

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

JOHN F. SCOTT

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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[Note: this interview was not edited by Mr. Scott.]

Q: Today is the tenth of June, 2008, and this is an interview with John F. Scott. This is being done on behalf of the Association of Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

SCOTT: I was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in 1946 on the 10th of November to be precise.

Q: Let's get something about the family first. Let's start on your father's side. What do you know about the Scotts and back and so forth?

SCOTT: Not too far back beyond my grandparents. The grandparents were originally a farming family and had a farm near Garrison, Iowa. They had several children, my father being one of the youngest. He had an older brother, a younger brother, and an older sister. They moved to Vinton, Iowa from the farm. My dad was a member of the armed forces, was a tech sergeant in the Army-Air Force and spent his overseas duty during World War II on Guam, came back to Iowa, went to Drake University. He studied law and became an attorney and was a lawyer in Vinton from the time he graduated until he passed on in 1964.

Q: Where is Vinton?

SCOTT: Vinton is a small town in the east central part of Iowa. For those who know Iowa, if you draw a straight line between Cedar Rapids and Waterloo, put a pin right in the middle, that's just about it exactly.

Q: What sort of town was it?

SCOTT: Primarily a farming community, most of its industry was farm related. They had, for example, a Green Giant packing plant, a couple of farm implement stores. So most of the merchants sold to farmers in the area. The population when I was there it was about 4600, it's still 4600, and probably will always be about 4600. It doesn't seem to grow much, but it doesn't shrink much, either.

Q: On your mother's side, what do you know about your mother's side?

SCOTT: On my mother's side, again, not much back beyond my grandparents. My grandfather was employed by Conoco Oil, spent a fair amount of time in Canada in the Saskatchewan area working on their oil, prospecting and drilling there. My mother, in fact, was born in Canada. Therein lies one of the interesting stories of at least our family life. She was one of the folks whose documents of birth burned up in a courthouse fire in Regina, Saskatchewan, so after I joined the foreign service and began to have some interest in her coming to visit us from time to time, it took the devil's own time to get her citizenship papers and a passport. We finally had to do it through interviews with folks who were around when she was born. Since she was well into her middle age by then, prospecting for folks old enough who could testify to that under oath was a bit of a trick, but we did find them.

She was one of six children. There were four sisters and two brothers. Most of them spent their formative years in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, again, not too far from Vinton and ultimately the town where I was born. Her side of the family if anything was somewhat more closely knit than my father's side. His older brother died fairly young; his younger brother and he were law partners, and the sisters headed to the opposite coasts, so we didn't see them an awful lot. For the most part, my mother's family stayed fairly close together, particularly the sisters, so they were all congregated in the area and we got together.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

SCOTT: That's a good question. I don't know exactly. They met after the war, got married, and had three children. I was the first of the three.

Q: Did your mother go to college?

SCOTT: She did not. She interestingly enough was in high school was what then passed for a world class diver as she, in fact, had been invited to try out for the '36 Olympics. Unfortunately, her father took ill about that time. She had to go to work to help support the family and never got to take advantage of that. She was diving champion for Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and a couple of other states in the area. Sad to say, that particular talent didn't work its way down to me, but it was always a wonder to watch.

Q: Did you grow up in Vinton?

SCOTT: When I was five, my dad bought a farm just north of Vinton. From then until he passed on, I was on the farm. That was from about age four until I was about 18.

Q: Let's talk a little about farm life. What was it like, and what were you doing?

SCOTT: Probably the biggest thing I have to say on that is it was one of those things they didn't want me to do as a grown-up. I think farming is still tough, but in some ways more so then than now, because you didn't have the state of the art equipment and labor saving devices. We raised corn and soy beans for the most part on our property. We also raised

horses. That took a lot of time. We got to ride horses and enjoy their company. In the winter, of course, we had to get up early in the morning and make sure that the horses were fed, the ice was chopped out of the water tank and that sort of thing. We paid our summer dues in the winter time.

Q: Why were you raising horses?

SCOTT: Partially because my dad liked horses, we raised some trotters for harness racing in the area. My brothers and I, our primary interest was just jumping on and riding. When we weren't working we were doing that.

The farm work, of course, was mainly when we were raising corn, planting and then taking the tractor out, weeding, and then combining in the fall. Back then, of course, you were out in the open, so we were getting sun and a lot of suntan, but you were also bringing in a lot of dirt and chemicals and that sort of thing. A number of my friends in high school who stayed on the farm after graduation have had a fair amount of trouble with emphysema and that sort of thing.

When we were putting in alfalfa or soy beans, with the alfalfa, of course, we'd bail that and put the hay up for the horses in the winter. A thoroughly unpleasant job in Iowa in the summertime. It's about as hot in Iowa on a good summer day as it is here today.

Q: We're having temperature in the high 90's.

SCOTT: High 80's, low 90's. Humidity was the same. You're out in the hay throwing bales out of the baler and onto the wagon. At level one and two it's pretty easy, but when you're starting to throw it up three or four high, then you're working for a living!

Q: Tell me about home life? What was it like at home? Did you sit around the table, discuss things? What did you do for fun?

SCOTT: We did sometimes. During the summer we generally got up and had breakfast together. Then my brothers and I played baseball in the Vinton Little League. Mom or Dad would take us in, drop us off at practice. That was usually nine to noon practicing ball. In the afternoon, when we were not working, you'd go to the swimming pool, sometimes had a baseball game, sometimes went fishing. We generally ate dinner together in the evening and occasionally talked about events of the day but mostly just what we had done during the day and that sort of thing. We didn't get a TV until I was about 13 or 14, so if we wanted to amuse ourselves after dinner it was either read a book or listen to the radio.

Q: Was there a movie theater in Vinton?

SCOTT: There was a movie theater. It basically showed two movies a week. They got one movie in Sunday to Wednesday and then another Thursday through Saturday. I used to tell my sons and pull their legs a little bit about the differences in prices. I would note

that my dad gave my brothers and me a 50 cent weekly allowance, and out of that 50 cents, one quarter would go for the movie ticket on Saturday afternoon. The other quarter, 10 cents for a Coke, 10 cents for popcorn, and we had a nickel left over to get an ice cream afterwards. They looked at that with sort of stunned amazement!

Q: Were you much of a reader?

SCOTT: I was always a reader and went through books in the school library and then the public library with a fair degree of speed. In part because of living out on the farm, of course, we took a rural route school bus to school every day, and depending on the route run, some years we were one of the last on and first off, so you'd have maybe a 10, 15 minute ride between home and school. Other times we were on the other end of the route and would have 45 to 50 minutes, and we spent a lot of that time reading.

Q: You had sort of a Carnegie library? What sort of books or any particular books that stick in your mind as early as a kid?

SCOTT: Because we were breeding and raising horses, I read a lot of horse stories and westerns and that kind of thing because that tied in a little bit to what I was doing. A lot of the old classics, Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, those sorts of things.

Dad was always a bit of a stickler for using your head for sensible things, so he first of all encouraged my brothers and me to read, and encouraged us to read at least something that was more than purely fluff. Not so much non-fiction. It was mostly fiction, but as I say, authors like Twain or H. G. Wells or Jack London, that sort of thing. These days that qualifies as good literature or is pushed out of libraries because it's too true to life!

Q: What about school? What was elementary school like?

SCOTT: Elementary school gathered not only the folks in Vinton but the surrounding farms as well. We had two elementary schools in Vinton, one on the east side of town, one on the west side of town, and they were appropriately named East School and West School.

I was telling my son the other day, in fact, one of the more memorable things was that we had old metal and wood desks. The wood was highly varnished, so you'd get a day like today, with no air conditioning in the school, and the school year was just about drawing to a close. Boy, you'd stick to the desks! Your arms would stick to the top, and your backside would stick to the seat. As I told him, we didn't wear shorts to school because it was too painful to get out of the desk!

Q: Early on did any particular courses especially grab you and other ones that didn't?

SCOTT: Not really. I enjoyed just about everything. This was kind of the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic sort of school. I also enjoyed history and government and that sort of thing as well. I would have to say I got, I think, a pretty well rounded education

starting in elementary school. I was historically pretty serious about education. When you look at educational statistics, I always tended to be on the upper end of the scale for that sort of thing, and Vinton's no exception. I can't remember ever having a dud teacher.

All the teachers I remember were fairly inspiring. A few of them left us with things that just to this day stick. I remember a seventh grade English teacher who the first time we were getting ready to take a big exam said, "There may be some of you who tend to look at your classmates' work. If you are, just imagine that you are on the table in the operating room, and your doctor cheated his way through medical school." That stuck with me for 50 years. That was a tremendous image!

For junior high they joined the two -- east and west -- into one school, and that was how Iowa does junior high, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, or most places do. It was the first time that we were in an educational environment where you went to different teachers. That was a new and different experience for us because in elementary you'd be in the same class. You had the same teacher. Team teaching was not yet a concept. Coming into the junior high environment was both a great step forward and a daunting step forward.

Q: I can remember in elementary school, and all of a sudden we were going to have a male teacher, and this was scary. My God, a male teacher!

SCOTT: That's right! That's right! Same with me. I guess in seventh grade government I had the first male teacher.

Q: How would you describe the student body?

SCOTT: Fairly uniform. Probably 60, 65% farm kids. There was a lot of uniformity there. The other thing about the student body that was memorable for me, and sometimes I regret my kids didn't have it, is my kindergarten starting class was largely the group of kids I graduated high school with. There were some departures and arrivals on the edges, but probably 80% of the kids I went to kindergarten with I graduated from high school with. It's the sort of thing that I can go back to Iowa to this day and just fold into with those folks.

I don't begrudge for a second the educational experiences that my kids have had at different schools in different countries and our wide cultural exposure, but the one thing I valued through school that they haven't had was the ability to sink roots really, really deep.

Q: Back to the family: Where did you fit religiously? Was this a factor?

SCOTT: It was a factor. We were Presbyterians and went to Sunday school most Sundays during the school year. Summers it tended to taper off a little bit. Sundays were in some ways a comfortable routine. We'd go to Sunday school and church afterwards and as a family stop by the local bakery and have a Coke or something like that. It was a fairly well established routine. I sort of dipped out of it in junior high and then came back into

it, interestingly enough, in high school. I wouldn't say that necessarily church and religion were an important part, a keystone part of socialization, because most of our family's friends were a different faith and there were 12 or 13 different churches in Vinton. Our family friends were really split amongst them. It was sort of a comfortable part of life.

Q: Was there any diversity, African-Americans, Jews, others? From the outside this seems to be a pretty uniform place.

SCOTT: It was a very uniform place. There were a couple of Jewish families. The mayor of Vinton for many years was Jewish. As I say, probably two, three families maybe. I don't think there was an African-American family in town. There would be during the summer months, particularly in harvest season, itinerant workers who would come through for a couple of weeks and help out with the harvest. If truth be told, that was probably the closest introduction of what would now be described as racial or cultural diversity in the town.

Q: I assume economically it was more uniform in a small town like that didn't allow for...probably one or two of the families probably had a little more money, ran the local store or something, what have you.

SCOTT: That's pretty much it. Even then you knew that it was always fairly uniform, and I don't think I was wrong in that. Being a little better off or having a little more money was not a social divider. I think it was important for people to feel that they fit in as part of the broader community. You'd see on a Saturday afternoon, or Sunday after church or at some of the Little League baseball games, folks who were on the poor end of the economic spectrum interacting pretty much equally with those on the well-off end. Small towns are nice; you can't be too uppity.

Q: Where did your family fit politically?

SCOTT: My dad was a republican. He had run and was elected to a couple of terms as county attorney on the republican ticket. Mom was more on the democratic side but even in the context of left-right, Dad was much more of an Eisenhower republican than a Goldwater republican. He was fairly close to the center; Mom was fairly close to the center on the democratic side.

Q: Did the Kennedy election in 1960 stir up anything? This was one of the more exciting elections.

SCOTT: It probably generated a little bit of stir between the residents who were Catholic and residents who were Protestant, but I don't remember all that much. A couple of my parents' best friends were Catholics, went to Catholic church regularly, and the election didn't create any divide or impact in the context of cutting back social conversations.

Q: Keeping in mind that this is the foreign affairs oral history program, did the outer world, maybe beyond the country, intrude on you at all?

SCOTT: The most memorable intrusion, of course, was the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Q: In '62.

SCOTT: Yes. That really generated a buzz. By then we had a TV, so we were watching the evening news. Most people were. I remember a couple of my classmates being what I would describe now as absolutely terrified that we were on the brink. More of the “duck and cover” kinds of practice and that sort of thing. That was the one event I think was most intrusive. You didn’t really see another foreign affairs thing begin to have an impact until after I had gone away to go away to college. You were hitting ’67 and ’68 and Vietnam. For the most part, there was a little bit of interest, as in any agricultural community, in terms of foreign sales and exports and that sort of thing.

Q: Particularly in high school, did the Soviet Union raise interest? You’d think in Iowa you had Khrushchev and looking at the corn. There was the agricultural tie as well as the political conflict.

SCOTT: I did a little bit. It certainly got a lot of press in the Iowa papers when Khrushchev came out and visited Roswell Garst’s farm. I remember it more in the context of reading about it in Life magazine and some of the pictorials they would do about the Soviet Union and that sort of thing. We did a fairly basic study of communism in the high school government class. At least for the kids of my generation in high school, it was more a little blip on the radar, and then it would go back to what we would have described as the important things in life.

Q: Let’s talk about high school. What was the high school like?

SCOTT: High school was, I think, probably for Iowa fairly standard for a small community. It offered a pretty good range of courses. At that time, you tended in our high school to begin to split the student body into those who were expected to go on to college and those who weren’t, and a guidance counselor who would sort of track you into college courses or technical or work skill courses. All of the courses, I think, were pretty good.

I look at what my sons are doing in their lives, and my youngest son is now a junior in high school. He was doing in math as an eighth or ninth grader what I was doing as a senior, and thinking we were really being stretched. We weren’t terribly progressive in today’s terms, but received a good basic education. You got algebra and geometry and trigonometry going through the math; biology, chemistry and physics on the science side; Iowa history, U.S. history, world history on the government side; English courses and literature and writing and that sort of thing.

Q: What about the Morning Register, or did you have another paper that you got?

SCOTT: We had three papers: Vinton had and still has a small daily that was basic, maybe a quarter page of state news, a quarter page of national and international news, and the rest of it local, and then the Cedar Rapids Gazette which was an afternoon paper weekdays. We also normally got the Des Moines Register on weekends. Those two obviously had a little more of state impact, the Register more so on national side.

Q: Did the international bug come to you when you were there or not?

SCOTT: Not really there so much as after university. I was in essentially the last generation before the draft lottery. So I graduated, got my draft notice, and joined the army. I was one of the fortunate few to be sent to Germany.

Q: What was social life like at the high school?

SCOTT: By today's standards probably pretty boring. We had high school dances most Friday nights after home football games and basketball games. The problem, of course, was choice. You went to the movies in Vinton. You'd get a driver's license and pony up four or five hundred dollars to get an automobile. At that point, life opened up. We could then go down to Cedar Rapids where there were five or six movie theaters, and there was a big choice. Wow! That was really the big city! A couple of shopping malls and life changed, but it was that sort of thing. We didn't really have dance clubs, we were too young for night clubs and that sort of thing, and there weren't that many anyway. It was high school dances and movies and go out for ice cream.

Q: Did you go out as a group, where guys go steady with girls?

SCOTT: Actually a little of both. There was always a group of guys who congregated and as you started dating a girl, you'd separate from the group for a while. As not infrequently happens, the romance cooled off, you'd cycle back into the group. And with the girls it was kind of the same way.

Q: You graduated from high school when?

SCOTT: '65.

Q: Vietnam was really beginning to pick up.

SCOTT: Right.

Q: What were you pointed to? What were you, wither John Scott at that point in time?

SCOTT: When I went to the University of Iowa, my intent graduating from high school was to be a teacher. I had been thinking more in the context of the sciences, because I tended to do pretty well in math and chemistry and physics. The first year at Iowa was, of course, then even more than now, essentially the core courses. You got a smattering of

everything. As a sophomore you started moving into things that were your major. I started taking a couple of political science courses and history courses. That really shifted my point of view.

I was still thinking in terms of eventually teaching, but at that point was shifting to history and government and, in fact, I had a double major in history and government. At that time my thought was probably to go to graduate school afterwards, get into teaching and settle into a nice school system in Iowa somewhere and teach.

Q: Talk about the campus, the spirit and students and all, the University of Iowa when you went there..

SCOTT: Vietnam really had a profound impact. When I first got there in '65, '66 it was a fairly conservative campus, at least by modern standards. Although a number of farm kids went there, more of them probably went to Ames, where the focus was more on Iowa State agriculture than at Iowa City. Vietnam really began to churn on campus as it did most places, and you could feel the place getting more and more politically charged. We had our own demonstrations and took over the administration building and that sort of thing as time went on. It was a really noticeable, quick evolution from a fairly quiet, fairly staid, fairly conservative campus to a much more active one.

Q: Somehow demonstrations at the University of Iowa strike me as almost an oxymoron!

SCOTT: Yes! You never would have thought it in '65, '66. This was still the era of "in loco parentis" so there certainly was no such thing as co-ed dorms, that sort of thing. In fact, the men's dorms were on the west side of the Iowa River and the ladies dorms were on the east side of the Iowa River, and it was absolutely intentional that they did it that way! It really did begin to churn things up.

Q: Where did you fit in?

SCOTT: I started out on the conservative side and gravitated to a more liberal and cushy approach, which generally recalls another thing that one of our professors said, that at the time I did not believe, and I later concluded that he was just dead on. His name was Robert Johnson, and he taught an American government course. I was sitting in one of the large lecture halls one day, and he took a raised hand poll, "How many of you see yourselves as conservative? How many of you see yourselves as liberal? How many of you see your parents as conservative? How many of you see your parents as liberal?" He said, "All of you who said your parents are conservative, you guys are liberal. Twenty years from now, you're going to be where your parents are." All of us thought, "What nonsense!" Twenty years later, right on the mark! That's a smart guy!

As I say, you could sort of feel the whole campus shift that way. Part of it I think was a lot of us knew that after we graduated, we were in the draft. That was not something anyone was particularly looking forward to. That kind of began to generate more interest on the foreign affairs side, for me, anyway.

Q: Was there a ROTC there?

SCOTT: There was a ROTC there. As I recall there was never a call to close it down. That's going a little too far for Iowans.

Q: Looking back on it, how did you feel at the time about the politics of Asia? Were you getting much on that?

SCOTT: Not really, other than what you picked up or read in the paper. This was mostly at this point the university student paper. There was a clear slant there. You'd get a little bit of it in a few courses, but not an awful lot. As I look back on it now, I'd would have to describe probably myself and most of my colleagues as folks who thought they knew an awful lot more about what they were talking about than they really did. We probably would describe ourselves as a mile wide and an inch deep.

Q: This, of course, is still true today. Did you notice or were you aware of the phenomena of young people, a certain group, a rather small group, sort of testing themselves out as leaders, political leaders, being quite radical but basically they're trying their wings out?

SCOTT: Yes. That was certainly true. You saw it a little on both sides, both on the radical side and the conservative groups as well that were sort of pushing themselves to the fore. By Big Ten standards, Iowa is one of the smaller universities. By eastern standards, it's huge. Probably 25, 30,000 students, which by eastern standards is a big university, but compared to Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio, was on the smaller end of the scale.

Q: 1100 is small.

SCOTT: My middle son went to Tufts, 4600. He was a little dumfounded when I told him there were more people in my graduating class than that. My sense would be as a student leader it's tough to establish yourself as a leader in a pond that size, but it's easier to try it because you can move up and slide back without an awful lot of pain or penalty.

Q: Was there a fraternity system there?

SCOTT: There was a fraternity system there, still is, fairly strong, fairly powerful. I did not gravitate that way. At that point I was still a farm kid, and I saw that as a little more elitist than I was comfortable doing.

Q: Did you identify as a farm kid and in a way were you a little bit outside sort of the major intellectual course of the professors?

SCOTT: A little bit, yes. I told my kids at one point that university for me was a real awakening. Going through high school I was on cruise control. I was a real smart kid; I knew I was a real smart kid. I didn't have to work very hard, and the A's flowed

regularly. Then I got down to Iowa City and thought, “Boy, there’s a lot of really smart people here!” Not only that, a lot of them know how to work hard, and I better figure it out.

Q: You say you were taking government and history. What sort of government and history did you find yourself taking and concentrating on?

SCOTT: Mostly American government. History tended to be world history, and a lot of it was medieval history. That was purely because of just a truly extraordinary professor, a guy named Donald Sutherland who started at Iowa about the same time I did. I think I took my first course from him, and there were probably 20 students in the course. When I took my last course from him as an undergraduate he filled a lecture hall and taught what probably most people would argue was a really dry subject. I can remember to this day he would come in with a pile of books, put the books down on the table, step to the front of the table, and start talking. Fifty minutes later, he finished a lecture that was almost story-telling in its intensity, never touched a book, never looked at a note, never did anything but just had rapt attention, and really made that period of history come alive for me.

Q: Were you able to get to Europe at all?

SCOTT: No, not until I got drafted.

Q: Did this arouse a thirst to go out and see the cathedrals, places they were talking about?

SCOTT: A little bit. More of what it aroused was the idea of okay, how did what was happening here generate what happened later in Europe and then generate what happened later in the U.S. It was seeing the beginning of nodes and streams that carried their way through history. When I did finally get to Europe, we did get around and look at those things, because it was an opportunity to see some of those places firsthand.

Q: Were you running up against students from foreign countries or children who maybe came from refugee communities, people who were other than Iowa farm kids?

SCOTT: A little bit. Not as much as you would probably expect at some universities, though. Iowa tended to be mostly Midwestern, a Midwestern student body. There were some Asian students, some African students, not a lot of students from what were then Warsaw Pact countries. Probably some people were put off by the winter. Iowa in the winter is not a fun place. It’s a big campus, and you might have a 10 minute walk in 10 below weather to get from one class to another. It tended to be hearty stock that went there and stayed there. A little bit there was a beginning of cultural awareness.

Q: When I think of Iowa, obviously one thinks of the Iowa School of Writing. How about your writing skills, which in the foreign service become very important. How did you find this?

SCOTT: I think it certainly produced it because, with the exception of some of the statistics courses that I took later on as part of the education degree, virtually all of the Iowa exams were written in the wonderful blue book where you sit down and write like crazy for 45 minutes to an hour. It was certainly at a time that professors didn't have any compunction at all about giving somebody a C if they didn't produce a good piece of work. It forced you a little bit to think on your feet, organize your thoughts, get it down, and then put it down in a way that was not just stream of consciousness, but had some order to it.

The early core courses in English and rhetoric really drove it home to you as a freshman that you better learn to do this. As you got into the meat of the courses, almost all of the courses that I took, the exams were essay exams, so you needed to develop your writing skills. I think I had pretty good teachers who insisted on that in high school, too, so I came I think with a pretty good background.

Q: '69 was when you graduated?

SCOTT: Right.

Q: You moved up to that first place, you had two things, in general wither John Scott and a career but also the draft. What was happening as you approached this?

SCOTT: Most of my contemporaries, myself included, were pretty sure that we were going to be drafted. We were all sort of -- how do you put it? -- healthy, red-blooded farm boys with no obvious or even unobvious physical ailments, so you were draft material. At that point it was pretty clear as you graduated from university. If you didn't have a spouse and child, you were a prime candidate. I was pretty much resigned to it. Within a couple of days of getting my degree, I got my draft letter for reporting later in the fall. Prediction proved reality or vice versa.

I guess the one other thing that was really formative before then, of course, were the events of '68. Most of us on campus really recognized that we had seen the scene change in a bad way in '68.

Q: You are talking about the Democratic Convention in Chicago?

SCOTT: Even before that with Martin Luther King's assassination, the Kennedy assassination, and then George Wallace being shot in Maryland.

Q: Robert Kennedy.

SCOTT: Yes, in California. You could almost feel life go out of the liberal radical movement in Iowa. When the convention turned to Hubert Humphrey, instead of Gene McCarthy, I can remember a bunch of us sitting watching the events in Chicago and just being horror struck. McCarthy, who we thought was sort of more akin to what Kennedy

had been moving toward than Humphrey, and almost a sense of, “Geez, this country’s just going crazy!”

As I look back on it now, I think I’d have to say I don’t think we really had as big a sense of how major that sea change was, but we certainly saw it. You sort of went from a crescendo moving upward in early ’68 to moving downward, so by the time we got to the spring of ’69 and the draft, what was going to happen?

Q: In the fall of 1969 you took the queen’s shilling.

SCOTT: The queen’s shilling. Got drafted, went to basic training in Louisiana, artillery training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and then off to Germany. That was an interesting experience, because Germany at the time was, at least in terms of equipment and support, kind of getting the dregs, and rightfully so. The combat folks needed the equipment and that sort of thing. At any given time probably 20% of our equipment was inoperable due to the need of spare parts. You could walk from one end of the barracks and come out the other end high just from folks doing marijuana and other drugs in the barracks. Morale was pretty gloomy.

The one time that morale always picked up was the couple weeks or the month or so that we’d go in the field twice a year. Then you were actually were going what you were being paid to do. You didn’t have to muck around with the paperwork and the silliness. You were getting dirty and getting muddy and getting wet. Looking back on it, it was kind of fun!

Q: What part of artillery, what were you doing?

SCOTT: I was trained as a basic artillery mechanic. When I got to Germany they looked at my test scores and put me in fire direction control (FDC), so we were in a relatively warm and dry truck computing firing data for the guns. If you’ve got to be in the artillery, that’s the place to be. If you’re a forward observer, you’re out on the front lines, cold, wet, and exposed. If you’re on the guns you’re cold, wet, exposed and carrying around really heavy ammunitions with broken eardrums, but FDC you’re back 100 meters or so from the guns and relatively warm and dry.

Q: Did you get a feel for other Americans, the enlisted men. I spent four years as an enlisted man myself.

SCOTT: I did, and it underscores something one of my foreign service colleagues said later in life. In Washington sometimes we tend to think this is the cultural average in the United States, and you’re probably dealing with people who are at the higher end of the IQ scale. If the mean is 100, there are people out there in the boondocks who are less than that. As an enlisted army draftee, you see that fast. Folks who are every bit as dedicated as you, every bit in many ways serious about succeeding and wanting to do a good job, but at the same time folks who it was clear that the army method of teaching where,

“We’ll tell you what we’re going to teach you, we’ll teach it to you, and we’ll tell you what we taught you,” was really needed to reach most of the people.

The other thing that I was sort of dumbfounded about in Germany was how many people in our battalion, and I think how many people across the board in Germany religiously saved up every one of their 30 days of leave so they could get on an airplane and go back to the States midway through the tour. My colleagues and I, I was married at that time, looked at this as, “Uncle Sam has given you a free trip to Europe. You may never have another chance to get here and you’re probably not going to have a chance to do it on somebody else’s ticket, so use the time to travel in Europe.” You’d get a three day pass and go to Strasbourg or Cologne or Paris.

Q: Where were you assigned?

SCOTT: In a little town called Gelnhausen between Frankfurt and the Fulda Gap. We learned the train system. Mass transit’s a wonderful thing. Jump on a local train to Frankfurt; jump on a train from Frankfurt to pretty much anywhere. You’d be there in two or three hours and enjoy yourself. A couple guys threw in and bought a car, so some of us would take the car every now and then, but we really used the leave time that we had to travel in Europe.

Q: You said you were married.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: Tell me a little about your wife and where she came from and how you met.

SCOTT: My first wife passed away a number of years ago, but she was also a farm girl from Iowa. We met at a high school dance and married when she graduated from high school. That was when I guess I was a junior at university. We had the common farm community upbringing in that respect. She joined me in Germany once we got through basic training and the advanced training and got settled in a little bit. We rented a place, lived off post, and traveled around a lot. So I didn’t have an awful lot of experience then with barracks life which was just as well. [laughter]

We both enjoyed traveling around. She worked in the base library when I was there. We tended to save most of our money, didn’t hit town or the clubs and drink it up the way some folks did. It was, for early enlisted army life, a pretty comfortable existence.

Q: You mentioned you’re in Gelnhausen near the Fulda Gap. What was the feeling? One, was the feeling the Soviets might make a move, and two, if they did what would happen?

SCOTT: I wouldn’t say that there was most of the time any great concern that the Soviets were going to make a move. The concern that we had was knowing how poor our overall condition was and assuming -- falsely as it turned out -- that they were better off than we were. We kind of thought, “Man, we’re going to be the doorstep for Russians on the way

to Paris and not a very big doorstep at that.” As I said, when we went to the field we tended to perform pretty well. We did well on our proficiency tests, but still, on any given day you could go down to the motor pool in the afternoon for maintenance, and the part you had on order six months ago, you’re still waiting for it, you knew you were in a potentially, at least, risky spot.

As it turned out, of course, the Russians were no better off than we were. What worry there was was probably not worth worrying about. The sense was that if the balloon did go up, we were in serious trouble.

Q: Did you have any much contact with German citizens?

SCOTT: Yes, we did. We lived with a German family. They had a small basement apartment, and we rented that from them, so we interacted with them fairly regularly. They were fairly liberal and fairly critical of the U.S. in Vietnam. I found myself as often as not engaging them in relatively spirited debate given that I had no German and their English was not really great but I would sometimes surprise myself that we could. My willingness to defend the country’s policy was not necessarily where I was personally politically at right there, but I felt that given my position as a soldier and, as you say, taking the Queen’s shilling that that was part of the obligation.

Q: Of course, that’s what we had at the time in our profession. Were you getting any guys coming back who had served in Vietnam, regular army and all that?

SCOTT: We did have a few, yes, who generally found life in Germany frightfully frustrating because the army bureaucracy was at the high end in Germany, and trying to figure how to get the mission done first approach was, for Vietnam hands, kind of on the low end of the scale. I think for a lot of those guys there was a fair amount of frustration.

Q: As soon as you get away with something... I spent a lot of my time in Germany, Japan, and Korea. I graduated from college, and here I was an enlisted man. I came back after four years with quite a bit of respect for the top echelon of the non-commissioned officers, the top sergeants. It stuck with me the rest of the time to realize who runs these organizations, not necessary military, but you have these people who really knew their stuff, and they’re the ones who really hold it together.

SCOTT: Sure. Yes. Very much so. Certainly in Germany those were the guys with the bulk of the experience, far more time in uniform than even anyone below the rank of major, and they really knew their stuff. It tended to be passed on down the line. When I was promoted E-5, the top sergeant kind of took the new group of us under his wing and laid out what we had sort of seen up till then, “You guys are running this operation. The officers are the ones whose heads are on the block if something goes wrong, but they’re depending on you to make it work.”

I remember when we got a brand new, just out of West Point second lieutenant as our new fire direction officer, he had me come into his office, and we talked a little bit, and

he said, "What can I do around the FDC?" I said, "Sir, let me be absolutely honest with you. This is a good group. If you just stand back and let us do our job, we'll make you look good." He was a smart guy. He stood back and let us do our job, and we did. I had the sense that most of the people, even in the unit in Germany, the NCO's felt that way, that they bore the brunt of the load and carried it with a great deal of pride and responsibility.

Q: How did you deal with the guys who sat around puffing marijuana? This is about the time when there's an awful amount of ... In Vietnam you had the fragging of officers and all that. Was there a group that was full of disrespect and sullenness?

SCOTT: We were fairly fortunate. We didn't really have much of that. I would describe it as more of "who cares", so that there was always a certain challenge in generating a fair amount of enthusiasm, and we would try different tricks. I had one guy in the unit who absolutely refused to cut his hair. He just wouldn't do it. I finally suggested to the first sergeant, "I think we ought to take the unit up for a little bit of chemical warfare training. We'll all put our masks on and walk into the gas chamber." Of course, if you have long, unruly hair, it leaks through, and he suffered. I didn't have any more trouble with haircuts! I could have beaten my head against the wall trying to get him to do that, but in that particular instance was able to find a way where he recognized that it was in his best interests to do it, and that worked.

Q: Did you find yourself more aware of what's going on in the world, use the Stars and Stripes, armed forces radio and stuff? Did you find yourself beginning to get the international bug?

SCOTT: I really did, and that really was where it started, and some of it was just as you say. Stars and Stripes covers it as a matter of course. They may not do it as well as a front line newspaper does it, but you cannot help but learn about foreign affairs if you read Stars and Stripes. It's impossible to miss it. The other thing is it brings home to you the idea that this has some personal impact for you.

I was in Germany from early '70 to mid-'71 and at one point during that time, of course, the sort of "phony war" started spinning up in the Middle East with the Israelis and Egyptians exchanging artillery fire, shooting down one another's airplanes. We were reading that and thinking, "If the army, if the U.S., needs to send somebody to the Middle East, it's probably going to be us." There's nothing quite like getting your attention focused on international issues as your realizing that this isn't something that's just happening off in the sweet by-and-by. There's a potential, at least, that it could come to you in a very real way. That began to generate a little bit more interest. I've often told folks that I mark my real interest in foreign affairs, and foreign affairs careers, as really generating in the army in Germany.

Q: Did you ever get to the consulate general in Frankfurt?

SCOTT: I never did. That was sort of a different world at that point. Our world was green rather than striped trousers. What it did start me doing was thinking, "This might be a fun career. I ought to look at something that would enable me to something like this. Spend time overseas, get interested in foreign issues and that sort of thing.

Q: What were you thinking about as you were getting... What were you getting, two years?

SCOTT: Two years. I had applied by then to graduate school again, at the University of Iowa and had been accepted, so I knew I was going back to graduate school. At that point I was still thinking in terms of a teaching career, so I had applied in the master of arts and education program and been accepted, so I was on that track and went back and did, in fact, complete that degree. When I did get back I started taking more international affairs courses and signed up to take the foreign service exam.

Q: How did you run across the foreign service exam?

SCOTT: A colleague of mine who was a teaching assistant named David Fultenhauer had taken the foreign service test, and he and I talked in class every now and then. He suggested, "If you're interested in doing this, why don't you take it and see how you do?" So I signed up and took it. This is a triumph of ignorance over reality because going in I think it is fair to say that I had no concept of how challenging that test would be. For me it was, in my perception, just another exam that might lead to an interesting career. I came in, I sat down, took the test, and walked out. I said to my kids on a couple of occasions, I walked out thinking that this was the first exam I really wasn't sure I passed. That was for me a real eye opening experience. Sitting for the foreign service written test was the first time I walked out thinking, "Boy, there were just a lot of questions."

Q: That was...

SCOTT: That was 19... I guess it must have been '71. And wow!

Q: So what happened?

SCOTT: I passed! I got the notification that I had passed and then scheduled an oral interview. I was pleasantly shocked.

Q: Let's go back to the educational side and coming into the foreign service. How did you find getting a master's in education because there's been a lot of disparagement about training teachers. I'm wondering how you found it at Iowa.

