall, for example, that I quoted a maxim during the question and answer period which followed my prepared remarks that said, "diplomacy without force is like a smile without teeth." Typically, the press coverage of my remarks highlighted that comment rather than my carefully crafted thoughts about the nature of a shared interest between the United States and GCC states. I used the example of an oriental bazaar, or souk, where both the merchant and the customer have a shared interest in making sure that there's security and that you don't have thieves that plague the area, and that without that kind of security the interests of both suffer. Describing this as the kind of complementary interests that our military intervention in the Gulf, and the presence of our fleet in fact since 1949 was intended to serve, building on the relationships that we had established, and the vast increase in cooperation between our Navy and local officials. The Central Command wanted to proceed to put in place some kind of meaningful pre-positioning of materiel (what the U.S. military calls PREPO) for future such contingencies.

One of the serious problems our military forces had found was that, although this is an area that produces a lot of oil, and has some refineries that at least can produce bunkering fuel for ships, there are certain kinds of fuels, particularly high octane aviation fuel, that are not produced by any of the refineries in the area. It was a logistical problem to make sure the U.S. aircraft aboard our carriers had an adequate supply of aviation fuel. The Central Command set itself about the task of trying to find a place where they could preposition aviation fuel. Certainly the best choice, based upon surveys that they had done and visits to the various ports, was at the giant port of Jebel Ali, which was to the northwest of the city of Dubai and, in 1988 almost entirely unused. Dubai had its own port, which was a little more convenient for the city. Jebel Ali was maybe 10 miles outside the city, had been literally carved out of the desert by Sheikh Rashid, the once visionary ruler of Dubai, who was still living but no longer able to govern. He was still the ruler in name, but he was paralyzed. The ruling family of Dubai and the UAE media carefully guarded any news about his health, and his picture was frequently shown in the newspapers — for example, with an article that he had sent a message of congratulations to the vice president of

Malaysia on Malaysia's national day. He would also receive messages from time to time from world leaders, but this was actually a lot of eyewash. He was the only ruler that I'd never been able to call on. I called on all of his sons, but had never met him and none of the other ambassadors had either.

Part of Sheikh Rashid's vision for the development of Dubai was to build this huge port, a gigantic port, which many people laughed at and said was a great white elephant. It had excellent facilities, however, including fuel storage facilities, and CENTCOM thought it would be just the answer to the problem that we faced. It was not going to be easy to do, however. First of all, we would have to get agreement from the U.S. authorities as to what kind of arrangements they could live with. And typically they wanted a government to government agreement which would stipulate among other things that anything that we stored in this leased facility would be U.S. property that we could remove at any time. The U.S. military wanted an absolute UAE government promise to do that.

Under the best of circumstances it's hard to get government agreements in the UAE about security matters. To get a Federal agreement you need to get the consensus of all the rulers, and to get a meaningful agreement for something like this you needed to have separate agreement with the authorities in Dubai. A Federal agreement wouldn't be worth the paper it was written on without some kind of agreement with the authorities in Dubai. I remember that I made some very careful presentations both in Dubai and to the Federal authorities with material that had been provided me from CENTCOM.

In addition to storing fuel they also wanted to store water, or at least have the capability of producing water. And for that purpose they wanted to bring in a ship which was called a reverse osmosis water production unit, or ROPU. The ship would then be able to deploy to any point in the Persian Gulf, and start producing water for forces that might be deployed -- let's say to Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait, or to the coast of Iran in theory, or to one of the islands out in the middle of the Gulf. We tried to sell both of these ideas, both fuel storage and having the local authorities allow us to tie up a water production facility at one of their ports. My idea was to put the ROPU at the port of Abu Dhabi, and the fuel at Jebel Ali. I thought that this way we could get both the major Emirates, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, involved in repositioning arrangements. I didn't succeed at the time I was out there in getting the water production unit deployed to Abu Dhabi. Frankly, there was a lot of suspicion about our intentions. I was told that if it was just a matter of using it somewhere in UAE territory, they would be delighted. But they wouldn't accept the idea that it might be used somewhere else, and that they would be blamed for having kept some kind of militarily important equipment that was then used, for example, for an invasion of Iran, or Iraq, or to put down a rebellion in Bahrain. So there was a lot of suspicion about what we were up to, and I was not able to dispel it at that point.

*Q: As you were making your arguments for the POL storage, and ROPU, what were you pointing at as far as why this was needed? Who was the potential enemy? I assume you had to say, now look, this is being done because we're protecting you against whom.*

MACK: Well, it wasn't too difficult for people to imagine that we might have to have another conflict with the Iranians. But at the same time we were also trying to alert people in the area to

the possibility that there might be another adversary, Iraq, for example. We simply couldn't tell in advance. One of the complications here was that, under instructions from Washington, we were at the same time raising the subject of Iraq with states in the area. To my knowledge, none of the GCC states were receptive to our suggestion that we ought to consult together about the possibility of meeting an emergency that would be generated by some Iraqi threat. I know they weren't receptive in the UAE. What I kept hearing quite firmly from the leaders of the UAE was that they appreciated the presence of our fleet in the area because they recognized that they had a potential serious problem with Iran. As far as Iraq was concerned, they said we should leave that to them. That was another Arab country. One of the other rulers told me, referring to Sheikh Zayed, the president of the country, "Zayed will take care of the Iraqis." The UAE leaders made it very clear that they thought they could handle any potential difficulty with Iraq diplomatically. But they were not so confident about dealing with Iran. They did not want to talk about contingency planning against a country like Iraq that they viewed as an ally, and had viewed as an ally at least during the latter part of the Iraq-Iran war. So that probably introduced some awkwardness in our discussion of pre-positioning.

The one area where we did make progress was on fuel, but we had in the end to do it in a way that they felt comfortable with, but the lawyers in Washington did not. The principal Sheikh in Dubai was Muhammad bin Rashid, the Defense Minister, the third son of Rashid, a person of strong character and perceptive intellect, and also the person who was in charge of Jebel Ali and the security of the Emirate of Dubai. Muhammad bin Rashid made it very clear that Dubai would have no problem with entering into a strictly commercial arrangement for the storage of fuel, whereby a company would provide fuel to the U.S. Navy. But they didn't want to have a direct relationship with the U.S. Navy, and we would have to do it in the way any other commercial arrangement for Jebel Ali would be managed. And at that time they were very eager to get some kind of customers in Jebel Ali, since this huge port was virtually empty.

So we looked at the rules for the port of Jebel Ali. The regulations of the Jebel Ali Free Port said that companies could bring in equipment, and bring in workers, and then take them out as long as they didn't take them from the Free Port into UAE territory where normal customs would apply. In other words, as long as fuel that we pre-positioned in Jebel Ali was not taken into UAE territory, we could use it anywhere in the area. In effect, this was the opposite situation of what we had with ROPU, where Abu Dhabi would have accepted it for the UAE but not if we would take it elsewhere.

I worked very closely with the head of logistics, the J-4 for Central Command, a major general. Major General Christian Patte was his name, a Swiss origin officer in the U.S. Army, Chris was a very capable logistician. And with the support of the then commander of the Central Command, we managed over a period of time to persuade the lawyers in Washington that a government to government agreement was not necessary. One of the arguments I used was, aside from the fact that a government to government agreement was impossible and we couldn't achieve it, that we could rely upon a commercial arrangement with a U.S. company. The U.S. company in turn could have a commercial relationship with either the government of Dubai, or with a Dubai company. We could hold a major U.S. corporation responsible for delivering the fuel. It seemed to me we ought to be able to hold a U.S. corporation responsible more easily than we could the government of Dubai. And plus, this was the Reagan administration, so I made the

argument that cooperation with the private sector is something that the U.S. government encourages. At first there were terrible squeals from the lawyers in the Pentagon. But eventually, with the help of the Central Command, we were able to reach such an agreement, private tender was let, and aviation fuel was stored in Jebel Ali. The importance of this was that when in August 1990 the Iraqis invaded Kuwait, we had established pre-positioning of fuel in the UAE. We had not managed to get the even more extensive PREPO the U.S. military sought, but at least we did have the top priority of aviation fuel in the area for our Air Force and Navy, and we did it through this commercial gambit. My attitude was, PREPO by any other name would smell the same, and we were able to do it by this commercial route, establishing a useful precedent.

*Q: It does strike me, particularly of what we've had in our Muscat and Oman, what we had in Kuwait, and also the infrastructures that had been built up in Saudi Arabia, although in a way we've been helping the guy who is going to cause us a great deal of grief, Saddam Hussein. We were in many ways much more set for him than we were for any other problems anywhere else. Were we thinking of one thing, and another thing happened that we were getting ready for?*

MACK: I myself am unaware of whether there was any sort of master strategist at some point in the U.S. government who said, we should sell the Saudis a lot of redundant military airport capability in Saudi Arabia because we may need it someday. So far as I know it was done mostly on a commercial basis, and the Saudis had very expansive ideas of what their own military needs would be. To my knowledge, people were not thinking ahead, and did not do this for a future contingency involving U.S. forces. But I could be wrong, and if somebody can take credit for it, they ought to come forward and do so. Certainly in the UAE what we were able to do was far more modest than what we were able to do in Oman through our official access agreement, or in Saudi Arabia just unofficially. And, of course, in Bahrain we relied on de facto cooperation without the benefit of an agreement. The only agreement we had with Bahrain was the rental of the facilities at what was called the Admin Support Unit, which was the ashore facilities for our Middle East naval force. So I think we had a certain amount of luck in developing a variety of pre-positioning arrangements throughout the region.

