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**ELISABETH KVITASHVILI**

*Interviewed by: John Pielemeier  
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## **INTERVIEW**

*Q: This is John Pielemeier. I am beginning an interview with Elisabeth Kvitashvili I am going*

*to ask you to start it by indicating how to spell your name and how do you pronounce it.*

KVITASHVILI: My name is Elisabeth Kvitashvili.

*Q: And the name is originally...*

KVITASHVILI: It is Georgian from the Republic of Georgia in the Caucasus.

*Q: All right.*

KVITASHVILI: It is my maiden name by the way not my married name.

*Q: OK, we are happy to have you do this interview. Could you start out with a little bit of background on your date and place of birth and some family background.*

KVITASHVILI: Of course, I was born September, 1955, in Washington DC. I am a first generation American. Both of my parents were immigrants to the United States having arrived in the early 1950's. My mother was Russian and my father was Georgian, from the Republic of Georgia. Both parents have passed away. My mother was born in France but raised in France and in Russia. My father was born in Georgia when it was still a part of the Russian empire. It eventually reclaimed its independence for a short period after the Russian Revolution and then became a Soviet Republic in 1924. Both of my parents' families were considered upper middle class, were landowners and part of the nobility. My Russian grandmother was a member of the Imperial Court serving the Tsarina or Empress. As a result of the revolution, ensuing Russian civil war and Soviet occupation of Georgia, both families had to flee their homelands by 1923 and settled in Europe. Some of my remaining family was sent to the gulag or shot. In a strange coincidence, while working in Ingushetia in 1995 I came across a Cossack military leader who knew of my (Russian) grandmother's family and who had met my grandmother's sister -- my mother's aunt -- who had survived the gulag, many years previously in St. Petersburg. She must have been over 90 when he met her. Anyway, both families settled in France where there were colonies of Russian and Georgian immigrants who had fled the Soviets. My mother was raised in Europe after leaving Russia and came to the United States after WWII. She was sponsored by the American Red Cross owing to her work as a translator during the Nuremburg trials. My father, who was already in England studying at university at the time of the Bolshevik revolution, became a British citizen. My parents met at the Russian nobility ball in 1953 in New York. My father's background is a bit interesting in that although he was born in Georgia and raised there, he also spent a good bit of his time growing up in Baku, Azerbaijan because my grandfather was the general manager of the then British/Anglo-Persian oil concession in Baku. This was at the turn of the century (my father was born in 1902!). Therefore, my father spent a good deal of his youth in Baku as well as Georgia's Racha region, which was the princely possession of the Kvitashvili family. Because my grandfather worked for an English firm, my father won a scholarship and went to university in England. As a result, after the Russian revolution when he was in college he was allowed to stay in England and eventually became a British citizen even though his family had fled to France after the Soviets invaded Georgia. (Many Russian and Georgian exiles went to France rather than England after the revolution). My father went on to become an engineer and, during World War II, a military intelligence officer serving in North

Africa and the Middle East. He undertook intelligence missions to the Northwest Frontier and the Caucasus on behalf of the British. He was an aide-de-camp at the Teheran Conference for Churchill. He was recruited by the OSS to come to the US in the early 1950's which is how he found his way to New York in 1953.

*Q: Were there elements of your family back then that led you towards work in international development?*

KVITASHVILI: There was. I was first generation and English was not my first language; French was my first language. My mother was not a good English speaker and for patriotic reasons my father refused to speak Russian at home (although his Russian was fluent). French was their common language so French was spoken at home. I really learned English starting in kindergarten. I heard many different languages at home. My father spoke seven different languages. My mother also spoke many languages. Both my father and mother were very well traveled. My father more so. Growing up I was exposed to different languages and people as visitors coming to my home were mostly immigrants. I was surrounded by an international crowd and we had very few American visitors. The topics discussed at the dinner table frequently were of a political nature because many of my parent's friends and family were anti-Communist and discussed what was going on in the Soviet Union.

*Q: Wonderful. That is excellent background. Tell us a little bit about your education especially your college years.*

KVITASHVILI: OK, I grew up in in northern Virginia. I was a tomboy and wanted to pursue athletics at college. I went to North Carolina because I wanted to be a physical education teacher and North Carolina had a respected program. I spent three years at North Carolina and one, more formidable year, in Paris. I spent the year in Paris studying at the Institute of Political Science (Sciences PO) which is part of the University of Paris system, as well as at the Sorbonne. My classwork was a combination of international relations, all in French, plus Russian and German language studies in French. In the international relations classes they touched on a number of development themes mostly dealing with Africa and the Middle East. I somewhat soured on teaching and decided to pursue something in the international relations arena and preferably overseas but wasn't really sure yet what. After I graduated from university, I worked for a year at the Embassy of Oman in order to save money for graduate school. At the Embassy I worked for the educational attaché. I was working with Omani officials to bring Omani students to the United States to study for their college and graduate degrees. In the late 1970's many countries from the Persian Gulf used their oil wealth to bring their young people to the United States to study, particularly engineering, so I was the educational assistant to the attaché working on that program. Saving money, waiting for the Peace Corps to which I had applied, I also applied for graduate school. I decided I was interested in the Middle East, perhaps because in Paris I had met so many students from the Middle East and heard much from them about the plight of the Palestinians. One of my French cousins had spent a year working in Lebanon in Palestinian refugee camps and with Palestinians associated with groups that eventually turned to terrorism.... My father had spent many years in the Middle East as an engineer and I also had family connections in Iran. I decided to pursue a graduate degree in Near Eastern studies, which took me to London, to the School of Oriental and African studies—SOAS-- which is part of the

University of London where I received a Master's degree. While I was there I heard from the Peace Corps. I had been accepted. The initial thinking was I was going to go to Afghanistan which was great news for me because I was greatly interested in its history. But during the course of that year (1978-79) things deteriorated greatly in Afghanistan, so I did not join the Peace Corps. I was accepted for a job at UNHCR at an entry level program officer. But, I had elderly parents. They married late and had me a little bit later. My father was 18 years older than my mother. I had been away for a year and a half and even though that wasn't that long of a time I was worried about being away from them too long, so I came home. I decided not to pursue UNHCR. I decided to try to find a job at least initially in the US and AID is where I landed.

*Q: Let me ask you just a couple more questions about your education. Did you do any thesis work or dissertation work while you were there?*

KVITASHVILI: As part of my Master's program at SOAS, I focused on Iran's land reform program which was implemented, ultimately unsuccessfully, by the Iranians with significant American support. This program--the White Revolution-- occurred in the 1960's. I also studied and wrote about Middle Eastern traditional irrigation schemes later going to Egypt to study a bit further. Hence I was touching on a number of development-related topics.

*Q: Wonderful. Did you travel to that region?*

KVITASHVILI: I went to Turkey and Lebanon after grad school. I probably shouldn't have gone to Lebanon because it was during the civil war. I had planned to go to Persia to see my relatives but couldn't because of the revolution. They eventually fled, but one of my cousins was executed by Khomeini. Interesting side note, however. While I was in London one of my primary professors was an Iraqi exilée. He talked to me about applying for a fellowship and possibly becoming a junior professor at the university in one of all places Basra, Iraq. So he arranged for me to go there quickly and interview for a position in Basra, Iraq. It was bad timing because there were already preparations for war. I would have loved to have stayed except for three things. My desire to take care of my parents, looming instability, and the heat...the heat of Basra did me in. So I came home after spending 6 weeks traveling in Turkey and Lebanon.

*Q: Were there any particular professors that you remember fondly that were helpful in your quest.*

KVITASHVILI: I had a French language professor when I was in high school and a superb French language teacher at UNC. Both of them were from North Africa. We would talk a lot about living and working in North Africa. So once again it wasn't just about language, it was about learning more about different people, different cultures. But perhaps my most influential professor was in the political science department at UNC. He loved Africa, had spent 2 years working in Ethiopia and took me under his wing to serve as his assistant. Discussions with him helped me to see that my interests were gradually moving towards a development theme—wanting to help others abroad through assistance programs.

*Q: That sounds like a good choice for your situation.*

KVITASHVILI: I think so.

*Q: And you came back from overseas and decided to look for a job and you began to say you landed with USAID all of a sudden. Tell us more about that.*

KVITASHVILI: In early fall 1979, I took the foreign service exam, because I wanted to be part of a State Department team that could help solve the Palestine-Israeli problem (boy was I naïve). But I didn't get to round 2! While waiting for my results, I applied to USAID. But, due to the election of President Reagan there was a hiring freeze.

*Q: You were going to solve the Palestinian Israeli problem.*

KVITASHVILI: Exactly. I was young, naïve, and idealistic, right? I wanted to be part of the team, part of the process that might actually lead to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. While I was waiting for the results of the foreign service exam, I applied for a job at AID, initially as a civil service officer. Now why not a foreign service officer? Because as I was applying, President Reagan had been elected and he put a hiring freeze on the agency and so they couldn't hire any more IDIs. The HR officer assisting me did not know how long the hiring freeze would last so she encouraged me to come on board as civil service and then try to convert to FS when the opportunity arose. But because there were no professional level vacancies I came on board as a GS 4! Then after 2 years, Robert Nachtrieb "discovered" me and helped me convert to a junior project development officer position in the Asia bureau.