SCOTT: I enjoyed it. One of the things they do in the Iowa program -- at least did in the Iowa program, I don't know if they do anymore -- is they throw you into teaching fast. You spend maybe the first semester in some basic courses, stats courses, and those sorts of things. Then your second semester is one-third classroom and two-thirds teaching. The nice thing about that is it gives you a sense of, "Is this something you want to do as a

living,” fairly quickly. We had a couple of folks who decided after that part of the experience that they just didn’t want to do it. They put us into a regular high school in Iowa City. It wasn’t the university school, but one of the regular Iowa City schools, so you were dealing with a standard student body, rather than kids of professors who supposedly value education.

You really got exposed to the... How do I make a class of 30 kids interested in something, when they’d much rather be outside on a lovely Iowa spring day? Sitting down and doing lesson plans, and putting the lesson plan into practice and getting critiques by your fellow students and by your professors and by the teacher whose class you were teaching. They brought you into practical teaching fairly fast. Then you had another semester of classroom, and then your last semester was purely student teaching. In my case I was in a high school in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Q: What were you working on, a particular course or area of studies?

SCOTT: I was pursuing the history degree, but I took a number of international affairs seminars as well. As an aside, one of the things that I used to think back on after five years in the foreign service was, “Sure wish I knew then what I know now because I think I’d have some more valuable things to contribute to the seminar, not the least of which was many of the monographs that we read, which sort of assumed that all policy-maker decisions were made in the cold light of rational thought and after careful consideration. I thought to myself, “A lot of what I’m seeing is a lot of people got up on the wrong side of the bed this morning.” Anyway, those were not the major part of the study, because at that point, as I say, I was focused mostly on the education degree but really kept the foreign policy interest alive, and particularly studies of how policies are made or superlatively made or how the writers determine they were made.

Q: Back to the foreign service exam. Did you really know what the foreign service was really about?

SCOTT: I did some reading about the foreign service, so I had a little bit of knowledge. If truth be told, maybe 40% accurate, and the part that was inaccurate was the part you learn once you come in. There’s an awful lot of ground work and stuff you do as a junior officer that is definitely not the glamour end of the foreign service. In that sense I would have to say I was probably more knowledgeable about the things that I would be doing 10 or 12 years into the foreign service than the things I would be doing right away.

Q: You didn’t have too many treaties or negotiations.

SCOTT: Didn’t have too many treaties negotiated. Didn’t have too many extensive conversations with senior level officials!

Q: How did you find the oral exams?

SCOTT: I found the oral exam easier than the written exam and intriguing in some ways because the first question off the mark was...and I can almost quote it for you because it stuck in my mind...was a question on Iowa politics. It basically went, "Iowa has a reputation in the country as a fairly conservative state, but you've got two liberal democratic senators and a fairly liberal republican governor. How can you explain this?" The thing that floored me about that question was that somebody would actually take the time to do homework about Iowa politics. I didn't find it especially hard to answer it, but it threw me for a little bit of a loop. Somebody had done the homework, familiarized themselves with Iowa politics and hit me with that right off the mark.

Q: You were taking this exam. You were taking it when?

SCOTT: I took it in '73.

Q: This is an older exam which unfortunately went -- people would tailor -- I used to give that exam around '75 and '76. We would look at somebody and then we would sort of say, "What would be a good questions to see how much he knows about local things?" Now, of course, as happens, they want to make sure that there's no bias or anything else, so the questions will not get the same response which is unfortunate. They are generic questions, determined by a throw the dice or something like this, but this is to meet the complaints of lawyers. They usually have situational questions. Do you remember any of those?

SCOTT: The one situational question that stuck in my mind was essentially, "Envision yourself at a diplomatic cocktail party, and a foreign diplomat comes up to you and says as far as he's concerned the United States is a cultural wasteland and has contributed nothing to world culture or of benefit to the world. How would you respond to that?" As I say at this point I'm still not too removed from the Iowa farm boy. That was another sort of left field question. What I did was draw upon, among other things, the University of Iowa where they had a fairly well established writers program.

Q: World renowned.

SCOTT: And Hancher Auditorium which at that point was a fairly new world class facility. I said, "You know, we bring a lot of culture in and expose people to it and that sort of thing." I did have to go back to, if you will, local talent to respond to the question. It struck me in the aftermath as a very good question, not only in terms of you may well see something like that. That's a potentially real question. It kind of forced you to think on your feet a little bit and develop an argument and make it on the spur of the moment.

Q: We used to sort of at the same time ask what novel would you to suggest somebody to read. Normally some old Huckleberry Finn who said, "Well, the book talks about slavery and all this." What do you think of that! Some people are just floored with that. They assume Huckleberry Finn, and couldn't have said, "It looks like somebody was fighting slavery or responding to slavery and all," just to see how they can react to it. It wasn't a bad exam.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: I take it you passed.

SCOTT: I did pass.

Q: They told you at the time you passed, didn't they?

SCOTT: Yes. You get the sheath with paperwork you filled out for the security and background checks and all of that. I think the other thing that I found in that exam and in talking to some of my A-100 colleagues afterwards, they got a different impression. I felt that the examiners that tested me really did set out to make me feel fairly comfortable. I did not find it an exam where I felt at a real disadvantage. I had others in my class say, "I walked in and boy, it was..."

Q: I know at least what I was doing, I did it for a year. We were very definitely trying to make sure that people didn't think we were going to play tricks on them and explained there were no dribble glasses or have a cigarette but there's no ashtray, "We want you to be at your ease and see how you do. It's the questions and enough tension as it is, so we're not playing games. Of course, it depends on the personality, too.

When did you come in?

SCOTT: I came in in January of 1974.

Q: Was your wife, having had the German experience, was she all hot and set to go, too, or not?

SCOTT: She was pretty comfortable with it, yes. We came out together, got a place in what was then the Arlington Towers back in the good old days when A-100 was on Kent Street. There are sort of little vignettes in the class that stick out. I think one of the more memorable ones, and memorable in not necessarily a good way, is as we first came in, there was a real camaraderie in the class. That has tended to stick throughout. We still get together sometimes when there are groups of folks around, although not as much now as we used to since most of us have retired. There really was very much a sense of camaraderie, and we've come through a certain crucible for lack of a better term. Two weeks into it -- a week or two into it -- we had the presentation on the then cone system.

Q: Cone being...

SCOTT: The political, economic, admin and consular. You could almost feel little walls go up in the group. A number of us got together afterwards, and one of our criticisms of that presentation was you probably could have had people doing the presentation of the cone system, but not do it in a way that subliminally suggested that one cone or another was superior to the other. From that moment on there was always the political cone, the

econ cone, consular, and admin, where before it had been simply a group of classmates. I don't know how other classes have reacted to that. We probably, I think, maybe didn't worry quite as seriously about it as others, but we were a pretty compatible and camaraderie filled group by and large, but that was one thing that sort of struck me as a change, and others had noticed it, too.

The other thing that was fun, when we got our initial assignments, is we all put a couple of bucks in a pool with the idea that whoever got the worst assignment in the consensus of the class as a whole would get the take. I think in some ways that expressed a little bit of, if you can say such a thing, the personality of the class. We took everything with a grain of salt, and had fun with just about everything.

The winner was a guy and his wife who were assigned to Bangladesh. I came in second because I was assigned to Saigon. I always argued, "If Vietnam's on your number, you're going to get there eventually whether it's in uniform or otherwise!" As it turned out, in a lot of ways Saigon was, at that time anyway, one of the better kept secrets in the foreign service.

Q: We'll talk about that in a minute, but let's talk about the A-100 course. What was the composition like? How did you feel about all of a sudden here you are in a group of people which are quite different from your artillery unit.

SCOTT: Very definitely. This was, by American standards then, a fairly diverse unit probably white Anglo-Saxon males predominated but I think we had four or five women, several African-Americans, a couple of Latin Hispanic-Americans, the beginnings at least of foreign service diversity. A wide range of backgrounds, a wide range of university backgrounds but obviously a group of folks who were uniformly well educated and could speak with a reasonable and fact-point knowledge of foreign policy issues and government issues.

We'd all come out the tail end of Watergate and the Watergate hearings. There was a lot of interest in how Washington worked and how the Hill worked and how the committee system worked and that sort of thing, certainly a sense on my part. We would have conversations in that group that I would never have expected to have back in Iowa. We'd already begun the "inside the beltway" attention track.

Q: What were you getting from Washington that the... Nixon had gone by that time.

SCOTT: No, he was still in, so there was still a lot of...

Q: Were you surprised that these were government people talking about their commander in chief?

SCOTT: There was an element of that. There was an element of... We're still new enough that we're still outraged by the whole process and kind of dumbfounded that the president is still in office and congress hadn't acted and what are people waiting for? So

we still had a lot to learn about the wheels of government and how they turn. At the same time a real fascination with the fact that we were where all of this was going on. If you wanted to drive out and visit the second Potomac overlook where some of the meetings took place, you could jump on the parkway, and two minutes later you were there!

Q: What about Vietnam? How was that playing out in your class at the time?

SCOTT: We really didn't talk much about it. This was, of course, post '73 and we were "out" so to speak, or at least the main military was out, so in some ways Vietnam had shifted to a former issue. The focus was much more Watergate tinged and that sort of thing, and sort of post-China opening and new opportunities in Asia. If Vietnam came into play at that time, I guess it was more what is going to be the impact on the U.S. presence in Asia and how was that going to affect whether countries see us as dependable or cutting and running?

Q: Did you get much about history of American diplomacy or that sort of thing?

SCOTT: Not really, no. It was kind of more, "Here's where you are now, and here's what you need to learn to do your jobs in the future."

Q: Thinking about it, did you think that, given the short time, was it pretty good preparation?

SCOTT: It was pretty good preparation. Obviously there's always going to be and there was an awful lot of on the job training. But I thought it was good preparation, and I think particularly good preparation in some of the things you wouldn't normally think about preparing for: how to think about what to take with you, what sort of benefits there are, how all of this works, how an admin section in an embassy works, the kinds of things you quickly take for granted until somebody sits down with you and says, "You need to know this."

Q: Did you get to meet the secretary of state or upper echelons in the State Department?

SCOTT: No. I think the highest most of us met with was probably country director of the countries to which we were going. I'm trying to think: I think Phil Habib swore us in, but other than that you didn't have the same sort of thing that's happened more recently particularly with John Bolton and Rice.

Q: I assume they asked your preferences of where you wanted to go. Where did you want to go?

SCOTT: They put the question to me in an interesting way. It really colored the rest of my foreign service career. My CDO (career development officer) noted that while just about everybody was going to be getting consular assignments as a first tour, they had an opening at Embassy Saigon for a junior political military officer which would get me straight into the political cone. The up side was you started doing political military work

right away. The down side as he said was you do that in Saigon. I said, "That sounds right." It was a done deal.

Q: You went to Saigon when?

SCOTT: Summer of '74.

Q: You were there for how long?

SCOTT: Till April '75.

Q: I take it that was a pretty crucial date.

SCOTT: It was a crucial date. Tell all and sundry that I'm one of the few foreign service officers who was nowhere near the last helicopter. I left about a week early when they really started drawing the embassy down big time. That particular set of events is one that I fortunately didn't have to live through.

Q: I take it this was not an accompanied tour.

SCOTT: It was. It was an accompanied tour. It was at a time that we were really seeking to make Embassy Saigon as close to being a normal post as you could, so it was accompanied. There were lots of families there. Not a lot of kids because there was not much in the way of schooling, but officers and spouses tended to be the norm rather than the exception.

The embassy had a nice recreation association, a pretty pool, nice restaurant. It was normal embassy living in what amounted to a war zone but bizarre in another way. That is I had to unlearn a certain amount of what I took to be normal in Vietnam when I got to my next post in Tel Aviv a number of years later. It was a very unusual place.

Q: Let's talk about that. Do you have time? Let's talk about out there. What was the situation in South Vietnam when you got out there?

SCOTT: The situation was, within Saigon, you would never know there was a war. The streets were full of traffic, people were going about their daily business, cars, motorcycles, and trucks running up the streets burning gasoline. You looked out the window at obviously draft-aged kids who were obviously not in the military, and you really had to slap yourself a little bit. You get 15 miles outside the city, and there's a war going on!

The primary job that I had was putting together the daily military situation reports, so I spent a fair amount of my time during the morning and early afternoon talking to the folks at the DAO, the defense attaché, both versions. We had a "normal" DAO, the folks that were intel collectors on the embassy compound, and then the broader DAO which was the 50 uniformed military that we were allowed to retain in the country, after the

peace treaty or the basic Paris agreement, that were essentially managing the U.S. contribution to the war. What you quickly saw was things were in a kind of a slow, downhill roll. The NVA would capture a bridge and destroy it, and it would take three or four weeks for the government to get it back and rebuild it. Then the NVA would take it again.

Q: NVA is North Vietnamese Army.

SCOTT: North Vietnamese Army.

Q: In the first place, here we had signed a peace treaty. What was happening out in the field? Was there peace?

SCOTT: No. They were going at it like gangbusters, not overt pitched battles, great skirmishes and that sort of thing, but destruction of infrastructure, blocking roads, cutting off towns, that sort of thing, constant demonstrations that the South Vietnamese government and authorities weren't really in control of the provinces.

A couple of months after I got there, the political counselor asked me to go up to Da Nang in the north for a three week TDY because he was a little concerned that their pol-mil reports weren't quite as crisp as what he was getting out of me, which I was quite flattered by. So I went up there to MR-I ...

Q: Military Region I.

SCOTT: Military Region I. I remember one night we, the Consul General and myself and a couple of others on the staff, went over to the provincial governor's house for dinner, and after dinner went up on the roof for drinks and were sitting there watching a firefight in the foothills about 10 miles outside of town. Tracer rounds were flying back and forth and explosions going on. It's far enough away that you couldn't hear anything. It was one of those, for me, it's not quite déjà vu moments but realization moments that there's actually a war going on here and people are shooting at one another!

When we got back to turn in for the night, because this was in Quang Tri province outside of Da Nang, at our province rep's house in Quang Tri, and all of us checked a weapon out of the arms vault and went to sleep with a weapon at our side. That was a bit an eye opener as well. It didn't seem to be Kansas anymore.

Q: In the first place, let's talk a little bit. Who was your political counselor?

SCOTT: Al Francis was the political counselor. For much of that time, well, Josiah Bennett was the political counselor; Al Francis was the pol-mil chief, but he was acting political counselor for a fair chunk of the time I was in Saigon in the early days, because Joe Bennett was away on home leave. This sort of brings in one area of the embassy that seemed to be normal at the time, but I found, at least in my subsequent assignments, was less so. I always had the sense that there was a real divide between the junior officers and

the working mid-level officers in the rest of the embassy. I think I maybe saw the DCM twice, Wolf Lehman. Graham Martin was ambassador, and I probably saw him once. Joe Bennett maybe three or four times. You just had the sense that there was what we were doing, and there was what they were doing, and the connection tended to be a little tenuous.

Q: Let's talk about the reporting you were getting. We had these consulate generals scattered throughout the area. We had old Vietnam hands brought back for a few months reporting. What were you getting from them? Here you are the new boy on the block. What were you hearing about the situations when you first got there?

SCOTT: I think that there was a tendency to argue that things were working, but the thing that sort of raised a question about that was the idea that if things are working so well, how come the NVA keeps taking these bridges and blocking these roads, and cutting the lines of communication that take the government so long to get back? You kind of had a sense, anyway, at least from the stuff that I was seeing, that more bad was happening than good was happening, and not enough good was happening to counter balance the bad. Certainly until March of '75 you couldn't really put your finger on something and say, "This is the turning point." It was more an impression than anything else.

Q: Did you get any reports, particularly from the hands of the consulates general sort of that the South Vietnamese government army was not responding very well, it was losing heart, or what?

SCOTT: It depended. In the north -- in Da Nang -- the general consensus was the South Vietnamese up there were performing fairly well and the leadership was pretty good. In Military Region II in Nha Trang the reporting tended to focus a little more, at least as I remember it, on charges of corruption and not very good morale. The Delta Military Region IV was much more desperate and much harder for the military to operate there because it's much more rice paddies and that sort of thing. I guess if you had to put your finger on it, you'd probably say that in the Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, and Can Tho military regions, the overall consensus was the South Vietnamese Army wasn't doing very well, but that they were not too bad. The leadership was pretty good in the north, which in some ways in the end game I think made the fall of Da Nang such a blow for both the Vietnamese and for us, because the expectation was that that division would do well, and in the end they didn't.

Q: What was the feeling that you're picking up from people you're working with about Thieu, the president and his leadership?

SCOTT: Not good, but I guess if anything he was more interested in staying in power than necessarily getting the wherewithal to the troops and providing national leadership to people that needed it.

There was one incident, not so much about Thieu, but at a very low level that really struck me. A foreign service friend of mine who had been an AID advisor previously,

before coming into the foreign service, hooked up with his Vietnamese Navy counterpart who had been with him when he was in AID. The three of us went out for drinks one evening and went into a bar, and the Vietnamese proprietor said that my friend and I could stay but the Vietnamese Navy officer would have to go because he only catered to Americans. We turned around and left. What struck me was the idea that this is a guy who is out there putting his life on the line for you people, and you won't serve him a beer. This country is not going to do well.

Q: How did you feel about these reports that you were getting from the provincial reporting officers and also from what was still the CORDS program?

SCOTT: CORDS was finished by then.

Q: Were getting from essentially the CIA people. How would you say the reports were that you were getting?

SCOTT: I think you were beginning to see a bit of a dichotomy, some of the CIA stuff tended to be more realistic. Maybe realistic isn't necessarily the right word, but conveying a more complete picture. Some of the stateside reporting that would come in, for example, would note that the South Vietnamese government had recaptured a bridge, recaptured a choke point, and you'd go back a couple of weeks and you couldn't find any reference in the reporting to when it was lost. Sometimes if you looked at some of the agency reporting, you could see it. You were beginning to get a sense that if it's good news, it will get reported. If it's not good news, maybe not.

Q: Did you have the feeling that people were holding back in the embassy, that the ambassador was setting the tone of, "Let's not report bad news."

SCOTT: Let me split this answer into two things: At the time I didn't really have that sense. As I look back on it, I think that's probably more of the case. If something good happened, we put it into the situation report. We might not necessarily get everything bad that happened. This wasn't a report that was just good. There were downsides as well, but you did have those cases where you would, as I say, look at a report where something good had happened. You had to search a little to find where the down side had occurred in the first place.

Q: What was your wife doing?

SCOTT: At that time she was not working, she mostly stayed at home and had several friends among other junior officers in the area, but she would be able to go downtown and do some shopping or take some tours or that sort of thing. It's sort of hard to over-emphasize the fact that in a lot of ways Saigon was a pretty normal post.

Q: When did things start to unravel?

SCOTT: Sort of in two stages. In early '75 there was a fairly extensive winter campaign, I think in late January, early February up in Military Region III near the Cambodian border, where the South Vietnamese force really got solidly rapped. Then things quieted down until things started up in earnest in early March. That March and April was just one bad series of events after another. I've always been sort of interested by a piece where the North Vietnamese commander General Giap said that in fact when he began the March offensive in '75, the intention was really kind of a dress rehearsal for a full scale offensive in 1976. As they started to push and the South Vietnamese began to fall apart, he essentially decided to go for it a year early.

Q: What were you doing? Were you reporting on this disintegration and all?

SCOTT: Yes, I was writing situation reports like crazy. It was at that point for a couple of us in the political section and in the agency, and at my level chief among them, we were really thinking, by the time we got toward the end of March, that they're not going to come back from this. The North Vietnamese seemed to be on a roll. There just didn't seem to be any mood that the South Vietnamese senior leadership that was going to bring it back around.

On that, I think the embassy and Washington probably, I shouldn't say I think, I know, they really waited a little too long to basically start pulling the plug on getting dependents out, giving people a chance to pack up and clear out. I think the reason presumably was not to create even more of a morale crisis in the South but, as I say, for several of us, getting toward the end of March, we just didn't see any way that this was going to come back.

Q: On the personal level, what were you and your wife doing? Were you getting ready to move?

SCOTT: We were. We had begun the process of adopting a Vietnamese child who is now 34 and married and doing well in the area. That process was underway, and she was working fairly closely with the orphanage where John was at the time. They were getting started on Operation Babylift. A couple of days before Carol and John were scheduled to fly out was the C-5 crash.

Q: A horrible crash, just devastating.

SCOTT: It was just devastating. At least among my friends, it's hard to overestimate the moral implications of that at the embassy and the hardships.

Q: You might explain what this was.

SCOTT: We were flying a lot of military equipment on C-141s and C-5's from Asia into Vietnam, trying to bolster the South Vietnamese forces. Instead of those planes flying out empty, we were beginning an evacuation of personnel, particularly Vietnamese orphans

and in a few cases Vietnamese families and various orphanages in the greater Saigon area, so we had kids that were flying out.

The C-5 incident, which I think was around April 4 or 5, '75, was a C-5 had delivered a load of military equipment, and was flying out with several hundred Vietnamese orphans and a few of their American escorts. It experienced problems with the rear gate after takeoff, the gate came away and damaged the hydraulics. The plane turned around and tried to make it back to Bien Hoa airport and crashed short of the runway killing everyone on board. There was a sense that went through the embassy that we just can't do anything right. Nothing. You even try to do something humanitarian, it's going against you.

The Babylift resumed after a couple of days. Carol and the orphanage that she'd been working with, including our son John, flew out on that. For all of us it created a real sense of trepidation, the realization that these things can go wrong even if they're done with the best of motives.

Q: When you left, was this saying, "Okay, we've got to get the hell out of this place." Was the understanding that this was basically the end of the game?

SCOTT: By the time I left, yes. Da Nang had already fallen, we brought the mission back from there. I think Nha Trang had fallen as well. The evacuation of Da Nang sticks in my mind in the context of a foreign service officer friend of mine named Charles Currier who was down at the dock managing the loading of an LST that was bringing refugees and folks back from Da Nang. The fall of the city was imminent at that point. He's coping with large numbers of the First RVN division which had been routed on the battlefield and was fleeing the city, coming down armed to the teeth. Charlie was at the gangway basically telling these guys, "You're not getting on that boat with a firearm." At any time, any one of them could have shot Charlie, and that would have been the end of that. Through what I think was just tremendous courage and force of will, he kept order in that evacuation. It may well be that, as time goes on, it has expanded in significance in my memory, but at the time I remember thinking, "What an incredibly courageous thing to do." It worked, and a lot of people got out of Da Nang.

I left a week before the final evacuation on one of the last commercial flights out of Tan Son Nhut Air Base. I went back to the Philippines for a few days and helped out on the visa line and then went back to the States on leave to await a new assignment.

Q: Okay, we will pick this up. We'll talk a little about your time when you got to the Philippines and what you did the next time. I'll put on this where we were and then move on. This would be April of '75. Great!

SCOTT: All right!

Q: OK, today is the 25th of June 2008. This interview is with John Scott. John, you left Vietnam as I recall by plane in a rather dignified way.

SCOTT: It was a somewhat more dignified fashion, yes.

Q: That was when, April '75?

SCOTT: That was about a week before the last evacuation, so about three weeks into April.

Q: By that time, I was just wondering, in leaving had they figured out what the problem was with the C-5, and were you worried about being shot down or anything like that, or not?

SCOTT: I don't recall if they had figured out the exact problem, but I think by that time they were pretty sure it was an accident and not the result of hostile ground fire. In fact, I had a sense that the North Vietnamese approach was sort of, "Don't do anything to get the Americans upset."

Q: This is what I recall. I might add that as a parenthetical note as we are talking today in 2008, that the Vietnamese prime minister is visiting.

SCOTT: That's right!

Q: I think a second visit of a now Vietnamese overall prime minister. April 1975. Where did you go?

SCOTT: Initially to the Philippines for a couple of days, and I think that was generally consistent with evacuation procedures at that point, which would essentially get us out of Vietnam into a safe haven. Since the American presence in Saigon was fairly big and certainly since the unofficial presence in Saigon was just gigantic, or in Vietnam was just gigantic, it probably didn't make sense to do it any other way than to stage people and get them out, but let them decompress a little, figure out what your next onward transit to the States was, and reassignments and that sort of thing. I spent, I guess, probably three or four days in the Philippines.

Q: What was the mood of you and your colleagues there?

SCOTT: The general mood was kind of, "What's going to happen now? Are we really going to see the domino theory kick into place?" Cambodia was gone, Laos was in Communist hands. Saigon was about to fall. Were the rest of the dominos going to topple over?

Q: Which would be Indonesia...

SCOTT: Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, Malaysia and down. I think in terms of strategic view, that was one. The other one was, "What's this going to do for U.S. credibility in East Asia?" We have mutual security treaties with the Philippines, with South Korea. We

have a sort of one-way security treaty with Japan and then the Australia-New Zealand-U.S. pact. Another thing I think a lot of us were thinking about was, "What are the rest of our allies going to think about this fairly ignominious departure?" This was before the photos of the helicopters and pushing people away and that sort of thing. Those concerns, even though they turned out not to have any basis, for most of us were very real.

Q: How did you find your reception there? Was anybody from the embassy coming and saying, "Here's what we're going to do."

SCOTT: Yes. That part was pretty well squared away. I happened to be very fortunate because an A-100 classmate of mine and his wife had been assigned to Manila. They volunteered to put me up.

Q: Who were they?

SCOTT: This was Doug Ellis and his wife Mai Chen. I stayed with Doug and his wife for the time I was there, so for me it was a particularly easy departure. My first wife Carol, who had left a couple of weeks before, had gone out on a military orphan lift flight. Their first stop was Clark Air Force Base, and then on to Hawaii and to San Francisco. She reported that the reception and the preparation for the orphan lift flights was really spectacular. The Air Force, both the uniformed folks and civilians and dependents at Clark Air Force Base, let out all the stops, had things well arranged to meet the flights, get the little kids and babies and so forth taken care of, and it was the same way with the folks at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii and San Francisco.

Q: How old was your son?

SCOTT: He was nine months old. He was little more than a babe in arms at that point. The interesting thing I recall from that was as you got further and further away from East Asia, the tendency was to have kind of more and more American style food for the kids. At Clark it was very much the sort of things that Asian children and infants would eat, for the younger ones either a coconut milk, rice pudding and rice and that sort of thing.

As you went further away from East Asia and closer to the continental U.S., you tended to get richer food and whole milk instead of soy. For some of the little kids, whose diet was not necessarily yet geared up to western cuisine, the incidence of tummy upset tended to be on the rise as you got closer to the States. The overall impression and the overall report from a lot of the people who manned the orphan lift flight was that the care and concern and natural looking out for folks was of a very high order.

Q: Did you go pretty much directly to Washington from Manila?

SCOTT: From Manila we went back to Iowa for several weeks of leave. The department's approach there was both sensible and necessity driven; sensible in the sense that there were an awful lot of people who could use a little bit of time to decompress before getting back into harness, and second you had an awful lot of people who you

needed to figure out where they were going to be assigned. That process was time consuming as well.

Q: What kind of reception did you get in Iowa?

SCOTT: Very interesting. From family and friends, of course, a big welcome home, and particularly since for relatives it was a new addition to the family. A lot of interest from the press communities as well. The local Cedar Rapids paper was interested in interviewing me and came out and did an interview. My home town Vinton paper came out and did an interview. There was lots of interest in what was going on, lots of interest about impressions and that sort of thing.

One set of questions that was interesting for me, as it has remained interesting to this day, was geared to the fact that a number of churches and service organizations in Iowa and around the rest of the world were sponsoring Vietnamese families that had come out of Vietnam. One of the questions or a variant was, "Are these folks going to be drains on the welfare system and that sort of thing?" The response that I gave, and it was put in the paper, was my experience had been that the Vietnamese were a very hard working and industrious people. It may take them a little bit of time to get on their feet here, but I don't think there's going to be much of a problem with Vietnamese families clogging the welfare rolls in Iowa, and that within a few years you're going to see people settling down and buying businesses. That tended to be pretty much what happened.

Q: You get back to Washington. In the first place, what had this done to you and your wife, coming back? Coming back from a wartime experience, and all of a sudden being in the heart of Iowa or hell, anywhere! I've had this happen coming out of Korea back in '53 or so. It's kind of a shock, business as usual. How did you find this?

SCOTT: It was a bit of a shock, business as usual. Part of it was mitigated by the fact that I got back just in time to be watching some of the TV scenes from the last couple of days, so it's still vividly in people's minds. In one sense, the transition was not quite as jarring as you might expect because there was a lot of attention on it, and you couldn't turn the TV on without seeing something. Iowans tend to be a fairly well grounded group of folks. The overall impression I had was, "Welcome back," safe and secure and family and environment and go on family picnics and go around and see people. There was a great deal of support and ease working back into the States.

Q: You came back to Washington. What happened?

SCOTT: That was pretty much business as usual. I was quite fortunate. Personnel was able to find a spot for me in the office of political military affairs. I think I was a little more junior than they might have been looking for. The work was very interesting and, in fact, they had me working the East Asia pol-mil portfolio, so I could pick up on at least some of what I had begun to learn in Vietnam. It overall was a pretty good introduction to the Washington bureaucracy.

In all, for everything that that means, not only in terms of being in a job that's in many ways more similar to an office environment than you would have overseas, but also with the additional bureaucracy of getting things cleared and how much longer it took to get a cable out or get a piece of paper cleared and sent forward, that sort of thing.

Q: How long were you in Washington?

SCOTT: All told I was back in Washington for six years. I did two years in the political military bureau and then did a two year stint in the State-Defense exchange program and went over and worked first of all for the marine corps for about six months and then about 18 months in the international security affairs East Asia office, and then came back and was the political military officer on the Israel desk for two years.

Q: Let's talk about your first time in political military affairs. What were you up to?

SCOTT: Basically at that time I was largely working on U.S. base-related issues. It covered anywhere from Japan and South Korea down to Taiwan, a lot of work on the Philippines and the Philippine base negotiations, a little bit on the Thailand drawdown, and a fair amount of work on arrangements for navy port-of-calls in Singapore. It was more on the bases and operational side of things than high policy or arms transfers.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting when you got there on the Philippines? The Philippines and Azores are continuing negotiations that absorb us all the time. In those days it was all money.

SCOTT: It was all money, and it was a fascinating thing. For much of that time, we had ongoing either preparations for, or actual negotiations, with the Philippines. I spent a lot of time working with the East Asia bureau, a lot of time working with the folks at the Pentagon, both on the civilian side as well as with the Air Force and with the Navy. I found that in many ways the toughest part of the main negotiations was sorting out the U.S. position internally rather than sitting down with the other side.

Q: The Pentagon lawyers. This always seems to be the major...

SCOTT: We spent far more time there than in the Philippines. I think the basic impression that I had of the Philippines negotiations at that point is when we went out the first time, and I think that was June of '76 June, we went for what was supposed to be a week or two of underbrush clearing negotiations with the Philippine government and Baguio. That stretched out from what started out as a week or two of underbrush clearing talks to about two and a half months. Most of the folks on the U.S. team from Washington hadn't planned on being gone quite that long, but it became fairly clear to a lot of us that from the perspective of the Philippine government, the objective wasn't necessarily a new agreement. The objective seemed to be demonstrating that they were holding the Americans' feet to the fire and getting a better deal for the Philippine government.

Q: Political.

SCOTT: Very much political. I think most of us became fairly comfortable with the idea that fine, if what it takes to operate the bases is being out here for several months and being chastised in negotiating session in the morning and breaking up in working groups in the afternoon, and then putting together a new set of proposed language, only to have it dismissed in the plenary the next morning, well, okay. It wasn't the most expensive way to keep the bases going.

Q: One looks at all sorts of union negotiations, it's almost the last day. It's an all-nighter and everyone comes out with their ties askew and looking haggard, probably an agreement they could have put together a week before. It's part of it. I take it at the time, particularly after the loss of Vietnam, that the idea completely dominating our work there was: the Philippines were absolutely essential. Later on life changed a lot. At this point there was no doubt in our minds that Clark and Subic and the whole area was absolutely essential.

SCOTT: We knew that. The Philippine government knew that. It seemed to me certainly in retrospect, that the Philippine government never really had any intention of holding our feet to the fire to the point where we would say, "This is too expensive to continue." It was always an issue of how much money would be necessary to keep things going, and how much money it would take for us to be able to keep the operational flexibility that we had. That was something that you didn't see. As I recall, we didn't see the Filipinos pushing us much on that. They weren't pushing us to curtail operations or pushing for more control of it.

Q: How about also the reverse, how about with Thailand? The Thais must have been re-looking at their options.

SCOTT: Yes. I didn't spend as much time there looking at internal time motivations, but there seemed to be much more pressure to draw down the presence which had, of course, been huge in the Vietnam War era and its immediate aftermath. It was really a lot of work to draw-down bases, re-categorize, and reshape status of forces agreements. If there was one area where you could say there was an impact from the end of the Vietnam War and how the locals perceived the U.S. presence, or how a country perceived the U.S. presence, Thailand was probably the example.

Q: What did we want out of Thailand? We weren't going to be running army bases.

SCOTT: We weren't going to be running bombing bases, but we still wanted to be able to have throughput, for example, to the Indian Ocean. We were just starting to get Diego Garcia spun up. PACOM -- CINCPAC at that point -- was even then their control for areas of operations which extended all the way to the coast of Africa. One of their concerns was throughput. The more different bases you could have, they were interested in doing that. You didn't need a lot of bomber space area. You didn't need a lot of operational

stuff.

Q: Did you feel that in working on this that you were really concerned with an aggressive Vietnam coming over and taking over more? Were we trying to build up a potential barrier to keep them from doing something?

SCOTT: I think that may have been part of it. The impression that I had though, was the need to demonstrate to friends and allies there that we weren't cutting and running across Asia, that we still were a dependable partner, and we were still going to be there, and we were still going to be a presence in the region. I think that element had a lot to do with it as well.

Q: I served in Korea '76 to '79. I never had the feeling that you had that these base negotiations were such a big deal as you did in the Philippines or Azores. How did you find that?

SCOTT: I found it the same way. Certainly from the Korean perspective as I saw it, their view was: hey, no kidding, a trip wire against the North.

Q: ...35 miles from where I lived. It tends to focus one's mind.

SCOTT: I think to a lesser degree, and certainly when I got to Tokyo, it was my impression that the Japanese view was similar, though some of the things that we did in terms of operations were annoying or downright aggravating, along with the occasional disaster that you have from misbehaving servicemen.

With the exception of the local politicians, who were probably arguing as much for political reasons as anything else, there's never been an awful lot of pressure from the Japanese to hate Americans, close up shop, and go home. The idea that we're a potential bulwark against instability in Northeast Asia is very real for the Japanese. I think the Filipinos looked on it more in the context of, "Nobody's really coming after us," so they could be a little more pushy about getting some money.

Q: You mentioned Taiwan. Did that figure in at all?