In general, of course, the State Department was discovering the importance of commercial activities to a much greater degree during this period. I had made some efforts during the course of the Iran-Iraq war in fact to get trade delegations out there. The efforts were not very well rewarded. U.S. business did not want to come near the Gulf under the circumstances that were prevailing at the time. The Department of Commerce and the Embassy did try one trade mission. We had about 20 people signed up for it, and then U.S. companies started dropping out one after another. It was going to be in Dubai, as I recall, at an international textile exhibition that the Dubaians were having. When you looked at the reasons, as these U.S. companies dropped out, it would be because they feared the security in the area, which they regarded as a war zone. And who could blame them? They were hearing from the State Department and the U.S. embassy that they would be secure out there, but when they would flip on the television, there would be a picture of an oil tanker burning, and it would say, dateline Dubai, oil tanker in flames.

Finally, with the war over in late 1988, U.S. companies began taking an interest and competing a little bit with the British, French, Germans and the Japanese. These competitors had been having us for lunch, and U.S. firms had slipped from a huge part of the market share in most of the Gulf

states, to a more modest part. The only place where we were really holding our ground was in Saudi Arabia, and in the oil and gas industry. But in the rest of the commercial areas we were not doing nearly as well as we should.

There were a variety of reasons. One of them was the Arab boycott. I remember, for example, that I had worked very hard to try to get a major contract for mobile phones for Motorola, which at that time at least was the world leader in mobile phone technology, so-called cellular phones. And wherever I turned the answer was, yes, but it's on the Arab boycott. I finally decided the only chance was to raise it with Sheikh Zayed himself. We had a visit from our Secretary of Energy, but he declined to raise a non-energy commercial issue, which struck me as a little peculiar coming from a Reagan cabinet member. So I took the initiative to raise it with Zayed. After carefully working on Arabic equivalents for the technical language, I made the argument on UAE national security grounds. I noted that the only way they could mobilize quickly their military officers was by telephone, and that their military officers were very often hither and yon, on the road, and out in the desert. How would they manage this unless they had mobile telephones, and Motorola was absolutely the best company. I added that other Arab states, such as Syria which hosted the headquarters for the Arab boycott authority, would make exceptions for the use of Motorola telephones by their police or armed forces. Zayed turned me down, said that he simply was not prepared to go to the other Arab states and say that he was making an exception to Arab boycott provisions, unless it was something that was specifically and solely for the UAE military. This was a general contract for their national mobile phone system.

We also had, I think, general problems out there in terms of a lack of market access because the traditional suppliers had been from other countries. This was certainly true in the area of food products. In the United Arab Emirates you scarcely ever saw U.S. food commodities in the local grocery stores. We were able to sell U.S. rice and wheat in bulk to bulk suppliers in places like Dubai, but we were not doing at all well otherwise.

My diplomatic mission was able to make progress on processed food imports by working together with our regional agricultural trade officer, who had his office in Bahrain and an Egyptian assistant that worked for him at our consulate in Dubai. The regional Ag Trade Attaché was Pitamber Devgon, a very savvy American official of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service. I want to applaud Dev as a good example of a part of the U.S. Foreign Service that doesn't always get treated as being fully a part of the Foreign Service. He was an American citizen who had emigrated to the U.S. from India, and he spoke English fluently but with a pronounced Indian accent. As it happened, a lot of the people who headed the major grocery stores and other food distribution and retailing operations in the UAE were foreign nationals from India. So Dev had developed pretty good personal relationships with a lot of these folks. Together with him, the Embassy developed a campaign called Yum-Yum America to sell U.S. food products. I threw myself into it, and we got the U.S. Information Service involved. Having been in so many meetings with UAE officials over the previous two years, I was a well recognized personality at that point. My picture had often been in the paper and on television, and now the UAE citizen and expatriate audiences saw me in grocery stores sampling U.S. food items, and making appropriate comments about how delicious they were.

We had just gotten a contract for U.S. food suppliers with Spinneys, which was one of the old line formerly British food retailing operations in the Middle East. The regional market for imported food, often high value products, tended to be dominated by British food commodities. British Ambassador Michael Tate, an old friend I had known him for years going back to my second assignment in Baghdad, came up to me at some reception. Michael, with his best imperial manner, said something like, "Dear boy, isn't this really just too tacky, Yum-Yum America?" I could only imagine how envious the British were, especially now that there was American food on the shelves of Spinneys. I told Michael that in matters of regional security, we were in one trench, but we would be enemies forever in the commercial area.

Just to finish the commercial issue, we had another example of our growing and expanding relationships with the UAE, which also says a lot about the way the UAE was developing as a country. That was in the area of textile negotiations. What was happening was that textile producers from places like Bangladesh were coming into the free zones in the UAE. The entire Emirate of Sharjah, for example, was almost a free zone. Firms from South Asian countries that had reached the ceiling of quotas for textile exports to the U.S. were establishing textile operations in the UAE, bringing in their own workers and their own equipment and producing with really very little relevance to the local economy. They would have a local sponsor. They would pay a little rent, maybe, and a few utility charges, but basically it was just an offshore operation. They were producing textiles for the UAE, which had no U.S. textile quota, since it had never before been a producer of textiles for the U.S. market. There was a legitimate suspicion on the part of the U.S. textile industry that these were fraudulent operations that were little more than re-labeling, and in some cases that was true.

We informed the UAE authorities that we were going to put a textile quota on them. They had few laws regarding the import of textiles and no laws at all regarding the production and export of textiles. Moreover, there were no federal authorities prepared to deal with the issue. In effect, we had to use the threat of a textile quota to get them to take any interest in the matter. As the various local Chambers of Commerce began complaining about the proposed U.S. action, the federal authorities decided that they would take advantage of this and, in effect, strengthen federal authority by coordinating the negotiations. So the federal UAE government negotiated on behalf of this very diverse group of local and expatriate interests. With our encouragement, the UAE government established a coalition and brought together the various textile interests in the country to deal with the U.S. In a way, just as the threat from Iran had strengthened military cooperation between Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and incidentally the United States, so it was that the threat of a U.S. textile quota enabled the federal authorities in the UAE to strengthen their hand with all these local interests.

The textile issue brought forth hostile articles in the paper, particularly in the English language press which was dominated by South Asians and Palestinians and Egyptians, the sort of people who were involved in the textile business. I remember Sheikh Suroor, one of the senior sheiks of the ruling family in Abu Dhabi who was attuned to foreign trade issues saying to me, "I'm seeing all this about textiles, so tell me, Mr. Ambassador, do we have a textile industry in this country?"

The U.S. diplomatic mission had a very well coordinated program on this. The Embassy's Economic Officer was very operationally oriented, and he really sank his teeth into the problem.

His name was Don Roberts, and Don was the day-to-day coordinator for me. We got our U.S. Information Agency involved in putting out public information to combat the public information coming from the UAE expatriate textile interests. We used information from our consulate general in Dubai, because a lot of the textile companies were in Dubai, Sharjah and Ajman, emirates in the Dubai consular district. We arranged for the UAE's newly empowered foreign trade officials to visit the U.S. to learn about the U.S. textile industry and its powerful role in U.S. politics. In the end, we had successful negotiations. A quota was established that gave them room to grow their industry somewhat, but at least put limits on the extent to which they could continue to invade our market with textiles.

*Q: Did they start looking at these textile industries as a way to gain some revenue, from what I gather a rather modest income that was welcome, and that sort of thing?*

MACK: No, not really. The interest for the UAE federal government was mostly bureaucratic and constitutional. The federal authorities saw that this was a function they could provide to businessmen all over the Emirates. People who previously had felt no need at all for the federal government now saw that there was a need. After many years of being mostly ignored by the individual emirates on economic matters, the federal government had a role to play.

Building on our textile dialogue, I started talking to some of the federal authorities about the problem of intellectual property rights. This was before there was really a lot of pressure from Washington, but I thought the next big problem could be demands from Washington that UAE companies respect U.S. intellectual property rights. The textile quota had really snuck up on us, and I wanted to avoid a repetition. The United Arab Emirates, which was very much of a laissez faire free trade economy, along with getting textile factories, was also getting people who were possibly producing, and certainly selling and distributing both in the UAE and to other countries counterfeit American video tapes. Not simply American, but from a variety of sources. So there was rampant commercial piracy of all kinds. There was very little protection for patents or trademarks, and none for copyrights. So I began to try to educate some of the federal authorities. It didn't really become a critical problem while I was there but subsequently did, and the UAE now has in many respects a model set of intellectual property rights protection. There's still some holes in it, but when I was visiting recently I talked to the Minister of Economy and Commerce. He is very proud about how they managed to respond to the intellectual property rights challenges that arose following my time in the UAE.