*Q: Just to put this in perspective, what would a GS-4 be making in terms of money, annual salary in those days?*

KVITASHVILI: Let me see \$35,000 maybe, I really don't remember. It was enough to help me pay back my student loan for grad school. I was still living at home which helped. I also want to explain why I was a GS-4 and not at least a GS-6 or-7. After all I had a Master's degree. There were two things that conspired against me! One, there was this hiring freeze with opportunity only to hire clerical staff up to GS-5. The second reason was I didn't know how to type! I had never taken typing. I was old school. I used longhand. I did not do well enough on the typing test to get the GS-5 level. But I had a job, as it turned out a good boss, and I learned loads about the agency. I was hired into the training division under Daniel Creedon. It was the same division that housed the IDI program directed at the time by Shirley Marino. The wonderful Cecelia Pitas was working with Shirley. There was the Development Studies Program under Dick Blue and the language training unit. It was an ideal spot where you could meet a lot of people and see what kinds of opportunities were available in the agency.

*Q: How old were you then, Elizabeth?*

KVITASHVILI: I was 24.

*Q: Oh my goodness; you were a young thing.*

KVITASHVILI: I was, and while I was there I was able to travel to assist with some overseas

training. I began to become exposed to field operations and missions abroad. The first mission I went to was Kenya. The formidable Ray Love was Director. His wife Mary was there, and Mary kind of took me under her wing. She was one of my first “mentors”. She saw potential in this young woman who was a clerk typist with a Master’s degree in Middle Eastern Studies and who spoke three languages and who probably needed to be somewhere else in the agency! She and Ray were very encouraging and kind in helping me find different avenues for professional growth. Eventually as I said, I met the wonderful Robert Nachtrieb. We got to talking and he said, “You know you really need to become a junior project development or desk officer over in the Asia bureau.” And in 1983, I was able to move over there. Let me pause for just a second. This is late ’82, early ’83 as I am waiting for whatever is going to happen with Asia bureau, the FS hiring freeze apparently began to be lifted and AID began to recruit a small IDI class. Again thanks to I suspect either Mary Love or Robert Nachtrieb, I got a call one day from the Yemen desk officer, Chris Crowley. He said, “Come on over and interview. We are interviewing for an IDI to go out to Yemen as the program economist. And we would like to interview you.” I went over and interviewed with Chris. I am not a program economist. Although the interview went well, we both agreed I wasn’t right for this job. But Chris was very encouraging. The Asia bureau job came through and I transferred to Asia/PD as the junior project development officer, although still civil service.

*Q: Just for clarification PD is project development.*

KVITASHVILI: Yes, the project development office within the Asia Bureau. The head of the office was Ray Van Raalte and his deputy was Bob Pratt. The head of my division which was South Asia was Howard Sharlock. My day-to-day supervisor was the wonderful Patricia Matheson, one of the few women in a non-clerical job in the Bureau and a civil service officer. I owe a lot to Pat who became my role model. I was assigned to be the project officer for Nepal working with the desk officer, Howard Thomas and the deputy project officer for Pakistan working with Pat. Howard spent many hours teaching me about Nepal-he had been the desk officer for years and knew the country very well. He introduced me to other officers who knew Nepal well and once again everyone was very encouraging. As I showed a lot of promise and had done well I was given more responsibilities with other countries in the broad South Asia division in the years I was there. Asia Bureau, under the overall leadership of Charlie Greenleaf, was a wonderful place to be for a young officer because it was full of officers who took me under their wing and mentored and trained me and gave me incredible opportunities to grow professionally by “doing” and through observation. I began to be exposed to an array of themes and development issues that I just absorbed like a sponge. I worked very closely in the development of irrigation programs under the guidance of experts like Mark Swanson and Dennis Wendel. Irrigation was big at the time and the Bureau was spending a lot of time working on various designs (remember Mahaweli in Sri Lanka?). Both Mark and Dennis took me under their wing and started taking me to meetings about irrigation projects in Asia and designs of irrigation projects because they wanted to “recruit” me to be a female irrigation proponent. Then there were a number of engineers in the bureau (like Hassan Hassan and Jack LeMaire) who took me to meetings and talked to me about some of the engineering and capital development projects we had in Asia. As a project development officer I met and was exposed to the technical side of the operations whether the soon-to-end malaria spraying programs or the growing environmental programs under Mike Philly. I began to be exposed to a number of countries and projects and

development challenges and development approaches (like integrated rural development and distance learning through radio) that were wonderful as far as giving me a very solid foundation in what AID was about, what AID approaches were and learn from the successes and the failures. So this is now '83-'84. All the while I am able to travel overseas, to Nepal, to India (the director was Own Cylke) designing a number of projects that turned out to be in the end really stellar projects. As project officer for Nepal I went on TDY several times. The mission director at the time was Dennis Brennan and his deputy, who I was afraid of initially until I got to know her, was the extraordinary Janet Ballantyne, who also took me under her wing (under the condition I collect airplane barf bags for her—those whose knew Janet will understand my reference!). Now remember, I am still civil service at this point. But an opportunity was made available for me to convert into the Foreign Service in late 1983. Bob Nachtrieb, who by that time was serving in India, was the one who spearheaded this effort with support from Pat and Howard Sharlock. In the end I didn't become an IDI, I just converted to Foreign Service as another woman from ASIA/PD had, Diana Swain. As this conversion process was slowly and I mean slowly working it ways through the system, another fantastic opportunity appeared. So while I started as project development officer for Nepal, eventually I took on Pakistan and India. It is late 1983 I believe and Larry Crandall was the director of Asia DP-- Development Programming which is where the budget shop was located as well as monitoring and evaluation and the Bureau economists including the wonderful Mike Crosswell. Larry was looking for a volunteer from within the bureau to work with him on this somewhat, well, very sensitive, almost secretive program that was in the process of being formulated. It was to be a program working with the Afghan Mujahedeen and the CIA (although I didn't know this at the beginning) on a cross border assistance program for Afghanistan. So I volunteered because it sounded really exciting and I desired more exposure to new ways of programming. When I was in meetings with Larry he sounded like a person I could learn a lot from although I already was surrounded by people who provided insights and mentored me. I now became the de facto project development officer for the Cross Border Humanitarian Assistance Program for Afghanistan. The program was initially based in Washington but eventually moved to Pakistan in late 1995 where it operated out of the Embassy in Islamabad and was distinct from the bi-lateral Mission to Pakistan. I was sent out there essentially on assignment to design all the programs and projects that this fledging new unit in Pakistan was going to be responsible for.

*Q: This was what year again?*

KVITASHVILI: It started in 1984 and I spent many months in Peshawar in 1984-85.

*Q: '84, OK, how old were you at that point?*

KVITASHVILI: Uh, 27-28. I was still doing Nepal, India and Pakistan. In Pakistan, I was working with and learning from people like Jeff Malik, Linda Lion and John Blackton, all of whom mentored me, advised me in various ways and on various topics. When I say I am working with them, partly I was working on the design of certain projects and programs in the field, partly it was working as a project development officer back in Washington supporting them in their needs on documents like Actions memos and approvals, the PIRs (Project Implementation Reviews) or on the development of the CDCS, (Country Development Cooperation Strategy) a variety of standard documents that I became quite good at writing. And

even though I was a project development officer, the desk officers frequently allowed me perhaps more participation in some of the things that were typically Program officer-related work as part on my ongoing professional development. Maybe because it was the nature of Asia Bureau which operated as an incredibly collegial unit where I was given all these opportunities to grow professionally. At every turn, I had mentors and people looking out for me and giving me sound advice. I saw more collaboration there than at any time in my career across desks, across offices. My time in Asia Bureau was formative, gave me sound fundamentals and established how I would operate in future within the bureaucracy and with people.

I was given continual opportunities to “show my stuff” and eventually I landed in Peshawar, essentially on very long TDYs working with Larry Crandall on the development and implementation of activities that were humanitarian and political in nature. I was given a “codeword” security clearance-very rare for one as young and inexperienced as I was, but the program demanded it. At first we were a team of 2-Larry and me, as the new AID Rep program in Washington but the team grew slowly once the program moved its operations to Pakistan. I spent most of my time living in Green’s Hotel in the rough and tumble world of Peshawar. It was incredibly exciting. Oh my God, the experiences that I had as a junior project development officer working on this program were incredible. Larry was meeting with members of the Afghan community and mujahedeen leaders and would take me along. I had an opportunity to observe and listen in on meetings and observe mujahedeen leaders like Professor Rabbani, Yunus Khalis, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and others. I felt as if I was witnessing the news of the day. I walked around the unrestricted areas of the city and my favorite haunt was “Mr. Books”, which had loads of old books on Afghanistan and the “Great Game”. I made a good friend in the junior political officer in the consulate, Brad Hanson, who was my DCM when I later was assigned to Afghanistan in 2002. Brad had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran and, like me, loved Peshawar.