SCOTT: Not an awful lot. It was part of my portfolio. I kept an eye on it, but by this time Nixon had long since been to China, the issues there were sorting out, we arrived at the understanding, and so things were fairly copasetic there. The main issue, as always, has been arms sales to Taiwan, and that was outside of my bailiwick. One of the things that I did want to mention, it occurred to me last week and just occurred to me now, was one of the early lessons I learned in Vietnam, that I think served me well in the few weeks before President Nixon stepped down and Vice President Ford took over...

Q: We're talking about Watergate.

SCOTT: We're talking post-Watergate, yes. The Vietnamese foreign ministry asked one of their foreign service officers to do a paper on the likelihood of a coup in the United States. She contacted several of us at the embassy to get our thoughts. We were initially kind of, "Where is this coming from?" After thinking about it a bit, I realized it's coming from where most political analysis always comes from. You try to place your understanding in a context you're familiar with, and that was the context she was familiar with. Governments change with tanks in the streets and one general throwing out another general. It was clear that there were those in the foreign ministry who assumed that's the way it would work in Washington. They were quite surprised to hear us say, "Look. We have a constitution that settles how this is going to be, and that's how it will happen."

Q: It's always interesting to get the view of a relatively new officer in the business. All of a sudden you're dealing with a foreign power called the Pentagon in particular. This was your foreign power. This was the equivalent of the Soviet block for you. How did you find it at this particular point in time?

SCOTT: The clearest impression I had working with the Pentagon was that this was nowhere near the monolithic organization that folks outside the beltway see it as being. International security affairs had one perspective, the Air Force had another perspective, the Navy had a third perspective. On a lot of issues, the three of them were going to work it out. The approach that we had, of course, was to try to encourage or look at or work with whichever of those organizations was closest to where State and the rest of the administration saw foreign policy issues, in the hope of bringing the others along with it.

You might assume that it would always be international security affairs, which has historically been described as the Pentagon's little state department. Every now and then it wasn't. Every now and then you'd find a void, and the Air Force has the folks that are closest to where you want to be, and occasionally the Navy was closest to where you want to be. As I say, it was absolutely crystal clear, as the job got underway, that any impression that the Pentagon was a large monolith, and that's how you were going to have to deal with it, was just not reality.

Q: Did you feel that your superiors on the political military side were pretty adept at bureaucratic fighting?

SCOTT: I had the sense that they were, but I would also note that I would not describe the bureaucratic warfare with warfare in quotes. It was nowhere near as pointed as it has been in the last decade. We all got along with one another. Even in those cases when voices were raised on policy, for the most part you were working with people, you had lunch with them afterwards, you'd get out of the negotiating session, go down and grab a bite to eat. You weren't sitting at different tables and that sort of thing. There was a real sense of community, if you will.

Q: Were you getting the feeling of the Pentagon post-Vietnam trauma?

SCOTT: Yes, a little bit. There was I think a certain sense of, “Boy, what happened?” Some of them answered the question in the context as, “What happened is that the politicians never let us fight the war we wanted to fight.” Others basically looked at it in the context of, “This was really a war for hearts and minds, and we lost the hearts and mind of the American people, and it wasn’t just the politicians.”

We just couldn’t explain to the public adequately what we were doing. I don’t remember at that point a lot of discussions about the need to retool or prepare to fight a different kind of war, a different kind of battle. We were still very much at that point in the be prepared to fight two and a half wars: the European War, the Asia War and then the Vietnam skirmish. At that point that was still the basic guideline.

Q: Did you feel comfortable that you found a home in a political military field?

SCOTT: I did, and partly because I had been doing a fair amount of that work in Saigon, and partly because I think there was still cachet in the uniform services for dealing with a foreign service officer who first of all had military service and had worn a uniform at that point and secondly had been in Vietnam. It’s not band of brothers sort of thing, but it’s, “This guy speaks our language.”

Q: I found that. Tell me, during the six years in total, did you find within the foreign service and your colleagues, was there much intellectual engagement, you know, reading about this or considering where we’re going? Or was this pretty much, “This is my job today, and I’m going to do it.”

SCOTT: It varied. There was an awful lot of focus on today. I don’t think there was as much then as there is now. I’ve described to other folks the last ten years or so of my foreign service career as, “Boy, you feel a little bit like a fireman. You’re constantly putting out a fire and there just isn’t enough time to sit back and study.” Partially, I think because -- and we’re getting ahead of ourselves here -- personnel decisions in the early ‘90s made it much more difficult for the department to put people into long-term training where you really had time to sit down and become an expert.

Q: During this period of tremendous cuts. The foreign service took a heavy beating.

SCOTT: Right. I did find that in that first job, and actually the first two jobs, the pol-mil job and then the time in the state defense exchange program, my work load was such that I really did have time to sit down and look at the NIE and equivalent documents.

Q: National Intelligence Estimate.

SCOTT: National Intelligence Estimate. I read some academic papers or read Foreign Policy and thought about things a little bit. The pace of work in the pol-mil bureau was never arrive at 8:00 and leave at 6:30. You’re constantly doing things. It was a more measured pace. As I was starting to get into the Philippine base agreement, my boss, George Churchill, who was director of the office at the time, said, “Take about a week

and go back and look at past negotiations and records with the Philippines. Go down to the library and learn about this.”

It’s very hard for me to imagine that sort of thing happening in the modern foreign service. It’s, “ordered from now and we’re going forward.”

Q: This is one of the real problems. We’re hoping in a small way to remediate by doing these interviews and then eventually getting them infused into the foreign service bloodstream. I’m not sure how. In time, we will.

We’re talking about ’77 to ’79. You were in this exchange program.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: What was this, and what were you doing?

SCOTT: The job title was Director for the Philippines, and the actual job was Desk Officer for the Philippines in the East Asia portion of International Security Affairs. For me it happily was a job without a steep, substantive learning curve. I just picked up what I had been doing in PM for a couple of years and brought it over to the Pentagon.

The early part of that as I mentioned was as an exchange officer with the Marine Corps. In those six months I was working at Marine Corps Headquarters in their plans division and writing papers for the commandant or his deputies for meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It was normally issues that had to do with foreign policy issues for the Philippines. That was one where I came away with several lasting impressions, that in the end I found useful again in my foreign service career. Given the small size of the Marine Corps, they have just about the smartest group of officers.

Q: This has come out again and again. The layman’s view of the Marine Corps is they point to the hill and say, “Take that.” And they’ll charge up. And it just isn’t so.

SCOTT: I had the impression that the lieutenant colonels and the colonels that I was working for in the plans division, I would have said 80% of them could have stepped into the foreign service and done just fine. They really were well grounded, well educated. I talked with some of them about it, and basically they’re selected for leadership. In a service as small as the Marine Corps you can’t afford not to be going after the best people, because you don’t have a big pool of folks to choose from. I had gone over thinking this shouldn’t be too hard to stand out, and after a couple of weeks there I realized you can learn a lot from these guys!

Q: What were you gathering as you were dealing with the Philippines? Marcos was still in power at this time.

SCOTT: Marcos was in power.

Q: How did we view Marcos, the situation there? They had a perpetual guerilla movement going on. What were we thinking about?

SCOTT: At that point the impression I had, and I think most people had, was that Marcos was the only game in town. There were still a sufficient number of folks around who remembered the pre-martial law era of, "Check your hat and gun at the door." There were still, when you got to Manila, some bars and restaurants with that sign up! It was kind of, "Wow!" At that point we were still mainly of the view: This isn't necessarily a nice guy, but he's brought order to a situation that was pretty lawless. That, of course, went very differently five or six years later. At least at that time there was still a sense... I think a cadre of folks still remembered pre-martial law, and post-martial law on balance seemed better than before.

Q: Did we see any real threat from these various guerilla movements?

SCOTT: At that point no. I think the Moro National Liberation Front was operating in Cebu and the southern island. I think most of us saw that as an annoyance, not a threat to the government. It wasn't going anywhere. It was chewing up some Philippine military units, but it was a local problem.

Q: Did you get any feel for or impression that our military had of the Philippine military?

SCOTT: Nothing particularly good.

Q: How did you find ISA (International Security Affairs)?

SCOTT: I found ISA an interesting place to work. I think at that point this was really when it tended to be the Secretary of Defense's foreign policy arm and now, of course, you have ISP and different organizations there that have taken some of its clout away. But ISA when I was there was, I think, tremendously influential. In many ways something of a rival of the Joint Chiefs for the ear of the SecDef (Secretary of Defense). As often as not, papers would flow up both ways, one from ISA, and one from the JCS and the SecDef desk would get them both to manage. We'd certainly try, whenever we could, to put together a common position, but often we couldn't do it. Even then it wasn't a situation where there was anything that I observed of bureaucratic meanness or in-fighting or nastiness. We had two honest differences of opinion and put it up to the boss to decide.

Q: Was there any real concern about -- you were dealing with the Pacific situation -- a blue water Soviet Navy influence or not?

SCOTT: A little bit, yes. Also, just some beginning sense of some thought about the Chinese as well. One of the things that happened when I was in ISA was Secretary Brown made the first SecDef trip to Beijing. There was beginning to be some focus on the Chinese side of things as well, including some of the skirmishes between the Chinese

and the North Vietnamese along their waters. They had a nice shooting war going on for a while.

Q: There was concern that the Soviets could turn Cam Ranh Bay into a major Soviet base. This would be projecting Soviet forces, and this would be protecting the Soviet Navy which was considerable at the time.

SCOTT: The idea was that if the Russians were successful there they would finally have a year-round warm water port out of which to operate. That was certainly there, and one of the reasons why the Navy wanted to keep things going as well as they could in Subic.

Q: Did you find that with the Pacific as your area that the Navy and the Air Force were predominant as far as... That was their territory.

SCOTT: Yes. That was their turf, except for South Korea. The Army was not a major player in the rest of East Asia.

Q: How about South Korea? How was that viewed?

SCOTT: Interestingly enough, one of my recollections there was in two stages: the before President Carter and the after President Carter, and particularly after President Carter's announcement that we were going to substantially draw down.

Q: And take the Second Division out of there.

SCOTT: Yes, that jolted the daylight out of people.

Q: I was in South Korea at the time. Scared the hell out of us.

SCOTT: It really did. As we were saying earlier, you never had any sense that there was any kind of pressure from the Koreans to draw down and never any sense that there was any sort of pressure from the Japanese to re-wicker it. I think it not only scared us, it scared the South Koreans and the Japanese, too.

Q: This was a political move. This was Carter becoming president post-Vietnam, and we're not going to get involved in a land war in Asia. But when the reality came, there was some moving of ships around, but basically nothing really changed much.

SCOTT: Certainly up to the election, when I was there, it seemed that as far as Korea and Japan were concerned, it was business as usual. Very pleasant. There wasn't a lot of focus on it. The Japan and Korea folks get together every six months or so when we'd have the Security Consultative or SC meetings, but other than that it tended to be fairly stable.

Q: Did you feel you were losing your home contacts with the State Department?

SCOTT: Not really, because there was always so much of a need in the base negotiation contacts to be in touch with the department that I was spending a fair amount of time each week consulting with my Philippine desk counterparts, either by phone or in my office or in their office. I didn't feel like I was completely adrift from the community. A little bit more being adrift in the Marine Corps.

Q: Where was the headquarters for the Marine Corps?

SCOTT: The Navy annex just to the west of the Pentagon.

Q: This takes us to what, '79?

SCOTT: It takes us to '79.

Q: To where?

SCOTT: From there to the Israel desk. This is the first time in the context of the personnel system where networking and who you know gives you an advantage. A former colleague from Saigon was the econ officer on the Israel desk, a guy named Joe McBride. I was starting to think about where I was going to go from ISA, and he said, "Why don't you come over and talk to the Israel folks? They're creating a pol-mil slot, and they would probably like someone who has some experience." I went over and interviewed with the deputy director Charlie Hill, and the next thing I knew I was assigned to Israeli affairs.

Q: This is a little unusual for a second tour officer. I would have thought they'd be saying, "It's time to go overseas again."

SCOTT: Normally you'd have thought they would, but the Israel folks really wanted somebody with pol-mil experience. They didn't apparently have a lot of people who were interested from the NEA bureau. Those that did had pol-mil experience on the Arab side of the fence. At that point, at least, there was always a little bit of nervousness about the Arabic speakers going in and doing a tour in Israel affairs. I think one of the reasons it worked for me and worked for the personnel system was I was interested, they were interested, and they didn't have a lot of candidates.

Q: Isn't that from '79 to...

SCOTT: '81.

Q: What was the Israeli side? What was happening when you went up there?

SCOTT: This was just after the Egypt-Israel peace treaty at Camp David. We were just starting to fold into, "How are we going to fulfill our obligations under the peace treaty?" One of our big obligations under the peace treaty was the construction of two major air bases inside Israel in the Negev to make up for the two major bases that the Israelis

would be giving back to the Egyptians. That was a fantastic learning experience in a variety of contexts. First of all watching how the Army Corps of Engineers works, and contracting two fully functional air bases in three years, where it normally takes eight or nine. That gave me some useful learning.

Q: How did they do it?

SCOTT: They did it by throwing a lot of money at it, and planning and constructing all at once. A lot of contractors too, because they really had to start from ground zero. They took two places in the Negev that were literally barren desert and built air bases out of them. They were constructing, building, and laying foundations for runways and working. They didn't have a, "We'll sit-down and plan it out for a year and a half, two years, then we'll slowly start into construction." It was planning and building and planning and building as you went. The Department's role in that was not large. By this time it had been handed over to the Corps of Engineers and the Army. They had the lion's share of it.

Our responsibility was to make sure it stayed on track and that we were ready to turn them over when they were due, because we didn't want our inability to finish to impact the Egypt-Israeli peace process.

The other thing that occupied a great deal of my attention was the skirmishing with the PLO in Southern Lebanon. That was constant. That was my first exposure to fire department stuff.

Q: I want to go back to the Egyptian side. Were Egyptians going to take over those two bases?

SCOTT: They were going to be demilitarized. In the end what we did with them was turn them in to the operating bases for the Multinational Force & Observers.

Q: The Sinai.

SCOTT: Yes, the successor to the Sinai field mission.

Q: When you were working on this, did you have any dealings with the Israelis?

SCOTT: Not an awful lot other than normal desk officer embassy kinds of things; if anything, probably slightly less for me than for other people on the desk because the Israelis tended to deal with DOD on pol-mil issues, and they tended to operate not so much out of the embassy here but their purchasing mission in New York.

What I did have and which proved valuable later on was a very good working relationship with the Israel folks over in ISA. An Army colonel, Paul Worcester, in particular had not only a superb grasp of how things worked in Israel but was endlessly

willing to share his knowledge and insights with a Foreign Service Officer. That was a real benefit for me.

Q: Did you have a counterpart of a foreign service officer who was dealing with the Egyptian military?

SCOTT: That's a good question, and to tell you the truth, I don't recall.

Q: I think you've probably given me the answer.

SCOTT: It wasn't the same way the Israeli relationship worked. That's certainly true.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Israeli lobby at all at your level?

SCOTT: At my level not too much. Folks would come in and see the director or the deputy every now and then, but they tended not to -- for lack of a better word -- not to bother too much with the rank and file desk officers.

Q: Let's go to Lebanon. What was the status of Lebanon at that time?

SCOTT: The status of Lebanon was a mess at that point. The PLO was operating extensively and relatively freely in the southern portions of Beirut, but really in Lebanon south of the Litani River, and attempting a fair number of terror attacks or short-range rocket attacks into Israel. When it happened the Israelis would bring the Israeli air force up and go pound them

There was one fairly nasty incident where the Israelis and the Syrians got into a shootout and the Israelis, in fact, managed the first shoot down of a MIG-25. That one truly was a fire department day because we were at most levels of the department scrambling and trying to make sure that it didn't go completely off the wall. We spent a lot of time on the situation in that period. There were fairly regular inquiries from Congress as to whether or not the Israelis were in violation of their agreements with us in terms of using U.S. military equipment.

Q: Cluster bombs.

SCOTT: Cluster bombs, but the broader issue was that historically we have defined arms sales in the context of self defense. One of the big issues was, "Is it self defense for Israel to launch an attack across the border into Lebanon against the PLO, not against the Lebanese, and particularly is it self defense in the context of it happening when there hasn't been an immediate prior attack across the border?"

The Israelis, if they spotted a group of PLO guys looking like they might be setting something up, they hid it. We'd have a steady stream -- or it seemed a fairly steady stream anyway -- of congressional letters, often from Congressman Findley, asking the

Department to make a judgment whether this was self defense. We kept the NEA lawyers awfully busy crafting responses.

Q: Was there a position would you say?

SCOTT: I would say that the position, if there was one, was to try to keep it as fuzzy as we could, the context being that you necessarily rule out an act as self defense if it appeared to be responding to something that looked like imminent preparations. The legalese in it often was quite -- how do you put it -- not necessarily mind-numbing but good lawyerly words!

Q: You did this until '81.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: It wasn't quite in your work orbit, how was the hostage crisis playing out in NEA?

SCOTT: It was in NEA.

Q: We're talking about the Iranian takeover of the embassy.

SCOTT: Obviously it was just absolutely consuming the folks who were working Iran, and the other side of the house as well. Aside from watching and talking to folks and that sort of thing, it wasn't much of an issue for those of us on Israeli affairs. We were focused particularly on the peace treaty and the Lebanon issue.

The other big focus was the other half of what had happened at Camp David. Camp David produced two agreements: One, the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty and the other was the Camp David accords trying to lay out a mechanism for moving forward on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. That one was one where the administration had basically sought to get Egypt to jump into the middle of that, and the Egyptians were understandably not too excited about doing that, so they laid out some broad principles.

The basic issue was still how you were going to sort out Palestinian-Israeli process. There was a lot of tension on that front and in the NEA front office as well. That one, again, didn't trickle down to my level too much. It tended to be a more senior level, the DAS level were the folks who were working on it. That was the other focus that really kept the bureau very busy.

Q: We're moving to '81.

SCOTT: Moving to '81 and moving to Tel Aviv.

Q: You went to Tel Aviv and were there from when to when?

SCOTT: From '81 to '84.

Q: Obviously you knew the players, knew the situation.

SCOTT: Two players.

Q: What was your job?

SCOTT: I went out as pol-mil officer, so the responsibilities were not too dissimilar to what they had been at the desk. This was from my perspective a bifurcated tour. The first year was focusing largely on the last stage turnover of the Sinai and bringing the Egypt-Israel peace treaty into play, making sure that the last year of construction on the air bases was working, and then the establishment and preparation for the Multinational Force & Observers.

There I had an opportunity to watch a couple of real masters at work. Ray Hunt was involved in the negotiation with the Israelis and the Egyptians, setting up the MFO becoming the first director general, and then was tragically was killed in Rome.

Q: Assassinated in Rome.

SCOTT: His deputy was a guy named Vic Dykos. The ability that those two guys had, first of all to work together and secondly to bring the Israelis together, the Egyptians together, and figure out a way to make them both happy about how much this was going to cost, what was going to be laid out, and how it would operate within the bounds of primarily Egyptian sovereignty, because the vast majority of the MFO's role was in the Sinai, was just remarkable to watch.

For me, among other things, it was one of the best examples of the fact that an admin officer can be a mighty good diplomat. They were superb. For me it was a privilege to sit and watch how all this worked.

Q: Let's talk first about the base business. How was this proceeding when you got there, seeing it on the ground.

SCOTT: By this point they were two years into construction, and you had runways and all of the infrastructure was in and the basics of things were in and going. It tended to be proceeding pretty smoothly. The Army Corps of Engineers may get a bum rap in flood management in some parts of the Midwest, but they were terrific managing this project. It turned out that my expectation, when I was getting ready to go out, that I'd have a lot to do watching over them really turned out that I didn't. It was self generating and self moving at that stage.

Q: Let's talk about the embassy. Who was the ambassador? What was the spirit of the embassy? This was the Begin government, I think.

SCOTT: This was the Begin government and then it became the Shamir government after a while. The ambassador was Sam Lewis, the DCM was Bill Brown.

Q: Both of whom have been interviewed for our program.

SCOTT: The political counselor was Charlie Hill. Charlie had gone from being deputy director on the desk to political counselor. I had mentioned earlier when talking about Saigon that I had a lot to unlearn about how embassies worked. I learned a lot in Tel Aviv about how embassies worked in embassies of that size, ambassadors and DCM's reach right down into the sections, and the glass wall that existed in Saigon was not there. You were expected to know your portfolio and know who was working on it and when the ambassador had a meeting with the prime minister or foreign minister or defense minister as likely as not, unless it was a real sensitive subject, you'd be taking notes, and that was neat.

Sam, I think, was a terrific ambassador in a variety of ways, not the least of which was he recognized that as an ambassador he was the neutron generator. He was full of energy and really kind of in-your-face. "We've got to get this done and we need it done fast," and this sort of thing and brought in as DCM and political counselor two guys in Bill Brown and Charlie Hill who were neutron absorbers. They bore the brunt of Sam's fire and demands and got the word down to the political section or the econ section about what they needed, without necessarily having to light a fire under you to produce.

It was only after talking to other people about how things had been previously in Tel Aviv and how things had been at other posts that I recognized what a valuable trait that was. I think it made for a tremendously efficient and high morale embassy, and gave people an opportunity to do their best work in an environment where you weren't necessarily in as much of a pressure cooker kind of environment as you could have been.

Q: How was the Begin and then Shamir government viewed by you all who were dealing with it?

SCOTT: As more conservative and more hide-bound than was needed to make progress on issues. I think in some ways, and it's important to give Begin his due in the sense that like Nixon traveling to China, Begin was probably the only prime minister who could have made a peace agreement with Egypt, because the folks on the far right knew where he stood. If it had been someone like Perez or Rabin, they'd have been hammered from the right. Begin was... How do you flank him on the right? They just couldn't do it. I think he still found it difficult to deal with the Palestinian side of the issue. It was clear that he was determined that Israel was going to live up to its agreements with the Egyptians. There was probably never a better example of that than the way they dealt with the recalcitrant settlers inside the Sinai in getting them out.

Sharon was defense minister at the time, and the assumption in Israel was that this was going to be a bloody, awful, nasty affair, and everybody's worst nightmare of Israeli soldiers fighting pitched battles with settlers to get them out of the community.

Sharon, brilliant tactician that he was, just went in with water cannon and essentially pounded all the fight out of the settlers and produced about as peaceful an evacuation as it was possible to produce under the circumstances. You looked at that and thought, “Boy, this is the kind of thing that is not only a little outside the box, but he gets *way* outside the box.” Again, it was the same sort of thing. Ideologically Begin and Sharon were probably closer to the settlers in the Sinai than they were to the mainstream Israelis, but they found an efficient way of dealing with the problem that minimized bloodshed, minimized bad press and that sort of thing.

Q: Were you there when Israel invaded Lebanon.

SCOTT: Yes. That was the second half of the bifurcated tour.

Q: Let’s talk about the first half.

SCOTT: Sure.

Q: You were involved with the Sinai Defense... What is it called, the Sinai...

SCOTT: The Multinational Force & Observers (MFO).

Q: How did you find that, the recruiting for it and setting it up? Not so much the genesis but the actual creation of putting it together.

SCOTT: Yes. There were several issues involved, of course, and one was where you were going to base these folks. Ray and Vic recognized that it made a lot of sense to use the two Israeli Sinai air bases. One of his early challenges was to convince the Israelis to demilitarize them but not to demilitarize them to the point where they would no longer be useful as a MFO base.

Q: There was the tendency on the Israeli part, okay if you’re going to be a little bit of the dog in the manger, if you’re going to it, we’re going to blow up the runways and...

SCOTT: Yes. Blow up the runways, pull everything out of the buildings, take the plumbing home, the lighting fixtures, everything. One of the challenges that Ray faced was essentially, “Leave these things as intact as you can,” and arguing, “This is going to save you money in the long run. If the MFO doesn’t have to build facilities and can use the ones you’ve built, this is an Israeli money saving.” In the main, he was ultimately successful in convincing them of that. He had to manage this because the third MFO facility is down near the southern tip of the Sinai near Ras Muhammad, and that one really had to be built up from nothing, because the Israelis had not had a base down there.

One of his challenges there was to work with the Egyptians and the Israelis to make sure the construction effort took advantage of Egyptian capabilities when there were Egyptian capabilities, and then Israeli capabilities, and those sorts of things. Another challenge, of

course, was there was a fairly short time frame. He had to have all the stuff ready to receive two or three companies of ground troops, plus all the helicopter support and fixed wing support and logistics support and all that. He didn't want to have people living in tents. It was just a constant traveling effort on his part to keep both sides in the loop and comfortable with what was going on.

Q: I sort of get the feeling that in all of this the Egyptians played, I don't want to say passive role, or accommodating role. It was all with the Israelis essentially.

SCOTT: A lot of it was with the Israelis. The Egyptians were more accommodating. One of the things that I saw there, it was especially apparent in the turnover ceremonies when the facilities were turned over to the MFO, was that the Egyptians and the Israelis who were the points of contact for the MFO got along very well together.

The chief of the team on the Israeli side was an Israeli brigadier named Dov Sion who happened among other things to be Moshe Dayan's son-in-law. His Egyptian counterpart was an Egyptian admiral, Mohsen Hamdi. They clearly liked one another. They got along well together, they spoke the same uniform language. I think that helped a lot in terms of the negotiations because all three points in the triangle -- the Egyptians, the Israelis, and the U.S. -- had a good working relationship. There wasn't any weak leg in that stool.

Q: I talk to people who served in these early days. I really haven't talked to anyone who's done it recently. In the early days, the Israelis who were on the ground, the troops were all of a sudden testing. This is sort of a game, you know. They try to put a something into a pickup truck a little more than they were supposed to, overfly a little more. Nothing serious, it was almost a game, but it was the Israelis who were pushy.

SCOTT: They were pushy, and part of it was, I think, the experience they had had with the UN and the Sinai in pre-1956. In their run up to the war, the UN headed for the hills in '67 and most recently with the UNIFIL in southern Lebanon. UNIFIL just drove them crazy, just drove them nuts. They really wanted to be sure that the MFO, and the reason we ended up with an MFO is that the Israelis just made it clear that the UN was not going to be part of that.

One of the interesting little things that I think impressed them was the first U.S. contingent was airborne. I forget whether it was the 82nd or 101st. Whichever one it was, the U.S. battalion commander decided that he was going to parachute his battalion into the south. The commander had broken his leg in a parachute jump a number of weeks earlier and recognizing the need to really impress the Israelis he led the first stick in and took his cane, broke the cast off on the plane and led the jump in.

That really got the Israelis' attention. Ray and Vic and I were talking about it afterwards, and we all three agreed that you just couldn't have had a better start to that because it really did give the Israelis the sense that, "This is no joke! They're serious about the mission, and they're serious about who they are." Would it have worked as well without it? Yes, probably, but it's those little things,

Q: Did you have any problems? We're still talking about this particular time that the Samoans, or some of the other groups that were there, weren't really of the same caliber.

SCOTT: Interestingly enough, the Fijians had been part of UNIFIL for a long time. The Israel's liked the Fijians. Part of the reason I think they liked the Fijians and the South Pacific islanders is their pre-conceived notion was a group of small, peaceful south sea island folks. When they got their first look at these guys. "Whoa! They're giants!"

Q: Big guys with lots of tattoos.

SCOTT: The Fijians in southern Lebanon took it pretty seriously. If you ask most Israelis who they had the most respect for in UNIFIL, probably almost all of them would say the Fijian battalion because they didn't mess around. They were quite comfortable having the Fijians there.

One of the things that proved to be interesting early on for the MFO folks in Tel Aviv was troops would either go to Cairo for leave or they would come up to Tel Aviv. Being troops, they party hearty. The Israelis' approach was if somebody got really drunk and disorderly, they'd bring them in to the police station and then they'd call the -- this was mostly in the context of ship business, for example -- they'd call the shore patrol, and they or the officer of the watch would say, "We've got one of your guys down here. Come get him." They were more than happy to have us come and get him, take him back to the ship. That way they didn't have to book him in and start a whole diplomatic process.

The first time they had a similar situation with the MFO guys, they called the officer of the MFO watch. His attitude was, "Fine! Let him sleep it off in jail. We'll come and get him later." We heard about it at the embassy and said, "No, no. Get him now. They're offering you a chance. Basically, this is a get out of jail free card." So they did, and the Israelis approached it with the MFO the same way they did with us. They bring him in, call us up, get him out of jail, and let him sleep it off somewhere else.

Q: Did you have a counterpart in Cairo? Were you comparing or working on the same thing?

SCOTT: A little bit. Dan Kurtzer was in Cairo at the time, and Dan handled MFO and peace treaty issues on the Egyptian side. We didn't consult an awful lot. Dan, in fact, came to Tel Aviv on assignment after he finished in Cairo, so he and I had an opportunity to sort of exchange war stories then. He was doing many of the same things with the Egyptians for Ray Hunt and Dykos as I was.

Q: I want to save the second part of your tour, but one last question: How did you find life in Tel Aviv?

SCOTT: Terrific. It's a great climate. Israel at that point was suffering from triple digit inflation, so prices were always on the rise, but the COLA (cost of living allowance) was generally covering us. Housing was pretty good. Housing, in fact, was quite good. It wasn't quite first world, but it certainly wasn't third world. The availability of most basic commodities was pretty good, the lifestyle was good, the embassy community got along well together. It's an easy country to travel in. What people say about Israelis is true, sort of the sovereign mentality: prickly on the outside, but once you get to know them, very warm and welcoming. For the most part, no restrictions on where you could travel, so it was a very good post.

Q: OK. We'll pick it up the next time. We talked about the Sinai side of things, but now we want to talk about what happened during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. I guess that's the right term for it.

SCOTT: Yes, that's absolutely the right term for it.

Q: Today is the 16th of July 2008 interview with John Scott. John, you were in Tel Aviv from when to when?

SCOTT: In Tel Aviv, the first time, from summer of 1981 to summer of 1984.

Q: On the other tape we ended with the invasion of Lebanon which happened when?

SCOTT: I believe it was in May of '82.

Q: Could you explain, as it was seen by you at the embassy and others, about the lead up to this thing, and was it pre-ordained? How did you all feel about it before it happened?

SCOTT: There was a certain buildup to it. The Palestinians and at this point it was Palestinians and PLO, not Hezbollah. Hezbollah came along later on in the northern quarter. Palestinians were carrying out or attempting to carry out raids or attacks in northern Israel and using a variety of occasionally rather creative ways of doing it -- hang gliders and that sort of thing -- because the border, of course, was pretty well guarded.

As I recall one of the real events that pushed it over the edge was an attempt to assassinate the Israeli ambassador in London. I think his name was Argov. He was not killed but was severely injured and that, in many ways looking back, seemed to me was the thing that broke the camel's back.

Q: The way I pictured it, and obviously I wasn't there, this was a history of what was taught, and it really was Sharon who was minister of defense and looking for something to do. That was the feeling, but again, I'd like to capture your feelings; that they were looking for something.

SCOTT: Certainly. I think that was true. The Palestinian cross border efforts or attempts at cross border efforts were really getting on their nerves. While this was never an issue

that represented a strategic threat to the survival of Israel; terrorism wasn't and in many ways never has been. It was a constant annoyance. It had been a constant annoyance from before when I first came to the Israel desk in 1979. The Israelis would conduct occasional in and out incursions or air strikes or artillery strikes and that sort of thing.

I think one of the things that was driving Sharon was the idea, you hate to say annoyance factor because it was more than an annoyance, but this fairly regular series of attempts was getting on his nerves, producing bad press, producing perceived pressure on the government. I think he used the Argov assassination as a mechanism of pushing through with Prime Minister Begin and with like-minded members of the cabinet the idea that something really needed to be done to deal with this threat and get rid of this threat.

Q: Did you all sit around and figure out what was in it? This goes for today, too. For these attacks, these bombings, this sort of thing, what were they supposed to do? If you were a Palestinian, what was in it for you?

SCOTT: That is a good question because at the time this was pre-any serious effort to negotiate a final status agreement or anything approaching that. There had been the beginnings in that direction in the counterpart agreement to the Egypt-Israel peace treaty that was worked out at Camp David, where the Camp David accords began to discuss how Israel and the Palestinians ought to begin to address their issues. I think in retrospect it was, as much as anything else, the beginnings of what is now described as asymmetrical warfare where the Palestinians really had no mechanism other than that of generating pressure on Israel. It's unclear to me even now, and I'm not even sure it was clear to the Palestinians, whether they had gone beyond the point of just having to demonstrate efforts to combat Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, or whether it was a broader sort of try to keep the battle open for the restoration of Palestine.

Q: We're talking about the time just before. How was this playing in the attacks, playing in the Israeli public?

SCOTT: I think probably part of the pressure that was on the government was this sense of the government is responsible for protecting its people and the people in northern Israel. At this point it was only the people in Northern Israel. You weren't seeing much of anything happening further south, but they seemed to be under the gun there. A few rockets would fly in or there would be an attempt at crossing the border.

This predated my arrival there, the group that went into the school in Ma'alot and which resulted in the deaths of a number of school children. But all of this sort of thing tended to generate pressure on the government of, "You've got to do something to protect us." I think that one of the reasons it generated more of an upshot in the aftermath of the attack in London was you really did have an event that took the threat outside of the confined area of northern Israel by going after a diplomat overseas.

Q: Do you have the feeling that the Israelis were exerting their power? Begin kept talking about a greater Israel... Unless the Palestinians fought back in one way or another, the Israelis were just going to swallow up the whole thing and say, "this is ours."

SCOTT: I think that's probably true, and at that point that was still the position. That was the position of the government. There had been a shift from the post-'67 or even the post-'73 era of where the deal was supposed to be land for peace. In return for a peace settlement Israel would get out of the West Bank, return the West Bank to Jordan, get out of Gaza, return Gaza to the Egyptians, and that would be that.

By the time of the coming to power of the Begin government, there really wasn't a completion of the shift. It had been gradually over time. The Begin government's view certainly was that the West Bank should remain part of Israel, and you began to see it referred to more regularly as Judea and Samaria, using the old biblical terms, and the idea that that land should be settled and settlers encouraged to go in there, and if the Palestinians didn't like it, it was too bad.

Q: What was your job?

SCOTT: I was the political military officer.

Q: When you got there was Sharon defense minister?

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: Were any of your Israeli contacts saying, "Yes. Watch out for this guy Sharon." He had a reputation going back to the '48 war of blowing up villages. He was not a nice guy.

SCOTT: That's true. I don't remember my contacts saying that at that time. The sense was that Sharon was not significantly out of step with the general perspectives of the Begin government.

Q: You weren't seeing this guy take control or something.

SCOTT: At that stage, no. In fact, one of the things -- and I think I mentioned it last time -- that Sharon did that would tend to undermine that a little bit, in the final stages of preparation for the last withdrawal of the settler community from the Sinai is Sharon really planned and executed most of this. I think, and the embassy thought, it was an absolutely brilliant strategy for getting the settlers out without generating this awful scenario of Jewish settler fighting Jewish soldier.