I very much enjoyed this kind of commercial diplomacy. I also enjoyed working on cultural exchange. We had already had a lot of UAE students going to the United States. During my last year in the country, I managed to spend some time at the UAE university in Al Ain, getting to know faculty members. My own philosophy was to discourage the idea that, as in the past, they would send students to the United States for undergraduate studies. I felt that there had been a lot of cases that hadn't worked out well. Young men who had gone who were not prepared in terms of their English language, who were not prepared emotionally, who got into trouble with drugs, sex, the whole gambit of problems.

*Q: It's a real problem. They're not as mature.*

MACK: That's right. Since they had established a university system, I encouraged my contacts in the government to educate their young men in their own country, but then take the ones that did the best, the ones that clearly showed they had academic motivation, and put them into graduate schools, especially in the United States. That's very much the direction that we tried to press them. I got to know fairly well the chancellor of the UAE university, who was a member of the ruling family. Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak was the son of the former Minister of Interior, a very important figure of UAE President Zayed's generation. He was quite ill, but I used to call on him at his majlis, and this was the kind of thing that was appreciated by his son. That gave me opportunities to discuss educational exchange in a relaxed social atmosphere. Suffice to say, our cooperation did increase a lot in that area.

In view of the importance of educational exchange in the overall relationship, I put some effort into the selection of a new PAO. The U.S. Information Agency in Washington had proposed a not very qualified and non-Arabic speaking replacement for our PAO, indicating they attached low priority to the UAE. I telephoned Paris to contact a very bright, energetic African-American woman USIS Officer I had met before in Tunis and Beirut. Carol Madison had a pleasant enough life in France but was under employed professionally. With her agreement, I successfully urged USIA to send her as our new PAO, and she helped a lot. The UAE universities were training huge numbers of local women. They were putting almost more effort into educating their women in the country than they were their men, while a lot of the men would be trained in other countries. The women typically were doing better in higher education than the men, partly because they didn't have as many distractions. The UAE university had separate classes and separate campuses for men and women, but with shared faculty. But also a lot of the best and most well-motivated UAE men went into the military, or the police, rather than going into universities.

During that period the UAE established junior colleges in a major community college program, and we worked with them on that. We tried to get the contract for a U.S. firm. In the end, it went to a Canadian firm instead, but we still worked very closely with them on trying to beef up those community college programs, partly because it helped meet the employment needs of U.S. companies.

Narcotics cooperation was another area which fits in with this theme of the UAE federal government gradually increasing its importance in their constitutional system. The UAE had long been noted as a place where there was a lot of smuggling that took place. Back in the pre-independence days it was gold smuggling and weapons smuggling. When I was there, there were problems with textiles and pirated video cassettes. Large quantities of U.S. cigarettes were being smuggled into the Iranian market during this whole period of time by dhows, traditional local sailing ships. There was also a lot of smuggling into both Iran and the UAE of narcotics, mostly for transit. Initially, I think, the UAE authorities were not terribly concerned about this. First of all they had this tradition of laissez-faire practices. They had very little in the way of controls on entry into the country. As a result they were being swamped by illegal aliens, illegal workers who would come in across the beach, and also by narcotics. They gradually were becoming aware that the problem was not one that they were immune to, and that some of these narcotics were being used in the country. They had quite draconian laws against narcotics use, but they weren't enforcing them to any great degree. And this is partly because, along with not having



many laws and a legal structure, they also had very weak enforcement mechanisms, and the country was very open to all manner of items coming in by small boats from the Indian sub-continent, as well as from Iran, and they had very weak ability to keep it out.

Our Drug Enforcement Agency, DEA, came up with an excellent idea. It was to have a regional narcotics conference in Dubai as a way of developing a close working relationship with the authorities in Dubai and the other Emirates. Moreover, it seemed like a place, because of the hotels and good communications, to have an international conference. DEA offered to subsidize the travel there of their narcotics contacts in countries all the way from Nigeria to Bangladesh. It was quite a wide swathe. There was a lot of interest throughout the region. We helped to get DEA in contact with both the federal and the local UAE authorities, which mostly meant the police in the various emirates. In the UAE, the police power is still very much based in the individual emirates. In my time, certainly, there was very little in the way of federal police power. There were some narcotics authorities in the federal government, and we got them involved also, but they were rather inactive. One of the problems in the UAE in trying to enforce narcotics controls is that, while you could stop people coming into one emirate, for them to enter another emirate was just a matter of getting into a taxi and crossing the emirate boundary. So, obviously, there needed to be at least a coordinating federal role.

To encourage both federal and international cooperation, the U.S. government sponsored a series of regional narcotics conferences, eventually getting the Abu Dhabi authorities more involved. I attended the first conference in Dubai and spoke at the opening, speaking in Arabic about the importance of narcotics cooperation. This was another case, I think, where we were able to work with all parts of our country team to make a statement about what the United States stood for, and in this case one of the things we stood for was the right of every country to protect its borders from invasion by narcotics. It had had real practical benefits for the United States. We were able in a very short period of time to develop enforcement relationships, both in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, at a time when the airports of both emirates were being used for a lot of narcotics traffic that would come through on its way either to Western Europe or to Nigeria, often for transit to the U.S. It would come through typically from Pakistan or Iran. We had some very successful cases where intelligence that we provided to the local authorities about couriers coming from Pakistan was used by the local authorities to make narcotics busts at the airport. These narcotics in most cases were destined to end up in Western Europe or the United States. We felt very good about that, and the UAE authorities also realized that it was enabling them to protect themselves, and to protect their own young people against an infusion of narcotics. So it was another good example of international cooperation that served mutual interests.

The major regional political problem that arose during this period of time was with the *intifada* (uprising) in Palestine. The peace process between Israel and the Arab states had become quite moribund. The promise of Camp David was that there would be a continuing effort. That the efforts would not stop with the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, but would continue to set up self rule in the occupied territories, and eventually lead to a comprehensive peace settlement between Israel, its Arab neighbors and representatives of the Palestinian people. This promise had not been realized, and the U.S. had not been energetically pushing the issue for some time, probably not since 1984 when the Reagan administration peace process efforts collapsed. Eventually, the

tensions in the occupied West Bank and Gaza reached very high points, and young Palestinians - basically children -- started taking it upon themselves to harass the Israeli authorities.

For the Israeli military this was a very unpopular occupation duty in the territories. In particular, to give them their credit, the last thing they wanted to do was to have to fight children throwing stones. The whole image of David and Goliath was one that they wanted to avoid, and the Israeli public was quite split over what to do about this. It became a serious problem of contention between the states in the Gulf, including the United Arab Emirates, and the United States. They felt we were doing nothing, and they argued that it was wrong for us not to use our influence on Israel to get the Israelis to deal in a better way with the Palestinians. The Gulf Arab states also felt this was a serious threat to their security. It had long been mostly an unspoken effort on the part of the U.S. government to separate the issue of Gulf security from the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israeli problem. It was a little hard to see how we thought we could do that given the fact that there had been a major oil boycott after the October 1973 war. But, nonetheless, there was a tendency in Washington to think that if we dealt with the major security problems, such as Iran and Iraq, then we didn't have to worry about effects on Gulf security from other kinds of problems, whether they were internal or dealing with the Arab-Israeli issue. We lectured them periodically about the wickedness of the Arab boycott, but we didn't even take that too seriously. It was not for most of the time a front burner issue.

The governments out there looked at it very differently. They realized that they faced potentially very serious problems of political disaffection from their own population, as well as a potential problem from terrorists. They feared terrorism that could be stimulated from outside, that could be exploited by radical Palestinian groups or by Iran posing as a champion of the Palestinians. So they tended to take the Israel-Palestinian issue very seriously. They didn't always articulate well the effect they felt this would have on security in the area and security of the oil supplies. During this period, however, it began to be apparent to American diplomats working in the Gulf Arab states that the problem taking place in the Palestinian territories was one that we couldn't afford to continue ignoring. That said, policy makers in Washington continued to shelve it until after the prosecution of the war against Saddam Hussein in 1991. That was when the U.S. finally reengaged itself very strongly under the leadership of President Bush and Secretary Baker.

I ended my time in the UAE feeling that we had advanced a great deal of practical bilateral cooperation under the threat of the Iraq-Iran war, but we had not succeeded in establishing institutionalizing a form of cooperation between us and the UAE that would help deter future problems for our mutual interests. I do think the fact that the United States toed the mark in Operation Earnest Will established a belief on the part of the states in the area that they could count on us in a future contingency. It had a lot to do with the readiness with which the Saudis and the UAE and others cooperated with us after the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. They had seen that we were willing to come out there with major military forces and take casualties without turning and running. They were also convinced, and this is very important, that the United States wouldn't want to stay around in any great numbers. That, in fact, we would leave when there was no longer a need for us to be there.