*Q: You were also I would imagine the only female in those rooms.*

KVITASHVILI: Yes. I was. But as I had gone local, I was wearing shalwar khamis, local clothes which I actually found very liberating and liked a lot, and as I had very long brown hair and olive coloring I blended in. This was my first real exposure to living and working abroad in a mission even though I had been on TDYs to Nepal, Pakistan and India. Now I was responsible not only for the design of a program but its implementation and oversight. In the midst of all this wild west adventure there were some really unusual characters both at the Embassy and in the NGO and UN community there. Many people with whom I became very friendly, like Brad, and stayed in contact with over the years because we kept working on Afghanistan for the next 15 years or so are friends I still have today. These were defining times for me.

*Q: Elizabeth, was there any push back on you being around as a female in those Afghan settings with the Afghan Mujahedeen and others?*

KVITASHVILI: No.

*Q: You were seen as sort of an honorary male?*

KVITASHVILI: No, it wasn't that-I could be invisible to the Afghans if necessary. The Afghans talked to Larry. I was clearly the junior person so they didn't have any issue with me. Larry explained my role, that I was designing the projects that were going to help their people, so I needed to be part of the mission. The Afghans were OK with that. I could be there but I could be ignored. They didn't need to address me, and I didn't need to address them.

*Q: I will just insert something when I was director for South Asia at one point I came to Pakistan and was in Peshawar with Julia Chang Bloc and we went to a mule training center for the Kentucky Mules. You know those programs.*

KVITASHVILI: Yes I do. I helped count them as they got off the cargo plane.

*Q: Some guy came off around the corner and Julia grabbed his hand and shook it, and the guy was sort of horrified and walked away. I said to Larry, "What is the guy doing now?" He said, "Probably cutting off his hand."*

KVITASHVILI: I learned very quickly how to greet an Afghan. I put my right hand over my heart and said "Asalaam Aleikum". There was never any issue. I learned to keep my eyes lowered. I was able to fit in because I tried to be as inconspicuous as possible and I quickly learned Afghan customs.

*Q: Wonderful. Well any other stories about Peshawar that would be useful to pass along?*

KVITASHVILI: I have a lot of stories about Peshawar. Those years in Asia Bureau in general for me were incredible because I had so many rich experiences that allowed me to immerse myself in the local culture of the country but also how to be an excellent AID officer. Let me go back to Nepal for a second. The head of the project development office was Don Clark. On one of my TDYs we were going to go out and monitor one of the projects which was a rural conservation project high up in the mountains. In order to get there we drove to Pokhara from Katmandu along the river and these winding roads.

*Q: So where in Pokhara. What part of Nepal would that be, north, south east or west from Katmandu?*

KVITASHVILI: From Katmandu it is essentially due west. It is a launching point for trekking to Annapurna. Our project sites were along a route comprised of a five day walk from Pokhara. So we began our trek-- Don Clark, a couple of FSNs from the mission and myself going to visit these project sites. As I said we were visiting a resource conservation project which included activities such as tree planting to reduce erosion and constructing gabion walls along certain paths to protect the land below from landslides. There was a lot of erosion in this part of the hilly area of Nepal. So we began to trek. We just had our little back pack with a change of clothes and we were walking. We didn't bring anything except a little bit of water because we would stay in local villages as we walked. When we were through for the day we just found a place (usually an occupied hut) to stay and relied on local hospitality. We walked through the hills, the foothills of the Himalayas going up, up, up, up. We were crossing rice paddies and rivers, in some cases fast moving rivers that were chest deep either on foot or using these chains across the river and a box

and you would pull yourself cross.

*Q: You would sit in the box and pull yourself across.*

KVITASHVILI: yes. It was real old world but it was wonderful. It was a real experience on how the Nepalese lived. Did I mention the leeches? There were leeches everywhere. I remember I had leeches on my legs when I came through one stream and Don showed me how to get the leeches off. So I have leech scars all over my lower legs. One night I slept on a wooden table in a local home and underneath me were goats. Don was on the table next to me. I slept next to the wall of the hut. The wall had been coated with animal urine. I asked why. It was a disinfectant. That was the local disinfectant and kept the bugs under control as did the smoke from the dung fire which I hated as it made by eyes water and my throat sore. These were experiences that made me appreciate the challenges people faced in their lives.

*Q: When you were sleeping on the table did you have a sleeping bag or a blanket of any kind?*

KVITASHVILI: We didn't carry anything with us except for maybe one change of clothes. We were travelling light because the hiking, it was tough because you were going up. So no, I slept on whatever extra materials the household could provide. Once we stayed at an "inn" a little flea bag inn. I was sleeping next to Don and the engineers we were all cramped together. It was clear that bedding hadn't been washed in a while so we were all itching the next day, but you know it was part of the experience. As I was walking I kept slipping as we were frequently walking through rice paddies on a thin mud path between the various paddy fields and, of course, it happened to be rainy season so there was a lot of rain. So I kept falling into the rice paddies, which made Don laugh a lot. I was covered with mud and leeches all of the time. It was OK though because it was part of the experience. The only down side was I developed hikers knee. I was in good shape but you were constantly going up, up, up.

*Q: Could you explain what hikers knee is.*

KVITASHVILI: When we first left Pokhara to get up to the first path we had to go straight up a series of stone stairs. I don't remember how many. It was probably half a mile up. My knee started to stiffen. Then we had to go down and my knee locked. So I am not sure exactly what it was except a stiffness in the knee that developed so that it locked. It was very painful to bend it. I don't know if it was ligament related. I was in very good shape because I was playing basketball and soccer back home, but still I developed hiker's knee so it was hard for me to keep my balance. As I said I spent a lot of time in rice paddies and Don Clark has a lot of very incriminating photos of me with my rice paddy look. But it was a great experience and I loved it. Not just one experience. Another time I was in another part of Nepal, the Rapti Valley.

*Q: This valley is more in the central Southern part of Nepal correct?*

KVITASHVILI: We had been working on an integrated development program in the Rapti Valley which is a more isolated area of south central part of Nepal so from Katmandu if you look at a clock it was like at 7:00 south west of the city. You have to fly there. There were no roads there at that time. In order to visit the project we had to go horseback riding. We went camping. There

we had tents and sleeping bags in order to stay overnight which was another great experience. Another time while on TDY in India, I flew off to Srinagar for a long weekend where I had made reservations on a houseboat.

*Q: Srinagar just for clarity is in Kashmir to the north.*

KVITASHVILI: It is in Kashmir to the north, correct. As I am arriving at the airport martial law is declared. Martial law is declared because there had been an incident somewhere in Kashmir between Shia and Sunnis. All of Kashmir was put on high alert, martial law was declared and everything was shut down. So here I am this young American stuck in Srinagar unable to use a phone. Land lines are down. There is no way for me to communicate with the Mission. A very nice Sikh police constable took me under his wing. The place I was supposed to stay in had shut down because of the violence. So he arranged a place for me to stay, a houseboat that he trusted. He walked me to the house boat and got me set up. Every day until martial law is lifted I had to check in with him in the morning and afternoon so that he knew I was safe. So for the next five days I was stuck in Srinagar under the protection of this police captain. But the family I was staying with on this lovely houseboat also was very generous to me and made sure that I was well fed. They walked me around to see some of the sites, and took me out on the famous Dal Lake. I went hiking in the mountains which I learned later I probably shouldn't have done. The police constable finally let me know on day 6 that he was sure I would be able to get on the plane and fly back to Delhi. So there you go another wonderful experience.