As I recall, the assumption was that that was going to happen. There were going to be pitched battles, and you'd see the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) guys going and having to beat up Israeli settlers. Sharon and his folks at the defense ministry concocted a strategy basically using water cannon and those sorts of pacification techniques, producing a situation where, by the time they were done, those guys were perfectly happy to

peacefully leave because they were battered, soaked, and demoralized. For one of the fathers of the settler community to have gone in and done that in a way that prevented everyone's worst fears from coming about, I think it generated a lot of respect for the guy and maybe a sense of, "Maybe he's not as out of control as we thought."

Q: In a way it's using a thief to catch a thief or using Nixon to go to China. It was so atypical of what the stand had been and that they had a much stronger basis for support than somebody who was a liberal or something of that nature.

SCOTT: Sure.

Q: Was there any period with you or with the military attaché or anybody else looking at this as the pistol being cocked?

SCOTT: Yes. We had our military attachés, as things were warming up, and particularly after the Argov assassination attempt, going up to the northern border fairly regularly just to see what was going on, see if there were troop build ups and known marshaling areas were starting to depopulate. There was a certain amount of that going on. The thing that really, I think, flabbergasted a lot of us, and we talked a little bit about this last week when we were talking about Sam Lewis's memoirs, was when Sharon told us what his plans of action were. Obviously the thing that was most flabbergasting was it was so out of character for an Israeli defense minister and certainly for this one to essentially telegraph what a likely strategy might be.

Q: Were you getting anything from Washington saying, "Be on the lookout," or something? We're talking about the so-called "green light" that Alexander Haig mentioned, a tip or a wink or a nudge or something that Sharon essentially said what he was going to do if we hadn't said, "Don't do it." This is very much in dispute, but it seems if he was telling you there, it would not be improbable that he might have been as forthcoming to Secretary of State Haig.

SCOTT: I wouldn't dispute that, but I'm not aware of anything where that happened. The conversations around the embassy -- around the discussions with Sharon -- I think left us all in basically a sense of wonderment and disbelief, first of all that he would say it and that he revealed his hand so forcefully.

Q: Was there any thought of, "I wonder why he's saying that?" I mean, "What is the devious plan behind him telling the truth?" [laughter]

SCOTT: A cunning strategy on Sharon's part! Not in any of the discussions to which I was privy. It may well have been between Bill Brown or Sam and Bill and the political counselor, but not that I was aware of.

Q: Was anybody saying, "You better be on the alert?"

SCOTT: I can't put my finger on anything specifically, but from that point on the embassy was working longer hours. The defense attaché's office was doing more tours. We were from that point, until the war began and afterwards, in on weekends and in that sense yes, we were looking a lot more carefully, a lot more closely at what was going on and what might be going on.

Q: OK. When did it happen, and what was, you might say, your initial reaction? I recall, this was another one of these limited little raids; put down the people who were sending over rockets then will go back and...

SCOTT: Essentially what Sharon had said to us was he could do one of two things: He could send the IDF up as far as the Litani.

Q: It's a river.

SCOTT: A river about 10 miles north of the border. Peel to the right and just move across that part of southern Lebanon to the Bekaa Valley and clear it of Palestinian terrorists. The other one, and which actually ended up happening, was to go all the way to Beirut and try to get the PLO out of Lebanon, or get the PLO out of a position of influence in Lebanon.

Q: While you were looking at this, how did we view Syria at the time?

SCOTT: That's a good question, and I don't really know. Certainly the sense was that Syria would have to do something because Syria has always perceived Lebanon to be -- depending on who you talk to -- within its sphere of influence, or the unfairly separated last province of Syria, but certainly within its sphere of influence. The sense was that the Syrians would react in a situation where the Israelis went beyond a Syrian red line. Certainly going to Beirut was beyond the red line and they would have to do something.

The result of it in terms of the Israel-Syria equation, at least initially, was a real humiliation for the Syrians. They sought to engage the Israeli air force and I think in the opening days of the war they lost something like 70 aircraft. It was just a crushing defeat for the Syrian air force. They engaged the Israelis in at least a couple of tank battles in the Bekaa Valley and again suffered real setbacks, including the demonstration for us and the world that the Israelis could take on the latest version of the then-Soviet main battle tank and beat it.

As I recall, the Russians were fairly quick to get people into Syria to figure out just what was going on. It was Russian built airplanes going down and T-72 battle tanks getting clobbered in the Bekaa. In many ways it was a real fundamental shift of the power balance in that part of the Middle East.

Q: What were you doing? This was a role. Were you looking at the map and saying, "Wait a minute! What's happening?" I'm sure that you guys and gals were dealing with this in the embassy.

SCOTT: In the early stages, of course, we basically were doing situation reports from the perspective that we had, what the IDF was telling us, what the foreign ministry was telling us, that sort of thing, and trying to put that together with what was coming out of Damascus, what was coming out of Beirut, and providing Washington with some sort of a sense of what seemed to be going on.

I think where things began to get more complicated for us at the embassy, on the broader diplomatic and political front, began to come about in the context of Israeli shelling of Beirut, the press to get Arafat and the PLO out of Beirut, and what was going on in the refugee camps.

Q: I've interviewed Bob Dillon who was our ambassador in Beirut and others. Bob was saying that news reports that came out of Israel, there was an exchange of artillery fire which when the siege of Beirut started was essentially some guy in the PLO coming out with a rocket propelled grenade and firing one these little rockets. The response would be the shelling of 155 millimeter guns which were the biggest in our arsenal, into Beirut. Was there a point where all of a sudden as these things kept coming and promises that we're not going to go any farther than this, that you were no longer believing the Israelis. The sons of bitches were lying to us. Did that occur?

SCOTT: I'm not sure that there was a point where that occurred *per se* because in the context of Beirut, I don't think that any of us thought that it was a -- how do I put it? -- an engagement of equals to begin with. It was absolutely clear that the Palestinians didn't have the wherewithal to engage the IDF. The Lebanese armed forces were largely out of it and either ran for cover or stayed clear.

The sort of military to military battles were the ones taking place in the Bekaa between the Israelis and the Syrians. I don't think there was so much, at least in my recollection, a sense of a daunting, hey they're lying to us, as a sense that if you want to describe it in terms of a military fair fight, it was never a military fair fight.

Q: There seemed to be a clash between, let's say, Bob Dillon and Sam Lewis. Bob Dillon in Beirut, and Sam was in Tel Aviv. At a certain point Bob would be saying they'd be doing this and that and then Tel Aviv would reply, "Oh no, they're not." There's a famous saying where Dillon and Habib at other times said they're shelling and Tel Aviv would said "oh no, we're assured they're not." And Dillon says there is shelling outside my office," and he puts the telephone outside of his office and says, "Listen!" Indeed they were. At your level were you aware of the turf clash you might say between Embassy Beirut and Embassy Tel Aviv?

SCOTT: To a degree. Partly one of the things we were trying to do was that Sam was always, I thought, very well attuned to not wanting our reporting to get into the context of defending the Israelis. He was always, I think, careful to look at reporting to ensure that what were saying were things like, "The Israelis are reporting to us," or, "The Israelis are telling us," and to avoid saying things like, "The Israelis are doing this, or the Israelis are

not doing that.” What we had to report was what they were telling us, not necessarily what was going on.

Q: In a way is that really badly ducking the issue? The Israelis can speak for themselves, but our embassy is supposed to say. “The Israelis may be saying this, but they actually, as far as we can tell, they are doing the opposite,” or something. They’re lying! Otherwise you’re just a mouthpiece.

SCOTT: The issue was how do you know. In that context...

Q: That’s a problem. Let me put it this way: That’s your problem to find out who’s doing what to whom, and not what somebody is saying.

SCOTT: Simply put, that’s correct. The issue though is if you don’t have someone either at the forward edge of the battle, or if you don’t have someone on the Israeli side who’s prepared to tell you on the forward edge of the battle, the best you can do is surmise.

Q: What were you picking up? You’ve got war correspondents. The Israeli citizen is not a mouthpiece of the government.

SCOTT: That’s true.

Q: These are blunt but honest people. Did you have access, with stuff coming back, saying, “Oh, my God! We’re shelling innocent people in Beirut!”

SCOTT: Not an awful lot. Probably a lot of that, or my guess is, a lot of the reason for not seeing much of that was the effect of military censorship and the Israeli press which is a vibrant free press really does pay a lot of attention to that. They’re sometimes, and even today sometimes, the best way they have of getting routed is reporting something that someone, that another press, had said, outside of Israel. You didn’t see a lot of it.

Q: One of these things that I’ve picked up just by reading the papers over the decades that this had been going on, is the Israeli military is very much like our military. They’re never wrong. They all say, “Actually, this isn’t what happened,” when it turns out that, as all military do, they can be pretty nasty. The Israelis, again, I’m not picking on them, because our military and others do the same thing. They never admit they’re wrong. Were you doing reports with a jaundiced eye?

SCOTT: I think as time goes on and seeing some of the Beirut reporting, it was clear that there were some real discrepancies in what was being said, I think leading some of us to the sense that there’s probably an area here in the middle where accuracy lies wherever that may be. What you were not seeing at the time was any sort of public call for a more public defense ministry, or even private to us, commentary that suggested that the line was completely inconsistent with reality.

Q: How did the massacres -- there can't be really another term -- of the Shatila and Sabra, these Palestinian camps... Actually, this happened after the Palestinians left the main ones. I'm pretty sure that was it.

SCOTT: It may well have been after the Palestinian leadership left.

Q: What was the feeling when the cease fire was negotiated, the Palestinian army and Palestinian fighters were withdrawn, and went to Tunisia? Was there a sense of exhilaration or what?

SCOTT: There probably was an Israeli sense of some exhilaration that that objective had been possible. I never talked to the Israelis about it *per se*, but the other half of it, of course, is none of it would have been possible without Phil Habib's efforts. This was not going to happen just between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Phil devoted untold amounts of time and effort and energy in shuttling back and forth.

Q: Did you have any contact with him?

SCOTT: I was the note taker in most of the meetings.

Q: Talk about your impression of Phil Habib.

SCOTT: Let me tell you one story which sums it up: Phil Habib was in one sense a consummate diplomat and in another sense as tough as nails. We had one session that I remember where he was meeting with Sharon as defense minister and the Israeli chief of staff and others about how to get this cease fire in place, so the PLO leadership and fighters could get out of Beirut. He said something or other, I forget exactly what it was he said, that clearly pissed off Sharon. Sharon pushed back from the table, got up, and walked out. You would normally think, "Well, there's the end of that. We'd better head back to the embassy and regroup and figure out what we're going to do next." But Phil just sat there.

After a couple of minutes he engaged Sharon's military aide in what amounted to a map discussion on what was going on in Beirut. "Can you show me where these guys are? What are they seeing on the ground? Show me where the units are." He kept this discussion going. I can only surmise what happened outside, but I presume what happened is somebody went into Sharon's office and said, "They're not leaving!" Eventually Sharon came back in and sat down, and we started talking again.

For me as much as anything else, that really encapsulated the Phil Habib approach to issues, he was not going to let that series of discussions fall apart just by dint of personality, and it didn't matter that his interlocutor had gotten up and walked out. He was going to wait it out. Essentially make him come back in and either tell him to go home or reengage, which in the end is what happened.

Q: I might as a footnote say there's an excellent book about Phil Habib called Cursed is the Peace Maker by John Boykin [<http://adst.org/publications/adst-dacor/cursed-is-the-peacemaker/>]. He used some of our oral histories, but somebody outside said it's an excellent book. Unfortunately it never really got much in the way of reviews, but it's very good.

How did the news hit you all of the massacre at these two camps, with the complicity done by the Lebanese, the Christian militia, I guess, but very much apparently with the complicity of the IDF.

SCOTT: In one way I think it's useful to put things into a bit of context. One of the triggers of that was the assassination of the Lebanese president, Bachir Gemayel who was leader of the Phalange Party, who had been elected president, and which drove a lot of Lebanese just crazy. The assassination just left the Phalange Party fit to be tied. Certainly in retrospect it was clear they were out for revenge. It was equally clear that at least some in the IDF were prepared to let them have it, and complicit is certainly a perfectly good term for what happened. The IDF essentially stood down and let these guys go into Sabra and Shatila and carry out what can only be described as massacres.

Q: This was after most of the men folk had left.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: And under our guarantee that they would be safe.

SCOTT: That they would be protected. There were some arguments at the time that the IDF did not realize what would happen. I don't believe those are credible, and my understanding is the head of Israeli intelligence had cautioned that a massacre was quite possible. In fact, as I recall in the commission that looked into it afterwards, one thing, at least, to the IDF's credit and the Israelis credit is they looked into it and meted out punishment. Sharon was essentially cashiered as defense minister and the recommendation of the commission was that he should never be appointed to a defense ministry or national security position again.

The chief of staff of the IDF was not cashiered, but it was made clear that he would not be reappointed. His term was coming to an end anyway, and as I recall, he was retired but not forced out early. The chief of military intelligence was dismissed from his position. As I recall, and I apologize, it's all kind of hazy, he was dismissed not because he had not predicted what would happen, but that he had not adequately argued that it would in a way that convinced folks to do otherwise. On the basis of that, I think it's fair to estimate that any argument from the protagonists that they didn't know what was going to happen or were not in a position to surmise what might happen is probably bogus. I think they were getting it.

Q: What was the reaction from your contacts in the press and all when the Sabra-Shatila affair became better known?

SCOTT: People were horrified. The pressure and the resultant commission to look into it was reflective of that, and as this became known it was recognized that all of this happened on the IDF's watch. The view was a real besmirching of the IDF's reputation and standing.

Q: As I recall, correct me, we're both a little hazy, as part of pulling the PLO out, we and the French and the Italians and maybe somebody else put troops in for an initial period to allow withdrawal, and then withdrew the troops. How did you all feel about that? Were there qualms about putting troops into those places?

SCOTT: I don't recall in retrospect, I think there probably were. This was not a friendly environment.

Q: I think we withdrew our troops and Sabra and Shatila happened, and then we put them back. This became sort of a real cause for later peace keeping operations; we didn't know what the hell we were doing.

SCOTT: I think that's right, yes. The result, of course, was the bombing of the Marine barracks in southern Beirut

Q: We lost all together. Horrible. Talk about yourself and maybe some of your colleagues, basically junior officers, because junior officers often have their own view of things that do not necessarily reflect the view of the people at the top. Was there a change in attitude?

SCOTT: To a degree there probably was. One of the things that was reflective of that was several of us put together a dissent channel message suggesting that now really was the time that we really needed to start talking to the PLO. At that time we were not talking with the PLO. This wasn't crafted so much as a direct result of Lebanon and that sort of thing, but watching what was going on *vis a vis* what was supposed to take place in the context of the Camp David accords. The idea was that if the U.S. is going to play a role in this, we have to be talking to both sides.

Q: This points out something that's occurring. As of today -- well, every day -- this idea that if we're opposed to somebody and strongly opposed to what they're doing, you don't talk to them. This is particularly more from, you might say, the conservative side. Unless they agree to our terms, we won't talk to them. People who practice diplomacy as we do, that's what you do. You talk with people you don't agree with!

SCOTT: Yes, exactly. In my second tour in Israel, I think Barak said it very well. No, it was Rabin who said it. You don't have to make peace with your friends.

Q: It's crazy. We're going through this with Iran right now. As of today, the 16th of July, we apparently should be talking with the Iranians at some level. We've had seven and a half years to get around to that.

SCOTT: Exactly. I can only speak for myself and maybe a couple of the military attachés that I talked with about this. There was, on the one hand, as we were saying earlier, something of a watershed in terms of how you looked at the IDF in this context, but not necessarily as big a watershed as you might have expected, because they really did, in the wake of Sabra-Shatila, take a serious look at themselves. A serious look at themselves that was not, to use a bizarre analogy, a look at yourself where Lieutenant William Calley and Captain Medina take a huge hit for My Lai and everybody involved.

Q: This was in Vietnam.

SCOTT: In Vietnam. Whereas the Israelis and the IDF looked at it and said it starts at the top and that is where the responsibility was.

Q: Both in Iraq and Vietnam our record's not that great, because it usually ends up that the lieutenants, captains, sergeants, corporals, and privates get hit but the generals don't. That's a pattern. It's not a credit. You mentioned military attachés. As part of your job as a political-military officer, were you able to talk? Able, but did you have contact with military attachés of other countries, the French, the Germans, the Brits.

SCOTT: Occasionally, not an awful lot. In my second tour a lot more, interestingly enough. We tended to leave the uniform contact with the uniforms and the civilian contact with the civilians. I think one of the things that the embassy did pretty well even during the first period, and I think what we did really well in my second tour was the idea that reporting needed to be fairly seamless. In order for reporting to be fairly seamless the political section side of the embassy needed to be talking with the other sections and sharing information of what we heard and hearing what they heard, so that it was all factored into reporting.

Q: That's often compartmentalizing, it's dangerous because they wanted to get off the track, but also each side is not really sharing its reporting. One side is reporting the trunk of the elephant, the other referring to the tail of the elephant, and you're not getting a very good picture of the elephant.

SCOTT: Exactly. One of the things here that I would be interested in hearing, looking at later in some recent oral histories might come into play here. I think one of the reasons was that sharing of information, and talking with one another fairly regularly. One of the things that made that easier was the fact that many of us in the foreign service at that time had previous military service, been drafted or joined from ROTC. There was a certain sense of understanding from a common ground that the attachés were comfortable in dealing with you, in part because you'd worn the uniform once.

Q: I come from a generation that every male I knew practically had served in the military. Some of us had high military qualifications. I ended up as an airman first class as a college graduate. Not a very sterling career, but obviously we understood, we were part of the military.

You left in what, '84?

SCOTT: Left in '84.

Q: Did you find, was it really shaking after... You were there I guess during the blowing up of the barracks.

SCOTT: I was there during the blowing up of the barracks. I was there during the blowing up of the embassy. During this period things were still going on. We had the USS New Jersey and other ships off the coast.

Q: A battleship which was bombarding Syrian posts. I'm not quite sure what it was doing but...

SCOTT: Exactly. Shooting at hotspots, including Druze hotspots. One of the interesting elements of all of this is Lebanese Druze were in contact with Israeli Druze who in turn were in contact with the embassy to try to generate a, "Hey, you guys are shooting at us! We're not your enemies here. You may not be shooting at us, but your shells are landing on us." I don't know if the same sort of message was feeding back through Lebanese Druze into the embassy in Beirut and outward into the Navy, but it was certainly coming that way. So you even then were seeing communications taking place between Lebanese and Israelis of a common religious faction.

Q: Our troops were there. This is when they came back after Sabra and Shatila. In a way there was supposedly peacekeeping, but all of a sudden I recall the Marines were taking heavier and heavier fire. The French and Italians were having the same problem. They were just defending themselves and not doing anything else. Was there any analysis, or coming out and saying, "What are we doing?"

SCOTT: Not really that I recall. It's only in later years that I look back on that and began to realize that we were starting to see then was the difference between a peacekeeping mission and a peacemaking mission. If you're there for peacekeeping, but what you really should be doing, or not doing, is peacemaking. You're very ill equipped for the task. I never heard anybody define it in those terms at the time.

Q: This is pretty new for us. There's just sort of a feeling that, "Well, you put a bunch of Marines in a place, and people are going to be quiet."

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: But this is not the case.

SCOTT: It's not. You make targets!

Q: After the blowing up of the Marines and in particular blowing up of the embassy, were there any calls on you as being one of our Middle East embassies, to go help out? You all, I'm using the term, to jump on Lebanon?

SCOTT: Yes. There were calls for different folks I think not only from Tel Aviv, but from other posts as well, to come up and do some TDY kind of work in Beirut. I don't recall right off hand who did. I don't think we had anybody from the political section go. I did not. In any event, they were pretty beleaguered.

Q: After these two blowing ups, was there a feeling this whole Lebanon thing was essentially not only an Israeli disaster but an American disaster? Obviously to the Lebanese it was a disaster or was there a bright side where we took care of that?

SCOTT: I think there were a few moments when there was a sense that it might have been a bright side. One of the things that had gone on in the post-PLO withdrawal and after Sabra-Shatila, and the election of Bachir Gemayel as president, was there was an ultimately aborted effort to try to help broker an Israel-Lebanon peace treaty. Actually, a document was produced. The spoiler in all that, at least in part, of course, was Syria, which was just having none of it.

Secretary Shultz made at least one -- probably a couple -- tours in the areas around the region to generate support for this agreement. All of it in the end came to naught. One of the side questions always has been, what if those negotiations had taken place more quickly and the document had come together while the Syrians were still reeling from the fact that they had just been militarily decimated. The unknown, was would the Syrians have been more inclined to let it happen and see if they could generate some sort of positive outcome from it?

In the end, as I recall, by the time all of the negotiations came together, the Syrians had been rearmed and re-supplied in significant measure by the Russians, and they seemed to be feeling a lot less beleaguered than they were. That's entirely speculative, because you can't predict.

Q: You can't. Assad was certainly his own man. As a political military officer, were you picking up a sense that okay, politically this thing could be termed in some ways a disaster, but it certainly showed that Israeli equipment and American equipment had shown this 10 foot tall Soviet soldier really had feet of clay. Their stuff wasn't of the same caliber as the Israeli and American. Even drawing the fact that the pilots were better trained. Did you pick up this?

SCOTT: Yes, I think so. I think the Russians did too, because for them, I think, it was a real humiliation since the performance had been just so one sided. To a degree it would be possible to argue the Syrians lost 70-odd airplanes because they weren't very good pilots. They weren't that bad, and they were flying Russian military equipment and flying Russian tactics, and the equipment and the tactics just didn't stand up. You can argue all you want, the Russians could argue all they want, that the T-72 tanks in the Bekaa fought

very successfully in strategic trials. They were supposed to be these tanks with wonderful armor against which tank rounds were going to bounce off and they would keep on fighting. That just didn't pan out.

Q: I go back to the time when I was in the Air Force as a Russian language intercept operator involved on the ground with the fighting between the Soviet Air Force in Korea and the American Air Force compared with making the Mig and the Saber and saying they're both equal, but the point being the Americans were shooting down 10:1. These are Soviet pilots. One adds these things up. We had the technical edge for a long time.

What were you doing after this invasion? Political military. What was up?

SCOTT: Pretty much my whole tour from '82 until '84 involved one or another aspect of Lebanon and the aftermath, continuing to report what the Israelis were doing, what we were doing, fairly regular support of a series of U.S.–Middle East negotiators, Phil Habib, Doug McFarland, and Don Rumsfeld. That part of the job continued right up to the time that I left. That probably was 80% of it.

Q: What were they after? You were in a way a fly on the wall weren't you, or more than that. What were you doing?

SCOTT: Each of them in their own way was trying to work out various Lebanon and post-Lebanon kinds of issues. The one thing that only became known in the aftermath was, and this was one where I was not a fly on the wall, is McFarland was having discussions with the Israelis on Iran Contra. There came points in various meetings where both the embassy seniors and frequently Sam or Bill Brown and me as the note taker, would be asked to step outside the room while Bud had a one-on-one with somebody and during that time we never were informed what was going on.

Q: The Israelis were supplying TOW missiles which you had given the Israelis to the Iranians...

SCOTT: ...to the Iranians, generating money that we were using to support the Contras in Nicaragua.

Q: Did you get any intonation of what was going on?

SCOTT: Not a bit. For me, I was a relatively junior officer at the time, and it irked me a little bit when we'd get to the end of the discussion on the Lebanon portion of the session and be asked to leave. You hate to be setting up a meeting, laying all the ground work for it, note taking, and then being asked to step outside. I assume that Sam and Bill Brown were equally irked. My sense is it's one thing to have a junior pol-mil officer leave the room, that's fine, but when the president's personal representative is being told to step outside, that struck me as...

Q: Was there any sort of speculation, or was this sort of thing you didn't want to speculate about with each other?

SCOTT: There was no speculation ever with me. I don't know if Sam or Bill or others did or not. Nothing that I was ever...

Q: Were you picking up from any of your Israeli counterparts, someone saying, "We know something you don't know?"

SCOTT: No. This was really closely held. Aside from knowing something's going on, there was no inkling.

Q: How was Iran being viewed at that time, from the embassy and your Israeli counterparts?

SCOTT: From the embassy I think -- and remember we're still relatively close to the hostage crisis, which was three or four years previous. For most of us, if we thought about the Iranians at all, it was preceded with a couple of expletives and that sort of thing, particularly folks who knew one or more of the folks who had been guests of the Ayatollah for over a year. The Israelis, I think at the time, did not yet perceive Iran to be the kind of threat that they see now.

Q: We're talking and the war was on. Was that between Iraq and Iran?

SCOTT: The war was on between Iraq and Iran. The Israelis would argue that the bad guy in that war was the Iraqis, a much closer and more personal threat. Their briefings would describe the inner circle of threats which at that time would be Syria, Lebanon acting as a Syrian counterpart, and Jordan because there was no peace treaty with Jordan at that time. Egypt was out of the core threat because of the peace treaty. The outer group of Arab states formed a threat, Iraq, the Saudis, the rest of Gulf states, and whatever they might do. You didn't really hear Iran described as a threat there.

Q: Speaking of briefings you get, is the Israeli development of nuclear weapons a no-no discussion? You're a political military officer and here they have deals with weapons. It's never been acknowledged, but is accepted by everyone.

SCOTT: It was never an issue of discussion. The best way to describe it would be parsing the public statements, and the standard Israeli public statement was Israel would never be the first nation to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East. All of the observers said, "Well, okay." The first time a U.S. aircraft carrier made a visit to the eastern Med, that particular bar was breeched, but no one, certainly not me, and I'm not aware of anybody else in the embassy, had any discussions of it with the Israelis.

Q: Was it assumed that they had?

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: This wasn't a discussion, was it?

SCOTT: It was assumed that they had it, and that was the basis of the parsing. A phrase which sounded like a future was actually...

Q: Way past.

SCOTT: That happened a long time ago.

Q: Did the attack on the USS Liberty during the '67 war, was that still rankling, particularly the American Navy or not?

SCOTT: Not with the American Navy as far as I could see. I never heard anything of it from either the naval attaché or assistant naval attaché. It popped up from time to time in the context of letters to the Israel desk when I was working on the desk and there was all kinds of, "How can the United States treat Israel as an ally when they did this to a U.S. vessel in the '67 war?" Aside from that, I can't recall anything that suggested that it was still even a warm button issue for some folks.

Q: When you left in '84, how would you describe the situation vis a vis its neighbors in your perspective?

SCOTT: Of course, there were still Israeli troops in Lebanon. The peace treaty with Egypt was a cold peace, and for a lot of Israelis that was a disappointment. I think for more realistic Israelis it was less of a disappointment. Witness again a statement that Rabin made later on that a cold peace is a lot better than a hot war. There was still not much at all going on in the context of trying to make further progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue post the Camp David Accords.

Everything else seemed to be business as usual, and if you had to sum it up in a sentence or two, as you got to the middle of '84 it was... The dust seems to have settled a little bit. The awful period of '82, '83 has tamped down a little bit. It's not as bad as it was, but there wasn't anything particular on the horizon that looked really positive.

Q: Did you see any possibility for curtailing the settlements, creating a State of Palestine at that point?

SCOTT: Begin, of course, had left office by then. Shamir was prime minister. Shamir was every bit as right wing as Begin and some might even argue more so, having led the Stern Gang...

Q: These were two guys, the Stern Gang. These were two pretty tough characters!

SCOTT: They were very tough!

Q: If you want to talk about terrorists, they ranked right up there.

SCOTT: A couple of us observed once that we were writing talking points for a meeting between Shamir and Arafat, the first talking point would be from one former terrorist to another, and either one of them could have said it! Prime Minister Begin was clearly a fairly urbane, well spoken and intellectual guy. He had a real right wing history, but unlike almost all of his political contemporaries, when he had meetings with you, he was in coat and tie. Most Israeli politicians were pretty much like I am now, open collar shirt. They may have a jacket on. Shamir certainly was that way.

Begin was in many ways a very urbane, Eastern European mystery prime minister, and he conducted himself that way. Shamir was a more visibly informal and gruff guy, both of them had very strongly held, very strong right wing views. At the point I left, if you were wanting to predict there's going to be a shift in the approach to settlements or a shift in the approach to the PLO, it wasn't under that group.

Q: King Hussein of Jordan aroused a lot of regard in the United States, but from your perspective of Tel Aviv, during your time there, how was he viewed?

SCOTT: I think he was generally viewed pretty positively. Someone on the Arab side who had an understanding of, if not a feeling for, the Israeli perspective, an understanding of Israeli red lines and that sort of thing, and someone on the Arab side who was someone who you could work with.

For some of us, if you look back at history and apply history, you'd probably have to conclude that here was a guy who had, at two big pivotal moments, made the wrong calls both times: '67 when they decided to join the fight which paved the way for the capture of the West Bank and "reunification" of Jerusalem, and '73 where he decided to sit it out. The early days of '73 for Israel was a near run thing. All of that aside, I think the general Israeli perspective of King Hussein was not negative, and I think to the extent the embassy thought much about the Jordanian role, we'd certainly have to say it was not unhelpful at the time. The Jordanians weren't doing things to mess things up.

Q: In '84 where did you go?

SCOTT: In '84 I came back to Washington and took a job as political military officer on the Japan desk. A complete shift.

Q: We'll pull out the maps and figure out where it was located.

SCOTT: Exactly, and move from dealing with a group of folks -- the Israelis -- who wore their hearts on their sleeve and told you exactly what they thought, and if you didn't like it, well, that was too bad, to a country whose culture is much more circumspect. You walked around the bush about 14 times before you finally figured out where people were coming from.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in 1984 when you were a political military officer at the desk in Washington. You were there from '84 to...

SCOTT: I was there from '84 to '86 then went off and studied Japanese for a couple of years and went out as chief of the political military unit in Tokyo.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

Okay. Today is the 28th of July 2008. This is an interview with John Scott. John, what got you out of Israel and all of a sudden off to the Orient?

SCOTT: The classic learning experience that you make in personnel terms is that the State Department sooner or later is dead working, and following up on jobs with folks you've worked with, or with whom you have a reputation. Bill Brown had been the DCM in Tel Aviv for the first couple of years I was there. He went back to be principal deputy assistant secretary in East Asia.

I was back about a year before my assignment and stopped by the department to check in and say hello to folks and ran into Bill in the hallway. In fact, I hadn't even set up an appointment or anything, but just ran into him. He said they had a couple of jobs opening up on the Japan desk the following fall that he thought I would be very good for and encouraged me to put in a bid. The prospect of working on Japan and East Asia affairs was appealing, and the idea of getting out of the pressure cooker of the Middle East for a little bit was kind of appealing. Bill Brown was a terrific guy to work for.

Q: I was very impressed with him. I have a long set of interviews with him.

SCOTT: He was a terrific guy to work for, and I thought, "Gosh, this sounds almost too good to be true," so I bid on the job and got the assignment.

Q: I would have thought that you would have gotten enmeshed in the bramble bush of the Chrysanthemum Club. You might explain what I mean by that.

SCOTT: The Chrysanthemum Club is those who focus on U.S.-Japan affairs and are Japanese linguists and tend to pop in and out of Japan with fair regularity. In some ways I did. What looked like a two year assignment on the Japan desk turned out to be a nine year association with Japanese affairs. That transpired as two years on the Japan desk, studying Japanese a year at FSI, then a year at Yokohama, three years in Tokyo as chief of the political military unit, and then when I was starting to look in some other areas for assignment after Tokyo, Desaix Anderson, who had been the DCM in Tokyo and had been head of the Japan desk when I was there the first time and was by then PDAS in East Asia, said, "No, no, no. I want you to come back as deputy director of the Japan desk."

Q: You went to the Japan desk initially when?

SCOTT: Initially in summer of '84.

Q: How stood relations with Japan at that time?

SCOTT: Relations with Japan in my issue, which was the security relationship and political military issues, were overall pretty good. We had a couple of issues that we can talk about a little bit, but the real focus of U.S.-Japan angst at the time was the economic relationship and a massive trade deficit with Japan, something on the order of \$60 billion a year.

Q: This is a time when we were looking at... Was it Japan, Incorporated?

SCOTT: Right.

Q: ...was going to take over the United States or buying out Rockefeller Center and Columbia Pictures and God knows what.

SCOTT: Half the golf courses in California and was going to eat our lunch. Economically our view was these guys are 10 feet tall and we're in real trouble. That was basically the theme that ran through U.S.-Japan affairs then.

Q: Sometimes the new boy on the block, and boy were you ever the new boy!

SCOTT: Was I ever the new boy!

Q: ...has a different view from someone who's been in it a long time. You begin to absorb the group-think and all that. Was anybody saying that you were dealing with... I realize this wasn't your issue, but was anybody saying, "Wait a minute. The Japanese have got real problems." We're going through some of the same thing with China right now. Was anybody there?

SCOTT: At that point not so much, saying that the Japanese now have real problems, as saying that a lot of what we're seeing isn't necessarily as bad as it looks. There were comments, of course, that many features of the Japanese economy and way of doing business were seemingly superior to ours, just in time deliveries, where you didn't need to build up a massive backlog of spare parts in your warehouse, but you bought just enough to keep the line going. The assumption was there wouldn't be strikes or that sort of thing to get in the way, that Japanese products were better made than ours, or pushing ours off the market.

Our deputy director at the time, John Monjo, who ultimately became ambassador to Indonesia, noted that some of that stuff didn't quite seem to tie into what was really happening. If you looked at the production of Sony TVs in their plant in California, they had, I think, the lowest rejection rate coming off the line of any Japanese plant worldwide. These were TVs put together by American workers. Japanese management techniques were very much in vogue. You had American workers turning out a really

good product. Similarly with the Honda plant in Ohio. They were getting fewer rejections of Hondas coming off that line than anywhere else in the world, including Japan.

You had certain aspects of Japanese production management that seemed to be doing very well. You had products that were being put together by American workers who were right at the top of the game. John's point was, "We need to look a little more deeply at some of the stuff that's going on here." This was a little before it became apparent that one or the other advantages the Japanese auto makers had was the fact that they had relatively young work forces. They used a lot of robotics. But you didn't have a significant chunk of the amount of the value of the automobile that was going into paying pensions for people who had been working for the company for many, many years. We're now at the point with the Japanese auto makers where that's starting to come into play, but it wasn't at that time and no one was looking at that carefully.

Q: In your particular slice of the pie, what was up during these two years? This is eighty...

SCOTT: This was '84 to '86. In my particular slice of the pie, two things were going on that were of considerable interest. One was the Japanese were wanting to get ready to build their own fighter aircraft. They were planning to build something that looked similar to an F-16. Our push for the Japanese was, "Don't spend a lot of money and build your own airplane. There are perfectly good U.S. aircraft you can buy off the shelf or near off the shelf for considerably less money." The Japanese argument was, "Our techniques are such that we think we can do this fairly economically."

One of our arguments was, "Look, McDonald-Douglas and Lockheed-Martin," at that time I guess it was General Dynamics before Lockheed bought General Dynamics out. "These guys have a long track record of developing jet air aircraft. They know where the pitfalls are, where the dead-ends are. You guys have never developed a serious front line jet aircraft. There are costs that you don't realize you're going to have."