So that was good. What was bad was that many political leaders in the Gulf Arab states seemed to believe that we had the capability of magically appearing with a very rapid response to save

them from any problem that might arise. We could brief people at the military level regarding the difficulty of a major deployment until we were blue in the face, but what our principal military contacts understood did not always convince the political leaders. Therefore, we didn't have much in the way of institutionalized cooperation outside of Oman and Bahrain. My own high level contacts with Sheikh Zayed, in particular, had become much more difficult to arrange, and they were certainly much less frequent than they were when there was a serious international crisis and they felt a serious and ongoing threat from Iran. I left with a feeling that we would be really unprepared for a future emergency, and that we had not established a framework to deter a future emergency. The Gulf Arab leaders still wanted us to stay over the horizon. Moreover, in good part because of the Palestinian Intifada, they didn't want to be seen cooperating too closely with us at a time when we were unpopular in the rest of the Arab world and among Muslims generally.

I left this assignment toward the end of October 1989. I had stayed in the UAE a little bit longer than I originally intended. Washington was having difficulty lining up a successor for a country where our relations were more personal than institutional, so I didn't leave until they had a successor named, I had presented the request for agrément for my successor, and we had reasonable prospect that he would be confirmed. By the end of October, I felt I could leave and Washington accepted my recommendation. My family had gone back in the summer of 1989, so I had been on my own for this indefinite period of several months. Moreover, I wasn't able to arrange a regular ongoing assignment since I didn't know when I would be able to be available. Washington assured me that it would be a good time for me to take a year as Diplomat in Residence, where flexibility in timing was possible. I agreed to become the Diplomat in Residence at Howard University, which was nice because it meant my family could stay in Washington. As a result, I ended up spending six months at Howard University, an interesting experience with aspects of American life that were new to me.

*Q: I'd like to get back, first there are three little things. One, with the ending of the Iran- Iraq war, which you said was quite balanced and the United States played a significant role in this United Nations broker. Do you think in the UAE the U.S. got any credit for being the equivalent to an honest broker? Obviously, we had no love for Iran but does this show us in a good light? Or did we get a credit for it?*

MACK: I don't think so. Partly because of Irangate, they continued to suspect that we would not be a reliable ally for them against Iran. Conditions might well change, and we would find it in our interest as a great power to have a much closer relationship with Iran, and that as a result they should not depend on us too much. I think that was basically their attitude. They took virtually no interest in what we had to say about Iraq during late 1989. This came up on a recent trip to the UAE from which I've just returned. While in Abu Dhabi, I had dinner at the home of a former Foreign Ministry official, Sheikh Fahim al-Qasimi, who had gone on to become the Secretary General of the GCC. Sheikh Fahim reminded me that I had raised with him the problem of Iraq in 1989, and how seriously we took the fact that the Iraqis had used chemical weapons in the latter stages of the Iraq-Iran war, both against the Iranians and against the Iraqi Kurdish population. At the time, the UAE didn't want to hear any criticism of Iraq, and they certainly were not interested in joining in any condemnation of Iraq for using chemical weapons, or even speaking to the Iraqis about it. On this recent occasion, however, Sheikh Fahim said to

me, "I wish you had screamed a little louder about Iraq." So no, I don't think we received credit at the time for an even handed effort to end the war. Maybe over a longer period of time we're getting some credit.

*Q: You mentioned the Indians who were involved in the newspaper business. I always think of the Indians as, particularly Indian intellectuals, having a certain disdain which they picked up when the British left, and maybe the right, too, and British universities, of the United States. In the first place, was the Indian population, I suppose that includes Pakistan, were they influential? And two, did they have sort of an innate anti-Americanism, pro-British, or not?*

MACK: People from the sub-continent -- India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Ceylon -- were important in UAE commercial activities. They had little political role, and they were careful to be very apolitical about events in the UAE. Many of them had been in the country for a long time. Some children of these communities had been born in the country. The UAE tended to treat the expatriate community, including the south Asians, in a tolerant way, as long as they behaved themselves. They had their own schools. There were even Hindu places of worship, which would be absolutely out of the question in many Muslim countries. I didn't feel that the business people in the community, whom I occasionally met, were particularly anti-American. The exception was the journalists, whether they were the South Asians, who tended to dominate the English language publications, or the Palestinians, Egyptians, Sudanese, Lebanese, Syrians, and Iraqis who tended to dominate the Arabic language publications. Those people did have a lot of anti-American animus, which I think almost came with their professions. Like many people in the media in the United States, they delighted in being anti-establishment. The U.S. represented the establishment, and so I think it was kind of a natural impulse for them. The press in Abu Dhabi was much more restrained, more subject to UAE government influence, while the media in places like Sharjah and Dubai was a good deal freer, rather less responsible and a good deal more critical of the United States.

*Q: The last thing about this period, you mentioned you had a woman USIS officer. How about, during this period, the ability of female officers operating in this Arab environment?*

MACK: She was not the first woman PAO in Abu Dhabi. A former DCM had been married to a USIS officer who had been PAO. I don't think there had been other women officers in the UAE outside of the administrative section. Certainly women officers would be accepted at the Foreign Ministry or government offices, to go and pay official calls. Socially, it was very difficult. The *majlises* and other informal gatherings were very much part of a male only society. There was the occasional distinguished woman visitor who would present herself in a majlis, or be taken there by her ambassador, but it was rare. I don't think it caused consternation when it happened, but you could tell that people were not as relaxed, and as open, as they would be in the traditional male only gathering. People would take off their shoes, wiggle their toes and relax, something they wouldn't feel comfortable doing if there was a woman there. It was not easy then for a woman diplomat in the more traditional Arab countries, and I don't think it's particularly easy now. I've talked to a number of women officers who worked in these environments. Invariably, they're treated courteously at the government offices when they go there. It may be like the Foreign Ministry building in Riyadh, where there isn't a ladies rest room in this huge building, but our women officers at our embassy in Riyadh are always treated perfectly

courteously when they go there. They're able to do their business. But do you have the same quality of rapport? I'd have to say no, not at all. Is it harder for a woman to function in one of these countries? Absolutely. Is it impossible? No. We have a woman ambassador in Oman now, and we've had women DCMs in a number of these countries. I think they've been able to conduct the most necessary functions, but there could be a lack of rapport where you'd miss something important.

**WILLIAM A. RUGH**  
**Ambassador**  
**United Arab Emirates (1992-1995)**

*Ambassador Rugh was born and raised in New York City. He was educated at Oberlin College, the School of International Studies (SAIS) and Columbia University. He entered the USIA Foreign Service in 1964. An Arabic Language Officer and Middle East Specialist, Ambassador Rugh served both in Washington and abroad, dealing primarily Middle East matters. His posts include Beirut, Cairo, Jeddah, Riyadh and Damascus, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. From 1984 to 1987 he served as US Ambassador to Yemen and as US Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates from 1992.*

*Q: You were in the UAE from when to when?*

RUGH: From the fall of 1992 until the summer of 1995.

*Q: Before you went out there, what initiatives or goals were you putting in your mental attaché case about what needed to be done?*

RUGH: The relationship with the UAE since the Gulf Crisis (after 1991 when the war was over) had become a very heavily military one. I thought it was important to do two things. One was to solidify that military relationship. In the past, the Gulf countries and, in fact, all of the Arab countries, have been reluctant to have any military bases or any close association with American military. I knew that bases still were not possible, but I thought that it would be important to work closely with the American military and help them develop the closest possible relationship with the UAE because the danger still remained. Iran was still a threat and Iraq was still a threat because Saddam was still in power. So, I thought that high on my agenda would be the role of the U.S. military in dealing with that, which I hadn't dealt with in Yemen very much as ambassador because it was a very small part of our mission.

Secondly, I thought it would be important to expand the relationship beyond the military because it was so heavily military already that it needed some other aspects. So, both of those goals: solidifying the military relationship and expanding it into other areas (economic, commercial, and cultural) and take advantage of America's prestige from the Gulf Crisis in ways that could help American companies on the commercial side. America had not been a major economic

player in the UAE; the British had. It was a British domain and it still was even after the British left in 1971.

*Q: What comprised the UAE? What was the government structures and political forces there?*

RUGH: The UAE is a small country. It used to be called “Trucial States” when Britain was running their foreign affairs and defense up until 1971 when it became independent. Seven small emirates combine in a federation. The largest, richest, and most powerful emirate was Abu Dhabi. The second largest and richest was Dubai. There were five others. These seven emirates were located on the Persian Gulf near the Strait of Hormuz. They were and are economically very important because of their huge petroleum reserves. They have about 100 billion barrels of petroleum reserves, which is four times what we have in North America. Their oil policy was very moderate and prudent and they basically recycled their oil revenues into investments in the United States and elsewhere, so the petrodollars were very important to us.