*Q: Wow a great story. You mentioned you had some good stories from your Peshawar days. Anything you can remember that could be useful from that period.*

KVITASHVILI: Living and working in Peshawar was like living in another era. It felt like being part of the Great Game—so much intrigue, so much mystery, so many characters and I was there experiencing it. Everywhere there were mysterious characters—at Greens, at the Consulate bar, on the streets in “Afghan town”. I kept my head down and observed and listened. The Office of the AID Rep for Humanitarian Affairs for Afghanistan (O/AIDRep) was given much leeway to get its work done, or, we didn't ask. I wasn't sure in some cases. We were working, I believe, with some understandings with the Embassy and I think with Washington as far as what we could do and where we could go...how far we could push the limits. Although I had a code word clearance (higher than SCI at the time), I was privy to only so much information—no need to know as the saying goes! It was very clear to me, although it was never openly discussed, that our assistance program was part of a larger package of assistance for the Afghan “muj” and that in some cases our assistance traveled with military assistance meant for the muj. But I knew I couldn't ask too many questions—certain topics were out of bounds for a junior officer like me. USAID staff (at that point Larry and myself and eventually Hank Cushing, Jack Huxtable and others), as well as our American HA assistance partners, couldn't travel into Afghanistan, although many of our NGO colleagues did travel inside—we just didn't want to know about the details. I should also mention that many of our European NGO partners like Action Against Hunger, Solidarities, ACTED all had operations inside and the (mostly) French staff went inside Afghanistan a lot—primarily to the Panjshir as they were working alongside Ahmed Shah Masoud. And really we couldn't travel into what was then still being called the FATA—Federally Administrative Tribal Areas. We couldn't because that is where a lot of the refugees were located

in camps and where a lot of the Mujahedeen were training under ISI and as I understood later under CIA auspices. But Larry was forward leaning and didn't necessarily abide by all the rules and regulations that were imposed on him either by Washington and even the Embassy with whom we had an excellent working relationship, or so I understood. That was all Larry's doing. Larry kind of went his own way and I know that on certain occasions he was able to travel into FATA and unbeknownst to Larry I also travelled several times into the FATA with NGO friends. I never told him because I didn't want him to get into trouble. I went in, almost to the Afghan border, with a couple of our European and one American partner organizations that had received funding from the O/AIDRep—as the project officer I was “monitoring” their work! A number of our USAID NGO partners got their start as a result of Afghanistan and our HA program there. Reputable NGOs like Mercy Corps and International Medical Corps essentially got their start as a result of O/AIDRep funds. NGOs were providing a variety of assistance to Afghan Mujahedeen primarily medical assistance or other kinds of assistance like educational support in the refugee camps. Many were also setting up shop across the border in Afghanistan providing assistance to Afghan civilians. The thinking was to provide HA inside so that Afghan civilians would remain in their villages and serve as a refuge for the muj as they moved around the eastern provinces harassing the Soviets and their Afghan puppet friends. I traveled on a couple of occasions to a place in FATA, which as I said was a big no-no for USG civilians, not necessarily for the CIA, to a place called Fort Freedom that had been set up by a tiny new NGO based out of Hawaii. The organization was called Freedom Medicine and it was essentially a 2-person show, a husband and wife team with excellent Congressional connections. Freedom Medicine provided Paramedic training to Afghan Mujahedeen to go back inside Afghanistan and serve as medics for the Mujahedeen. Then there are the Charlie Wilson stories which have been recounted in Charlie Wilson's War by George Crile. Charlie loved our HA program, and was a frequent visitor.

*Q: Yes.*

KVITASHVILI: Charlie Wilson with his lady friends that accompanied him.

*Q: Just for clarity for readers for this oral history, Charlie Wilson was a congressman from Texas.*

KVITASHVILI: He was a congressman from Texas who was a very outspoken proponent of providing support to the Afghan mujahedeen as a counter to the Soviet Union which was fighting against the Afghan Mujahedeen in Afghanistan. Charlie Wilson is the one who served as the enabler in so many ways; he played a very positive role in getting advanced weaponry through the CIA to the Afghan Mujahedeen and he ensured the O/AIDRep had program, funds. But his style and manner was a combination of aggressive and obnoxious. Everything a young impressionable foreign service officer like me didn't like. I remember he came into Larry's office once, or maybe it wasn't Larry's office it was somewhere in the Embassy. I was there and he said, “Hey Sweet thing. Can you get me a drink?” I went to get him some water and he said, “What are you joking?” I mean a man's drink. He wanted a bourbon or whiskey. Of course we didn't have that in the embassy at least not that I was aware of. Larry pulled out a bottle saying “I got it and we are ready for him.”

*Q: So you were saying earlier that he was coming around with his girlfriend at one point.*

KVITASHVILI: Well, girlfriends, whatever they were. A female companion(s) who clearly were not members of Congress or Congressional aides! The way they were dressed, the way they kind of draped themselves over him it was clear there wasn't any professional reason they were out there. Then we had Gail Anne Hurd, now a famous film producer who wanted to do a film about the Mujahedeen and the AIDRep was asked to help her. We didn't have time, we didn't want to but Larry took that on. I didn't have to do anything with her, but I remember it was just another example of people wanting to be affiliated with the excitement surrounding the Muj and their fight against the Soviet Bear. It was exotic. It was different It was secretive. You get to be a part of a special boy's club.. There are so many stories. I had to help count mules coming off the C-130s (I think they were C-130s if I remember). The reason we were getting

mules, I believe, was because the local mules weren't big or strong enough to carry the loads of "humanitarian assistance" USAID and the CIA were putting on the mules. They needed something hardier. They were all going across border on very mountainous paths. They were taking mule tracks because the conditions were so extraordinarily harsh both in summer and winter. They needed mules that were very hardy and these American mules were considered the best of the best as far as being able to carry the load and being able to survive very harsh terrain without a lot of food and water.

*Q: I recall they were Tennessee mules.*

KVITASHVILI: Tennessee mules, whatever. I just had to count them.

*Q: Let's take a moment if we can to reflect more broadly on the cross border program. It has been a long time and there has been a lot of things that have happened since. Is it your sense at that time and then later as you watched what was happening that it was a successful and useful program and you were pleased to be part of it.*

KVITASHVILI: I was extraordinarily honored and pleased to be a part of it. I was thrilled that Larry thought enough of me to ask me to work with him. And then to be part of his team in Pakistan. Yes, I thought we were doing God's work. Don't forget I grew up in a family that had suffered mightily as a result of communism and Soviet aggression. Both sides of my family lost members to the gulags and to execution, and my father was targeted for assassination by Stalin. My father worked in British intelligence in WWII to counter the Soviets and later briefly for OSS before he joined the Voice of America. So for me, part of the thrill was fighting the communists. The 2 aspects to the overall program that I was most uncomfortable with but for which I didn't have a lot of information about except from NGO friends concerned our support for some of the more virulent muj groups who were also receiving funds from the Saudis among others and working with muj leaders who also dealt in narcotics. That aside, I felt our USAID assistance program was of benefit and did address needs identified inside and in the refugee camps. The NGO programs we funded, the cross-border health program for example, I helped designed were meant to help Afghans and they did ultimately. One program I helped design that later became rather infamous was the primary education program, in which we trained teachers as well as designed new primary school textbooks.

*Q: Can you explain why it was infamous?*

KVITASHVILI: This program was a fairly straight forward education program for Afghanistan. We had three objectives. One was to identify people who could be trained as teachers both to serve in refugee camps in Pakistan and to go across border to keep schools open in Afghanistan, As I said earlier, the idea was to try and prevent as many people as possible from coming into Pakistan. Not so much because of pressure from Pakistan to keep the Afghans out but because the policy and the political strategy at the time was the more Afghans that remained in Afghanistan in their villages the more support networks the Mujahedeen will have to rely on. It was felt that it would be helpful to keep people in Afghanistan to show that people are going to fight back against the Soviets. We wanted to put schools and medical clinics in Afghanistan both to provide those services but as a point of reference to show that people were not going to give up. The second thing was to develop textbooks to be used in the refugee camps and also in the rural areas of Afghanistan-- this was primarily a rural-based program, not an urban-based program because most of the support for the Mujahedeen was in the rural Pashtun areas as opposed to the big urban centers like Kabul. So we needed to develop and then print textbooks. I will come back to that in a second. The third objective was, where, if possible, set up schools inside Afghanistan, not constructing, but with tents and tarps so you actually had a facility so to speak where people could congregate and learn. So now back to textbooks. The University of Nebraska at Omaha was selected to be the implementing partner of this program. The head of the Afghan center in Omaha (Tom Gouttierre) had a long history with Afghanistan. He had been a Fulbright scholar there. He ran the Fulbright program. He had lived in Afghanistan for a number of years. He had set up an Afghanistan center at UNO and he gathered Afghan intellectuals on his campus and eventually they became part of the academic community there. So, UNO were understood to be knowledgeable about Afghanistan, had many good connections in the educational system. The textbooks that were developed were primary school textbooks for the most part including your ABC's, but the pictography and the language that was used in some cases, today, seems very inappropriate. For example, rather than promoting a narrative that was neutral and unbiased, the narrative tended to be extremely militaristic, anti-Soviet, pro-American in the narrative; it reflected the thinking and politics of the time.. Everything was beat the Russians, kill the Commies and teaching children that the Russians were bad and they should do everything they could to kill the Russians. At the time maybe that was accepted. This was the Reagan era. Looking back now and in hind sight, I wince, but the texts were what was called for at the time and I recall the texts did not raise any issue when they were eventually released. But when I went back to Afghanistan in 2002 right after 9/11 and we talked with people about those particular textbooks because we were trying to get textbooks into Afghanistan again, I remember people talking about how foolish we had been to put together those kinds of textbooks. They promoted such a negative narrative and promoted in many cases hostility towards the west, not just towards the Russians. The Afghans said it was hard in many cases to differentiate a Russian from an American. They were all westerners. They were all Ferenghi, right?

*Q: Did you say they were all Ferenghi?*

KVITASHVILI: Foreigners, unbelievers.