We weren't making an awful lot of headway on that. They were pretty much determined to do it themselves and national pride I think certainly was a factor in it. There was no question that they *could* do it. The issue was, "How much money do you want to spend and how much money can you save going with a U.S. product?" That debate sort of went on and off most of the time I was on the Japan desk. In fact, it didn't really get resolved until about two and a half, three years later after I had finished studying Japanese and had taken up my post in Tokyo. We can go to that as well. It went on for quite a long time.

Q: You're saying this was an issue. What were you doing?

SCOTT: I was doing a fair amount of, not only working with the political military bureau on the analysis of the funding side of it, but also a lot of working level interaction with my Japanese counterparts, trying to convince them of, not only the economic benefits of it, but also the political downsides of going after a non-American product.

Q: Who were your Japanese counterparts?

SCOTT: For me it was primarily the political military officer at the Japanese embassy whose first name was Ken and whose last name escapes me.

Q: You can fill that in later.

SCOTT: We can fill that in later. That was the primary intersection involved with discussions with the Japanese when they sent folks back here. The recently departed ambassador at the time, Ryozo Kato, was very much involved with U.S.-Japan relations at that time. We had discussions with him. I would have to say I think by and large for the Japanese, who had a long time connection with the U.S., and the Japanese have their own version of -- it's not the Chrysanthemum Club, but you might call it the Stars and Stripes Club -- the folks who cycle in and out of Washington and in and out of U.S.-Japan affairs. They had a pretty good feel of where we were coming from. My estimate would be they were fairly sympathetic to our arguments.

Q: Was there also a problem at that time... I'm moving out of my field of knowledge, but advanced avionics? In other words, we intended to sell off the shelf planes, but we kept all the real goodies -- how to shoot and how to navigate -- down to a minimum, and we were restricting those which we didn't want them to get. Was that an issue then?

SCOTT: A bit of an issue but probably not, at least as I remember it, as big an issue as it might have been for some countries. The paradox I think that made that workable was the restrictions in the Japanese constitution on offensive warfare capability and on selling war capability or war materiel overseas. There was general recognition that the Japanese took that pretty seriously, so it was probably no greater concern that they would take it and sell it abroad than there was for any other country and perhaps, at least among those who had a fair understanding of the Japanese, less concern that they would.

There was a certain amount of concern that they might take the military technology and wring it out into some sort of commercial advantage, but the Japanese also understood the derivative restrictions of the Arms Export Control Act and that sort of thing. You can't take something military, turn it into commercial, and sell it. The original purpose still controls. They were pretty careful about that.

Q: What about the fighter, what for? What was the threat?

SCOTT: To the Japanese air force. The rest of northeast Asia at that time saw potential concerns with North Korea and the Korean peninsula. I think, although they didn't mention it much, that they certainly had considerable concerns about the Chinese and what the Chinese might want to do. They were also, at the time, worried about the Russians and their Far East presence.

Q: What were you talking about, the Soviets?

SCOTT: The Soviets. Exactly. They had a wonderful map that they would show us of East Asia rotated 90 degrees. The Russian perception of the Pacific from the point of view of Vladivostok, if you look from Vladivostok out to the Pacific, you see one huge barrier, and that barrier is Japan.

Q: There's a map up there. We can look at it later.

SCOTT: ...Vladivostok and look out slightly southeastward, there is this huge barrier. That was a concern of theirs as well.

From our perspective, of course, and I think one of the big factors that came in, and it demonstrates again in foreign policy there's no issue that's isolated. What drove many of our folks crazy was the economic element that we would be losing out on the sale, certainly of a multi-hundreds of millions and perhaps in the billions sale to a Japanese company.

Q: And particularly at that time...

SCOTT: At that time it really drove people crazy.

Q: Did you have aircraft manufacturers, American ones, dropping by?

SCOTT: Oh, sure. They were even from the time I'd been in the political military bureau a number of years before, very forthcoming in terms of development costs and that sort of thing, because they really did want us to have a really good feel for what they saw as the facts of the matter. They were active in arguing their case, and we were certainly prone to listen to them.

Q: Let's talk about the guts of diplomacy, relations with the Pentagon, for example.

SCOTT: This actually was, again, pretty good. We had a fairly good relationship with the Japan director in ISA, a guy named Jon Auer, a long-time Japan-hand and Navy commander, who subsequently retired but stayed on as a civilian. He knew Japan very well. He had served there for a number of years, spoke very good Japanese and had very good connections and a particularly good understanding of political military issues.

We tended to be pretty much, in most every instance, reading off the same sheet music. A common concern that DOD had, and that I and some of the folks with the security focus had, was to try to ensure that the discussions we had and the difficulties that we had with the Japanese on economic issues didn't spill over too much into the security realm.

There was actually quite a potential for doing that because of the nature of the U.S.-Japan security relationship. Even though it did involve a security treaty, it was a security treaty with a different focus, say, than NATO or some of the others. While we had obligations to come to Japan's defense in certain instances, the mirror image obligations didn't really exist because that would have been a violation of the Japanese constitution in their eyes.

We worked with and occasionally pushed the Japanese pretty hard on things that they could do in other areas such as host nation support and support of the U.S. presence in Japan. We wanted to be sure that the points we were making, and the diplomatic representations that we were making with the Japanese on the economic side, which were frequently pretty strong, did not produce a backlash on the host nation support side.

Q: Let's do one of these nice academic exercises: compare and contrast. You're now in the East Asian bureau. You came from the Near Eastern bureau, both of which have completely different cultures and everything else. Can you compare and contrast?

SCOTT: I think the clearest contrast between dealing with the Israelis and dealing with the Japanese was that the Israelis wear their heart on their sleeve. When you have a question for them, they will tell you point blank exactly what they think. It may be what you want to hear, or may be not what you want to hear, but there will be no doubt in your mind fairly early on where your interlocutor is coming from.

The Japanese on the other hand -- I think I used this a couple of weeks ago -- you walk around the bush five or six times before you figure out where folks are coming from. It's a little less complicated with the folks in the Japanese foreign service or the Japanese defense agency who've had regular dealings with the United States. They take on a little bit of the trappings of being a little more direct and forthcoming. But not really. In some ways it seems a more traditionally diplomatic kind of approach of getting to know somebody, developing them as a contact, understanding where they are coming from, and their trying to get an understanding of where you're coming from. It's a more long and involved process.

Second contrast, of course, is you are dealing with a culture there that's centuries old and with the Israelis you're dealing with a country that literally just celebrated its 60th anniversary. They're really historically the new guys on the block.

Similarities are that both, for different reasons, get a lot of attention within most administrations. Japan has historically been key to our East Asia policy, certainly key to our Northeast Asia policy. If you need to talk to somebody in the executive branch about Japan issues, it's not too hard to get them on the phone. Similarly with Israel, there's a lot of attention there and a lot of political underplay and dynamics. Both of the countries tend to be fairly well connected, so it's relatively easy to get some attention if you need it.

In watching some of my colleagues in NEA and in East Asia whose countries were, if you will, less high up on the totem pole, there was always, I thought, a certain amount of, if not envy, amusement at the fact that whether it was the Israel desk or the Chrysanthemum Club, that if you needed to get somebody on the line at the National Security Council, you could usually do it. They frequently would have a little more trouble.

Q: Did you find internally, how about the sense of purpose relationship between the NEA bureau and the EA bureau? Did you see a difference there?

SCOTT: One of the differences, I think, is in the NEA bureau you would see it a little more starkly, and I'm not sure rivalry is the right term, but different perspectives within the Israel side of the house and the Arab side of the house. There was always some dynamic tension.

Q: It's not quite clientitis, but it seemed sort of your side of the equation and trying to make sure that your side of the equation is given fair weight.

SCOTT: Similarities in East Asia were a little more diffuse. The Big Three power hitters for East Asia were Japan, China, and South Korea. South Korea then, almost entirely for security issues, and now much more broadly in terms of economic wherewithal as well. But there was also a dynamic of competition amongst the three.

Interestingly enough, particularly for you guys, where folks in the Chrysanthemum Club tended to go when they weren't working on Japan was either China or Korea. Korea because there's a lot of, actually with all three of them, a lot of shared cultural similarities, and you could sort of slide into another one without having to begin from ground zero. That tended to mitigate a little bit the clientitis or that sort of thing in East Asia. A lot of folks working on one of the countries would have had at least some experience, either on the desk or overseas, working on one or the other two.

Q: I served in Korea, and my first ambassador was Dick Snyder who was a preeminent Japan hand who helped set up the Japan-Okinawa deal with Japan. Bill Gleysteen did too. What about on the political military side, accent on the military since we had a very strong presence in South Korea. It was just sitting there waiting for something to happen. There was a crisis over the horizon.

SCOTT: On the military side with the relationship with Japan, Korea was never far from the equation, because one of the principle reasons for forward deployment in Japan was to enable us to get fairly quickly to Korea with large numbers of people and supplies fairly fast.

The Japanese were well aware of that and, in fact, were for at least the political and security side of the house, quite comfortable with it. I think the average Japanese focus was more in the context of constitutional limitations. The idea of Japan being drawn into a Korea conflict for them was pretty horrifying.

For the political leadership and the foreign policy leadership and the military leadership, they had no doubt at all that there was any way at all that they could avoid it. From their perspective the view was, "If you're going to be in, be in with the 800 pound gorilla in the region rather than on your own," we being the 800 pound gorilla.

Q: Was China doing things? There was the Taiwan thing. Did this cross your horizon at all?

SCOTT: It crossed the horizon mostly in the context of the inevitable Japanese remark about World War II and attempting to justify Japanese behavior, which just drove the Chinese nuts. They'd fly into a high tension and there'd be all kinds of angst and hand wringing in Tokyo about all of this. That tended to be the way it popped up with the exception of the security folks, who really did see China as a long term serious rival for Japan in the region.

Q: In your group, did you ever figure out what did the Japan see as the Chinese menace, if it was? What would the Chinese be after? They had no particular claims on any of the Chinese islands.

SCOTT: There were a few disputed islands down to the southeast of Okinawa. Again, it's never between one or two. It's a three-way dispute between Japan, Taiwan, and China. That's still there, and it works under the surface and bubbles up every now and then when somebody does something, but for the most part remains quiescent.

Mainly it was the context of overall Chinese dominance in the region, including economic and social-cultural as well as military.

Q: I imagine you were blessing Stalin for having laid his hands on control of the northern islands.

SCOTT: The northern territories!

Q: Yes, the northern territories because he really made our diplomacy delightful, vis a vis the Soviets, by keeping these God forsaken islands under his control. We're talking about the northern territories.

SCOTT: The northern territories, yes.

Q: Sakhalin is not part of the...

SCOTT: Sakhalin is not part of it.

Q: That half thing is all. That's not a dispute.

SCOTT: That's no longer a dispute. The Japanese have waived that many, many years ago, but the northern territories still stick in their craw. As you say, the Soviets and the Russians just handed us an opportunity to be the good guys in an easy and painless way.

The interesting thing is, and I'd like to mention it now while I remember, rather than later on, is the northern territories issue actually came back to me many years down the road as political counselor in Tel Aviv. When I had some conversations with Russian immigrants

and was trying to get a handle on why the Russian Jewish community was so generally adamantly opposed to any kind of a territorial deal with the Palestinians. They assigned it at least in part, to continuation of Russian pride. One of them as much as said, "Look, we're from a culture that never gives anything back. We've spent 50 years telling the Japanese to go count sand over four teeny tiny hunks of territory. How can you possibly think we would be comfortable reverting large chunks of territory to the Palestinians?" It was one of those slaps in the face. You don't really think about it until somebody puts that perspective in front of you. Anyway, you're exactly right. It's been a diplomatic gift to us for many years.

Q: In your dealings with the Japanese, did the consequences or anything dealing with the Great Pacific War come up, or was this so many years later that it was gone?

SCOTT: For us it was largely gone with two exceptions: One, of course, was the continuing problem they had with countries in the region. Every couple of years new Japanese text books would come out and how they deal with the war, and if it isn't the Chinese, it's the Koreans or the Southeast Asians or the Filipinos, the Koreans especially. They just go bananas about it.

In our case it tended to be more abstract, in the context of general conclusions on our part that a lot of the issues that were meaningful to the Japanese in security terms would perhaps have been less meaningful, if at some point they had undergone a Germany-like fundamental introspective look at their history, what happened, and who did what, and why they did it.

Q: Apparently the Japanese really haven't.

SCOTT: They really haven't. The idea of victimhood, the idea of the war that they describe, and some of the more nationalistic guys describe, as racial in nature, is very much alive in some segments of Japanese society.

Q: Were there people saying, "Poor little us. You big people picked on us," or something?

SCOTT: Sure. The then-member of the Diet Shintaro Ishihara, currently the mayor of Tokyo and author of a book at the time that Japan can say no, was very much of the mold that Japan had been victimized for 40 years and it was time that the Japanese stood up and told the West, "If you don't like the economic straits you find yourself in, too bad. Fix it."

Q: Had the book -- I can't think of the author now -- The Rape of Nanking come out? This had been something the Japanese had, for very legitimate reasons, nurtured in their souls, but it really hadn't come to, particularly American or world attention until this book came out.

SCOTT: I don't remember the exact timing, but that was certainly one of the issues that always generated real heat with the Chinese. The interesting thing was if you had somebody in Japanese society who would take the more traditional argument, that Japanese soldiers had acquitted themselves abominably in Nanking, it would generate just firestorms of criticism. Again, for many reasons, I think the Japanese just hadn't gone through some sort of, "We need to figure out what really happened. We need to deal with it. We need to move on." There was a knee jerk reaction, "This couldn't possibly be true. Our soldiers would never act that way; therefore, it's an anti-Japanese plot."

Q: The whole thing about comfort women still hasn't gone away.

On the political military side did the, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy on nuclear things. Was that in full swing or how did that stand that during your time?

SCOTT: It still was. This was after, of course, Ambassador Reischauer had made his comments post-his ambassadorship that sort of peeled off a few layers of the onion and let some light shine in. It still was nonetheless a matter of considerable sensitivity on the part of the Japanese. We continued to draw on the U.S. Navy's policy not to confirm or deny. It was one of those issues that floated along under the surface, would resurface every now and then, and get a fair amount of attention in the Japanese press. As long as folks stayed with the public affairs line, it would last for two or three days, or maybe a week or so, and then drift back into the mist.

We had one somewhat memorable occasion when I was on the desk where the folks over at the national archives declassified a set of documents from the late '50s period, without having referred them back to the department. A couple of them were purportedly cables that talked about the nuclear issue.

That one did get us a bit of a hiccup because one of the Japanese papers, the Asahi Shimbun got hold of one, and asked the Japanese embassy here if this was a legitimate document. They dutifully came into the department and asked us if it was a legitimate cable. It was probably one of those wonderful questions that you really shouldn't ask the question if you're not prepared to hear the answer. I took it, told my counterpart, "I will look into it. I don't know if this is official or not or if it's real or not. It's a very old document so it'll probably take me a long time to find out." He was happy with that. We never, as I recall, did answer the question. In point of fact, it was a legitimate document.

Q: What about the involvement of our military forces in Okinawa and Japan? My brother at one point was commanding officer at Suki. Planes would crash, troops would sometimes get pretty nasty with local ladies and all this. During the time you were there, did you get involved in any of these?

SCOTT: Not an awful lot when I was on the Japan desk, because most of it was handled out in Tokyo. But for the three years I was out in Tokyo as chief of the political military unit, the short answer is, almost all the time.

Q: We'll come to that later.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover during this Japan desk period?

SCOTT: I think that pretty much covers it. As I say, the security side tended to be going pretty well, compared to the economic side. The one thing that we might say a couple more sentences about, in terms of the political military side, was the host nation support issue. Congress was becoming increasingly interested in what our various allies were doing, not only Japan but NATO allies and others as well, as part of burden sharing. Because the Japanese were constitutionally unable to do an awful lot in terms of deployments and that kind of support, we tended to focus our responses much more on the Japanese role and host nation support, which in turn, of course, tended to generate more congressional pressure to get more host nation support. We had a good story to tell. We told it, but the reaction from the political side of the house and the U.S. was, "You need to make this a better story."

Q: You were always asking for more?

SCOTT: Yes, always asking for more.

Q: What were you getting from your military colleagues dealing with this at that time, the armed forces of Japan?

SCOTT: Not an awful lot that I recall, other than the armed forces of Japan were at that time, and certainly even during the time I was posted in Tokyo, very sensitive about their public position in Japan. In the early years Japan defense force personnel would not wear uniforms to work. They would come in in civilian clothes and change into uniform once they got on the base and got to the defense agency. When they went home at night, they changed out and did the same thing the other way around, because their status in Japanese society tended to be so low, and they were viewed with considerable suspicion.

Q: Was it a lowness or suspicion?

SCOTT: A little, I think, of both, but it was lowness out of suspicion rather than just lowness. In terms of doing exercises and exercising with the U.S., it was easiest if you were the Japanese air force because your airplanes took off and went to 25 or 30,000 feet, flew out somewhere out where there was no visibility whatsoever, and they could exercise with us fairly effectively. With the Navy, Japanese Naval Self Defense Forces, it was the same sort of thing. They could sail out of port and out of sight of the mainland and exercise fairly effectively. Well, Army self defense forces were much, much, much more limited because they were in place on land, and highly visible. They were very, very reluctant to engage in any sort of activity that could conceivably be seen as offensive in nature.

Q: Okay, you took Japanese essentially from when to when?

SCOTT: From August of '84 to summer of '86.

Q: How did you find the language training and the language both here and Yokohama?

SCOTT: The language was agonizing. The training was pretty good. The instructors were very good, very conscientious, very dedicated. One of the interesting things that transpired out of that was the Japanese language instructors at FSI then were all women. Most places this wouldn't be any big deal, except that the colloquialisms that Japanese women use are different from those the Japanese men use, and the manner of speaking is somewhat different.

We arrived in Yokohama after a year of learning Japanese here in Washington, and the occasional comment that you heard was, "You speak Japanese like a woman." We did! That's who we learned from! I think one of the efforts on the part of the instructors in Yokohama, who were evenly split between men and women, and two of the most senior were men, were really designed to get the men away from speaking like a woman would. They worked diligently there in terms of taking folks out to bars after class, having a couple of beers, and conducting language training the way a Japanese man would speak Japanese. They had a great deal of dedication to getting the language across, not only in the classroom environment, but getting you out into the real world.

Q: To go back a bit. I was part of the occupation, the tail end of the occupation of Japan. I heard that some of my colleagues, I was an enlisted man, who thought they spoke pretty good Japanese picking it up, but they spoke women's Japanese, but guess where they learned it! [laughter]

Also, your training, your time in Yokohama, did this get you into Japanese thinking or the feeling of Japanese thought? One always has to say that you can never really do it unless you're born there.

SCOTT: I think in almost every instance that's true, partially because it's useful to look at Japanese society as a series of concentric circles starting with family and then close friends and immediate social group, and then maybe work group and university group and then neighbors. Way out on the edge of that are folks who are clearly not Japanese. You're there, you're accepted if you speak Japanese, or try and speak Japanese, there's a lot of understanding and appreciation for that, but if you think you're going to move from the outer edges of the circle into the innermost circles, that's not going to happen. The quicker you can become comfortable with that idea, the happier everybody is going to be.

That's not to say that you don't develop very close friendships with some Japanese. You really do, but if you think that from within this circle you're ever going to get into the family circle or the folks who grew up in Japan circle, you're wrong.

The other thing that's always beneficial for learning a language in the country where it's spoken, and certainly a language like Japanese or Chinese or some of the other really hard languages, is the fact that you can't escape. When you're out on the street, you're going to hear it. When you turn on the radio, you're going to hear it. When you turn on the TV you're going to hear it. The patterns are going to start to bounce around inside your head. One of the pieces of advice our linguist gave us in Yokohama was, "When you go home at night, turn your radio on. You're not going to understand what they say, and that doesn't matter. You're going to start to hear vocal patterns and inflections and pronunciations and all the other things that come into language that don't look at vocabulary or diagramming sentences and that sort of thing." I think he's right.

Q: Firm up the idea that often the people in our embassy or in our consulates in Japan, people from the United States come out -- I'm talking about officials -- who have a long conversation. They'll say, "Oh, boy. That really went well." I'd say, "No, it didn't go well at all!" Did you begin to understand that other layer of what they were saying? Sometimes people would say, "I hear you." It sounds like they're agreeing with you.

SCOTT: The classic example is in a conversation with a Japanese counterpart, what you'll very frequently see is head nodding, "Hai." Hai is yes. It's, "Yes, I hear you. Yes, I understand what you're saying." If you ask them to do something, unless you hear, "Yes, we will do it," in fairly forward leaning terms, you probably don't necessarily have the meeting of the minds that you think you do.

As I was saying, one of the things that was really different in the context of Japan versus Israel, with the Israelis if you ask them something and they didn't want to do it, you'd get a flat, "We're not going to do that. We don't see that as in our interests, and we're just not going to do it." You were frustrated, but you walked away. You knew where you stood. With the Japanese you will almost never hear somebody say, "No." It will be "Uhhh..." or, "Well..." You really have to read the body language.

Q: Were you picking up also the problem of the Japanese understanding the Americans or foreigners, Americans in this case?

SCOTT: Oh, yes. It works both ways. If you were talking to a Japanese diplomat or a defense agency official who had long dealings with the United States, you could be pretty confident that he or occasionally she -- but it was almost always he -- would be as adept at reading your body language and your inferences as you thought you were in reading his. If it was somebody from a ministry that normally didn't deal with Americans or a Japanese company that normally didn't deal with Americans, you needed to be mindful of the fact that he was probably putting the same Japanese overlay on his interpretation of you, as an American in that situation would be putting on his interpretation of what his Japanese counterpart were saying. The opportunities for misunderstandings were just rife.

Q: This is the second part of an interview on July 28th with John Scott. You started in our embassy in Tokyo in '86.

SCOTT: In '86.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

SCOTT: The ambassador at that time was Mike Mansfield.

Q: Had he been there a long time?

SCOTT: By that time he had been there quite a while because he was a Carter appointee.

Q: Yes. As a matter of fact, I met him when I went to Korea I think in '75 or something. I don't know. Anyway, I knew him later than that. It would have been '77 actually.

SCOTT: Probably '77, yes. He was there for I think over 13 years. I got there at the tail end of his tenure. He was an ambassador who first of all, of course, had an enormous respect within the Japanese community. I think it's fair to say he had an equally enormous respect within the embassy. He'd forgotten more about the Far East than most of us ever...

Q: Yes. He had been a Marine in China before the war.

SCOTT: Exactly, and always had a Far East focus during his time as a senator and as majority leader, so he really knew the country. The fact that he was, late '70s, early '80s, for no other reason than his age and venerability, drew a huge amount of support and respect from the Japanese, and the fact that he was prepared to go to the mat in instances where he felt Washington didn't understand some of the implications of what was going on in Japan endeared him to folks. Nonetheless, this guy was an American patriot through and through.

Q: Who was the DCM?

SCOTT: The DCM was... I think Bill Clark had left then, and it was Desaix Anderson.

Q: What was your impression when you got there of the embassy morale, outlook, operation, and other?

SCOTT: First of all, it was a huge embassy, and still is, with representation from a wide variety of the executive branch agencies, so it's a much more complex Asian embassy than many. Overall morale, at least as I saw it, was pretty good, particularly in those sections where there really was a lot going on.

The economic section was always busy and running at full speed because the economic issues were still very much front and center. The political section was probably not quite so busy, especially in terms of issues that constantly attracted Washington attention, but there still was always Washington attention on what was going on politically because that colored the economic side sort of things. There was a certain amount of rivalries there as

well, one of which was perhaps more pronounced, which was between the economic section and the finance attaché and the financial section. We were one of the few posts that had a treasury department officer posted there.

There was, I think, at the working level at least, a sense that the sharing of information from the finance and ministry of finance folks was not quite as good as it could have been with the economic section and others in the embassy. Whether that view was held higher up, I don't know, but it certainly was at the working level.

Q: It continued. The pressure to somehow get the Japanese to do something about the deficit, not for us to do something about it.

Q: What was your job?

SCOTT: I was chief of the political military unit. I had one guy working for me full time and another officer who I shared with the political external section. Our focus, of course, was several-fold, but predominantly either issues related to the U.S. presence in Japan or broader issues of how the Japanese related to the security treaty and the security environment. That ranged from host nation support and U.S. training efforts to the occasional and almost always nasty incident of bad behavior on the part of a U.S. serviceman.

Q: What was the American military presence like? We're talking about what, '86?

SCOTT: '87 to '91.

Q: What was the American military presence during that time on the Japanese islands?

SCOTT: Still fairly substantial, the bulk of it on Okinawa with the 3rd Marine Division and their support, and Kadena Air Force Base. There was a presence on the main island, on Honshu. In the north we had F-16s at a northern base.

Q: Misawa?

SCOTT: Misawa, right. Yokota was largely a support and through-put facility but also headquarters of U.S. Forces Japan, and Yokosuka where the Navy presence was based, Yokosuka where the aircraft carrier was based when the carrier was in port, and then the naval facilities down in Kyushu.

The bulk of the non-personnel issues that we had all seemed to revolve around training, whether it was noise or the occasional training mishap or night landing practice in the case of Yokosuka. Most of the problems were in one way or another related to training. Those tended to be fairly constant throughout the tour although they tended to drop down for a couple of reasons when the Gulf War started.

Q: This was 19...

SCOTT: This was 1990. The reason for that was, I think, twofold: One, of course, the homeport carrier *USS Midway* and the battle group deployed to the Persian Gulf, so there wasn't a lot of training and that sort of thing going on with the Japanese Navy that normally went on when the carrier was in port.

Interestingly enough those events I think began to produce some shifts in how the Japanese perceived the carrier and the present. I actually had folks at the foreign ministry call me once the air war had begun with the question basically of, "How is our carrier doing?" It was just that: How was *our* carrier doing? The answer I was happy to give them was, "The carrier's doing quite well, thank you."

It was the only carrier in the first Gulf War that didn't lose a plane or pilot to hostile action. The point that we used with the Japanese was, "This is the result of all that training that these guys got." They got better training than any of their counterparts because they fly here so often. For that reason the learning curve that other carrier pilots had to endure in transitioning into a high fly hostile environment, they were already at the top of that curve. For the foreign ministry and defense agency folks who were somewhat familiar with that sort of thing, that was a pretty convincing argument.

We would also take the city fathers of Yokosuka and the surrounding areas out to the *Midway* when she was in port, or steaming nearby, for a day of observing what was going on on the carrier. That always included an arrested landing with the tail hook landing and a catapult departure. Inevitably, for at least a few weeks and maybe a couple of months surrounding that trip, the level of complaints about night landing practice tended to drop way off, because they really got a firsthand view of just how hard that is. We'd take them in, take a flyby of the carrier. From 30,000 feet an aircraft carrier looks like a postage stamp, and it really isn't very big. You realize that in a couple of minutes the guy flying the plane you're in is going to go from 130 miles an hour to zero in about a second. It has a way of clearing your politics!

Q: How did the military attachés at the embassy fit in, or did they have a completely different set of interests?

SCOTT: They had a similar set of interests. There were sort of four of us if you will: the embassy's political unit, the embassy's attaché corps, and the attachés are traditionally over our intelligence gatherers. They're collecting information, so their job is to interact with their defense agency counterparts and collect information on what the defense agency is doing.

We also had an -- and I think probably still do -- office that was responsible for managing military assistance programs. They were separate and distinct from the military attachés. Their job was handling training, handling payment for the training, handling Japanese purchases of U.S. equipment, and that sort of thing. Then the fourth was over U.S. forces in Japan, the headquarters that commanded all the U.S. forces in Tokyo.

With these four elements, even though you could look on them as four legs of the stool, you were better looking at it as a Venn diagram because any of the two would overlap with the others to a considerable degree. There was a certain overlap with all four. One of the issues that you always had to be mindful of was making sure that these four organizations weren't getting in each other's way, and that we knew what each other was doing.

From the embassy's front office perspective, their expectation was that for the most part I was responsible for that, and my section was responsible for making sure that we understood what the other three were doing, how that impacted with us, and then keeping the embassy front office informed of any problem areas.

Q: How was the fighter aircraft production problem going during the time you were there?

SCOTT: We ended up bringing that one to closure while I was there. The agreement basically was that the Japanese would build an aircraft and partner very closely with then-General Dynamics, now Lockheed Martin, in building it.

Q: That was the F-16.

SCOTT: It was based on an F-16. It was a bigger aircraft than the F-16. They would have access to a lot of the information that General Dynamics had from developing the F-16. General Dynamics in turn would have access to the Japanese technology that they planned to employ in the wings and controls surfaces using carbon fiber composite technology to build those surfaces, as opposed to metal and rivets.

This was an area where the Japanese were considerably more advanced than U.S. technology, so there was a trade off both ways. The idea was that the U.S. manufacturer would be making some sales of technology and getting some money back for it, plus getting a lot of know-how in that carbon fiber coke-cured deposit technology. A lot of that work had been done while I was out of the loop in Washington and Yokohama studying Japanese, but it all came to closure in basically the first year after I got there.

Q: When you were at the embassy during this time, was there any change in the attitude towards whether Japan or particularly Japan buying up the United States? Had the bubble broken by that time?

SCOTT: The bubble hadn't broken yet, but we were beginning to see, particularly by the end of my time, the indications that at least parts of the bubble, particularly land values and especially land values in Tokyo, were clearly out of whack. The idea that a decent Tokyo lot the size of this card table would be worth a million dollars, come on. That can't be real! The bubble hadn't burst yet, but there was that beginning sense that there're some economics here that defy logic.

Q: What about the collapse of the Soviet Empire which was happening during your watch? How did that play from your point of view? Did that change any dynamics?

SCOTT: I think in some ways it generated a little more difficulty in the host nation support argument in that the big enemy was in the final throes of collapse. Two things happened, though, that mitigated against the enemy, at least in my view. One, of course, was the Gulf War and the Japanese beginning to realize the Soviet bear is no longer at the door, but there are certainly a lot of -- for lack of a better term -- cubs or small guys out there who are prepared to make real trouble.

Q: The Japanese were utterly dependent on Gulf oil.

SCOTT: That one really got their attention. The other thing was the events in China in Tiananmen.

Q: That was June of '89.

SCOTT: Correct. The idea of the Chinese government's willingness to slap down a decent democratic movement in a pretty brutal way I think caused a lot of folks in the Japanese hierarchy to think carefully about it. There I think, in some ways, we have to thank the substantial changes in world news organizations and satellite uploads and that sort of thing. The Japanese, like anyone else, could see this stuff happening almost in real time.

Q: The whole CNN, but it's much more than that, but it's the CNN influence on world events. We often were responding to images rather than to policy.

SCOTT: Exactly. One thing that struck me, and I suspect it struck my Japanese counterparts, although I never really talked with them much about it, was the sense that at least at that point it seemed clear that the Chinese didn't realize quite the tiger whose tail they had a hold of.

I remember one very interesting byplay in a discussion between a CNN crew and a Chinese official. The Chinese interlocutors clearly did not understand that those images were being beamed out live. It was going from the guy's camera to the satellite uplink and downloaded everywhere. At one point, as I recall, the Chinese guy said he was going to want a tape of that conversation. It was clear that he thought, "Oh, I'll get that tape, and it's as if this never happened." Welcome to the real world!

I suspect that there were Japanese who, like I did, looked at that and thought, "These guys haven't quite got it yet." Another example was when a former chief of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, Ace Lyons, had visited Beijing, and the Chinese essentially tried to tell him that Tiananmen Square hadn't happened or at least the brutality of it hadn't happened. Admiral Lyons was really blunt. He said, "Come on, guys. The world saw it! This isn't something you can hide. This is real. Those were real images and the world saw it and the world saw that guy standing in front of the line of tanks," and then

conveying to the Chinese the message that their ability to control a message by censoring the press is not as much there as it used to be.

I think the impact of watching that also made the Japanese a little nervous about what was going on in their region.

Q: What about the Japanese press, the media? They seem to have huge contingents all of a sudden all over the place and occupying coverage there.

SCOTT: Thorough but not necessarily enlightened. As you say, they had a lot of folks all over, and sometimes it seemed they were falling all over themselves. Most of the Japanese newspapers have a fairly clear editorial bent and for the most part it tends to be anti-government or at least very skeptical of government. So you'll see a lot of that in the coverage, assuming the worst. I think the pressure sometimes was to get the story out, and maybe check it afterwards. That produced some interesting things.

Q: What was your feeling, I'm talking about yours, maybe the other officers that you were working with at the embassy, of the political element of the Japanese?

SCOTT: I think a couple of things come to mind. One, that the political element for the most part tended to be fairly reluctant to do anything that would make waves or might generate controversy in the body politic. If you were a proponent of the idea that one of the responsibilities of political leadership is to lead, watching the Japanese political system in action can be kind of frustrating because there tended not to be a lot of leadership, and they tended to close ranks around an idea and stayed there.

Some people in the context of the Japanese defense policy felt sometimes that with the right leadership the Japanese public might be prepared to move further than the politicians gave them credit for. At least during my tenure there the politicians tended to be fairly conservative. That's not to say everybody was. The parties that were out of power tended to be pretty out there in their own way, whether it was the Shintaro Ishihara camp of, "We can go our own way without the Americans, and we should set the constitutional restrictions aside and redevelop a world class military." On the other side, on the leftist side, the idea was that the defense agency has already gone far too far and needed to be reined in.

Q: In a way they were almost free to do this because the LDP had been running the thing since...

SCOTT: They had been running the thing almost uninterrupted since the end of World War II.

Q: The other ones were quite free to play around with ideas without having responsibility.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: I can't remember, at that time did the Japanese send any ships to the Persian Gulf?

SCOTT: No.

Q: There was some talk later about minesweepers, so maybe that was the second one.

SCOTT: They did send some minesweepers. I think in the aftermath of the Gulf War they may have sent minesweepers because they, as I recall, were largely wooden hull ships and were not particularly susceptible to magnetic mines. This, as I recall, was post-war.

Q: I wonder if you'd speak a bit as an officer there, you've learned the language, but what of the role of foreign service nationals that you dealt with. These are very important elements.

SCOTT: Sure. They are an important element there and I think just about everywhere, but in Japan they were particularly loyal, and as a result particularly long serving. I mean, my guess is probably the average was 20 to 25 years service. When I was there we had at least one person who had retired and got a 40 year pin. When you think about that, it's really pretty remarkable, working at the same place for 40 years! There really was a lot of continuity.

We had a section that did daily press translations for the front office, and for the political and economic section, run by an American expatriate, in fact, who had stayed in Japan after the war and who had excellent Japanese. He and his staff were a real source of understanding and information about what was going on because they had been watching it for so long. There was almost nothing that happened in Japan that one of them hadn't seen two or three times before, and they were instantly able to give you contacts that you wouldn't otherwise have had. They had the added benefit of having a foot in both camps. The foreign service nationals had been working with Americans for many, many years, and they really understood our culture and how we operated. They understood the Japanese culture and could serve as a bridge between us.