In addition to the economic interests for the United States, they also occupied a very important piece of real estate on the Persian Gulf and also there is a piece of the UAE which is on the Indian Ocean. So, from a strategic point of view, the U.S. military looked at the UAE as very important territory for us. For example, if the Strait of Hormuz were closed and bottling up the Persian Gulf, if the UAE were friendly, the U.S. still could have access to the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean side. There is an airfield in Fujairah on the Indian Ocean side where the U.S. Navy brings in people and supplies on a regular basis in quiet times. If there were a crisis, that would become very important, providing us very easy air access to the Persian Gulf to supply the fleet. You have to remember that there were, on an average, 20 American naval vessels in the Persian Gulf at any one time, including from time to time a carrier task force. This was a very important commitment of American military personnel and equipment to peacekeeping in the Persian Gulf. The lines keeping contact with those ships were important. A lot of that went through the UAE, including to the airfields. We never had an airbase there. We still don't. But they were open to us. For example, when we were flying Southern Watch (We're still doing that.), which is the air flights of U.S. military planes over southern Iraq to maintain the sanctions on Iraq. The Southern Watch missions had to be fueled by U.S. tanker planes called KC-10s. These KC-10s were based in the UAE in airfields. We couldn't have flown those missions over southern Iraq without basing these planes in the UAE. Although there wasn't an American base there, it was through the UAE we were allowed to do that. That was something useful to the military, so that was important.

In addition, American exports to the UAE had grown over the years so that it had become an important market. In fact, it is an entrepôt. Dubai in particular had become an entrepôt for South Asia and for the Arab world. Really in the last decade, Dubai has taken over the role of Bahrain as the entrepôt, transit point, and most active and vibrant commercial center of the entire Gulf. Dubai has the largest man-made port in the world, Jebel Ali, with a free port, an aluminum plant, and a lot of commercial activities. A lot of American companies went into the free port and went into Dubai and used Dubai as a transit point for shipments all over the world. Dubai merchants are very clever and very experienced and have really taken advantage of opportunities in the last few years.

*Q: They used to dominate the gold smuggling business during my time as commercial officer in the Gulf from 1958-1960. You would go to Dubai and you would see four men carrying one very small box.*

RUGH: That is still true. Smuggling and commerce. From Dubai's point of view, it's commerce. Smuggling is sort of a pejorative term. In Dubai, you don't have to smuggle because everything is tax free and free trade prevails. They have almost zero duties and controls over what you can bring in and bring out, so you bring in large amounts of gold to Dubai and you resell it to Indians, Pakistanis, Saudis, people from all over the world. People from Europe go to Dubai to buy European-made gold because it's cheaper. For some of those countries, it's not legal to bring in gold without paying a tax, but for Dubai it's perfectly legal to export it without paying a tax so that they benefit by people taking a risk in their own home countries. There is a lot of smuggling of other things that goes on between Dubai and Iran. There are boats that go every day from Dubai across to Iran and evade the Iranian customs people and go into Iran bringing goods and come out of Iran bringing carpets, pistachios, and so on. It's only 50 miles across the water, so it is a very active trade.

*Q: Could you explain the government situation?*

RUGH: The government is legally and constitutionally headed by a council of the seven emirs, the seven sheikhs who rule each of the seven Emirates. So, it is as if in the United States that the governor's conference of 50 governors would get together and run the country. That is the theory in the UAE. In practice, Sheikh Zayid, who is the ruler of Abu Dhabi, is really in charge, certainly of foreign affairs and defense policy. He has much more weight in national decisions than any other ruler because of the wealth and size of Abu Dhabi Emirate. Sheikh Zayid was one of the founders of the UAE in 1971 and is now about 80 years old. He is universally respected as a leader. He has enormous charisma. Everybody in the UAE looks up to him. He is sort of the George Washington, the founding father who is holding the country together by force of his personality. There was another major figure, Sheikh Rashid of Dubai, who was almost as powerful, as prominent, and as respected as Sheikh Zayid at the time of the founding, but he died a few years ago, so that leaves Sheikh Zayid as the towering figure in the country.

Formally, the seven rulers get together and discuss national policy on a regular basis, but major decisions like whether to allow the Americans to base their aircraft in the UAE, those were made by Sheikh Zayid and his family, his sons. His sons have become very prominent. One of his sons is the Chief of Staff of the armed forces. Another is the head of the Security Service. Another is the number two in the Foreign Ministry. Another runs the Ports Authority. So, his sons are being groomed to succeed him.

*Q: Have they been trained abroad at all?*

RUGH: Some of them have, yes. The Chief of Staff, Sheikh Mohammad, has had military training at Sandhurst in the UK. Some of his other sons who have been trained in the United States have gone to school here. His oldest son, who is in his late 40s, had a traditional education, has not been trained abroad. The rest of his sons have had training abroad.

*Q: I would have thought that when you went out, both on the United Emirates side and also from the American side, that it was pretty well understood that there are times when the United States is really up against national interest and national interest is that the UAE is not going to fall into unfriendly hands. Was this one of these things that was unsaid but always there whenever you were talking, dealing with this?*

RUGH: The overwhelming threat as seen by the UAE leadership in Abu Dhabi is Iran. The United States saw and sees Iran as the overwhelming threat to the region. So, we had a parallel of interests. I was fortunate to be there at a time when the leadership in Abu Dhabi and in Washington really had a threat perception that was similar. The second most important threat as seen by both countries was Iraq. Again, we had a parallel threat assessment. As time went on, the perception of the Iraqi threat began to change a bit. In the UAE, the leadership as time went on began to become very uncomfortable with the status quo. Saddam Hussein stayed in power. The embargo was hurting the Iraqi people very badly and not hurting Saddam. The United States takes the lead in the embargo against Saddam. We had expected Saddam to fall and be replaced by a more benign Iraqi leadership. Everybody had expected that. It didn't happen. We continued our policy of a tough embargo on Iraq. The UAE continued to support it, but became increasingly worried that it wasn't doing the job, that it wasn't bringing about a change of behavior in the Iraqi leadership and the departure of Saddam. They didn't have an alternative to suggest. They weren't saying, "You ought to stop the embargo and do the following." They wanted us to keep up the pressure on Saddam, but they felt the pressure wasn't on Saddam; it was on the Iraqi people. So, at the end of my tour, by 1995, there began to be a discussion over "What are you going to do about Saddam and why haven't you gotten rid of him? Why are you punishing the Iraqi people?" Well, we weren't intentionally punishing the Iraqi people. In Washington and the American embassy, we felt that Saddam was the one who was punishing the Iraqi people. So, in terms of threat perception, both Washington and Abu Dhabi continued to believe that Saddam was the problem, but the solution that we were applying, namely a total embargo, pressure on Saddam, a no fly zone in the south, and support for the Kurds in the north, wasn't bringing relief for the Iraqi people. That hurt Sheikh Zayid. As an Arab, he felt a lot of sympathy for the suffering of the Iraqi people. So, that continues to this day, a discussion along the lines of Zayid and his people saying "What are you going to do to fix the Iraqi situation" and us saying "Well, it's Saddam's fault."

*Q: Always with an embargo, which seems to be the weapon of choice of the United States, what you do is, you put an embargo on and hope somebody will depose the leader. We're doing this in Bosnia, too.*

RUGH: Or change the policy.

*Q: It has proved to be extremely ineffective. What had the UAE done during the Gulf War? What was their participation?*

RUGH: UAE was very supportive of the allied position during the Gulf War. It was part of the coalition against Saddam Hussein. Thousands of American troops were allowed to have access to the UAE. Aircraft were stationed in the UAE. UAE hospitality was total in terms of providing support for the American military effort. The UAE provided some military forces for the



coalition. So, it was a very strong support. Even before Saddam invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the UAE, I think, perceived almost before anybody else that there was a real crisis. The Saudis and the Kuwaitis thought that Saddam was bluffing, and we thought Saddam was bluffing. He never would invade all of Kuwait. Sheikh Zayid in July 1990 asked us to conduct a military exercise, an air exercise, a joint exercise, between UAE Air Force and the United States Air Force as a demonstration of American willingness to support the UAE in a time of crisis. That was quite perceptive. It didn't stop Saddam from invading Kuwait, however.

*Q: In fact, he got kind of annoyed about it.*

RUGH: Right. He was very upset with the UAE in particular. To my mind, it shows that Sheikh Zayid had an instinct and a feeling that something terrible was happening and we needed to draw the line. As I say, it didn't stop Saddam, but it showed Sheikh Zayid's concern. He was totally against Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and totally in support of the effort.