*Q: This is John Pielemeier. We're starting our second session.*

KVITASHVILI: It is now May of 1986 I am a newly minted foreign service officer, and I am arriving in Honduras, Tegucigalpa, as a project development officer. The Honduras assignment followed on my time in Asia and the office of Aid Rep for Afghanistan. The mission director at the time was Tony Cauterucci but Tony was assigned as Director to El Salvador in early fall of 1986, so John Sanbrailo arrived from Peru to take up the helm as Mission Director. I was an FS-5 and assigned to the project development office which was then run by Bill Kaschak. I worked under the supervision of Danilo Cruz de Paola who in turn reported to Bill. One of the nice things about the assignment was that it was a relatively small mission with about 36 U.S. direct hires and of course many more FSNs. It was a team that worked very closely together. As a project development officer, I was given responsibility to work on the design and backstop of projects in the engineering, agriculture and rural development offices but also with the health and education offices. I was given the opportunity to work on the design and implementation of projects for a large portfolio that first year. As a junior officer, I was also given opportunity to sit in on many meetings to learn more about the workings of the more traditional mission since the work with the O/AIDRep was very nontraditional. I spent a lot of time observing and participating in the work of the program office as well as the engineering, health, education and rural development offices. The office directors and senior leadership were all very supportive of my being able to float around various offices for short periods of time to observe and learn about their operations and learn what it was like to be not only a project development officer but a program officer or working in the health office etc. Oh, I forgot to mention. Let me step back a second. There was a very large engineering office, which was relatively rare for USAID at the time, as many of the old capital development offices had begun to phase out as AID began to move away from the traditional large-scale infrastructure engineering projects. But in Honduras we were doing quite a lot of engineering and construction work. The engineering office were run by a female, whose name I don't recall (her first name was Betty and she was probably in her late '50's.) I believe she was the senior engineer in the agency at the time. It was nice that she was a woman. As a junior officer I did not have a lot of female role models in the Mission and she, like others before her, took me under her wing. The mission was involved with a lot of road, and bridge projects, water and sanitation and electrification projects. I was working with a number of the FSNs engineers on road projects that were extending roads into an area called La Mosquitia which was an indigenous area, very swampy, that bordered Nicaragua and then went out the Caribbean. It was an important area strategically during this time (1986 to 1988), as the US was supporting the Nicaraguan Contras, anti-communist rebels, against the Nicaraguan regime. Honduras and the region of La Mosquitia served as a rear base of operations for the Contras. Politicians in Washington including people like Eliot Abrams wanted USAID to put roads in La Mosquitia in order to facilitate the movement of rebels and arms.

Due to the variety of projects I was involved in I travelled throughout the country, getting a good sense of Honduras. I had been given the opportunity to refresh my Spanish for three weeks at a language school in Antigua, Guatemala, so while I was not yet fluent, my 3/3 in Spanish allowed me to converse easily with the population. Agriculture was a big part of the Honduran economy, so I spent a lot of time with the Mission agriculture officers in the field visiting our various agriculture projects, including a particular agricultural research project which was one of my favorite projects. By the way, I will mention I was the only female PDO at the mission and there were but 3-4 other professional deputy women in the mission, including Betty of the engineering office and Mary "Mitzi" Likar the deputy in the Private Sector office.

*Q: Elizabeth, was the focus of the Ag program on export development or was it more for subsistence and domestic consumption.*

KVITASHVILI: It was both. Honduras was a very poor country, second only to Haiti in all of South America (perhaps tied with Bolivia...). Our portfolio was a combination of policy reform in return for budget support. And then, a number of traditional development projects in the education, health and rural development sectors. We also had a large private sector program which focused on micro enterprise development among other things. As poverty levels were high, our rural development projects focused on increasing rural incomes through production improvements and increases in traditional crops like coffee and cattle since there were vast ranches in the central provinces. The contractor Louis Berger was working in the rich Comayagua Valley to help farmers increase production of traditional crops. In addition, through an ag research program, we were helping increase production –for export—of crops like bananas, plantains, pineapple. The agricultural research institute was located in a town called La Lima, The facility had previously been owned by Dole. Honduras was one of the original “Banana” republics, in which Dole had been present not only growing bananas but pineapple and, therefore, there had been a lot of estates which grew those two crops for domestic consumption and also for export. There were a lot of problems with disease and poor agricultural practice. Our projects, including the support for the Honduras Foundation for Agricultural Research (Fundación Hondureña de Investigación Agrícola or **FHIA**) supported local efforts to improve varieties of certain crops such as plantain, bananas, pineapples, mangoes, both for domestic consumption and for export markets

*Q: How big was the overall mission budget?*

KVITASHVILI: If I recall correctly because of its political importance (anticommunist in a region with a number of communist rebel movements), Honduras was one of the countries in Central America that received a significant boost in foreign assistance as a result of their cooperation in the broader fight against communism, in this case against the “socialist minded” government in Nicaragua. We had a large budget, over \$500 million, which in those days was indeed large-probably in the top 5 among aid recipients. There was a budget support component of about \$350 million and I want to say another \$200 million or so just for direct projects that didn’t necessarily get tied into budget support.

*Q: Per capita that is one of the highest in the AID world.*

KVITASHVILI: It was. As I mentioned, the Contra program loomed large and Honduras being an ally in that fight was, I suppose, given a “thank you” for helping us with the contras, or so I suspect. Another project development officer named Peter Kranstover oversaw the Mission’s small “contra program” working in the south-southeastern part of Honduras along the border with Nicaragua. Because these programs were somewhat classified I didn’t have many details, but I do know that some of USAID’s support within Honduras supported Nicaraguan refugees as well as internally displaced Hondurans. Peter asked me to assist him with a couple activities in La Mosquitia which, although development projects, were meant to help the local population but also had political significance. There was a large bridge that was being built in La Mosquitia, and

the contractor was having terrible difficulties. They couldn't get the foundation to set due to the nature of the terrain and drainage there. It was very swampy. The land was not stable and it rained a lot. I remember the indigenous population was resistant to the introduction of roads and bridges in this part of the country. They primarily traveled by cayuco, a dugout canoe or by foot. They said when it rained, which it did frequently in this part of the country, the land kind of sunk because it was so boggy. If you build roads they said, they will always sink. This one bridge kept having foundation problems. The engineers were trying to figure out what to do and in the end it wasn't completed because of the weather and in this case the indigenous population was correct. The foundations never held. There was pressure to build roads that would support heavy equipment and a lot of trucks. I remember this is already now late '86 and throughout '87 and '88 we would frequently get visits from Oliver North although I did not know the nature of his business being focused on my own work. We would gather for these all hands meetings at the embassy cafeteria across the street from where our offices were in Tegucigalpa in which he would exhort us to support the policy of beating back communism and support the contras to free the people of Nicaragua etc. You would have the embassy people up front kind of cheering him on. You would have this group of AID officers, I won't say booing and hissing but it was clear there was a divide between the AID people and the Embassy listening to Ollie North. I remember the Mission's running joke was we were not going to build "tank" roads. We were willing to build roads to support local transport and local needs but not roads that would support tanks and other military equipment across the border with Nicaragua.

*Q: I was going to ask you I don't think you mentioned the name of the female engineer. Do you have that in your bank?*

KVITASHVILI: I think her name was Betty Mosely. She retired after Honduras. She had already been there for four years.

*Q: Did you find that she had any problems working with the men especially the locals or with USAID men as a female engineer at that stage?*

KVITASHVILI: Not in this mission. She may have elsewhere, but not in the Honduras mission where she was highly respected. Most of the Mission FSOs and the many local hire US PSCs had spent almost their entire careers serving in Latin America which was common at the time. There were less than a handful of female Foreign Service officers there, and we were considered part of the team. I never felt either as a woman or as a junior officer, belittled or discriminated against. On the contrary, similar to earlier in my career in which I was enveloped in this mentoring atmosphere it continued in Honduras and I thrived as I had people who continued to look out for my professional wellbeing. And gave me many opportunities to experience and learn how to be a good officer again. I will say another thing. Early in my tenure in Honduras I had lost my mother quite unexpectedly. I had been extraordinarily close to my mother who had already been ill when I left home and came to Honduras. So my immediate office and then other people with whom I had become friendly tended to me to make sure I was doing OK, personally as well as professionally. Again it was part of this nurturing atmosphere which had been created under the leadership of Tony Cauterucci and Carl Leonard who was his deputy and subsequently by John Sanbrailo and George Wachtenheim, all superstars and the best leadership one could ask for. The LAC Bureau, like Asia was full of seasoned leaders who looked out for their junior staff-and I

was a beneficiary of that professional largesse. I think it was the best possible world. What I did in Afghanistan was creative and unusual and kind of behind closed doors and cloak and dagger kind of thing. It was a great experience because I was allowed to bring bold thinking to the table. Honduras was a more traditional operation where you did things according to best practices while being encouraged to be as creative as possible. John Sanbrailo frequently asked me to come into his office and would talk to me about where the mission was going and ask how was I doing, He wanted to know what I was doing, whether I was enjoying my work, was I learning. He would give me feedback even though I was four levels below him. With people like John, Carl, George, Bill and eventually Lars Klassen who replaced Bill and my direct supervisor Dani, I blossomed into a not-so-bad project development officer.