Q: We've done a little sampling elsewhere, but I'd love to get somebody to do an oral history with some of the experienced foreign service nationals.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: Think about that. If you know of anybody who might be able to do that. Did you go to negotiations or meetings and then come back? I assume often you went with a foreign service national to do the more tricky translations. Would you come back and say, "What was that all about? What were they really saying?"

SCOTT: In my case it didn't happen all that much, mainly because most of the discussions and negotiations that we had were with long time American hands whose English was quite good. My deputy, a guy named Evans Revere, had very good Japanese.

If we needed to, we would draw on his expertise more often than not, but most of the ones that I was involved with were primarily handled in English. Host nation support and some of the trickier ones on how we were going to handle particular events where American forces and personnel had gotten on the wrong side of...

Q: During the time you were there and this time, any major involvement that we haven't discussed?

SCOTT: Only a little bit more in the context of host nation support. We really were able to do a lot when I was there. The President and the Secretary of State had named an ambassador for burden sharing, Allan Holms, who came out with the idea of expanding Japanese host nation support for the U.S. We did those talks in a way that was pretty effective. My staff and the DCM and I did a lot of the underbrush, clearing up, and got most of the little issues that would need to be worked out, out of the way. So, by the time Allan came out, we pretty much had it down to the extent to which the Japanese were going to take on costs for Japanese workers and whether the Japanese were going to begin to move into building facilities that were more combat support.

We were fairly successful on the first one. They essentially agreed to pay for the retirement and all of the pension costs for the Japanese labor force that we had. The big quid on our side was that we would work fairly hard to manage the number of personnel that U.S. forces hired. The Japanese concern was, "Now they're going to go out and hire a whole bunch of people, and we're going to end up taking a bath on the other end."

One of the interesting outcomes of all of that was after the deal was sealed, I think it was the Army that came out with a worldwide requirement for, I think, a 10% or 15% across the board reduction in locally employed people. We initially went back to the Army and said, "We think you need to make an exception for the Japanese here because the Japanese have agreed to take on, after a certain period, all of the pension costs for all of these folks. If you reduce them in force now, we will bear those costs, and these are almost all people who have been, as with the embassy, with U.S. forces, 25 or 30 years." Big pensions and for people, who at the time and still are, among the longest lived on the planet, so this wasn't going to be a situation that went away after two or three years, but it was going to last a long time.

It really took us a lot of work to put together the numbers to convince the Army that making an exception for the Japanese would generate some short term costs, but in the long term would save hundreds of millions of dollars. The part of it that surprises me is also the part of it that doesn't surprise me, which is that the bureaucracy tends not to look at things with a particular logic until you really make it unmistakable. It really did surprise me that anything other than the most basic of numbers had to be sent in before they finally realized this was a dumb idea!

Q: Particularly with cost of living, how was social life? How did you find Japan?

SCOTT: Social life I think was pretty good. One of the things that my wife and I always told folks was, "If you want to eat the same way you eat in the United States day in and day out, it's going to cost you a lot of money because beef is high, and many of the staples of Western diet are pretty high. If you're prepared to move toward a more Japanese-like diet -- which, by the way, is good for you -- you can do okay." I think a lot of people in the embassy found that to be the case.

We had real advantages, of course, too, because we had access to the PX's and commissaries at the bases, and most people would take a cooler and make a commissary run once a month and load up on some of the basic staples. Even if you didn't do that, you could manage as long as you didn't necessarily try and maintain a Western lifestyle. Some of the other things, the travel was expensive, and if you wanted to get away for a few days at a Japanese inn or resort, it was pretty costly. If you wanted to experience Japan other than Tokyo, you bit the bullet and did it.

Q: I think this probably is a good place to stop, John. We'll pick this up in '91. Where?

SCOTT: '91 back to Washington on the Japan desk.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then.

Today is the 5th of August 2008 with John Scott. We're in 1991, and you're off to the Japan desk.

SCOTT: Off to the Japan desk.

Q: You were doing that from when to when?

SCOTT: From '91 to '93.

Q: As you looked over your shoulder, what of Japan did you think about at that time?

SCOTT: The parting thought, if I give a conscious effort to it, was, even through some of the turmoil of the economic situation and some of the things that had happened globally, Tiananmen and the unrest there and, of course, the first Gulf War, the U.S. and Japan relationship really seemed solid and stable. We weren't necessarily out of the woods on economics yet and the bubble hadn't burst, and we hadn't fully realized yet that economically the Japanese weren't 10 feet tall and about to pound us into oblivion, but the overall state of the relationship seemed pretty good.

I felt that going back on the Japan desk at that time was probably not going to generate a lot of real angst and anguishing issues. I felt, by and large, after the two years on the desk that that was pretty much true. I was thinking a little bit over the course of the past couple of days about if there was anything particular that I wanted to highlight, and I came to the conclusion that, on the whole, it was a relatively peaceful two year tour. I had a few

presidential visits, and I think it was during one visit that you have the Bush-Miyazawa vomiting incident, but other than that...

Q: You might explain what that was.

SCOTT: Oh, yes. President Bush I, at the end of a very long and arduous East Asia trip, got to Tokyo for a couple of days' visit. It was clear that he was just exhausted. He had been as far south as Australia and moved his way up the region. Travel in Asia is always arduous because the distances are so long. He was just pooped by the time he got to Tokyo. At a very elaborate dinner, a Japanese dinner that then-Prime Minister Miyazawa was hosting for him, the fatigue and probably a touch of the flu caught up with him, and he lost his supper in the prime minister's lap [laughter], which generated all kinds of headlines and not so nice jokes and humor.

I think, all things considered, if you had to pick a prime minister for that to happen to, Prime Minister Miyazawa was probably the ideal candidate. He had a long and very positive relationship and dealings with the United States. He understood the U.S. very well. He spoke pretty good English. Of all of the potential prime ministers, the one least likely to be insulted would have been Prime Minister Miyazawa. He pretty much picked it up that way: very sympathetic, didn't make a big deal of it, and it smoothed out pretty quickly.

Q: You were on the desk for two years. What was your chain of command there at that time dealing with Japan?

SCOTT: The director at that time was Russ Deming. Russ had been political counselor there. He and I went back together. He had been political counselor in Tokyo, and I had been chief of the pol-mil unit, and we decamped together back to the desk, so we had a very good and by then long-standing working relationship. We changed assistant secretaries in mid stream. I'm trying for the life of me to think who was assistant secretary when we first got there, but it escapes me. Bill Clark who had been DCM in Tokyo several years earlier came back as assistant secretary, and his principal deputy was Don Westmore. Don had been chief of the political internal unit in Tokyo, so you had a string of folks in East Asia, all of whom had a fair amount of time dealing with Japan. In fact, I had at that time seven years, and I was probably the new guy.

Q: Bill Clark was political counselor in Seoul in the '70s when I was consul general there. Westmore was a young vice consul in Da Nang in South Vietnam when I was consul general down in Saigon.

SCOTT: So there you go! As you know the East Asia folks tend to stay in East Asia. I think one of the things that made the job in some ways less demanding than it might have been was all the way up through the chain of command in the bureau, you have folks who served in Japan, understood Japan, understood the U.S.-Japan relationship. A lot of the things you might normally have to do in terms of educating your DAS or educating your secretary just weren't needed.

Q: How would you say the relationship or the importance of Japan was seen; you were there during a change of administration.

SCOTT: There was a change of administration.

Q: Between Bush I and Clinton. Let's say Bush I. He was probably, with the exception of John Adams and John Quincy Adams the most knowledgeable president we had with foreign affairs experience. Did we have any problems or distance between the State Department and National Security Council or the president on relations with Japan?

SCOTT: Not really that struck me at the time. I think one of the reasons for that, it goes back even before the Bush administration, in some ways perhaps early into the Reagan administration.

We had always had in East Asia from the time I first came into the bureau at the Japan desk a Monday afternoon meeting attended by the East Asia assistant secretary and the deputy assistant secretaries, the senior director for East Asia affairs at the National Security Council and the NIO for East Asia from CIA. I think that that meeting which tended to be pretty collegial really identified any potential issues fairly quickly. Oh yes, and the East Asia deputy assistant secretary for International Security Affairs from DoD.

You had the four senior players in the administration who looked at East Asia issues, and all of them frequently focused on Japan issues, they would get together every Monday in the afternoon and hash things out. That, I think, was really instrumental in avoiding a lot of issues, at least on the security side.

Q: This is one of the problems in a bureaucracy. If you can air these things early, otherwise, they fester. This is like medicine. If you get a problem, you talk it out, you take care of it. I don't think this is done very often in other bureaus.

SCOTT: I have not seen it in other bureaus. I never saw a similar meeting in the NEA bureau. We did a little bit of it subsequently. When I was in the Africa bureau there were pretty good relationships; with East Asia it was very, very tight. That all worked down. People briefed their subordinates on what was going on. We were expected to have the same sort of collegiality with our counterparts at the NSC and the DoD in the agency as the seniors did.

Q: Was there...not to say competition...but did you find the Japanese hands saying, "Don't pay too much attention to those people across the yellow sea in China." In other words, was there a Japan bureaucratic attention focus problem or not?

SCOTT: Occasionally there might have been, but during my time in East Asia we tended to have the same sort of relationships between the desks. They're fairly close together in the department, it was fairly easy to walk around and talk to somebody. As you know, there's always a certain amount of cross-fertilization within the northeast Asia service, so

there was a fair amount of mitigation of potential rivalries there as well. That said, though, all of us, of course, at the desk level were focused on the U.S. relationship with the country we were responsible for. You might occasionally see a certain amount of competing with each other for ear time with your principals.

Q: They weren't the equivalent to big clashes of interests. In other words, you didn't have an island between the two that both claim that... Just recently, the last couple days I've seen there's been this perennial dispute about...

SCOTT: I saw that!

Q: ...a couple of rocks around Tsushima or something like that, between Japan and South Korea. How about the South Korean-Japanese relationship? It ain't warm and friendly.

SCOTT: It ain't warm and friendly, and it wasn't warm and friendly. It occasionally warmed just a bit, but it was never, as you know, warm and friendly. Even though everybody was certainly aware of those issues and would occasionally need to describe them to the embassy or the senior policy makers, I think for the most part everybody managed to avoid too much in the way of clientitis and were able to describe the issue without taking sides.

Part of that, I think, in the case of folks watching Japan affairs, is a lot of us did share the sense that, to a degree at least, the Japanese could have helped us out by doing basically what we were talking about last week, the introspection and examination of what happened in the first half of the 20th Century. There wasn't, I think, as much sympathy as there might have been if the Japanese had really tried to deal with these issues and were being brushed off. They were pretty, I'm not quite sure of the term, not really blasé, but they were pretty firm in their view that they didn't need to re-examine this and the problem was somebody else's, and that was that. It's hard to be sympathetic for with that.

Q: Yes. In a way it's handy not to have people fall in love with a country; which can happen.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: We're still, I guess, just on the cusp of the decline of the Soviet Union at that point. How did that play? It was a Far Eastern power.

SCOTT: Sure. In some ways that fact and the fact that you sometimes think that if the Russians have a choice of doing things the smooth and subtle way or the ham-handed and in-your-face way, they're going to go for the ham-handed and in-your-face way every time. That was certainly the way they tended to deal with the Japanese on some issues, particularly the northern islands issue. As we talked about a little last week, it made life so much easier for us.

Q: I've said the same thing. If we would have been there at the creation, we would have given Stalin the Medal of Liberty or something for grabbing that and then hanging on to it.

SCOTT: It really was. It seemed anytime there was a sense in the Japanese government structure that maybe the security relationship with the U.S. was a little too close or a little too limiting or a little too complicated for Japan's other foreign policy interests, the Russians or the Soviets would do something and boy, they'd slide right back.

Q: Was the KAL shoot down during your time?

SCOTT: Yes. During I think my first tour on the desk.

Q: How did that play? This is a shoot-down of a KAL plane that was off course and over the Kamchatka Peninsula.

SCOTT: I think pretty much everybody, certainly the Japanese and we were just horrified by it. It probably is the most glaring example of what we have been discussing, the Soviets doing something that flew in the face of any kind of Japanese sensitivities and really brought up into full light the Russian bear, particularly with the Japanese, given the anti-military streak that certainly runs through folks to the left of center.

This was just horrifying. You'd get a certain part of the group that would argue that it was certainly horrifying, but in a perverse way understandable, because the Soviets and the Russians feel beset on all sides by people and countries who wish to do them ill. For the most part, I think the reaction on the Japanese side was just horrified.

Q: What piece of the pie did you have in it, political military again?

SCOTT: I was deputy director so subsequently I had a little piece of all of the pie, but also the responsibility of making sure that on the administrative side that things ran smoothly. That included a lot of work on personnel issues, scouting out folks who were interested in going to Japan, interviewing, making sure paneling went smoothly, and that folks who needed it got language training and that kind of thing.

Q: What were you looking for, members of Chrysanthemum Club? Now you were one of the entry gods! What do they call that, Gateway Gods?

SCOTT: Gateway Gods, yes. A lot of it was the same sort of thing that you look for in any personnel assignment process. We wanted folks who were enthusiastic, particularly if they were going to go into language training, because as anybody who went through it knew, that was not a terribly fun experience, and it was a not terribly fun experience for a really long time. Two years is a long time to wake up and feel stupid every day. You wanted to get somebody who understood that this was a long haul kind of thing, this wasn't 20 weeks or 24 weeks of Spanish or that sort of thing. We looked for folks who

were also interested in the issues and had done at least a little bit of homework in getting to know things.

Finally, on most we would pull the hallway reputations and try and get a sense of, is this someone who plays well with others, is comfortable working within the system, because the folks who tend to be successful working with the Japanese tend to be folks who... It's fine to think outside the box, but you don't necessarily want to be stepping outside too often.

Q: During the time you were doing this, were you able to recruit people that had some experience with Japan? I'm thinking of people maybe teachers, five-five, or whatever the equivalent was, or people who had majored in Japanese studies? Was there very much of that around?

SCOTT: There was a little bit of that. Here I think in some ways the department's personnel policies tended to work against us. One particular example that still sticks in my mind is a young guy who came into the foreign service. He had been a Mormon missionary in Japan and was essentially a self-taught five-five Japanese speaker. He was just extraordinary. We wanted to get him essentially entry level assigned into Japan in the worst way. You don't come across five-five Japanese every day, or every year, maybe every five years.

Junior officer personnel was just absolutely determined that this guy was one, going to do his consular tour, and he wasn't going to do it in Japan. He did his consular tour, and he didn't do it in Japan. They did eventually bring him back into Japanese affairs I understand, but I found that while in general terms this was understandable, it just seemed to me that here was a guy we could put to work on real substance, real early. We were unable to break through that.

Q: How did you find relations with the Hill, with Congress, as far as... Were there Japanese hands on the staff in Congress or not?

SCOTT: There were by the time I came back as deputy director. The relationship with the Hill was at least in my sense rather better. The first time on the desk I frequently...

Q: First time...

SCOTT: The first time was before I went to Tokyo, after Israel.

Q: '91.

SCOTT: We're talking the '91 timeframe. The first tour, which I probably thank my lucky stars for at least once a week, I was working pol-mil issues and not economic issues, because the econ folks were just getting clobbered.

The second time around it may have been that the ensuing five or six years had hardened my skin a little bit, but I think that the atmosphere had improved so much that there wasn't quite as big a sense of the Japanese out maneuvering us at every turn economically. There wasn't quite as much pressure from the Hill as there had been. In addition, this was because Ambassador Allen Holmes had been very successful in negotiating with the Japanese an expansion of host nation support.

While I was in Tokyo there wasn't as much push from the Hill for the Japanese to be doing more to support U.S. forces there. When you looked at what they were doing, as opposed to what everybody else was doing, they were way up here and everyone else was down below. Obviously, the reason for that is that other allies had much more of a mutual defense assistance agreement than the Japanese did, but there wasn't nearly as much pressure as, you know, "We've got to get the Japanese to pay a lot more money."

Q: Were you in public or going through the American newspapers, picking up the anti-Japanese thing? It's pretty handy. We've had it with Mexico, we've had it with other countries, but particularly somebody like the Japanese, they're Oriental, they're different, and here they seem to be eating our lunch economically. If you want to be prejudiced, you might as well be prejudiced against this group. It makes it handy. Were you sensing a change there?

SCOTT: I was beginning to sense a change in that, yes. I tended not to see quite as much of it, I think, partially because the Japanese were handling the economic side much more sensibly. By this time all three of their major auto makers had plants in the United States, and while it was still Japanese cars being built here, they were beginning to order more spare parts from U.S. suppliers. Many more people were buying them. It was a little harder to whack them.

Q: I got a Toyota in the early '90s, 60% made in the United States, probably more now. How effective did you find -- or less effective did you find -- the Japanese embassy? I've asked this before, but how did they play the Washington game?

SCOTT: I think they played it pretty well. First of all, they did as we did, and they identified for the most part very solid officers in their foreign service and tracked them into the American service and made sure they spoke good English, often sent them to school here. So they had a pretty good understanding of the U.S. system. They tended, I thought, to be fairly skillful in terms of maintaining contact with the White House, maintaining contact with DoD, and worked the Hill fairly effectively. I think overall they were pretty good at it. In some ways I came to feel more that way a couple of years later when I was starting to work U.S.-South African issues and was watching a South African embassy that really wasn't very good at it.

Q: A prime example has always been, until recently, with India-Pakistan. The Pakistanis knew how to play the game; the Indians still had their dignity and did a lousy job for a long time, and it makes a difference.

SCOTT: Oh, it really does.

Q: Part of the game is if you insist on equal rank talking to equal rank, you get concerned about your dignity rather than getting down with the boys who really do the business, and they don't give a damn what their title is, sound them out and all.

SCOTT: Exactly.

Q: Were there any issues you had with the Pentagon in this time, the '91 to '93 period?

SCOTT: I really don't remember any. By that time the host nation support was taken care of and off the board. The FSX, the fighter aircraft issue, had been sorted out, and the Japanese were partnered with General Dynamics, now Lockheed, and that was going forward. Home porting was working well. We swapped out the Midway. We had a little bit of angst there because the Navy was briefly considering at that time putting a nuclear powered carrier in and ultimately everybody concluded that that was probably a little more than the market would bear, so they put another oil powered carrier in, the *Constellation*. Now it is a nuke powered home port. Even that went away.

Q: Was there any problem with the Sixth Fleet, was it?

SCOTT: Seventh Fleet.

Q: Seventh Fleet. Sixth Fleet was Mediterranean. Was there any problem with the Formosa Straits? The Japanese, how were they treating Formosa or Taiwan?

SCOTT: I didn't watch it terribly carefully, but by and large the way they did, the relationship with China, was through the economic relationship with Taiwan. I think they were probably more focused on the economic side of the thing because they didn't have... I was about to say they didn't have security interests. They certainly had security interests in terms of watching it and its potential effect on the sea lines of communication. They didn't have any security obligations toward Taiwan, and no arms sales to Taiwan, so their security interests tended to be a little more general and didn't get into the specific, demonstrative kinds of issues that we sometimes did.

Q: Were we having any economic clashes with the Japanese, their being after a market that we're after or that sort of thing? Did that translate into problems for the desk?

SCOTT: Occasionally, you'd get a little bit of that, but what you saw more of was almost what I would describe as the rivalry of who could provide more foreign aid and what types of foreign aid. It would go year by year. One year we'd be a little higher globally, and the next year they'd be a little higher, sort of back and forth.

One of the things that we tended to push them on fairly regularly was the issue of foreign aid that was tied, as opposed to untied. By that I mean our foreign aid tends to come without an awful lot of strings attached. We provide funding and the lowest bidder will

normally get the contract. It's great if that's an American, but sometimes it isn't. The Japanese tend to be much more in the context of tied foreign aid. A big package of aid would be provided, but all that had to be spent on Japanese firms doing the work and running the contracts and doing the building and that sort of thing. So the aid tended to flow to the country in question, and then the bulk of it flowed back to Japan in terms of costs of the contracts and so forth.

One of our arguments was that they can't really compare. If the foreign aid is not benefiting the country in ways other than to simply get a turnkey building or turnkey factory or a turnkey sewer system, but if somebody in the country isn't learning to build it and operate it and do it, it's less effective. That tended to be the situation, more than competition for markets, the kinds of things that we were seeing. I don't recall seeing anything along the lines of what we sometimes see with the Chinese in Africa these days, just getting out and working with aid and working with sales and really trying to capture markets with inexpensive goods.

Q: Were there any particular issues or incidents during this time that might be worth talking about?

SCOTT: As I say, I was thinking about that and wracking my brain, but there really isn't anything that pops up as a really noteworthy item. It was overall a pretty smooth couple of years from my perspective.

Q: Did you note, or was it too early to note, any change between the Bush and Clinton administrations, vis a vis Japan?

SCOTT: While I was there, no. From '91 to '93 President Bush was in full swing. By the time President Clinton came in in '94, I had already left. I think what I would say was it seemed to me that the Bush I administration tended to carry through the policies that had existed in the Reagan administration.

One of the things that was interesting about the Reagan administration was, for all of the occasional critiques that President Reagan gets in terms of not having a real solid grasp on the details of policy, and I think that's often true, he had an instinct for how to deal with people. He established a very good relationship with Prime Minister Nakasone and the other Japanese prime ministers that he dealt with, he found ways to raise the issues that tended to get the message across but in, if you will, a nice way rather than being obstreperous.

I think President Bush Senior tended to keep that same general approach with the Japanese. I think his focus was probably a little more on China than on Japan and, having been ambassador to China, you'd have been surprised if it had been any other way. Like Reagan he did not adopt a confrontational approach with the Japanese, and I think that at the end that proved to be the right call, because we eventually found that the real economics of the situation were not necessarily as bad as they looked at the time. A lot of

it turned out to be self correcting as the Japanese economy met its own problems and had to deal with them.

Q: Did December 7 cause concerns, the anniversary when you were there, or was this just another day?

SCOTT: It was not quite just another day, but pretty close. By now enough time had gone by that things were generally in good shape. During my first tour on the desk, we had had, I think, the first meeting of U.S. veterans and Japanese veterans of Iwo Jima, and there was a lot of concern about how that would come off, and concern that old animosities would flare up. It turned out not to be the case.

Q: Often when you see veterans together, this has been true throughout history. They say, "Oh, you were on the left flank. I was on the right flank. I must have shot at you." It's quite a different...

SCOTT: That was really it. If you had done that five years after, it probably would have been pretty awful. Forty-five, fifty years after it was pretty good.

Q: My brother was on the battleship Maryland at Pearl Harbor [laughter] at the wrong time. Where were you after two years?

SCOTT: After two years I went back to the bureau of political military affairs. I was deputy director there of an office called defense relations and security assistance. Ted McNamara was assistant secretary after I got there, and Bob Gallucci was assistant secretary when I arrived.

Q: The bureau of political military affairs has gone through similar iterations but I think it still remained particularly strong. Were you there when the staffing...

SCOTT: The staffing was very robust, yes. I was there before they sort of... When I was there ACDA was still in place.

Q: Arms control.

SCOTT: Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. They moved to split PM into what amounted to three different bureaus, which didn't take place until after I left. At that time it was a very robust, very wide ranging bureau that looked at everything from nuclear proliferation to broad arms control, to day to day U.S. defense relations with countries, to specific operational kinds of issues like peace keeping, de-mining and that sort of thing. It was a very broad portfolio.

We were in the broad operational side of the house, and our office was split into two groups. One handled security assistance and funding-type issues. The second handled issues of sort of broader U.S. defense security policy. That was the side of the house that

I had day to day charge of. My counterpart deputy had the security assistance side of the house.

This was really a marriage of two sides of the security issue that worked very well. I think it worked well for a variety of reasons, one being that as you looked at a particular country in the context of security assistance you needed to be looking at broader policy issues and how we got along and what the broader policy questions were *vis a vis* that country, so within the DRSA office we had both of those.

Q: DRSA?

SCOTT: Defense Relations and Security Assistance. I had the defense relation side, and my counterpart had the security assistance side.

Q: What was the relationship? What do you mean by relationship?

SCOTT: It could mean anything from security treaty, to treaty relations, to U.S. force presence, to port calls, broader issues of port calls, to what was going on in a particular country that might affect U.S. defense relations. Those sorts of things. The marriage worked well together, first of all because within the office we cross-fertilized one another nicely.

The second reason it worked well is because when the regional bureaus wanted to work with PM to obtain security assistance for one of their countries or increase security assistance for one of their countries or change the form of security assistance for one of their countries, they had to come to our office. That, frankly, gave us the opportunity to comment on the broader defense policy and broader defense relations side of the relationship as well. Regional bureaus tended to be less happy about PM doing that than they did the other way around.

One of the things that happened in the PM reorganization afterwards was the under secretary for security assistance broke that office into two. She wanted an office that just handled security assistance and an office that just handled the defense relationship side. My sense is they found that didn't work very well because the bureaus didn't need us anymore.

Q: Security assistance is exactly what the relationships of almost all countries are based on, aren't they?

SCOTT: Very often. If you want to influence, one of the things you can do in security assistance, of course, is influence a country's broader defense policies: we're not going to sell you that if you're going to use it in this way. We're not going to provide that training for you, if you don't take these steps to clean up your act. It's very hard to separate the two out, but Dr. Davis wanted two separate offices to do that.

Q: Who is Dr. Davis?

SCOTT: Lynn Davis who was under secretary for security assistance at the time. I think it proved to be not an effective way of dealing with the bureaus because they still had to come to the security assistance side of the office, but if they didn't have to come to the policy side of the office, they weren't going to.

Q: Should we approach this as a geographically or maybe a... How about Latin America to begin with. I gather our policy for a long time has been to keep the Latin Americans from getting too many of these toys. They're expensive and they cause an arms race, and they're not used to... What are you going to do? You can have little air wars between Ecuador and Peru which means a few people are killed, but nobody's got to run tanks up to the Andes or something like that. It just doesn't make sense, but they are toys that military people aspire to. How did you deal with that during the time you were...

SCOTT: On a number of occasions there really was something of an adversarial relationship there. It wouldn't necessarily be the one that you might logically think of, using the idea of sales of F-16s and tankers to Venezuela as an example. This is, of course, well before the Chavez period when Venezuela had a lot of oil money and a lot of money to spend on military equipment, and they really wanted F-16s.

Q: The F-16 at the time was our preeminent fighter.

SCOTT: The preeminent air combat ground support or ground attack aircraft, and in the Clinton era up until then the most capable aircraft were very old Navy A-4s carrier based attack aircraft or F-5s which were much less capable, but for most of South America probably an eminently appropriate airplane. The Venezuelans had a lot of money, and they wanted to have the big toys. The desk, I think, was generally comfortable with that. The Air Force was delighted with it because every F-16 you sell reduced their unit cost and reduced their unit maintenance costs, a wonderful thing.

The PM office were kind of out there, saying, "Wait a minute." Folks were about to significantly raise the bar of capability in Latin America. That tended not to be a particularly successful argument. The same sorts of arguments came into play as countries began seeking tanker aircraft, aerial refueling tankers, which is in many ways a strategic upgrade for equipment and drastically lengthens your legs and capability. Heretofore that had been a sale that we tended to restrict either to fairly close allies or to countries that had very long and very big areas to defend.

Q: Brazil...

SCOTT: Brazil or Turkey or something like that. We had one that was rather funny, and if truth be told there was a reason for it. It was one of these things, you looked at it at first blush and thought, "This is crazy." That was the proposal to sell tanker aircraft to Singapore. [laughter]

When I first saw this, I said the Scott rule for selling tankers is, “If you can’t get your tanker up to operating altitude flying in a straight line within your national borders, you probably shouldn’t have them.” In point of fact, there was a good argument for them because the Singaporean air force does almost all its training in Australia. They needed tankers to fly that distance.

Historically, they had essentially contracted with PACOM or Pacific Command to use some of its tankers, and the Pacific air force folks were not particularly excited to see their tankers being hired off to support the Singaporeans every now and then. That one you could draw justification for, and the Singaporeans have never been a particular threat to anyone. It was one of those things, you first looked at it and thought, “This is crazy!” Some of the others were less funny.

The other thing that popped up at this time in connection with the sale of F-16s to Venezuela and other places were requests for things like the AMRAAM missile, the anti-aircraft air to air missile that has very long range and is a fire and forget missile (Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile). If you shoot it off, you can turn your attention somewhere else. On that one we really did step in. The PM bureau really did take the position that there is nobody who needs that missile other than countries that face a real, dire threat.

Its emblematic of what you see in arms transfer issues, you make the original sale of the aircraft and then folks want to hang the best of the best toys on it. I think generally, as I recall during my tour there, we did not sell AMRAAM. I don’t know if we have since then or not. The overall history of arms sale in the broad scheme of things is the escalation factor just keeps going on. It never stops.

Q: John, I would have thought that the whole arms business would have been quite complicated by the fall of the Soviet Union which had just happened, I mean the dissolution of the Soviet empire. A lot of countries got all these things. The Soviets, a lot of maybe surplus high performance planes around. Did that affect you all?

SCOTT: Well, it did just as you might expect. Either surplus Russian aircraft particularly transports and that kind of thing, and you started to see more and more arms often in the hands of not necessarily terribly humanitarian folks, flying supplies into and around Africa, which tended to provide mechanisms for armies and supporting people that historically had found it difficult to get arms and support, which had been a good thing.

Also, there was more and more pressure on the former Soviet military to find ways to make money and keep some of their stuff running by selling equipment on the market. That generated not only a concern that a lot of very high tech or relatively high tech and capable weaponry was going places that heretofore it hadn’t, but also generating the inevitable competition of U.S. arms manufacturers. Basically there was using the argument that, “We’re not going to be able to stop this sale unless we offer a comparable U.S. product, and a comparable U.S. product that at least gives us a certain amount of

control over spare parts and training,” and that sort of thing. Those arguments tended to be fairly convincing.

Q: The overall effect was to escalate.

SCOTT: The overall effect *was* to escalate. The wonderful paradoxical thing is that as the strategic threat reduced, the level of arms sales increased.

Q: I would almost assume that the Middle East would be taken out of your hands, particularly...well, because of the politics. How about that?

SCOTT: Not as much necessarily as you might think. We had and continue to have, for example, with Israel a fairly robust set of security discussions that take place twice a year, once there and once here, in a session run by the political military bureau. They normally last a couple of days and deal with broad global strategic issues, regional strategic, and regional sort of minimally strategic issues, and offer a good opportunity for back and forth. We do that with other countries as well.

One of the things that we did as an aside was we began to, while I was in the political military bureau, a series of consultations with former Warsaw Pact states to try to slowly begin to bring them toward the NATO fold, but maybe we can take that up in a couple of minutes.

The other thing that we would do, or were doing at that time, was looking at some other arms training for the Middle East Gulf states specifically. One of the things that really the PM bureau had a fair part in was determining that the Saudis, at that time, were pretty much out of cash. You looked at what they had spent and signed up for, and what their expectations were of oil revenue and other basic budget requirements, and they were pretty much talked out of it. They would float the issue of the possibility of buying something, and the folks on the security assistance side of the house would find a way to gently put the, “How are you going to pay for this?” question.

The answer was, for at least a period of time, there wasn’t any cash. That had a bit of a role in some of the cost analysis and cash analysis and working in what was then the Defense Security Assistance Agency. We looked at these issues in a way that we concluded that, at least for a period of time then, we just couldn’t be selling anything more to the Saudis.

Q: When the Saudis, when one looks at them, you think, “What’s it all for?” Obviously we don’t want them to fight Israel, and I guess well, Iraq was a problem and Iran. Did we feel that arming the Saudis was really advancing any particular cause?

SCOTT: I think it probably, to the extent that it was advancing a cause, was trying to keep them closer to the Western and the U.S. orbit. A lot of what we were selling in those years was more infrastructure than a lot of equipment, the focus certainly on the equipment, the AWACS aircraft, F-15 air superiority fighters and that sort of thing. A lot

of those came with restrictions on where they would operate and where they would fly, to take into account Israeli concerns, but infrastructure was a huge chunk of the pie.

Interestingly enough, if I can hearken back to a conversation that took place with an Israeli counterpart and a visiting congressional staffer in the early '80s in Israel. The congressional staffer was attempting to get the Israelis to say, "We're just outraged by how much stuff you're selling the Saudis and how much stuff the Saudis are buying, and it scares us to death. We're really worried about it."

This guy basically said, "We don't see a problem," which took his interlocutor back. He said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, you're selling them a lot of infrastructure, and the way we calculate the payments on that stuff, that's going to chew them up for years to come. You're going to get to the point where they can't turn the oil off anymore because then they'll default on your payments, so sell away." At that time I thought, "Gee, this guy's crazy!"

During the time that I was in DRSA that conversation came back to me because at that point that's exactly how it worked with the Saudis. Their debt service was so high that it was all consuming and took every bit of cash they had.

Q: Did the problem of Iran... Iran, of course, was under a ban; but they had...

SCOTT: F-14s.

Q: F-14s, and not only F-14s but a lot of American equipment and since 1979 they hadn't been able to get parts. Was there a leakage of parts to them? How did we view Iran at that point?

SCOTT: We did view Iran very negatively. I think there certainly was a leakage of parts. There were certainly rumors that, at least in the early years, the Israelis were sending some supplies that way, and then in Iran Contra they certainly did, and may have in other cases.

One of the things that I recall among surprises about the Iran and Iraq war was we found that our definition of when it was safe to fly an airplane wasn't necessarily the same definition the Iranians used. Our judgments have been that the F-14s would be largely grounded, because a lot of parts were beyond serviceable life and they shouldn't be flown anymore.

If it had been the U.S. Navy, that's the way it would have been. The Iranians treated it differently. If the thing would get off the ground and get to the forward edge of the battle and carry out the mission and had a reasonable chance of getting back to base, they'd fly it. A lot of analysts were quite surprised that the U.S. equipment in the Iranian inventory was still flying and still useable, even though by our standards it might not have been.

Q: Did the India-Pakistan complexity enter into your work?

SCOTT: It did in the context of the Pakistani F-16s and the legal restrictions that were placed on delivering those aircraft after the Pakistanis set off their nuclear test. For us it was very vexing, because you had the aircraft essentially sitting out in Arizona in shrink wrap to prevent deterioration, but still they're getting older and older. They were the old models F-16s. We found ourselves tied in several ways by the law.

At one point it was suggested that we look for another buyer for the airplanes and then reimburse the Pakistanis for it, because the Pakistanis had already paid for them. This was not a case of cash on delivery. They put the money forward and the planes were paid for and not delivered. The lawyers determined that under the way the legislation was written, we couldn't even give the Pakistanis their money back. We were stuck any way you tried to go.