*Q: What about the influence of Iran? I know in Bahrain, one of the problems has been the Shias have been coming in, which has turned into sort of a disruptive force on Bahrain. This is not just recently, but has been going on over the centuries. Has the UAE had that same problem?*

RUGH: The demographics in the UAE are very interesting. The total resident population in the UAE is just over two million. The number of UAE nationals, UAE citizens, is about 400,000 out of that two million. That means foreigners living in the UAE make up 80 percent of the population. They are not given citizenship. It is not a melting pot. They don't believe that these people should stay around after they finish working, but they're very hospitable to them while they're there working. So, these are guest workers whether they're Indians, who are about 450,000 and Pakistanis, who are about 350,000. There are more Indians than UAE nationals. Or they are Americans, Brits, or Bangladeshis, etc. They are all there temporarily. When they're finished working, they are to leave. So, that is an odd and unusual arrangement because there are so many foreigners living there. Among those foreigners are more than 60,000 Iranians. Those Iranians are mostly in Dubai. Many of them are working in business and commerce, working as laborers, or working in fishing and so on. Among those 60,000 Iranians are, we believe, a number of Iranian intelligence officers from the MOIS (Ministry of Intelligence and Security, Iran). They are there under cover of business or other types of employment that attempt to disguise their true intent, but they are there for purposes of surveillance and watching, watching the UAE, collecting data, collecting intelligence, and they are a potential fifth column. Certainly the ones who work for the Iranian government could cause trouble. There have been some incidents in the past involving those Iranian agents directed, however, against other Iranians. There was one incident where they kidnapped an Iran dissident in Dubai and bundled him off to Iran. They have the potential of causing trouble. The UAE security authorities keep a close watch on them. We try to keep a watch on the Iranians. In fact, since we don't have an embassy in Teheran, we tend to do a little bit of reporting on Iranians who come to our consulate and apply for visas, as they do in large numbers. But the most active Iran watchers in the UAE are UAE authorities themselves. They keep very close tabs on them. The UAE doesn't have a very strong, tight border. It doesn't have much of a coast guard. So, it's very easy for Iranians to slip into the country. They can come over in a small boat and get in without any trouble. Sometimes

residence permits and work permits are sold by various authorities. So, you can slip into the country and this is a potential security problem.

In addition to those 60,000 Iranian nationals who live in the UAE out of a resident population of only two million, there are thousands of UAE nationals who have as their national origin southern Iran. Arab tribes and Arab peoples of southern Iran immigrated to the UAE (then the Trucial States) over the centuries and make up a sizeable number of the population, particularly of Dubai. Some of them still speak Farsi or a version of Farsi. Many of them are in business. Some of them even speak Farsi at home. But they consider themselves Iranian nationals. They are full-fledged UAE citizens and they have citizenship because their grandparents were there forever, but they really are sort of a class by themselves. They have Iranian connections. These are the people who are most effective in maintaining trade between Dubai and Iran. They have family ties. They speak Farsi. They know people back in the village and in the cities of southern Iran. So, they have old commercial connections with Iran and they keep the trade going very nicely. So, it's a very mixed population. Why isn't there more conflict between ethnic groups? Why isn't there unrest among the foreigners? I think the simple answer is prosperity. Every one of the foreigners working there is earning more money than they would be earning back home. The Indians and Pakistanis in particular are really well off compared to what they would be making back at home.

There was an incident while I was there, a spillover from a problem in India. A mosque in Ayodhya India was attacked and destroyed in 1993 or 1994. Muslims in India were very upset about it. Indian and Pakistani Muslims living in the UAE also were upset about it. There were some incidents for about two days in the UAE, demonstrations and clashes between Indians and Pakistanis. This only lasted two days. It lasted much longer in India. This was because the UAE rounded up some of the troublemakers, put them on a plane, sent them back home, and they realized that they had lost their jobs. Immediately word spread that if you made trouble over Ayodhya, you were going to be deported and you would lose your job. That stopped it cold. So, the people there realized that if they got into any political demonstrations or involved in anything other than just making a living and keeping quiet, they would be deported.

*Q: When you were there, or prior to when you were there, did Iran make any geographic demands on the UAE?*

RUGH: Yes. That is an important point. Iran and the UAE both lay claim to three small islands. One is called Abu Musa and the other two are the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. These are tiny islands, only five or six miles wide. But they lie exactly in the Middle of the Persian Gulf halfway between Iran and the UAE. In 1971, just hours before the UAE became independent, when the British were still in charge, Iran forcibly occupied the Two Tunbs, which had been Arab islands all along, and took over Abu Musa as well. Abu Musa was regulated by a memorandum of understanding between the Shah and the UAE, which said that the sovereignty will be put aside and this Abu Musa island will be divided administratively between Iran and the UAE. After that 1971 memorandum of understanding, which the UAE didn't like because they thought all Abu Musa was their island, the Iranians gradually militarized all three islands. Particularly during the Iran-Iraq War, they put garrisons up. In 1991, the UAE said, "Halt. You're talking over our island. You're militarizing Abu Musa and the Tunbs you stole from us."

We want them back.” Since 1991, there has been an ongoing dispute in public in the UN in every forum that the UAE goes to, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, etc. Every time they make a speech, they say, “These three islands are Arab. They’re ours. Iran has been taking them over gradually, annexing them. We object. We want to go to the international court. We want to go to the UN mediation. We have legality on our side.” Why are they making such a big issue over these tiny islands? There is a little bit of oil, but it’s really symbolic. Sheikh Zayid and the UAE leadership are afraid that if they make concessions and allow Iran to take over these three little islands at the midline of the Gulf, then Iran will not hesitate to try to take over more islands. Half of the UAE’s oil reserves are offshore on other islands close to these three. So, the UAE is afraid that Iran will have an appetite for more islands with more oil if they don’t draw a line and say “Halt.” So, this has been an ongoing dispute. The UAE has the backing of practically everybody in the world and Iran doesn’t, but Iran is not giving up its de facto hold on these islands.

*Q: Did we get involved in that at all? We had no relations with Iran.*

RUGH: We have been asked from time to time what is our position on the islands. We have said that we recommend a peaceful settlement of the dispute. We have never been asked which side do we come down on. I don’t know what we would say if we were asked. My personal opinion is that the UAE legal case is much stronger than the Iranian case. The Iranians have been there really only since 1971 and they occupied two of them by force. But we have never been asked that. The British have been asked. The British were very much involved. They allowed it to happen. They allowed Iran to take over these three islands. The UAE wants the British to say that this was a mistake and “We have right on our side.” When I was there, the UAE asked the British ambassador for the documents. He dragged his feet. He didn’t want to give them the documents. He didn’t want to get involved. He said, “It’s your dispute. This is an old story.” But the British were culpable. The British were responsible for allowing it to happen.

*Q: What were the main issues you dealt with and how did you deal with them?*

RUGH: One of the main issues was sort of a technical one, but it had a lot of symbolism. There was a request by the U.S. government to sign a defense cooperation agreement with the UAE. This request goes back to the end of the Saddam crisis in 1991. As soon as this crisis with Saddam, Desert Storm, was over, we decided that we wanted defense cooperation agreements with all of the Arab states in the Gulf, all six of the GCC states, and we got one immediately with Kuwait. We got one rather promptly with Bahrain. We already had one with Oman. We got one rather promptly with Qatar. The Saudis said they really didn’t need one because we had close cooperation. That left the UAE as the one country besides the Saudis that had not signed a defense agreement. We requested it immediately. It was taken under advisement. When I got there in 1992, there had been a year and a half of discussion of the agreement, but it hadn’t been concluded. I spent two years working on that and finally did sign a defense cooperation agreement before I left. It was a problem for them because we were asking them to give up a portion of their sovereignty. It was a Status of Forces Agreement which said that an American military person who commits a crime in UAE territory would be handed over to the United States for trial, not to the UAE. Under normal international law, the crime would be tried under UAE law. We were saying, “No, hand him over to us.” So, for example, if a sailor off an

American ship kills a UAE national, he is not tried in a UAE court. He is tried by an American court martial. We were asking for that. They had trouble accepting that. They said, "This could cause political problems and this is difficult for us to swallow." We had long discussions and a lot of delegations that came out. I spent a lot of time on it. Finally, we persuaded them that in the context of everything that we were doing to provide security for the UAE and the other countries of the Gulf, this was something that they could give us and they did do it. But, frankly, they weren't happy about it. Particularly the folks in Dubai, where most of the American sailors are on leave, said, "We don't need this. We are hospitable. If anything goes wrong, don't worry. We're friendly to Americans. Nothing will happen." Well, the lawyers in the Pentagon didn't believe that. So, we had literal-minded lawyers in the Pentagon versus tribal chiefs in Dubai having different views of what would happen if an American sailor killed somebody. The tribal leaders said, "Don't worry, we'll take care of it. There may be a brief period where this guy is locked up, but we'll deal with it because we like Americans." That wasn't enough for the lawyers in the Pentagon. They said, "No, we've got to have something in writing."

*Q: In the interviews I've done, one of the most difficult negotiations on base rights always seems to be between the Department of State and the Pentagon lawyers. Spain, Greece, anywhere else.*

RUGH: Right.

*Q: They want to get everything nailed down for their client.*

RUGH: That's right.