*Q: That is quite interesting and amazing.*

KVITASHVILI: Yeah, it was a wonderful learning environment. The Latin America bureau at the time was a great place. It was led by Terry Brown and Malcolm Butler, superb leaders who were highly respected by the staff in the field. In Honduras, there was a lot of emphasis on doing things as a mission with much socializing as there was in many missions. Honduras was a mission where people really did get along and people did do a lot of things together. It was a country where we could easily travel and since everybody spoke Spanish, everyone partook of the local opportunities. One last story on Honduras?

*Q: Sure.*

KVITASHVILI: So it is probably March of 1988. My assignment was finishing up that summer. One evening about 7:30 I was working late on the design of a project, finishing it up, in time for the upcoming Easter break because I was taking a farewell trip with a number of colleagues. We were going into La Mosquitia and taking a boat ride, a motorized cayuco down a river in La Mosquitia. We were going camping. So, I was working late on this project. I thought I was the last person to leave the mission that night so I closed up and walked out the door. I heard a disturbance coming from down the road. I didn't know what it was, didn't take any notice and drove to a girl friend's because we were cooking that night in order to prepare for a party we were having a couple of days later. Within 30 minutes the embassy radio started blaring, the emergency radios that we all carry. Literally as I had left the Mission building, which was across the street from the Embassy, a mob had come up the street and attacked and set fire to our building, which also housed the consulate. The Embassy which was across the street had a high wall and the Marines Security Detachment. But there was no set back and all the things that we require today. The AID building which also included USIS and the consulate and I think USDA, we were in an unprotected building across the street with a metal gate and I believe local guards.

*Q: There were no Marine guards.*

KVITASHVILI: No, not at our building. The Marines were across the street. So the building gets attacked and it was burned and our motor pool mostly destroyed. I thought I had been the last person to leave, but I heard later that evening that the deputy program officer, Eugene Szepesy, who I knew from Pakistan had been working late as well. He made his way up to the "tank", the safety area and eventually was rescued. When I heard what was happening I quickly went home.

Everyone was told to shelter in place, go to your safe room and lock up. We didn't know what was going on, so I just listened to the emergency radio channel. There was a worry there could be other attacks throughout the city. I learned later, our building had been attacked by this mob because unbeknownst to most of the embassy community a day or two previously the DEA, Drug Enforcement Agency, had done what was considered by some to be a somewhat illegal snatch of a narco-trafficker apparently in the skies over Honduras. We never got much of the detail, but this kingpin who was taken to the United States had apparently lots of supporters in Honduras. And his people formed a mob and burnt and ransacked our building. We were out of commission for many months as the building was being repaired. There wasn't any unclassified space at the Embassy. For weeks on end we were all working out of our homes. Eventually some of the Mission staff found locations where we could work together including in partner organization space. In those days there were no cell phones. You didn't have personal computers. Very few people had then what was the equivalent of a laptop. Indeed for our Project Development Office, we had use of three computers in a common area. Again this is in the mid-80's and although Honduras was a mission with lots of money but we didn't have computers at our desks. Each office had banks of computers that they could use and we communicated via cable for the most part along with the occasional phone call to Washington. But you had to sign up for it because it was expensive to make those phone calls. It was usually the mission director or deputy mission director who had calls to Washington. So even being able to communicate among ourselves in the mission was difficult. While working at home we had to find a way of getting together, so this incident brought us even closer together as a mission having to figure out how to continue working without having our offices and access to many of our documents. When they first allowed us to go back into the office a few days after the fire had been put out in order to see the damage and to retrieve anything we could, some offices in the building had lost everything. Other offices, the higher up they were, were in better condition suffering more smoke and water damage. I recall the building was eight floors and the tank was on the top floor. That is where Gene had been.

*Q: Could you just describe what the tank is.*

KVITASHVILI: Each Embassy or consulate building had to have a secure or safe area in the building in case of an emergency. If there was an emergency, all the staff could go to that safe and secure area and lock themselves in. Each Mission home (I think we all had rentals, save for the MD), had to have a safe area designated as well. In our building, it was not just a safe area but it was an area which was secure with the cipher lock where you could have secure calls and where we could keep our classified material.

*Q: Gene is a former classmate of mine from Georgetown. I saw him at a reunion last year. Anyway he would have had to be escaping the fire - were there elevators? Would he be walking up to the safe room?*

KVITASHVILI: My guess is he went up the stairs.

*Q: Then the room for the tank would be fire proof as well?*

KVITASHVILI: Yes, but as it turned out the fire did not get up to the eighth floor where the tank

was located

*Q: Wow, well that is fascinating. All right shall we move on from Honduras or do you have anything else that you would like to say.*

KVITASHVILI: No, that's enough. I am sure others from my time have stories as well.

*Q: All right, did you ask to be transferred or what was the process of your next move.*

KVITASHVILI: So as much as I wanted to stay on for a second tour in Honduras, as I mentioned I had lost my mother, and my father was in his mid-80's at the time and not in good health, grieving for my mother. I asked to be reassigned back to Washington. It was a very tough choice, and I was counseled not to return to Washington as it would be bad for my career, but out of loyalty to my father I had to. As it turned out, I also got married to my wonderfully supportive husband when I returned and for the next 18 months or so I was assigned back to the Asia bureau, back to Asia/PD, the project development office. Asia/PD was by then directed by Ron Venezia. His deputy was Bruce Odell. Ron eventually left and Peter Bloom came in from Sri Lanka to head up the office. I was at first working on the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan and Afghanistan as the PDO. My division chief was the wonderful John Tennant and he assigned Jay Nussbaum to watch over me and continue to mentor and train me. I learned so much from Jay and John who had spent so much time working in or on the Philippines. Jay was an encyclopedia of "good practice" and taught me to ask the question "is it doable?" I eventually became dual-hatted officially working in ASIA/PD but being given more "desk work" by the Philippines desk. Eventually I shifted to the Asia Program Office run by Robin Gomez and then the extraordinary Paul White and assigned as the deputy program officer for Philippines while concurrently continuing my Afghan work, but now in support of the Afghan desk which had become its own office directed by Gary Mansavage. Eventually I was asked to focus exclusively on Afghanistan which was preparing a transition as the Soviets had withdrawn and our US policy towards Afghanistan was evolving. I was sent to Pakistan to work with Jonathan Sperling on the development and drafting of a new strategy for Afghanistan. A strategy that was going to shift the program and the mission from Pakistan to Afghanistan starting in Jalalabad and eventually on to Kabul. It was to be more traditional in its approach but with a strong emphasis on building the capacity of the 6-7 Afghan political "parties" (run by the individual muj leaders) and help them evolve into a government capable of administering Afghanistan...HA! This is 1989 now and the thinking was the muj would defeat the forces commanded by the Afghan president, Najibullah. AID was told to devise a strategy that would shift its cross-border program from Pakistan to Afghanistan with the expectation that this Afghan interim government (the Afghan muj parties) that we had been supporting and capacitating by creating various ministries-in-exile would shift to Afghanistan and begin to rule out of Kabul. We were so wrong... And so I went to Pakistan working with the USAID team still called the AID/Rep and now directed by Robert Bakley. Our transitional strategy outlined a gradual move of the Afghan government, our partners and the Mission itself to move into Afghanistan slowly over a period of 18 months. It was the first kind of transitional strategy that USAID had developed I believe. All the while I was wearing multiple hats and working on Afghanistan, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand in between two different offices as both program and project development officer-in reality a combined BS 09/94 position! In between my trips to Pakistan, I went to work on a couple project designs in the

Philippines where Malcolm Butler was now Mission Director.