I left PM before that issue got resolved, so I don't know how it was taken care of, but it was a real vexation for us because we couldn't deliver the airplanes, we couldn't sell the airplanes and keep the money because they weren't our airplanes, and we wouldn't sell the airplanes and give the money back to the Pakistanis because the law prevented us from doing any sort of defense assistance or augmentation with the Pakistanis.

Q: Did anyone have anything to do with the C-130s in Libya? I think they're still sitting there.

SCOTT: Yes, I think that's probably right, but I don't know anything specifically about that one.

Q: How about Thailand or Singapore, or even Vietnam? Did any of these enter your sphere? Or Taiwan?

SCOTT: By that time not really. We would provide a little bit from the security assistance side of the office, and provide some commentary back to the East Asia bureau on Taiwan on how those sorts of arms transfers should be managed. But the basic restrictions and basic issues were largely handled by the East Asia bureau.

Q: How did you find the Clinton administration, particularly in the starting years? Foreign policy didn't seem to be ranked very high. It seemed, frankly, kind of inept. Did you get that feeling at all?

SCOTT: Occasionally, yes. Most of our issues tended to be the ones that we had handled under the broad policy issues, so on many of our day to day things, we continued to push forward. When we did hit something that had White House or presidential level interest, probably the comment that I heard most often was, "You just can't get a decision out of these guys! It will go over there and you'll either hear nothing or you'll get questions and requests for more information, so you feed the beast and send the data back, and nothing happens."

I remember one thing that tended to work the other way, too, when President Clinton met, I think the first time, with the Turkish Prime Minister Ciller. She asked him about Turkey buying tanker aircraft. He essentially made positive noises and said, "We'll go ahead and do that." Word came over from the White House to begin preparing a program for tanker sales to Turkey.

At that point it seemed to just hit a whirlpool. Whether it was the folks in the EUR bureau and the Greek desk going wild or getting pressure from the congress and the Greek lobby, it just wasn't going anywhere which always surprised me, because I figured that if the president says you will do something, you do it! As I recall the president subsequently met again with Prime Minister Ciller, and she asked him about the tankers again. He turned to the secretary -- I think it was Secretary Christopher -- who told him that they hadn't completed it yet, and the famous presidential temper just let loose in all its glory.

That pretty much broke the whirlpool, and it went forward, but it struck me that even when the president had made a decision, the fact that there wasn't somebody over at the White House two weeks after the decision, calling the department and saying, "Where's my package? Get it over here."

Q: This wasn't a legal or ideological thing, it was just ineptitude on everybody's part from...

SCOTT: ...or the ability of the effort of folks who opposed the sale to use the ineptitude and the bureaucracy to just stop it.

Q: Why would there be any problem? The Greek lobby or something?

SCOTT: I don't know. That was my suspicion at the time, but I couldn't really figure it out. As I say, my view was that if you've got an issue that's to be decided, that's when you all have your opportunities to get your views in, but when the president says, "We're going to do this," you do it.

Q: What about the role of Congress and congressional staff and all from your perspective during this time. This would be '94 to '96 or something like that.

SCOTT: '93 to '95. They were moderately active but more than that, particularly on the security assistance side of the House, there was real care not to get crosswise with the committees, if a package was large enough that it triggered the provisions of the law for prior notification.

Q: ...prior notification...

SCOTT: ...prior notification to the congress.

Q: At a certain level.

SCOTT: Yes. At a certain level, and I forget what the numbers are. Certainly there was a monetary level for significant military equipment, but not spare parts, and it required prior notification. By this time a customary practice had evolved, not only for prior notification, but there was a pre-notification period and then a notification to committee staff that you were going to send it out, and then at that point clocks started ticking.

You would never send a notification out of the 30 day notification if the congress was going to be in recess. You could have a period that from the time you completed the negotiation with the U.S. supplier and the purchasing government and the DSA, if it were a foreign military sales case, where we'd be handling the details of the sale. Once you got it all put together, you were probably looking at a two-month, or it could be longer if there was a recess involved, period before you actually told the purchasing government, "Sign on the dotted line. We're ready to make this sale."

At any time during that point, somebody could say, "Hey, wait a minute." I think many of us felt that while there was certainly good reason and need for congressional oversight, and the original purpose of the law of a 30-day notification period for large monetary sales of significant equipment was good, the process had morphed into one where you added three or four additional hurdles. My sense was it tended to make it difficult to do something that the administration really thought it needed to do, and you had good solid reasons to do, as well as the issues that were or could be fairly politically sensitive and really needed to be looked at.

Q: Were there other suppliers out there, the Brits, the French particularly, but maybe the Russians or someone who were competitors, sometimes we were finding we had too many restrictions, they were screwing up our negotiating positions?

SCOTT: People would argue that from time to time. I'm not sure that I necessarily buy into it. Probably the most challenging competitors at that time were the French, who at least seemed to be willing to sell almost anything to anyone...

Q: Some said they'd say they'd sell their grandmothers...if they had to.

SCOTT: There were some wonderful inducements to the sale. The down side of that from our perspective, and one of the things that made it not quite as difficult to counteract as it might otherwise have been, was with the French you were never sure you had the whole picture. It was, "Here's the price for the sale. Oh, by the way, it will cost you this much more to get training on it. All the spare parts? You want that?" Folks who dealt with the French a lot found that they'd keep flipping parts of the contract back and the numbers would change.

One of the things they liked about dealing with us was we were fairly insistent DSA was very insistent with U.S. manufacturers, that this is the whole-price sale. You tell them what it's going to cost them for the equipment, the spare parts, the training, and the logistic supply line. I think American manufacturers tended to find that that gave them at least a bit of an advantage, particularly with folks who had been around the sales market

two or three times, and had dealt with the French two or three times. They realized with the Americans you get a final price; with the French you get a cheap price with an asterisk added.

Q: How about the American manufacturers? Were they on you all of the time? Were they cozying up to you?

SCOTT: They would come in fairly regularly. We certainly wanted them to do that, as we used that as a mechanism for finding out what they were doing and where they were in the sales process and that kind of thing. For the most part, I found that the folks that we talked to were pretty willing to share information, and that they would share information on what their competitors were doing and why they needed some assistance from us.

We would occasionally get folks who were new to the game who wanted us to go in and be a government lobby for their specific product. If there were no other American competitor, we were happy to do that. If, as an example, you had Lockheed-Martin wanting to sell F-16s and then McDonald-Douglas, now Boeing, wanting to sell F-15s, our position would be, "You should buy American, and it's up to you (the host government) which of these two fine American products you buy," and then we'd tell the Lockheed guys and the Boeing guys, "Go out and win a market."

Q: Was NATO a completely different game?

SCOTT: At that time, yes. It was becoming a completely different game in that the European consortium had had a role in at least some elements of the design of the F-16, but the consortium was buying the F-16s as well as the U.S. Air Force. Subsequently you've seen the Europeans move much more into the Euro only mold; whether it's the Tornado aircraft or tankers that the European Consortium is building. They'd become more competitors and less cooperators than they were. I think a lot of that is probably due to the demise of the Soviet Union. The big common enemy is gone, and it's much more sharp elbows.

Q: Were you looking or was there any movement toward Eastern Europe which is now out from under the Soviet yoke?

SCOTT: Early on in my PM tour Chas Freeman, who was assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs at the time, began putting together a program of getting out and talking to a number of the former Warsaw Pact countries about the early stages of moving toward NATO.

This at the time was the PFP, the Partners for Peace, program. He told the department that he wanted someone along on that team from the European bureau who could speak to the European policy side of the House, and he wanted somebody from the political military bureau who could speak to the security policy and the security assistance side of the House, and the bureau asked me to do that. That was my first exposure to European issues, certainly to Central and Eastern European issues.

It was really a widely divergent group of countries. We met with the Czechs and the Slovaks, by that time Czechoslovakia had split, in a couple of successive days of meetings at Garmisch, in what subsequently became the Marshall Center. Then we decamped, visited the Baltic states -- Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia -- and finished up in Poland. You really saw countries with widely divergent levels of development, the Czechs being pretty good, the Slovaks a little less so. The Baltic states, countries, which until recently had essentially been part of the Soviet Union, were really starting from ground zero. And the Poles at the end were pretty good, and were, among other things, interested in how they could get themselves into the competitive U.S. defense market and sell some of their equipment services to DoD. So we had a variety of questions that we needed to answer.

One thing in Latvia really struck me after we arrived, I believe on a Saturday and had Saturday afternoon off. The Latvian defense ministry folks asked if we'd be interested in visiting the old Russian naval base. Several of us basically said, "Gosh, if you guys are prepared to spend your Saturday afternoon showing this to us, we're happy to do it!"

We went out, and the conditions of what they'd been left with was just appalling. The Russians, the Soviets, had sunk a couple of submarines at pier side because they just weren't worth taking back to Russia. So you've got battery acid and diesel fuel and heaven only knows what other kinds of toxicants coming out of these submarines. They had also sunk several patrol boats pier side and you had the same kind of problem.

They took us around to some areas in the base where literally nothing would grow. Huge areas of dirt. Grass wouldn't grow. Weeds wouldn't grow. Nothing would grow there. One of the things they asked us for was, "Would it be possible to get some U.S. experts to come out and analyze that soil?" They were absolutely up front about the fact that they didn't have the money to clean it up, but they at least wanted to know what they were dealing with. All of us came away with the sense of, "Oh, boy." It's not too hard to figure out why most of the Warsaw Pact countries have no love lost for the Russians. If this is the way they left their facilities. It was just *awful*.

And they took us in and we toured some of the barracks which were, certainly in terms of American standards, very sparse and very basic. They really were serious about at least meeting the basic needs of their troops and that sort of thing. You could tell, on the one hand, here are folks who are really in need of a lot of help, but at the same time are certainly eager to use their limited resources in a way that's most efficient and effective. That really had a lasting impact on me.

Q: This is the thing. There's nothing like seeing something. You can deal with these things theoretically, but when you get down and you see the reality. This, of course, is one of the things, too, I think when we were building up the Soviets as being 10' tall or so, but when one looked at their military, it just didn't measure up. It was obviously a mighty force, nobody would dispute that, once it started rolling, but it was highly vulnerable because of maintenance and upkeep.

SCOTT: Right.

Q: By the time you left there, how stood things? Did you feel things were moving on to a different track, the post-Soviet period?

SCOTT: Yes, it really did. At that time the Partners for Peace program was very basic.

Q: This was getting the eastern European powers ready to get into NATO, if that was going to happen. It was still a little problematic.

SCOTT: Yes. It was still problematic, but the idea was to first of all find a way that let them know, in as nice a diplomatic way as you could, that they weren't ready, but that we were prepared to work with them, to begin to take on a little bit more and begin to develop things that would meet NATO's standards. With the possible exception of the Poles, who probably felt they were a little more ready than they were, and clearly were a lot more ready than any of the other countries we visited. I think most everybody else reacted to that visit and subsequent visits very positively. They felt the Americans were not working to hold them at arm's length, but were working to pull them forward.

I had the sense in some of the discussions with the Poles that they felt we were looking to hold them back a little. I had one conversation where I was describing to someone the legal requirements that we place on U.S. contractors to do business with the government and said, "You'll need to learn these regulations so you can comply with them." The answer was, "Why can't we get waivers?" I said, "Perhaps for some things on a specific basis if you're a sole source, you might be able to, but normally we don't grant waivers." We spent a certain amount of time back and forth on, "Why can't we get waivers," instead of, "What do we need to do then?"

Q: John, were we under instruction? Were you all under instructions or just using common sense in avoiding an attitude of, "Boy we really stuck it to those Soviets" or something like that?

SCOTT: As far as I know there weren't any specific instructions, but it was absolutely clear, in common sense terms, that we weren't going in there as conquering heroes, and throwing candy to the children. This really was a serious effort to bring these guys along. I think that came through. I never heard anybody on the team suggest anything other than, "We're out here to build ties that will be lasting."

Q: Did you have any contact with what now would be the Russians?

SCOTT: No, we did not. On the Latvia visit, they took us aboard one of the Latvian patrol boats. The commanding officer was clearly Russian old school. He was Latvian, but he'd done his training with the Russians. It was pretty clear that he was about as happy to see four Americans on his ship as he would have been to deal with a full scale mutiny. He was not a happy camper! [laughter]

Q: You left there in '96.

SCOTT: I left PM in the fall of '95.

Q: Where did you go?

SCOTT: I went to Southern Africa affairs. This was completely new.

Q: This might be a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in '95 when you're off to Southern Africa affairs.

SCOTT: Okay.

Q: Today is August 8, 2008. That's 8-8-08.

SCOTT: That's right!

Q: This is John Scott. We're off to the Africa bureau.

SCOTT: Off to the Africa bureau.

Q: You've already done this. You've almost become a Near East expert, then a Japan thing and a disarmament thing that obviously made you qualified to go to the Africa bureau.

SCOTT: Well, exactly! My wife whom, I met and married in Israel the first time, was from South Africa. So in the course of spending lots of time with her and lots of time with my in-laws who also emigrated to the States, I found myself becoming, if not an expert, certainly a little more knowledgeable about southern and South Africa affairs. At this point I was coming into my fourth or fifth year of my FSO-1 window.

Q: You might explain.

SCOTT: That's the time period where you're being looked at for promotion across the senior threshold. The way it works normally is after you've been promoted to FSO1 and you've been in grade for basically a couple of years, any time from then on you can open your window for consideration for a promotion into the senior foreign service, and you get seven shots at it. At the end of the seven years, if you're not up, you're out.

I think at that point I'd had four or five looks, so I was starting to think in terms of, "Well, maybe this isn't going to happen." I thought rather than go overseas and find myself being pulled out in the middle of a tour, I'd try to position myself in Washington for a retirement, if that's the way life worked. The position of officer in charge of South African affairs was open at the time, and since I had a little bit of my family background,

I was interested. As it happened at that point, we were engaged with the South Africans in a fairly interesting and significant political military issue that I had been working on.

Q: This was when?

SCOTT: That was summer of 1995.

Q: You did that from '95 to...

SCOTT: I did that from '95 to '98.

Q: While we're at it, could you explain the background of your wife? This is your second wife.

SCOTT: This is my second wife, right. She was born and raised in South Africa.

Q: A Jewish family?

SCOTT: A Jewish family. She went to Israel to teach. My first wife had passed away in Israel. She was teaching there at the American school. She and I met doing a play that the embassy had put on. Her background was drama and theatrics and teaching English. We met, and subsequently married. By the time I got to this point in my career, I knew a little bit about South Africa.

Q: To give a feel for this, how committed was your wife to Zionism, the Israeli cause? This waxes and wanes with the Jews who were involved with this.

SCOTT: It does, and she was fairly committed. The South African Jewish community is an interesting community. We can perhaps talk a little bit about that if you want.

Q: We can.

SCOTT: At the time the people tended to look at South Africa in terms of Black or White. In fact, there were really four distinct groups:

The White Afrikaner community, the community whose ties were largely to the Dutch caste and who basically had nowhere else to go. They carried South African passports, had no real ties or prospects outside the country, so they clung very tenaciously to power. The non-Afrikaner White community was for the most part either of British descent or Central European Jewish descent. They tended to be focused more in the economic structure of the country and not so strong on the political side of the house. Then you had the colored community, Indians, mixed-race, whatever you would call it, and finally the Black African community.

Particularly, the South African Jewish community for many years had politically been -- how to put it? -- not comfortable with the Afrikaner government, but they always treaded

very carefully, because it wasn't too hard to get on the wrong side of the Afrikaner government. Within the Jewish community there certainly were mixed ties, the focus on the one hand as South Africans was there, but also the Zionist tradition and that sort of thing. A number of South African Jewish community members had gone to Palestine in '48 and fought in South African units in the '48 war, so there were those ties, and then the other tie of Zionism in general. She and her family were relatively strong on the Zionist side.

Q: At some point as we get along because of the political military side, there had been this mysterious explosion in the Indian Ocean which for some time was considered by many to be an Israeli test of their nuclear weapons with the compliance or cooperation of white South Africans. I don't know if that came up or not. There was that uncomfortable link between racist South African government and the Israeli government which didn't sit too well. It was there at one point.

SCOTT: It was there, and it was there in I think an interesting context that the Israelis weren't necessarily very comfortable with. On the other hand, at least at one point, you had what might be described as a small group of international pariahs, some more pariah-like than others, with South Africa real close to the serious pariah end. Those countries tended to stick together.

South Africa and Israeli, and Taiwan at one point, was part of that. Even though I think if you ask most Israelis how they felt about South Africa and apartheid, they'd be pretty uncomfortable with it. They also would acknowledge that, as they said, they lived in a tough neighborhood, and there weren't a lot of friends out there. You had to take who you got! There certainly was that flash or mysterious test, as I recall I think it took place in '75 or '76, but it had the typical double flash of a nuclear device that the satellite picked up, but no one ever figured out for sure what it was or who did it.

Q: I don't know. Anyway, let's talk about your time on the desk. Could you give me a little wiring chart of who were the principal people?

SCOTT: At that time John Blaney was the director. Johnny Carson was one of the DAS's. Howard Jeter also worked in the front office. The assistant secretary at the time, the name just escapes me. Susan Rice subsequently took over. Pru Bushnell was PDAS, and she went on to Kenya right at the 10 year anniversary of the attacks in Kenya. This I'm sure was a very poignant time for Pru. It was overall a good group of people, fairly close knit.

I talked last week about the very close working relationship you had between the various policy elements on Japan affairs. Africa was not quite as advanced in that, but not too far off. There was fairly close and regular coordination between the department and the National Security Council. Less so with DoD, at least at the country desk level; we tended to do that mostly through regional affairs. Again, there was a fair amount of back and forth at fairly senior levels, and that filtered its way down.

Q: I could see the DoD Japan it was mainly worrying about obstreperous Marines, whereas in Africa they were having to evacuate our embassies rather frequently!

SCOTT: You had different sets of issues but fairly constant communication. There were times, of course, where you never knew from one week to the next whether you would be working in your office or seconded to a task force in the operations center on Sierra Leone or Liberia or wherever.

Q: Or Somalia.

SCOTT: Exactly. So it was a pretty constant sort of thing.

Q: With South Africa, first of all you had the Mandela government.

SCOTT: We had Mandela government, so the real challenge of the shift from apartheid to an elected government had taken place, so some of those real growing pains or initial growing pains had been taken care of. But there was still a lot of occasional testiness there, because you had an ANC government that basically perceived the United States or felt the United States had been kind of late coming to the boycott. As a result, their tendency was to have fairly good and fairly close relations with some countries that we were pretty unhappy with, mainly Iran...

Q: And Cuba was giving much stronger support. In the first place, by the time you got there, there was this great joy when Mandela basically took over. Was the honeymoon kind of over?

SCOTT: The honeymoon I don't think was over yet. We'd moved into the tough phase. One of the things the Clinton administration, and particularly Vice President Gore recognized and established with the South Africans fairly early on, was a counterpart to the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission with Russia and former Soviet states. The vice president felt that it would be a good idea to establish a similar commission headed by himself and then-Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. It worked fairly well, and it was one of our principle challenges for the time I was there.

We did two meetings a year of the commission, one here and one in South Africa. You always were either getting ready for one, wrapping it up, and starting the process of working on the actions that had come out of the meeting, or getting ready for the next edition. That tended to, I think, in some ways from my perspective anyway, keep the honey going for a while because there was clearly a senior level on both sides that was interested and whose focus was to help this relationship to grow and make it normal as quickly as you could.

Q: What was your view, maybe different from your colleagues, of the two principle players, Mandela and Mbeki?

SCOTT: Mandela I think everybody felt was just an extraordinary human being, and I think that there can be little or no debate on that. Here's a guy who came out of prison on Robben Island with not only no, or no apparent, ill will toward his jailers, but someone who actively took the line that we have to build a full society. He practiced what he preached, went to sporting events that had been historically "White Only," and wore the Springbok colors.

Q: Springbok?

SCOTT: That was the South Africa rugby team, the ultimate White sport in South Africa, and he just made no bones about it that he was proud of that team as South Africans and really set down a model that everyone could follow.

Thabo Mbeki was in some ways I think more cerebral and more of a get-it-done kind of guy. In the sessions in the commission that I was in and observed I felt that in many ways where he was coming from was cut from similar cloth to Mandela. He had not suffered nearly the privations of prison that Mandela did, but had been in exile for many years. I think he took many of his cues from Mandela on how things should work. That tended to filter all the way down, at least to the ANC folks in the foreign ministry that I saw. There was a reach out rather than a push away.

Q: What was this Mbeki-Gore group? When you were there, what were they after?

SCOTT: The principal focus was to try to move the U.S.-South Africa relationship fairly quickly from one which was testy and just getting started into something that was normal, fulsome, and detailed. The idea was that with senior level, vice presidential level, pushes on both sides, you could push through a lot of bureaucracy.

I think that in a lot of ways, that worked pretty well, that there really was a genuine effort on both sides to move forward. I think that we -- that is the U.S. side -- probably did better at that initially than the South Africans did, partially because I think the South Africans for a while didn't really realize the kind of unique situation they had at hand. The first couple of meetings they would come to the sessions with a shopping list of issues that as you looked at it you thought, "Boy, this is something that deputy assistant secretaries and below ought to be working on."

At one point we began to mention to the South Africans, "Look. You've got 48 hours here where you have the ear of the vice president of the United States. Don't waste it on consular issues and nonsense. If you've got some really big things you want to discuss, this is the guy to talk to about it. He's the guy who, if he can't do it, can walk into the Oval Office and suggest to the president that we do it. Don't waste it on this little stuff." As time went on the South Africans got more comfortable with that.

Q: It was basically jumping into the big time for a group that had been essentially a guerilla group just a few years before.

SCOTT: Exactly. Unlike the Gore-Chernomyrdin commission where the Russians had been a world power for many decades, that one was shifting the nature of a relationship that was already well established if not terribly friendly. But the South Africans, it was much more taking a relationship that had been testy and stand-offish and moving it into real world politics.

Q: The professional diplomatic establishment within White South Africa carried over into the ANC run government. This would be your historical perspective and your professionalism. Was that there or had that been pretty well wiped out?

SCOTT: It really was there. In some ways you almost saw it at the South African embassy here, for example, a certain amount of duplication. You'd see a White South African career foreign service officer sharing duties and responsibilities with an ANC counterpart. I interpreted that as being another example of Mandela's idea that this transition was not to cut these guys off at the knees and start afresh. There really was a time period where you had folks working side by side, if not necessarily comfortably together, learning the ropes, drawing on the historical background, and not throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Q: We had developed just about four or five years before, when the Soviet Union fell apart and we had all the Stans and all and other places such as Albania, we had quite a lot of experts training diplomats in these new states. All of a sudden they're a state. If fact, I did part of that. As a retiree I went out to Kyrgyzstan to tell them about consular stuff. Were we offering and doing anything of this nature?

SCOTT: I don't believe we were. At least I don't recall us doing anything of that nature. I'm not sure the South Africans would have been keen for it because I think they felt they had the expertise within. It was just a matter of getting them used to...

Q: I was thinking that, but I was wondering. Can you think of any particular issues that reached the higher level where it should have reached that we were dealing with?

SCOTT: Yes, and this was the issue that I was mentioning as we started that transitioned from my period in political military affairs to Southern African affairs. This was an arms transfer issue that came to be known as Arms Corps. Arms Corps was, and I think still is, a South African parastatal that essentially runs their arms industry. The issue at hand was we became aware that Arms Corps had illegally obtained U.S. source equipment and was using it. The normal provision for that sort of thing, when you find it, under U.S. law and regulation is to essentially slap a ban on the organization that does it. This makes it impossible for them, for a period of time, to deal with U.S. defense suppliers, refuses to allow them to purchase any U.S. equipment, or if they have this equipment, any spare parts for what they've got, and if they want to transfer any of it, refuses to allow them to transfer it.

The clinker in all of this was that the offenses that Arms Corps was, I want to say, guilty of not just in a legal sense, but guilty of in a real sense, had all taken place during the

apartheid era. The Mandela government, the position the South Africans took in the Gore-Mbeki group, was that you shouldn't be punishing us for something that happened under the previous regime. Part of our response was, "Yea, but the same guys who were running Arms Corps then are still running Arms Corps now. We have no evidence that they have done anything to clean up their act, or that South Africa has done anything to clean up their act. So, we are going to leave these issues in place."

To make a long story, which carried itself out over a number of months, relatively short, the vice president's office saw this first of all as a serious legal issue that needed to be dealt with, but secondly as a real impediment to warming up the relationship that they wanted. One of their points was the U.S., consisting of the Justice Department, State Department, I think mainly Justice and State, who were working the issue, needed to figure out a way to sit down with the South Africans and arrive at a conclusion that both sides could live with.

The Gore-Mbeki Commission became more of, if you will, the home port of that particular issue. We sent a team out to South Africa, I was part of that team, for three or four days of fairly intense discussions, with the South African foreign ministry and deputy president's office and their legal advisors, and we finally sorted out an agreement where the essential requirements of U.S. law would be met. Arms Corps would endure a certain period of sanctions but once the provisions of the agreement had been sorted through and the steps were taken necessary to clean things up, we'd lift the sanctions.

The funny part of that is we finally finished and initialed the agreement about 8:30 on, I think, a Sunday evening. By that time it was so late in Pretoria that the only place our delegation could go to have a celebratory dinner was McDonalds! [laughter] Everything else was closed! We all had a great chuckle. We'd just beaten ourselves to death here. We'd been in South Africa for three or four days. The only part of the country we'd seen was the road between the foreign ministry and the embassy. Here we are late on Sunday evening, we've wrapped up the issue, and the only place we can do to go celebrate and toast our success is the McDonald's!

Q: Let's talk a little about Arms Corps. What types of equipment were we talking about, and did you get to talk to them? Did you get any feel from others, what sort of organization this was at that time?

SCOTT: We did not talk with Arms Corps *per se*, although the embassy DAO had contact with them. The equipment involved, as I recall, was aerial refueling equipment that the South Africans had acquired illegally and put on their aircraft. There was, so far as I can recall, no information or evidence that it ever actually had been used in a nefarious way. The fact that they had it, and we had never approved the sale, was enough.

The ANC government, of course, was looking to maintain South Africa's defense capabilities and so forth and recognized that Arms Corps was essentially the premier part of that, the crown jewel in their defense industries. They were certainly not of a mind to

tear it apart, or break it up, or even dismiss a lot of the senior leadership, who had a lot of knowledge and that sort of thing.

I think the toughest issue to overcome, in some ways, was for us to convince the working level in the U.S. government, whose primary focus was insuring the sanctity of these agreements, that you didn't necessarily have to hit them with the full force of the case law. And at the same time, it was to convince the South Africans that yes, we know it took place during apartheid and yes, we know that you guys didn't do it, but we are not going to be comfortable creating the international precedent of saying, "We're going to give you a pass on this," because probably almost any country that has a similar situation could probably figure out some sort of argument that...

Q: The change in government. They were Republicans; we were Democrats, or that equivalent.

SCOTT: Once you overcame those two issues, "You've got to give us a break because we're different," and nobody gets a break because it's a violation of law, and moved them away from that, then it was fairly easy to sort out a solution.

Q: What did you do. Was it, "I confess and will sin no more," sort of thing?

SCOTT: You had to have a confession, a sin no more. There had to be a period of time when there was a sanction in effect, and there had to be a punitive fine. As I recall, we agreed there would be a punitive fine. The punitive fine would be in large measure remitted back to the South African government in the form of training on U.S. law and how you establish controls to keep this sort of thing from happening. It was a fairly creative way of working through it.

Q: While you were working on something like this, did you find the Jesse Helms wing of the Senate and other places playing dog in a manger and causing problems, trying to stick it to the ANC government?

SCOTT: Not directly, no, although we were always sensitive to the fact that this agreement was going have to be briefed to the Hill. It was going to have to pass muster, at least with a wide enough range from left to center to right, trying to avoid groups on the fringe that either said, "You gave these guys a free pass, and it's an outrage," or on the other end of the spectrum, "How dare you punish the ANC for the sins of their predecessors?"

We didn't have an awful lot of sniping about it, but the heads of our delegation both on the Justice side and the State side, never forgot that there was going to be a period of time where the Hill would have to be briefed, and everybody would have to pass muster. You certainly didn't want to go up to the Hill and say, "We've arrived at this agreement under the auspices of the vice president," and get a firestorm back.

Q: What was your impression of the South African embassy during the time you were there? Did they have a pretty effective machine for dealing with the United States or was it a learning process?

SCOTT: I think it was a learning process. The South African ambassador at the time was an ANC stalwart named Franklin Sonn. He was very urbane, understood diplomacy pretty well, and was very approachable and friendly. But his tendency sometimes was to think in terms, or make arguments in terms, of what the U.S. owes to South Africa to make up for the apartheid period.

One of the things that he would do occasionally in speeches to American business was, “You guys gotta invest a lot more money in South Africa because you owe it to us for the apartheid era.” We’d have some discussions with him sometimes, noting that that’s not necessarily the best argument to use with American business.

The American CEO or Chief Financial Officer, the only obligation he sees is to his stockholders. If he can argue the case that an investment is good business and is going to produce greater business opportunities and remuneration for the company, he’s going to be happy to bring that back to his stockholders. If he steps into a board meeting and argues we should do this because it’s the right thing to do even if we don’t make money, he’s going to be looking for work. It seemed to take a while for Ambassador Sonn to finally tumble to that notion, while you could certainly understand where he was coming from, and from a moral point of view, his argument was a good one. If you’re trying to convince businessmen to invest, you need to convince them it’s a good deal.

We would occasionally get some heat from the South African embassy about why was the United States so absolutely set against Iran? We would note to them, “Look, it wasn’t so long ago that 50 American diplomats were the unwilling guests of the Iranian Ayatollah for 444 days.” At that time most of us knew of or knew some people who had been there, and for us it was a personal experience.

We would tell them, and I would tell them, “This isn’t the kind of feeling that goes away overnight. You have to understand it. This is, short of imprisonment and execution, just about as undiplomatic thing that a country can do another country, and we aren’t going to get over it overnight.” I think there was a certain sense of their feeling that South Africa could perhaps be a bridge between us and Teheran, and the message we were giving them was, “That’s a bridge we’re not prepared to walk across right now. Thank you anyway.”

Q: Also, too, and correct me if I’m wrong, I don’t think there was any great feeling of guilt on our part about South Africa. As I look upon it, you were making all sorts of efforts. Some were misguided, some didn’t work, but it wasn’t as though we were sitting back and really telling the apartheid government, “sock it to them.”

SCOTT: No, no, no.

Q: We were coming out of a long guilt period. It was a joyous period. It was great, they worked it out, but we felt we had a hand in it.

SCOTT: We did. Chet Crocker had worked just incredibly hard to bridge that gap. One of the other ironies of all of that was, we may have come a little slower than some countries to sanctions and bans and requirements to sell off investments in South Africa, but we did do it. We did it not only at the federal level, but at the state and local level as well.

One of the things that the South African embassy found difficult to understand during that period was these sorts of things aren't like a light switch. You don't have a case where you go up to the Congress, everything gets lifted, all those laws are declared null and void, and all 50 states repeal their laws, and hundreds of municipalities lift theirs.

I think for the South Africans it was something of an education in the federal system. Okay, so the federal government is active. You still have 50 states who have their own versions of the law. Some of these legislatures only meet every couple of years, and they found it very difficult to understand that the ANC's been elected, and we have a new era in South Africa. We'd love to start having U.S. businesses come in to invest, however, you still have California businesses, for example, based in Berkeley. It's all well and good, but it's still against the law in Berkeley to do that.

The question was, then, "Well, you as a federal government ought to go to all of these institutions and agencies and state legislatures and local assemblies and that sort of thing and tell them to repeal their laws." Wait a minute. "Let us tell you about the federal system. If you South Africans want to do that, by all means go for it." There was this sense that, you, the U.S. government, should make a blanket effort to get out and change state and local laws.

Q: Did you have much contact on the desk there with the American academic community? They were some of the most ardent supporters of doing something about South Africa, although not particularly well organized. I would have thought that you'd be full of starry-eyed people that might be going to go to South Africa, or not.

SCOTT: Actually, we didn't much. If I had to hazard a guess as to why, I would think that academia is probably fairly agile and could shift itself fairly quickly. Okay, the bad guys are gone, the good guys are in, off we go. But we didn't, as I recall, get an awful lot of lobbying from the academic community to do things.

Q: Were there any issues that you got involved in?

SCOTT: There was one really big one. Everything else was kind of time-to-time. We did have one interesting thing that might be interesting to folks who look at this.

As I was coming to the end of my South Africa tour, President Clinton was getting ready to make one of his circle trips through Africa. He was going to make a couple of stops in South Africa and then go on to East Africa and finally end up in Pretoria, Johannesburg

and Cape Town. One of the facts of life of a presidential trip, of course, is in addition to the incredible amount of work and paperwork that goes into briefing papers and background papers and talking points and all of that, was not so euphemistically known as “deliverables.” What is the gift the president can bring and deliver? For most of the trip it was pretty easy to set up a set of deliverables. We hadn’t had a president on the African continent for many, many years.

For most of these guys, the potential goodie bag was pretty wide open. Not so with South Africa. This is two and a half years into the Gore-Mbeki Commission, and pretty much every easy deliverable had been given by the vice president at one time or another. We were going back and forth to the weekly meetings at the White House and discussing what’s going to be delivered here, there, and everywhere. For South Africa it was really getting to be a hand-wringing experience because someone would say, “How about this?” and someone would say, “No, Vice President Gore did that two years ago.”

John Blaney, who is an extraordinary guy in a lot of ways and who tends to think strategically, had for much of the time when he was country director, been tossing around the idea of an eventual free trade agreement with South Africa, with Southern African affairs. You can imagine how excited the rest of the non-foreign policy community was around Washington, “Geez, another free trade agreement.” We had an agony with NAFTA, and now want to do it with somebody else! He’d raise the idea and bam!

About a week and a half out from the beginning of the trip things were really starting to get a little bit dicey on the South Africa deliverables. John raised the point of, “How about when the president opens the new consulate in Johannesburg he mentions his vision for an eventual free trade agreement with South Africa? It doesn’t have to be now; it can be later. It’s a vision thing.”

The president’s guys just loved it! As they said, “This is just exactly what President Clinton likes to do. It’s vision, it’s broad, it’s not just digging into your pocket. How about if you guys go back and draft us a paragraph for the speech?” My sense from sitting in that meeting was that some of our heretofore naysayers were not terribly excited to have been flanked by John in that way. In any event, we did go back, we did draft a paragraph for the speech, and sent it over. It was tweaked and revised, but he did say it, and the South Africans loved it!

By that time the relationship had grown to the point where they were looking more at visionary ideas than just throw a few hundred thousand dollars at South Africa. It was another one of those moments in a diplomatic career where you realize you have to be attentive to the time and opportunity, as well as to the good idea. A good idea, whose time isn’t yet, will eventually come if you’re looking for the moment.

Q: In the first place, what were you getting from our people in South Africa? Lately, I didn’t know how it was at that time, but there was beginning to be a breakdown of law and order to a certain extent. Was that a worrisome thing?