*Q: As those of us in the Foreign Service know, most of the time, arrangements are made which aren't spelled out. You sort of get the person out of the country.*

RUGH: That's right. There were a few people in the Pentagon, bless them, who understood the situation in the region. I think General Joe Hoar, who was the Commander in CENTCOM (United States Central Command) during most of the time I was out there, was one of them. He really understood and he was not pushing. He said, "Don't twist their arm. If you have to twist their arm the agreement won't be worth anything. If they want to sign it, if they know what they're doing and they're happy with signing it, fine. But we don't want an agreement that they will sign under duress." There were others. We found a few lawyers in the Pentagon who were able to talk to people out there, but it wasn't easy. The State Department was supportive, but the Pentagon regarded this as their issue. They sent their lawyers out and they were hardliners. So, it was tough. To tell you the truth, after I signed the agreement, we had difficulty implementing it. The implementation phase of it lasted for quite a while. It wasn't really implemented until quite a while after I signed it. The story wasn't over when I signed it, even though I thought it was.

*Q: You said that one of the things you wanted to achieve was to strengthen the military relationship, which I assume that part of the baggage you had to do would be this Status of Forces Agreement. How did the rest of this come across on the military side?*

RUGH: The other major issue on the military side was sales of military equipment and services and joint exercises. The joint exercises were fairly easy to work out. The sales of equipment was

tougher. I and Washington believed that American military equipment was the best in the world. The UAE was not automatically signing up to every deal that was proposed. They were taking a lot of time. They were looking at French, British, and even Russian equipment. So, I spent a lot of my time trying to advise and counsel American companies, the Pentagon, the Department of Commerce, and everybody else who got involved on military sales. There was one major one that we lost. The UAE bought over 300 main battle tanks. I thought it would be fairly easy to sell the M-1, which had won the Gulf War, to the UAE. The French came along and made an offer which had a lot of claims in it. It hadn't been built yet. It was a paper tank. The UAE bought it. I think that the French didn't tell the truth in their sales pitch and we did. In addition, the French offered them an offset program which was required in the sale, which was much more attractive than our offset program. So, the French tank won a multibillion dollar sale and we lost it.

There is another contract that is still being considered that was active when I arrived in 1992 and was active when I left in 1995 and has still not been concluded. That is the fighter aircraft. The UAE wants to buy 30-60 fighter aircraft. I thought when I arrived that this was an easy sale because McDonnell Douglas makes a wonderful F-15 and Lockheed makes a wonderful F-16 and who can match that? Well, the Russians had some MIGs and the French had some Mirage and other planes. The British had some planes. It was by no means an easy sell. It is still not decided. As we speak, the UAE has narrowed the sale down to Lockheed plus a European competitor and it's still not concluded. This is long after I thought it would have been concluded. So, that was tough. We spent a lot of time trying to help the American companies with this.

*Q: Did you find that after the Gulf War, where American equipment had demonstrated its superiority, that our selling people the equipment had maybe lost their edge as far as being good salesmen?*

RUGH: Yes. They're not used to selling to people in the Arab world. They don't have the patience. They don't have knowledge of the thought patterns of Arab officials. The French and British have a lot more experience with selling in the Arab world. Plus, frankly, the French and the British had a lot more direct government support. We tried at the embassy to give the companies as much support as we could, but the British embassy got Prince Charles and Diana, the Defense Minister, the Foreign Minister, and Margaret Thatcher, and all these people to come out to the UAE regularly and make high level visits and see the President. They got treated royally. By the way, they were selling British goods and services. The French did the same thing. The French Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and Defense Minister all came out. They invited them back. When they went to Paris, middle level officials going to Paris would see the Defense Minister. They would come to Washington and try to see the American Secretary of Defense and you can't get in the door unless you're of equal rank. So, that helped the Europeans and it hurt us. Americans wanted to sell. As a matter of policy, we increasingly were told by the State Department that trade is important, but we weren't able to match the European political effort. Frankly, there is a Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in the United States which prevents American companies from paying bribes and the French don't have anything like that. That makes a difference. All of those factors made it difficult for us. We argued quality. We said, "You get what we say you're going to get. The French don't always deliver on their promises."

*Q: This has been true even back when I was in Athens in the early 1970s with the Greek government. The French were loading up the deal with all sorts of things, but the equipment really is isn't that good.*

RUGH: Right. As people say, the French will sell you something and forget to add in spares and say, "Oh, you want spares?" Spares are automatically included in our package, as is maintenance and all kinds of things. We just give a better deal.

The other problem is releasability. We have some special equipment on our aircraft that the UAE wants. They want the best. They want everything that we have – radars, and so on. The Pentagon doesn't release all of that to everybody. They may release it to nobody, they may release it only to NATO, or they may release it to NATO and Israel, but not anybody else. That sticks in the craw of people in the UAE who say, "We're a cash customer. We're ready to pay you for this. We want top of the line. We don't want second-rate stuff that isn't the best." Congress gets involved and you have to get the Pentagon to release the stuff. Sometimes, people in the Pentagon at the highest levels say, "We haven't given it to Israel, so we can't give it to you" or "We just gave it to Israel and Israel needs a qualitative edge, so we won't give it to the UAE." That doesn't go down very well in the UAE.

*Q: Did you find yourself getting into arguments or trying to work with the Pentagon and also with Congress?*

RUGH: Yes, we worked with the Pentagon. We pointed out the material advantages of making the sale, the income, and the job creation. In addition, there was the interoperability. The Pentagon likes the argument of interoperability. That is to say, if the UAE has American equipment, that if we go to war again, you can work more closely with the UAE military because they have the same equipment. So, interoperability was an argument we made to the UAE, but we also made it to the Pentagon to encourage them. Of course, the American companies were lobbying the Pentagon, the White House, and the State Department to get support, but they didn't always have that much clout, as much as one imagines they do. In comparison to the French and the British, there is a much tighter relationship between business and government than there is in the United States.

*Q: What about the other side, of increasing ties and influence on the non-military side? How did that work?*

RUGH: That didn't progress as far as I had hoped. The overwhelming character of the relationship was military. I had hoped that there would be more political connections, more State Department connections, and more Department of Commerce connections with the UAE. In my time, we got very few visits from any non-military people. We had general officers every month coming up from the Pentagon and from CENTCOM. We had colonels and majors there every day visiting us. We had thousands and thousands of troops coming in for port calls. So, the American military connection with the UAE in terms of visits, personnel, connections, conferences, discussions, and consultations was enormous, whereas the connections on the political side were fairly weak. In my time, the Assistant Secretary of State came twice. We had the Secretary of Transportation, Mr. Pena, come, but we didn't get anybody else really of a

senior political nature who came out and had serious discussions with the UAE leadership. We had one Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Peter Tarnoff, come. But we never got the Secretary of State. We certainly never got the President or Vice President. In contrast to the Europeans, we didn't have that kind of high level visibility. I was disappointed that we didn't have more of a political dialogue with the UAE. They wanted it. They resented the lack of it. We would send envoys out to ask for money. We would send a special envoy to see Sheikh Zayid and say, "We have a project in North Korea to help persuade the Koreans to stop building nuclear weapons. Will you pay for it?" Well, they would get a puzzled look from the UAE officials, who would say, "What does this have to do with us?" Well, the only thing that it had to do with them was that they had a lot of money. We were carrying a tin cup to collect money. I had to try to persuade the people that were visiting to try to make a link between North Korea and the UAE to put a good face on it to make the people think that we weren't just coming because they were rich. But we were, frankly, in many cases. We hit them for money for the Palestinians, which is a little bit more logical. We pressed them hard for money for Turkey, for the Palestinians, and for a whole list of other causes just because they had money. So, we tended only to show up when we wanted money and not when we wanted a serious political dialogue. That was a problem.

*Q: You had been dealing with the State Department and American administrations over a long period of time. Did you have a feeling that when the Clinton administration came in in 1993 that it really had very little interest in the Middle East, except for the normal Israeli thing?*

RUGH: Right. That is true. Secretary Christopher spent a lot of time working on the peace process. He shuttled back and forth to Syria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, even Lebanon. He never came to Abu Dhabi. I think he went once to Kuwait, but occasionally, he would come to Saudi Arabia and announce that he was visiting the Gulf. People in Abu Dhabi didn't think he was visiting them. Saudi Arabia is part of the Gulf, but it's only one country. It is the biggest, wealthiest, and most important to us, but he really neglected the Gulf. The rest of the Clinton administration completely neglected the Gulf. Vice President Gore stopped off in Oman for a refueling stop once, but other than that, senior Clinton administration officials didn't pay much attention to the Arab world, except for the Arab-Israeli conflict, and it was a disappointment. I think it started with the President. I don't think the President really is interested in foreign affairs very much and this is reflected in the rest of his administration.