During this time frame (post 1998), there was a change in the administration with the election of George H.W. Bush. Carol Adelman was the new Assistant Administrator for Asia. There were several rather momentous developments that occurred. 1989 saw the beginning of the end for the USSR and as we know the fall of the Berlin Wall and over time the emergence of newly independent East European nation states; the Soviets withdrew their troops from Afghanistan and there was a devastating earthquake in Armenia. All three events impacted by own career. Asia Bureau, under Carol Adelman (her special assistant was Liz Cheney) was asked to undertake analysis of potential programming for countries emerging from the Soviet orbit and in 1991 from within the former Soviet Union. By 1991 Asia bureau (which had by then been merged with Near East to become ANE-Asia Near East) all under Carole evolved again to become a Bureau that comprised countries in Asia, the Near East, Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union. We started actual programming in Armenia in 1989 because of the 1988 earthquake.. Armenia was still part of the USSR at the time. The earthquake destroyed the towns of Spitak and Gyumri. Tens of thousands of people were killed and left homeless as a result of the earthquake. Many tens of thousands more were badly injured, many with spinal cord injuries. USAID received a Congressional earmark to support programs to help those injured during the quake. I believe we received about \$10 million in funds starting in FY 1989. I was asked if I would be willing to take on the programming and monitoring of these funds (along with another woman Donna Frago) while still covering Afghanistan. I reduced my focus on Philippines. Because I was a Russian speaker, one of just a handful in the Agency at the time, Carol thought I would have “street cred” with the State Department. So, in 1989 I also took on the responsibility for the project management of these resources that were now going to go to several non-governmental organizations, operational in Armenia. This was a time when President Bush and Prime Minister Gorbachev were trying to find ways of enhancing cooperation and the humanitarian nature of the Armenian program was such a gesture. These funds were meant to demonstrate our concern for the victims of the earthquake. I should also mention, of course, there was a powerful Armenian American lobby in the United States and they pressured Congress to make funds available for their homeland so to speak. Things start to move fast now. Programming in Afghanistan begins to evolve further and shrinks as the Afghans begin to turn on themselves and civil war breaks out. Once the Soviets withdrew the real rationale for being there disappeared as “we’d won”—our covert military assistance had defeated the Soviets. And the plans to “move inside” disappeared as our muj friends and allies turned upon each other. We start programming in Armenia and, in 1989-1990 we also begin providing limited support to US NGOs to bring humanitarian relief, primarily DOD-excess medical supplies and some donations from pharmaceutical companies, to victims of the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown. Many people had been affected by the radiation, so the U.S. once again started making limited amounts of funds available for emergency medical programs (none of this comes from OFDA). I was asked to be responsible for these limited medical programs implemented by American NGOs in Ukraine and Russia. The primary partner in Russia was Project Hope based out of Millwood, Virginia. Project Hope was working with a number of hospitals in Moscow and Kiev bringing in donated medicines among other things and providing some doctors to assist Soviet physicians treating people exposed to radiation earlier or suffering longer term impact to the initial exposure to radiation many hundreds of miles away from Chernobyl. During this 2-year period, 1989-1999, I went to Russia, Ukraine and Armenia a number of times usually flying on US military transport

planes and always coordinating with the US Embassy in Moscow. During this same time my husband was also TDY in Moscow.

*Q: I am guessing from what you are saying that assistance to Armenia and after were not government to government. They were basically working through nonprofits and emergency organizations.*

KVITASHVILI: Correct. There was no funding going to the still Soviet government. This was funding going primarily to American NGOs that were working in the 3 countries to provide health care and physical rehabilitation. Moscow was receptive to our help because this was a way of expanding non-threatening relationships with the United States in areas in which we had common ground. Our assistance was viewed very positively, and Congress also supported our efforts. Starting in 1989 I flew to Armenia to undertake monitoring of the programs that were implemented by among others the American Red Cross, Armenian Assembly etc. It was surreal as people were greatly traumatized by the earthquake. Homeless people were housed in railroad containers without heating. There were several NGOs that were Armenian-American, all working with people who had been impacted by the earthquake, primarily related to spinal cord rehabilitation and trauma care. We did not give funding to rebuild the cities impacted. We also provided a lot of medical supplies for hospitals that had been damaged because of the earthquake. Then there were medical programs through organizations like Project Hope and one or two other smaller ones that we were dealing with victims of Chernobyl and then starting in 1990 a terrible fire that occurred in central Russia. There were hundreds of burn victims, many children, because of this fire. Russia didn't have the specialized burn medication (I think it was silver nitrate) needed to treat the badly injured so once again as a humanitarian gesture through Project Hope the U.S. government donated lots of this special silver nitrate that was needed for the burn victims. There was a special burn unit in Moscow that received the bulk of these burn victims and the bulk of the medicine. I oversaw this project. By now, late 1989, there was a small cadre of people working on this new region-still the USSR-and eventually within 18 months Eastern Europe. Outside of the humanitarian assistance programs I described we weren't programming, but it was clear that things were changing in the relationship between Russia and the United States and we were given signals to familiarize ourselves with this part of the world. And lo and behold what happened. The Berlin Wall falls, and relations begin to normalize and become warmer and beginning in late 1991 we, USAID, are being encouraged to possibly plan for more programming in Russia or the Former Soviet Union as it began to be called. We are being encouraged to think about what might be possible. So again, Carol Edelman asked me to become the Russia/ Afghanistan desk officer! But Afghanistan was already falling apart, as the muj were now fighting among themselves and there was a pause in a possible move to Afghanistan. I was spending more and more of my time on Russia. We had a new Former Soviet Union office and the head of it was Paul O'Farrell, husband of Vikka Molldrem.

*Q: Oh, I don't think I know that name.*

KVITASHVILI: You didn't know Vikka Molldrem? She and her husband had come from Indonesia I believe. Paul was a senior economist in the Agency.

*Q: No I didn't know her well at all.*

KVITASHVILI: OK, so we were a small unit, with Paul as Director, myself and Karl Schwartz. All of a sudden, a small group of us Asia Bureau hands, including Paul and Karl, are now working the former Soviet Union stuff while we are doing our other day jobs. Paul is head of this unit which is not really official but still is charged with following, tracking, doing all things related to the former Soviet Union including me with my Armenia program and traveling back and forth between Russia and Ukraine to oversee the HA program because we needed to demonstrate to Congress among others that the materiel we were giving was used appropriately. There remained people in Congress who were very skeptical about giving assistance to the Communists, which they still were despite perestroika under Gorbachev.

It is 1991. The Berlin Wall had now fallen and you began to witness serious stirrings in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union from among the various republics which are beginning to make moves to break away, declare their independence. There is a decision on the part of the Bush administration to announce the undertaking of a huge humanitarian airlift of DOD surplus medical equipment and supplies throughout the (former) Soviet Union. Now let me take a step back. Starting in 1989 and into 1990 I had been traveling from Armenia through Russia and Ukraine, overseeing the programs implemented by NGOs. DOD also started to engage because they wanted to develop a relationship with their Russian counterparts. Special funding was made available by Congress to DOD which at the time had an emergency humanitarian assistance office. That office had been created in 1984, during the early days of the Afghan humanitarian assistance program. DOD transported a lot of our “humanitarian assistance”, like the mules for example. DOD also helped evacuate wounded Afghans to the US for medical treatment. This office, Office of Humanitarian Assistance, was led by General Robert Wolthius. He was still in office at the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union. Under his supervision, with me as the AID counterpart, we would take these huge DOD cargo planes, C-130s, that were filled to the gills with excess medical supplies and equipment that was collected by DOD from their warehouses worldwide and distributed to medical facilities in Russia. The recipients were American Red Cross or Project Hope who in turn donated goods to Russian facilities. We still couldn't do government to government. But DOD was flying these planes and I was the USAID person going with them because technically USAID was responsible for humanitarian assistance even if it was coming from DOD. I provide this as background because in late summer 1991, Richard Armitage was named Ambassador to coordinate aid to the countries formed out of the collapsing Soviet Union. Eventually this post would become the Coordinator for Assistance to Newly Independent States. A decision was taken to undertake this huge, largely symbolic airlift, using DOD planes to about 40 locations throughout the former Soviet Union but primarily Russia, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The airlift did not include Eastern Europe or the Baltics. Beginning in mid-1991 there was a lot of planning to identify locations in the former Soviet Union where we could go and what kinds of medical items were needed. DOD was responsible for collecting the medical excess supplies while AID was responsible for identifying the locations and people who would fly on these missions into the Soviet Union to help with the delivery and the handing over if you will, of these humanitarian commodities. In this case the airlift supplies would go to local governments or local red cross/crescent societies because our NGO partners did not have offices in these locations. I worked with CIA and State Department counterparts and the Embassy to identify locations and match them with available supplies. I was one of the few people in USAID who could read Russian maps in order to identify locations