SCOTT: Yes. It was a worrisome thing right from the start. John Blaney, who had in fact been an economic consular in Moscow when the former Soviet Union came apart, saw a lot of the same sort of things, a lot of similarities in South Africa and in Moscow. The bad guys had a huge advantage because up until the point the apartheid government fell, police work in South Africa was to round up the usual suspects, browbeat them, interrogate them, or occasionally rubber hose them, till somebody confesses. You take the confession into the court. You're guilty, off to jail, and that's the end of it. So you had a police force that had very little concept of chain of evidence, rights of the defendant, how you build a case and maintain it, that sort of thing.

The bad guys in the early years had a huge advantage because the South African police and the idea of courtship shifted fairly quickly. The police just had a huge gap to fill. I don't know the extent to which the South African police force has improved on that, because I haven't been involved with South African affairs for almost ten years now. Rochelle, my wife, still has family in South Africa, and the safety situation is as bad as ever, and in some ways worse. It was there right from the very beginning.

Q: You were in a new bureau and so for you, you were the new boy on the block. Looking away from South Africa, I don't know whether you were able to kind of look at the Africa hands looking at it. What was the feeling about Africa, wither Africa and all that?

SCOTT: I think one of the things that was different for us on Southern Africa affairs from the rest of Africa was, aside from Angola and Mozambique, because this was before Mugabe really started ripping Zimbabwe apart, but aside from the continuing civil war in Angola and the recently ended fighting in Mozambique, Southern Africa was remarkably peaceful.

You didn't really worry if you were going to be on a task force next week. It would be in the west, maybe Congo Brazzaville or Congo Kinshasa, or perhaps the east, but Southern Africa for us tended to be a relative island of stability, and a relative element of some prosperity, certainly with South Africa, maybe a lesser extent Botswana. Even Mozambique was beginning to turn the corner, and with the eventual demise of Jonas Savimbi, Angola started to come around, too. You had, I think for some of us, a looking northward and thinking, "Boy, there but for the grace of God go we," that much of the rest of the continent was scrambling to hang on by its fingernails.

Q: What about basically these Bantustans or something in South Africa per se; Swaziland. They were sort of created to take some of the pressure off the white South Africans. They represented a tribal entity, but at the same time did you see them eventually getting gobbled up?

SCOTT: In many ways, even by the time I got to Southern African affairs, that had largely disappeared. The idea of real divisions where supposedly there would be black self rule had largely gone by the boards. The one area of the country that continued to have some difficulty was in KwaZulu-Natal where the Zulu party was dominant.

Q: Inkatha or whatever it is?

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: But that was in a way sort of a legitimate move.

SCOTT: Oh, absolutely!

Q: That was with, what's his name. Buthelezi?

SCOTT: Buthelezi, yes. It was in a way, from the ANC perspective, a never ending thorn in their side. Buthelezi and the Inkatha Freedom Party really were very politically powerful. In some ways, the irony of it was it's as difficult as it was for the ANC. It was proof of South African democracy in action, because you really did have one province where the ANC was not in control, and there was very little prospect of them getting into control.

Fairly soon after coming on to the desk, back in the days when there still was some money for what was called an "orientation tour," before you had to figure out a way to do it without calling it that, I traveled to South Africa and spent some time in Pretoria, some time in Cape Town and a couple of days in Durban. One of the things the consulate general in Durban set up for me was to attend a political debate. There were going to be representatives of the National Party, the remnants of the White Party, the Social Democrats who had been kind of the opposition White Party, the ANC, and Inkatha Freedom Party.

I'm thinking, "This is going to be a real donnybrook," and I walked out afterwards thinking that it was really enlightening in a number of ways. Four fairly separate -- I shouldn't say fairly separate -- *really* separate parties in terms of ideology and viewpoint -- had a rousing four-way political debate which never descended into name calling, never descended into ad hominem attacks. They maintained decorum and strenuous debate on the issues. I walked out thinking, "This country's not in bad shape at all politically if they can do that." I remember thinking to myself if you put a similar mix in the U.S. together and 10 minutes in people would be screaming at one another and calling each other fascists and communists and everything in between. It was a remarkable evening!

Q: You left, in '99 or something?

SCOTT: Left there in '98, heading to Tel Aviv as political counselor.

Q: You were in Tel Aviv from when to when?

SCOTT: For four years, from '98 to 2002.

Q: What was the situation? Who was the ambassador, and what was the situation when you got there?

SCOTT: The ambassador was Ned Walker, DCM was Richard Roth, and the economic consul was Deborah Schwartz. That was the State substantive country team for the first year. At that point we were, this is by now five years or so after Oslo, and the peace process by and large seemed to be going not badly.

There were very few terror attacks, and it was pretty clear when there were that it was a situation of the terrorists trying to do something to break apart the peace process, rather than force the Israelis to the table or force the Americans to take positions. There was some moderately good feeling at the working level. The Israeli prime minister at the time was Netanyahu who, if truth be told, was certainly no friend of the peace process, and was not keen to move it forward.

Shortly after I got there, the President brought the sides together. Why? To try to establish a little bit more of a road map of where we were going. It was pretty clear that Prime Minister Netanyahu would have preferred to be just about anywhere in the world other than Wye talking to anybody in the world other than Yasser Arafat. The fact of the matter is he felt politically constrained to go, and it wasn't something he could back away from. Things proceeded by fits and starts in that first year. Not making a lot of terrific progress, but not an awful lot of backsliding either. The complaints tended to be more that one side was not living up to what it said it was going to do, rather than they were actively trying to tear the process down.

I think an objective observer would have to say that kind of applied to both sides. There were more instances of not doing nearly everything that was in the agreement, rather than one side leaning far forward and the other side pulling way back, sort of both advancing slowly by degrees. A year in U.S. leadership changed. Martin Indyk had been assistant secretary for Near East and South Africa affairs, and Ned Walker, as I mentioned, was ambassador.

Netanyahu and Ehud Barak had faced off in an election for prime minister, and Barak won. At that point it was determined, and I think Martin and Ned probably worked it out with the secretary, that they'd essentially switch positions. Martin who had had pretty good relationships with the government before Bibi took over, and had good ties with the Labor Party, would come on as ambassador and try to push the process forward with Barak and his government. Ned came back as assistant secretary, so it was basically a swap. The rest of the U.S. team or the rest of the embassy team stayed in place.

You began to see a little more kinds of progress in the peace process area. Martin was fairly active. Dennis Ross was coming out regularly, pushing things forward. Martin and Dennis worked well together. They worked well with the NSC, so the move from the U.S. team was pretty solid. There was obviously a good deal of support and encouragement from the White House, so at least on our side there was a lot of good going on. Barak certainly came in as someone who, having been the head of the Israeli

special operations force for a while, had impeccable counter terrorist credentials. He was a highly decorated soldier, had been...

Q: Entebbe, wasn't he?

SCOTT: He did not participate in Entebbe, but he led a very successful raid when terrorists had seized an airliner. He was in charge of the team that took down the terrorists without loss of life. Interestingly enough, Bibi was a member of the team, too, so you had an interesting juxtaposition there!

He'd served as chief of the northern command. He'd been chief of staff of the Israel defense forces. He was one of the few guys as prime minister who could argue, if he was making political concessions, that he had taken the defense side of it fully into account and was comfortable with it. How do you tell somebody with those credentials, "You can't make that judgment?" So he had very good credentials that way.

He had to deal with the same thing that every Israeli prime minister has had to deal with, and that is a coalition government, where his party was a minority party and dependent on the good will and folks of a mixed group of constituents. I think for any prime minister that that's always a limiting factor, because you can only go as far as most of your coalition is prepared to go. You need to be ready, if one of them bolts, to bring someone else in who will enable you to keep your majority, so it always was a balancing act for any kind of political action that he took.

The big event, of course, for that tour took place in the summer of 2000 where Barak's support was beginning to wane, where the president hit his...

Q: This was Clinton.

SCOTT: This was President Clinton, who had hit his six month out window, and was interested in establishing a legacy of trying to bring the process to final closure. Barak, I think, was interested in doing that, but Barak I think was also interested in what I've sometimes described as the "press to test" button with Arafat to see if he'd was prepared to come to closure. The upshot, of course, was Camp David, and the ultimate failure of that and all that happened afterward.

Q: I did a series of interviews with Beth Jones, who was the principal deputy assistant secretary in Mid East affairs at that time, who was not part of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating team, but she was the manager. She was saying that she knew that when Clinton called for this Camp David meeting, Arafat said, "I'm not ready. I can't make any commitment." Clinton promised that he wouldn't be asked to make a commitment, and yet when the meeting...

So Arafat went there, and he was true to his word: He wasn't going to make a commitment. He said he wouldn't, but Clinton left it as though everything had been set up, and then Arafat had reneged. Arafat's a difficult person, and I don't know if he ever

would have made a commitment. The point is, it's a little different cast. Did you pick that up?

SCOTT: Slightly differently and, of course, we're all looking at the Israeli side of it. In one of those novel and unique U.S. approaches, the consulate general in Jerusalem handles the Palestinian side of the house. The embassy hides the Israeli side of the house although I had a Gaza watcher who made regular trips to Gaza and talked to the Gaza community, so we'd get a little bit of that element as well.

In the Palestinian community there were tensions between the guys that stayed home and lived through the occupation and the Tunis crowd. From the perspective of the Gazans, the West Bankers lived the high life and traveled around Europe and had a wonderful time, then they came back in '93 and said, "Thank you very much. We'll take over now." So there was that tension. There were tensions between Gazans and West Bankers, so a lot of tough issues for the consulate to handle.

At the embassy, of course, we had our own multi-party political situation to watch, as well as those who were supporting the settler community. I think the impression that I had afterwards was that the president hoped to be able to get from Arafat at least a: maybe there are some elements here that we can talk about. We need to think about it more. If you will, in shorthand, a yea, but, with a big "but." But he got a no.

I think everybody knew that enough groundwork for Camp David had not been laid, that the president was trying to push it too hard, too fast. Barak was prepared to do it that way because he, I think, felt, that either way it goes, it's not a bad outcome. Either the Palestinians will say, "Okay, there might be enough here to talk about. We'll go on," in which case that was good news. If they gave them a flat, "No," they had a good offer on the table that could have been a basis for starting, and they blew us off! I think Barak and his guys went figuring that, however it comes out, they could live with it and they would know where they stood.

I think one of the other elements that sometimes gets glossed over is people tend to see the Camp David meetings and collapse as, at least at that period of time, an end of game development.

There were, in fact, two more sessions between the Israelis and Palestinians, after the Intifada had started to spin its way up. One was in Sharm el-Sheikh in September or October where the Israelis began to flesh out their proposal a little bit. It was really, as I understand it, pretty amorphous at Camp David, and got a little fleshier in Sharm in September-October. Then there was a second meeting in Taba (Egypt), just across the border from Eilat, toward the end of December. At that one, my understanding is the Israelis started getting real specific.

When you look back at it, in the aftermath, both of those were probably doomed for no other reason than the intifada was already going on. Whatever trust and confidence that existed pre-Camp David, if not gone, was going fast. While you had, at one level, a set of

discussions going on where the two sides were beginning to talk in a fair amount of detail about an agreement that I think a lot of observers thought would be pretty reasonable, there just was no longer any fertile ground for any of that to take hold.

Q: Could you explain how the intifada manifested itself during this time, and what was behind it, and then how much from your perspective in Israel, was this due to the mood?

SCOTT: In some ways it is hard to describe what was going on, because it was changing and evolving, and what applied now didn't apply in a week or two. It began with, in a way, unrest on the Palestinian side, or demonstrations and reaction by the IDF. In those early stages things were pretty awfully one-sided. I say awful. That is not an adjective. What was going on was pretty awful. The Palestinians were out-gunned, out-matched, out-strengthened at every turn. The IDF was tending to use deadly force, when at least in some situations lesser force might have been used, water cannons or that kind of thing.

What you were seeing were a lot of Palestinian casualties and relatively few Israeli casualties. Almost all of this was taking place either in the West Bank or in Gaza. Very little was going on internally. About a month into it there were demonstrations in northern Israel in several of the Israeli-Arab villages. In a couple of those there were a number of Israelis, pretty much all young men, killed. Everybody was horrified by this.

One of the worries was, "Boy, are we starting to see the first inklings of the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian community taking sides, and we're going to have an intifada that's happening in the territories and happening internally." The Israeli-Arab community told us at the embassy that that's not what they read. That's not what was happening, that these demonstrations took place in the context of their own issues of lack of support of the government, and not enough money for villages, and being second class citizens and those sorts of things. They worked very hard. They told us they were going to be working very hard to get things back under control, which I think they did.

The Israelis, for their part were equally horrified by the whole thing. It happened, at least as I remember it, fairly quickly you began to see stories in the Israeli press that suggested that what this was was a breakdown in command and control. The Israeli police commander for the northern sector, who long had a reputation of being anti-Arab, had not done anything to find a way to quell the disturbances, or tell his forces, "If you're confronted, back off or use minimum force."

In the end the Israelis did put together a commission that studied it, determined basically that that was the case, and the guy was relieved. It did not happen immediately. It took place over a period of time. Basically I think for both sides within Israel, the Israel-Arab side and the Israeli government Jewish side, looked at that and I think came up to the precipice, looked over, and said, "We do not want to go there," and backed away.

Things continued bubbling and escalating in the territories. It stayed in the territories for a number of months. I was coming to feel that, at least among a fair number of Israelis living in the green line -- in other words living inside the pre-'67 borders -- there was a

growing sense, or at least a sense that the settler community is... I'm trying to look at the right words here. "This isn't necessarily worth our boys going out and getting killed for. We have a group of settlers, who have decided for religious reasons, or ideological reasons, or whatever reasons, that they want to live amongst a population who is inherently hostile to them, and why should we be sending our boys off to defend these guys?"

Prior to Camp David you actually were beginning to see stories in the Israeli media speculating about the possibility that this may be the last generation for whom post-high school military service was mandatory. They really were starting to think, "We're getting pretty close here. We may not have to have a draft anymore."

There's this optimistic sense, building up to Camp David that dropped like a stone. Along with it, as I remember, there was kind of a sense that there are those sort of crazy guys who are living in the territories, and how come our boys are going off in the line of fire? I indeed actually heard one right wing Israeli say that he did not perceive a lot of what was going on in the territories in the early period, particularly when it was directed against IDF, as terrorism. I was a little surprised by that.

He elaborated and said that terrorism is political, with acts of violence directed against civilians or non-combatants by people who don't have a direct role in what's going on. While the idea of an attack on the IDF that results in a young man or young woman soldier being killed is a terrible tragedy, you have to remember that these people, Palestinians, perceive these guys as occupiers, and they are attempting to end an occupation. I wouldn't have been very surprised to hear that from somebody on the left. I was a little surprised to hear it from somebody on the right.

Q: Did you get at that time a good profile of who were the settlers?

SCOTT: Yes, I think there was a reasonably good profile. It's like anything else, they're not a homogeneous group. There were some settlers in the West Bank, primarily the West Bank, less so than Gaza, for economic reasons. The housing was cheaper there, it was subsidized, they could get a nice place, nicer than they could afford in Tel Aviv or the Tel Aviv suburbs. It was not a too far commute, and they were living there for economic reasons. There wasn't any sort of deep-seated ideological or religious devotion to the land.

Then there were the religious settlers who harkened back to Eretz Israel, it's been Eretz Israel since Moses, and God giving the Promised Land to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and we're just taking back what was originally and historically ours. That's the religious side of it.

Then they're those fairly closely involved with the perhaps secular, but intensely ideological side, who look at Zionism in its most extreme iteration. This is the land for the Jews, and the Arabs can either live in a Jewish state and learn to like it, or go somewhere else. That's the mix.

Q: What about this rather large exodus of Russian Jews? Were they part of this or what?

SCOTT: My sense is most Russian Jews settled inside the green line of Israel, but Russian Jews, and here I got a real good lesson in if you're going to do political analysis, you better figure out what the people you want to analyze are thinking rather than superimposing your viewpoint on it. I asked a source about this once. I said, "I just don't understand this. Here are people who were oppressed for hundreds of years. They finally, through dint of their own persistence, and a great deal of work on the part of the United States with Jackson-Vanik and other things, are out of Russia. They've come to Israel, and the first thing they're doing is supporting the oppression of a minority people. What the heck is going on here?"

The answer was, "Look, these are folks who may have been oppressed in Russia, who certainly were, and whose families experienced pogrom after pogrom. But they come from a Russian experience where if it's not the Poles, it's the Germans or the Prussians, or whomever, making a run at the French, making a run at Moscow, and they are bound and determined that their land is their land, and nobody else is going to get it. If you put yourself in that time, in that mental frame, you can understand where they're coming from. I thought, "Gee, that's not the way I would have interpreted it, but in talking to Russian Jews who had come to Israel, that's pretty much where they were coming from.

Q: Was that Natan Sharansky?

SCOTT: Sharansky and Avigdor Lieberman, Lieberman more than Sharansky. Sharansky was, if you will, the liberal wing of the Russian community. Avigdor Lieberman was the hard-nose wing of the movement and, at least when I was there, basically held the view that the proper Palestinian state was Jordan, and the quicker they all go there the better.

Q: In the embassy, how did you find it? Was there an attitude among the junior officers about the situation there? Were there Israeli-ophiles versus Arab-ophiles?

SCOTT: A little bit of both, and in part dependant on who their primary contacts were. My sense was that the differences tended to be more on the edges. We had a quite cohesive overall political section, from the Gaza watcher who was an Arabic speaker on one end to the folks who were in contact with the more liberal wing of the Israeli political structure. I think in large part because most of us had arrived at post in this period when things were tending to go pretty well, that was kind of where we were coming from, and that was the basis that we all worked with. You didn't suddenly see a moving in different directions when the intifada came.

I think the common feeling, right from the front office on down to the junior-most officers was, "How in the world could this thing have fallen apart so fast?" That was the thing that was just staggering. You had what you thought was a fairly high degree of trust and confidence between both sides, and three months later it was just gone.

Q: What was your feeling on it?

SCOTT: Once the fighting started and the killing started it just essentially became politically untenable on either side to argue vocally for the peace process. The guy we were sitting across the table from a month ago in the case of the Palestinians, is now shooting at us, or in the case of the Israelis, who were now commanding Gaza, they were shooting at them, and telling others to use deadly force.

Q: Were you sensing any change in the United States? I am caught by a thing I saw on TV showing this Palestinian man holding his son. He's caught in the middle and is obviously just caught, and they keep shooting at him! These Israelis are shooting and killed the son. The son we're talking about was...

SCOTT: He was five or six years old. A very little boy.

Q: I was so horrified by that thing that it still sticks with me.

SCOTT: And it did. It was a horrifying thing. The thing that in many ways was really sad about that, and would have been sad even if there hadn't been loss of life, was the IDF eventually did an analysis of where their people were and where other people were. When they completed the study it was no means clear that an IDF bullet killed the little kid. A number of us said to them, "Okay fine, but this was over a long time ago. We're at a point now where it doesn't matter whose bullets did the damage. The fact is that you guys kept shooting and the fact is that it was on TV; you guys are expected to live up to a higher standard, and you didn't do it."

Q: Also, did you have this thing that I have come away with. I've seen IDF studies after IDF studies, and most of the time we didn't do it, somebody else did and all that, which comes across like sometimes we do it with our army, friendly fire or something. It comes out a pile of crap. Here are people with overwhelming arms firing into somewhere and then saying, "Maybe it didn't happen," or something like that. I find it very easy to discount these studies laying around. How did you feel about all that?

SCOTT: I thought what we saw, and they showed us their diagrams of where their guys were and the Palestinians they were engaging, and it was pretty difficult to figure out that there would have been concentrated IDF fire at the man and his little boy. But the thing that I thought was lacking in the study was the point that I made: "You guys had overwhelming force. You were fairly well protected. Just stop shooting! You weren't going to suffer casualties. Stop shooting, and if the gunfire keeps going on, then it becomes clear to the camera. Whether it was a valid study or not, and whether it was convincing or not, in my view is beside the point. The fact is you could have approached this differently, and you didn't do it."

Q: Did you sense a change in the mood in the United States beginning to look at the Palestinian cause as -- at one point there wasn't much support for it. I felt by this time in particular -- with kids throwing rocks at jeeps and having people respond with gunfire...

SCOTT: And even respond with rubber bullets.

Q: Still. I think things were changing.

SCOTT: I think that's probably true. It's difficult for me to say because you'd be able to see a little bit of CNN and a little bit of BBC and get a little bit of that, but I think for even those of us at the embassy, the early weeks of the intifada was kind of an absolutely overwhelming force being used against a set of events where overwhelming force probably wasn't needed and in many cases certainly didn't need to be used. There was the inevitable, "What's going on here?" You certainly could see why the Palestinian side was losing confidence and trust in the Israeli side.

Q: Where was this coming from, this overwhelming force? Was this Netanyahu?

SCOTT: No.

Q: Barak?

SCOTT: This was Barak. I think it was probably, as much as anything else, a sense on the political side in Israel that, in the face of terrorism, you cannot show weakness. You have to respond with...

Q: One can't help but go back to the German response during World War I and II. Schrecklichkeit, horror, really come down hard. This was a tendency... It doesn't work.

SCOTT: No. It doesn't work. I sometimes think in some ways the nature of the Israeli political system pushes things that way. In a coalition government there's a certain tendency to shift more to the conservative wing, because if you don't they're going to leave you, and the guys on the far left, they're not going to go. They know if they leave, the right takes over, and they're really out. So you can see a political shift to the right.

I think the next sort of phase in all of this, at least from my perspective, was a massive Palestinian miscalculation to take the intifada to the next stage of attacks inside Israel. As I say, for a fairly lengthy period of time what was going on was going on in the territories. A lot of Israelis saw some of that stuff with the same sort of sense of deep unease that the rest of the world did. You didn't have to do anything more than look at the casualty figures, which were overwhelmingly Palestinians, very few IDF, and even fewer Israeli civilians in the West Bank.

Then for whatever reason, and I have no way of knowing whether this was a command level decision, or if it started to happen at lower levels, but you started to see suicide bombers inside the Green Line. Boy, you never saw a political mood shift quicker. I have described it sometimes as up until a certain period of time toward the end of 2000 or early 2001, where the mood inside of Green Line Israel tended to be: the settlers are not,

if not on their own, they are suffering from a problem of their own making. When the attacks started inside the Green Line it was...

Q: Nothing focuses in your mind. Everybody is risk.

SCOTT: The other part of that shift was a lot of the targeting, as I recall in the early months, was against the IDF and checkpoints and IDF patrols and that sort of thing. Coming back to that right wing guise, it's always awful when you have to tell a family that their son or daughter is dead, but there is this sort of understanding in Israel that when you put the uniform on you are at risk. It's in some ways what we're seeing now in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One of the risks, as horrifying as it is, is injury or death. When you have a group of mostly young kids and a lot of them Russian immigrants standing outside a disco in Tel Aviv and a guy wearing an explosive vest full of ball bearings and nuts and bolts goes up and joins the crowd and explodes himself. That was really... The view was these were not combatants. These are innocent kids just out for a good time on Friday night. You could almost see the mood shift.

Q: Were you there when Sharon went to the Temple Mount?

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: How did we see this in the beginning? Was Sharon almost a has-been at the time?

SCOTT: He was out of government. He was not part of the government. I don't think Sharon has ever done anything without at least a certain amount of thought as to the strategic consequences of it. He had to have known it was provocative. He took a fair number of police and security people up there with him. The response was eminently predictable.

This is one of those things where you really feel that two wrongs do not make a right. It was absolutely outrageous that he chose to do this at the time. This was post-Camp David, just pre-intifada, but the mood was tense and bubbly. It was a callous thing to do, an outrageous thing to do, a foolish thing to do, and there should have been no doubt of the consequences, but he did it anyway.

Then there was the Palestinian reaction, equally understandable and equally right in the short term of what they were doing. I sometimes think the wiser diplomatic suggestion on the Palestinian side should have been, "Tell the head of the Waft to tell the former minister that we're delighted to have him up here and we'll welcome him for an escorted tour and show him around." It would have made the Palestinians look eminently reasonable. It would have humiliated Sharon, and I'm sure his reaction would have been to call off the visit and might well have defused the whole situation. But you had both sides absolutely...

Q: Did you feel that there was any directing force on the Palestinian side?

SCOTT: You know, you really didn't, at least I didn't. I thought what was going on in the early days was individuals or small groups really going berserk. The part of it that eludes me to this day is, given that was there then a decision on the part of the Palestinian leadership to go ahead and let it go, or did they feel that we can get this under control at any time, and then found two weeks into it that it was uncontrollable. That I just don't know. I think you could make a good case for any of them. The factionalism within the Palestinian community is so great.

Q: This is really before Hamas.

SCOTT: Hamas was active in Gaza, but they were active in opposition to Fatah. A certain amount of Hamas leadership were either in Palestinian custody or Palestinian jails, but even at that point they were already well into their social responsibility kinds of things, providing food and shelter and welfare and helping people out. You had this juxtaposition of the Hamas side of the house trying to take care of the people and the Fatah side of the house stealing them blind.

Q: The figures I think were just horrible in Gaza. I talked to some people who were water experts and they said what the Israelis did in their settlements. It was 3,000, or whatever it is, a small group that went in there, took all the choice land and all the choice water. They were living a very nice life surrounded by poverty and this swelling humanity. For those people there must have been a certain amount of contempt for them, wasn't there on your part?

SCOTT: I think there certainly was. I don't know if I necessarily would use the word "contempt," but a certain sense of outrage and disbelief.

A couple of anecdotes are noteworthy here: One of the reasons that Barak had wanted to go to Camp David in the first place was he saw a similar part of that whole thing playing out, with the fairly significant number of Gazans who were coming into Israel each day to work, and really very large numbers, 40 or 50 thousand, coming from the West Bank to work each day.

One of his worries was, "These guys are coming from a place where poverty is just endemic. They're building our buildings. They're working on skyscrapers going up in Tel Aviv, a glittering modern city. How do those guys feel when they go home at night? They look 10 miles west, and there's the golden apple, and they're living in a rotten peach." One of Barak's ideas was, and he used this phrase: "We have to get away from the idea that Palestinians are the hewers of wood and the drawers of water for Israelis." It's that same sort of dynamic that was blindingly apparent in Gaza of lifestyles.

The other thing about the Gaza settlers that I heard from somebody who was in the IDF was the seeming total disdain and lack of respect that the settlers had for the IDF personnel who were down there to keep them safe. I guess it would be fair to describe it

as a certain sense of entitlement. “We’re here. You’re supposed to put your body between us and the bad guys. That’s what you’re here for.” I talked to one person who described having to walk from an outpost back to base and settlers passing him and not stopping to give him a ride. That was an example of the internal dissension between the IDF and the settlers.

Q: Was there any tension between our embassy in Tel Aviv and our consulate general in Jerusalem during the time you were there? They had obviously different outlooks. They had different sets of responsibilities. How did that play out?

SCOTT: It actually played out pretty well. That’s historically been a pretty prickly relationship, and sometimes people are at loggerheads and sometimes not. The approach on both sides coincided after the intifada started. Ambassador Indyk was there from 2000 to 2001, and then Dan Kurtzer came out as Martin’s successor.

Both of them basically set down a guideline that we’re going to report this together. We’re going to show Jerusalem our reporting before we send it in, and they will show us their stuff before they send it in. We’re not necessarily going to pull our calls if the other guy disagrees, but we’re not going to get into a situation where we’re reporting just the Israeli side and the Jerusalem folks are just reporting the Palestinian side. We were sharing, for example, our situation reports before we sent them in and commenting, or adjusting, or bringing the other guys into the account.

There’s always a little bit of tension there, because from the embassy we’re getting the Israeli guy on the other end of the phone yelling about the Palestinian treasury and Jerusalem’s getting the same thing on the Palestinian side. I think under both Martin’s administration and Dan’s administration, there was a very conscious and very deliberate effort.

Q: You lived in Israel twice.

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: You want to compare and contrast on the personal level. This time you had a Jewish wife with ties to Israel, and also the atmosphere was different. How did you find being an American living in Israel this time as compared to the time before?

SCOTT: The very first thing, that struck me when we got there, is when we left Israel in 1984 this was a country that in some ways was, if not an economic basket case, it was certainly teetering on the edge. Triple digit inflation, salaries indexed to the rate of inflation, so huge salaries that barely let people keep up. It was third world, maybe second world overall standard of living.

When we got there the second time, this was clearly a country that had arrived as a serious first world economic status country.

Q: Was it the electronic era that did it?

SCOTT: The electronic era did it, and that I think did a lot of it. Part of it was Shimon Peres had done a term as prime minister and basically started taking steps that were going to get the budget under control. That kind of got things headed in the right direction, but the electronics thing had a lot to do with it. People coming out of the IDF, men and women who began computer start-up companies and sold them a couple of years later for mega bucks, an economy that really started to turn.

When we left there was a lot of focus on agriculture, on fruits and vegetables, and flowers and that sort of thing, making the desert bloom. By 1998 it was investments and electronics and high end stuff. So that was a first impression: the nature of the nation had changed. It was a much more comfortable place to live in terms of lifestyle.

Second, I think a country that was in some ways more confident in itself. It didn't necessarily feel like the difference between well-being and not was the size of the USAID package. It was -- and still is -- a very large AID package. Where earlier if you included it in gross national product, it would have been a fairly significant part of it. Now it was not. So a little more of a sense that the relationship was a bit more balanced.

Third, a little more comfortable with some of the countries in the region. The Jordan Peace Treaty had been signed by this time. That was working well. Fairly good relationship with the Turks. You could begin to make an argument in Israeli politics that there are demonstrated relationships with Muslim states other than hot war or imminent hostilities. So a different kind of approach in that area as well. Just an overall different, a really different feeling.

Q: Maybe this is being political, too. Looking at demographics, were the Arab-Israelis still producing more kids than the Israelis?

SCOTT: Yes.

Q: Was someone drawing some straight line projections and saying, "Hey, wait a minute."

SCOTT: They were, and particularly when you included the West Bank and Gaza, the idea that you draw these lines, and at some point in the not too distant future in the 21st century, Israel is going to cease to become a Jewish majority state if they keep the territories.

The other thing that had happened, of course, is the massive influx of Russian Jews in the early '90s. You had within the Israeli body politic roughly 17% of the population that was Israeli-Arab, a little bit more of the population was Russian Jew, then the remainder was divided amongst Ashkenazi which was smaller and Sephardic Middle Eastern Jewish immigrants or whose parents had been immigrants on the Sephardic side. So you really have fundamental differences in the political demographic that had shifted substantially

conservative. The Russians figured out, unlike the Israeli Arabs, the idea that if you got 17% of the vote, you can marshal enough people in the Knesset to really throw your weight around. They were very efficient and effective at that.

Q: What were they after?

SCOTT: They were after a piece of the social pie, a piece of the economic pie, jobs for Russian immigrants. If you get a big enough percentage in the Knesset and support the ruling coalition, you're going to get a couple of ministries, and if you're a politician in a ministry, whatever that ministry doles out you can use it.

Q: The Russian emigrants were bringing, I think of two things. One is Russians as a people are great at mathematics and doing stuff of that nature, which is highly suited for computer skills. Also there's that government control which they've had since Ivan Grozny going back to the Tsarist times, not wanting a free-flowing thing, but controls and, "What's in it for us?"

SCOTT: I think there was a certain amount of that. With the size of their population, it would have been hard for them to really put it in place, but they certainly figured out... As I say, if you've got 17, 18% of the population and you run as a party, you can get a fair amount of people in the Knesset, and that gives you huge bargaining power, and they did that.

Israeli Arabs have yet to figure that out. There are three or four parties, and each of them runs. Normally each of them will put a couple of people, maybe two or three, in the Knesset. They are individually separate and distinct. You may offer a couple of people a position, you don't bring them into the coalition, but they vote for you and you send a few things their way.

The thing that always surprised me was that even after the Russian example, you could take this block of voters and do a lot with it. But you didn't see the Israeli-Arabs doing this. They need to get rid of this four or five party thing and come to terms with the broad umbrella of a single party, and nominate just enough candidates to get a good block of voters. Then they're sitting there with 10 or 11 people in the Knesset, and can really throw their weight around. They never have figured that out.

Q: While you were there, did you ever see accommodation being made with Syria? Was that in the cards?

SCOTT: At one point I think there was a sense that it might be. This was in the aftermath of Camp David where Assad senior was still vigorous. They put together the session at Shepherdstown. I wasn't there, so I have no idea what the actual dynamics were, but some of what I've heard is that the Syrians were there to throw some ideas around, and the Israelis went basically to listen. I sometimes think, boy it was the opposite of Camp David. You had one group that seemed to be there to throw some ideas around, and the other that just wasn't ready to make the step.

The impression I have is that, by the time the Barak government was ready to move on it, Assad's health had really begun to fail. They had the second meeting in Geneva, and Assad for whatever reason basically put the kibosh on it. It was a point where you really thought they might have closed on something.

Q: You left there when?

SCOTT: I left there in the early fall of 2002.

Q: And then what?

SCOTT: And came back here, went out to CIA as senior state rep, had an office there, and what started out a two year tour ended up a four year tour from which I retired.

Q: I'm wondering: Is this something we can talk about next time or not?

SCOTT: Not a whole lot.

Q: Maybe we should leave it off.

SCOTT: Okay.

Q: One quick question going back to African times: Susan Rice was the assistant secretary for African affairs. Right now we're in the political season of 2008, and she's one of the people around Barack Obama. What was your impression of her in Africa affairs? I've had very mixed views.

SCOTT: I'm a real fan. I think that she certainly had her views and she was not the least bit reticent about expressing them. I found her to be quite approachable. I had done a TDY at the National Security Council where she was senior director for African affairs. During that time I was on Southern African affairs and she had one of her directors who had left. They had a big hole, and she asked the department to send somebody over. The bureau suggested me. I went over and talked to her, and she said, "Come ahead."

I found her, as I say, very approachable, perfectly happy to listen to other ideas. She might not necessarily agree with you, and she might not necessarily disagree with you in a kind and diplomatic fashion, but if you didn't allow that to put you off, and came back and said, "No, I think you're wrong. We really ought to take another look at this." I found that by and large she was prepared to listen.

Q: Good.

SCOTT: I also found, and I believe by and large, she has a great respect for the foreign service. She had a couple of people from the department, myself and one other, over at the National Security Council staff when she was there. Her staff meetings were always

an open exchange of ideas and she was happy to hear from foreign service folks. She expected the debate to be on a professional level with good ideas. You didn't get the sense that you sometimes get from folks coming in from the political side who see the foreign service as, "You're the guys that go off and put it into effect. Don't bother me with policy ideas. You're an implementer, not a thinker." She was, at least my impression of her was, always fair. If there was a good idea, she'd let you run with it.

Q: Good. Okay. John, I want to thank you very much.

SCOTT: It's been a pleasure.

End of interview