*Q: Were there any other issues that you were dealing with while you were there?*

RUGH: We dealt with intellectual property rights and working with them to pass a law and then to implement the law. We dealt with visas. I went to the Minister of Interior and said, "You only give an American businessmen a three month visa and he has to have a sponsor. You don't require the British to have any visa." I knew this went back to the time when the British ran the place. The first time I said this, the Minister said, "Frankly, we could give you a longer visa if it doesn't apply to Arab-Americans." I said, "Whoa, wait a minute. We can't do that." It was clear that they didn't trust Arab-Americans. So, that discussion collapsed. Then a new Minister of Interior was appointed. I went to him and made the same pitch and he was more open-minded. He said, "Okay" and we made a deal. We agreed on a 10 year visa with no sponsor. UAE was the first Gulf state to do that. Some of the other Gulf states have now done that. They realized

that it was hampering trade and business to have only a three month sponsored visa, so we opened that up a bit.

We didn't have any other major issues. We had quite a few sailors coming through and no major incidents, fortunately and to my surprise. Somehow, they behaved themselves. They were all told that if they misbehaved, they would forever lose liberty, so they wanted to come and enjoy the beaches, the hotels, and the beer in the hotels. These were the best ports in the Gulf. If you go to Saudi Arabia, you can't drink. If you come to Abu Dhabi, you can drink in the hotels. We discovered that the few sailors who got in trouble were the young sailors on their first night ashore. They would go and get plastered and might get into trouble somehow. They would steal a car and joyride around, that kind of thing.

*Q: This is really the very young kids trying to show off and show how tough they are. It's like fraternity initiations.*

RUGH: Yes. We dealt with that. We set up a beer tent on the pier next to the ship. The first night, they were allowed to go onto the pier, drink all they wanted, but then they couldn't go into town. They had to go back on the ship. That dealt with their initial splurge and spree. The second night, they were allowed to go into town. That took care of that. So, there were very few problems.

*Q: With intellectual property, I take it the problem was copying videotapes, music, etc.*

RUGH: Right. And textiles. What happened was that Pakistan and India were up against their quota in textiles for export to the United States, so the additional textiles that they wanted to ship to the United States they would transship to the UAE. In the UAE, they would sew a label in a Pakistani shirt saying "Made in the UAE" and then ship it off to the United States because the UAE didn't meet the textile production quota. So, that was a violation of intellectual property. We had to police that. But it was also videotapes and audiotapes and even computer programs that were made in some apartment in Dubai by Indians who were cranking these out and selling them very cheaply on the market. And fake Rolexes and so on. So, we worked with the government and they passed a law, but that was only the first stage. We had to get people to police it. They were inexperienced in policing that kind of a law. I had many discussions with the Commerce Minister and with others trying to persuade them that it was in their interest to stop this piracy because there wasn't any gain for the UAE and they were hurting their reputation and losing by this pirate activity. They finally did enforce the law.

*Q: What about banking? Banking came up before your time.*

RUGH: The BCCI (Bank of Credit and Commerce and Industry) problem, yes, that happened before I arrived. The BCCI was a Pakistani bank which Sheikh Zayid bought into and then at the end when they were having difficulty, he bought a controlling share. That was before the British revealed that there was a lot of corruption in the bank and the whole bank collapsed. So, Sheikh Zayid was left holding the bag and there were a lot of creditors who wanted to get paid back. He put the Pakistanis who had started this whole scheme, this fraud, in jail in Abu Dhabi, but there were still creditors out there demanding retribution. The New York Attorney's Office was



interested in investigation whether there was any criminal activity involving American banks, so they were investigating it. The U.S. Department of Justice was involved. I asked about this before I went out because it was a big story just as I was going out. The State Department said, "Try to stay out of it. Let Justice and the New York attorney deal with it. If it comes across your screen, report, but don't get involved. It's a legal matter and you don't want to muck up the case. Besides, it's New York. They're fairly aggressive and they're not Washington." So, I did try to stay out. I kept informed and I informed Washington as much as I knew. At one point, even Jimmy Carter came out. He had been involved with BCCI earlier. He asked me what was going on. I told him what I knew. We saw the attorneys for both sides regularly. They would come out and talk to us, but we sort of kept at arm's length at the embassy. Finally, it was resolved by some of the Pakistanis who were in jail in Abu Dhabi being transferred to American custody and tried in the United States. That happened when I was there. It went smoothly. But it was an embarrassment for Sheikh Zayid, who wasn't knowingly culpable. He didn't know that it was fraudulent. But, of course, the New York attorney was not going to accept my word on that. He was suspicious of everybody, including Sheikh Zayid, and wanted to cross examine him and everything else. During most of this period, Sheikh Zayid didn't come to the United States when he would have come here for a visit and for medical treatment. His advisors thought he might get embarrassed by somebody slapping a subpoena on him in the hospital or something. But then it was cleared up and he did come. The whole matter was settled between the lawyers on the UAE side and the lawyers in New York and in the Department of Justice.

*Q: What about your original specialty, which is USIA? Were you able to have much of a program going there? It's always difficult in an Arab country.*

RUGH: The program there focused on the information side rather than the cultural side. It was difficult, if not impossible, to do what USIA calls "cultural presentations," dance groups, singing groups, that kind of thing. It just didn't have an audience in the UAE. But there was a lot of interest in American education. The educational counselor at USIS/Abu Dhabi did a lot of educational counseling. There was a lot of interest in American policy, so we dealt with the press, all of the media. The journalists there were in close touch with the USIS office. The newspapers had proliferated in the UAE. Nearly every emirate has its own paper in English and Arabic. There are television stations all over the country. So, there is a lot of media activity. That was the main focus, in addition to the education work. Those were the two main avenues.

*Q: Where did the young sons and daughters of the up and coming classes go to school?*

RUGH: On the university level, the daughters tended to go to the UAE University in country. Most of them went there. The sons tended to go abroad to the United States primarily, but also to the UK and some to Germany and France. The daughters stayed in the country for social reasons. Their families didn't like them to go abroad. They were afraid of what terrible things might happen to them if they came to America or even went to London. If they sent them abroad, they usually sent them to Cairo, where they thought it was a bit safer. It's culturally similar. But the sons went abroad. The university now has over 12,000 students. About 10,000 of those are women.

*Q: With the young men going to university in the United States, were they more likely to go for technical education?*

RUGH: Both. A lot of them went for undergraduate education. But they liked to study engineering. A lot of them did undergraduate education there. Quite a few of them had a very good education, very good English, very good training. There are some Ph.D.s. They have over 100 university faculty with Ph.D.s and many of those degrees are American. So, they've gotten the full range.

*Q: Is there anything else we should cover?*

RUGH: I guess that pretty much covers it. It was a quiet period. My predecessor, Ned Walker, had dealt with the Gulf War. He went off to the UN and then to Egypt as ambassador and now he's going to Israel as ambassador. So, Ned had the Gulf War to deal with. His predecessor had the Iran-Iraq War to deal with. I had peace! So, it was a pleasant occasion.

The UAE and Abu Dhabi in particular is a surprisingly civilized and pleasant place to live. It's very quite and peaceful. Sheikh Zayid has done a lot in planting millions of trees and building gardens. He is concerned about the environment. It is, I think, the most pleasant place on the peninsula to live. The quality of life is very good. People who go there don't want to leave. In fact, I even know a Foreign Service officer who was assigned to Dubai and when he was told to go to his next assignment, he quit the service and stayed in Dubai. It is a nice living.

**GEORGE QUINCEY LUMSDEN**  
**General Manager; Gulf South Asia Gas Project,**  
**United Arab Emirates (1994-1997)**

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

*Q: You had left the IEA in early 1994. You were with this other outfit.*

LUMSDEN: I went back to the UAE and worked there. Technically, I was going to be home, they said. I wanted to go home after living overseas for 37 out of the last 45 years. They said, "Oh, yes, you can go home." Well, during the next two years, I was home for four months out of 12 and out for eight months. That would have been in 1994, 1995. In 1996, I started to spend more.

*Q: You were there essentially from 1994 through 1996.*

LUMSDEN: I was the general manager of the Gulf South Asia Gas Project from March 1994 through March 1997, exactly three years. At this point, it became evident that the project had coagulated or suspended animation. I still have a retainer if it ever comes alive again.

*Q: What was your role, working with the Arab governments?*

LUMSDEN: I was the general manager of the project. Yes, I worked with the governments. I went out to talk to the sheikhs to get pipeline rights through their territory, but also ran back and forth between these various companies in the consortium holding their hands and trying to keep them on the reservation as things got dicey.

I did not get to the ultimate problem. I've talked about the midstream and the D'Amato legislation that came up and then the India-Pakistan situation. Of course, the supplier of the gas was the state of Qatar, who all along wanted to see proof that this thing would fly before they actually committed the gas. We've got a section of the north field which we can drill on and everything, but the final signature allowing the gas to move was withheld. I've got to hand it to the Qataris. There was always something out of kilter down the line somewhere.

From the point of view of observation in diplomacy for many years, the negotiating teams that we had, I was on, were heavily stocked by other Arabs, particularly non-Gulf Arabs.

*End of Reader*