where these commodities would be best needed. I identified sites in Siberia and former Gulag cities where I knew emergency medical supplies would be welcomed. There was a call made to identify people, AID and State officers who would participate in the airlifts which finally began in February 1992—the dead of winter in Russia. I couldn't go as I was six months pregnant but my old colleague Don Clark did as well as Ted Bratrud and Linda Bernstein. Linda was another Russian speaker. To go you had to have top secret security clearance to get the CIA briefs. You had to go through a special medical protocol. There was concern that some of the cities that we would fly into were contaminated from nuclear fallout/radiation. Those participating received training on how to don these special HazMat suits. People were also assigned special “cold weather” gear used by the military. Vorkuta, a former gulag, was one of the locations selected. In winter, Vorkuta and similar towns have temperatures at minus 30 degrees. Don Clark may have been from New Hampshire and used to the cold weather but even that was going to be cold for him. So, as I just said, everybody was issued these special winter suits. Concurrent to these preparations, by early 1992 there is discussion about opening embassies or consulates in newly emerging countries in Eastern Europe and former republics of the Soviet Union now declaring independence from Moscow. While in January '92 you still had an intact Soviet Union, slowly over the course of spring and summer more and more countries declared independence. By the late spring 1992, you have a handful of new countries and State and now USAID are trying to figure out how they are going to cover all these new countries. I am on maternity leave by this time. A decision is made by the Bush Administration that we are going to set up new embassies in a number of these countries, and AID is asked to set up missions in 4 new locations—Ukraine, Armenia, Kazakhstan and Russia. There was a very fast bidding and assignment process. I bid on Russia and was one of seven people initially assigned; I was the project development officer. I arrived in Moscow in mid-August 1992. The first USAID staff to arrive in Russia came in June. Our EXO, James Leo arrived first, and I think our controller Igor Nesterchuk, a Ukrainian-American, arrived next. Throughout the summer the rest of the mission arrived. As there was no space in the Embassy, we, as well as Peace Corps, were assigned to the “Change Building”. It was located outside the Embassy compound and between the grand old Embassy building on the Ring Road and the new, still unfinished and not yet de-bugged building. It was called the “Change” building because that was where the Russian workers who had been working on the new Embassy building—before it was discovered they were bugging the building—used to change their clothes. It was not a pleasant building, poorly wired, with asbestos ceilings (as we later learned) and an old Soviet heating system that didn't come on until early November, already 4-6 weeks into the long Moscow winter. A not so funny memory—that first winter the first snows arrived by the third week of September and by October it was freezing. Our offices didn't have heat yet. We bought some local space heaters but because the building was so poorly wired, we couldn't run our computers and heaters at the same time. So, we sacrificed the heaters for our computers and sat at our desks with winter coats, gloves and hats. My boss Tom Rishoi put a thermometer by his desk which was next to a window and one day it registered 32 degrees. At staff meetings we could see each other's' breath....oh the fun of opening a new mission. Oh, and did I mention the Embassy “call home” system. Each family was assigned 1 free 15-minute call home per week. There were no personal phones.

For a country as huge and complicated as Russia, we were a small mission, only seven direct hires by October, 1992, as we were told to have a small footprint. We added a couple more officers over the next 3 years. We opened our new Mission to Russia under the direction of Jim

Norris who had been Director in Pakistan. There was a new mission in Ukraine, a regional mission in Central Asia under Craig Buck and a regional mission in Armenia under Suzanne Olds. So those are the four missions that are set up in what we at first call the FSU and then by 1993 the Newly Independent States (NIS). In 1992 there is another Presidential election and just as we are getting starting in Russia we get a new President and a new Assistant Administrator (Tom Dine) for our new Bureau. The new Administration brought a different focus to our planned assistance and very much wanted to direct how we did our business.

*Q: So what is the change of focus?*

KVITASHVILI: The previous limited “assistance” to Russia and Armenia had focused on humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations. With the launch of new missions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union there was a desire to cement democracy and introduce a free market system in these formerly communist countries. Our activities would support the introduction of market reforms that would bring about a western style economy with an emphasis on private sector-led growth. We implemented a program that led to banking reforms. The privatization of state-owned enterprises and land became an almost singular focus. Harvard’s Jeff Sachs and his group of “young turks” essentially guided a small group of reform-minded Russians on how to implement reforms to open up the economy. The emphasis on democracy promotion and strengthening civil society led us to focus on the creation of new political parties, and elections training with support from NDI, IRI and IFES. A young NDI staffer posted to Russia eventually became US Ambassador-Mike McFaul. His wife worked as a PSC in the Mission. In AID/Washington, the new Democracy Center was created, and the Agency had a new cadre of people focused on how to bring about democratic reforms. In Russia we focused on building political parties, educating people on how democratic practices worked, what it meant to operate in a democratic atmosphere; we helped foster civil society organizations to become active participants in this democratic reform process. But civil society did not really exist in the former Soviet Union. People didn’t participate in voluntary activities due to the past where people were “volunteered” as part of the Soviet way of life. Volunteerism had a negative connotation. An important point to remember is the AID officers who early on served in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe, all of their experience was in the developing world. As we learned very early in Russia and I will just speak to Russia, our Russian counterparts rightly told us they were not “third world” they were a modern country that saw things differently than we did. They had trained professionals. They told us “just give us ideas on how to get where we want to go; don’t tell us what to do. We know what to do. What we want is to see options and models.” So very quickly we began to see this level of discomfort among some of our counterparts in Russia who were very highly educated but who did not know the Western models and in many cases were extremely resentful. They loathed the term “development”. We had to rethink our approach in how we dealt with counterparts, avoid seeming overly paternalistic. We couldn’t use the phrases, development assistance as this term was demeaning. We came up with “Technical Cooperation” which was acceptable to the Russians. Technical Cooperation demonstrated we were peers, we were equals, we were not anywhere superior to them. We had to be careful to avoid saying “this is how we did it in” Pakistan or Egypt or worse yet in Africa. The Russians would reject such comparisons saying “we are much more sophisticated; we have our systems, you just need to help us transform them to fit into a Western world.” My nanny by the way was a Ph.D. nuclear physicist.....

As we were so small we received a lot of support from Washington-based TDYers. Our Director Jim Norris brought a number of staff from Pakistan where he had just been Director. It was a cadre that Jim was very comfortable with; it was for me a “boys club” and I never fit in. I was the outsider in more ways than one. I was the only woman, I was the junior officer, but I was also for the first year, the only Russian speaker and the only one with contacts and friends not only in Russia but also in the Embassy. I was also a mother with 2 children under 3 and needed a bit of extra support which was greatly resented by the Mission. I had good working contacts in the embassy partly due to my husband, who was also assigned to the embassy—we were a tandem couple--, partly because I was known given my TDYs over the past couple of years and I was a Russian speaker (our Controller was a Ukrainian speaker, and eventually, two other officers were assigned who spoke Russian, George Deikun and Jeanne Bourgault). I loved being in Russia but it was not a happy posting for me and my husband and I did not socialize with my USAID colleagues. Life was very difficult at first as the Russian stores were empty of supplies and our embassy commissary was full of alcohol and junk food. There was one “foreign” store where we all shopped, Stockman’s which was of Finnish origin. I remember in the early days asking TDYers to bring me baby food and diapers as they weren’t available in Russia and the pouch was dreadfully slow. My husband and I used local Russian stores and markets like the Russians did.

Initially, I was assigned as a project development officer but with 2 functions—that of a PDO AND humanitarian assistance officer for the entire Soviet Union. At that time there was no such thing as a humanitarian assistance officer. There really isn’t even today. I was the early equivalent of a backstop 76 which is the crisis and stabilization backstop of today. In 1992-93, I was responsible for overseeing much of the humanitarian assistance work directed at a variety of hotspots in the former Soviet Union. My reporting went primarily to OFDA and to the intelligence agencies due to the details in my reporting (I went to locations few Americans had been to at the time.) Owing to my previous work with Armenia, Ukraine and Russia, I maintained those portfolios while assigned to Moscow between 1992-93, but very quickly I handed over Ukrainian-related HA matters to the Ukraine Mission. In Armenia (and very quickly Georgia and Azerbaijan) I started working very closely with Suzanne Olds who was the MD in Yerevan, Armenia but who had a regional responsibility for the Caucasus. I became HER HA officer and much to Jim Norris’ unhappiness (and my husband’s!), I was frequently on TDY in the Caucasus. Central Asia, under Craig Buck, wanted to oversee their own portfolio of HA-related assistance so Craig tasked Paula Feeney, who was newly assigned to Almaty, to take on this portfolio among others. I coordinated with Paula very nicely and she took the lead. In the Caucasus, I was responsible for designing and implementing, the humanitarian assistance program for Armenia and then eventually for Georgia and Azerbaijan. Suzanne also asked me to lay the groundwork for what would eventually be the opening of 2 AID offices/Missions in those 2 countries.

In the early days, the geographic boundaries for who was responsible for what in this huge new portfolio of many emerging countries, was somewhat unclear. Even though I had tactical responsibility for all of the former Soviet Union when it came to humanitarian assistance, there was understandably a little bit of sensitivity of why this officer in Moscow was responsible for humanitarian assistance in countries outside Russia. Nevertheless, I had good relationships and worked very closely with the missions and traveled very frequently primarily to the Caucasus

where Suzanne was very happy to have me around. even though I was working in Moscow on my Russia portfolio, helping to design new programs for Russia, I also had this dual responsibility for overseeing humanitarian assistance for the Caucasus. During 1992-93, in Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan programming focus was on humanitarian assistance. Armenia was still suffering from the effects of the earthquake. In addition, throughout the Caucasus there was an outbreak of ethnic violence which resulted in internal displacement, refugee movements and a lot of humanitarian needs. There was war over the Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan with hundreds of thousands of affected. This led to a Turkish embargo (Armenia borders Turkey) which led to Armenia suffering from an electricity, oil and gas cutoff from Turkey; there was a humanitarian crisis in Armenia in winter 1992 and 93 with no heating and no electricity. Georgia had experienced ethnic wars with the Ossetians and Abkhaz. I was on my first DART in Georgia-we were a team of 5 undertaking an assessment of IDP needs owing to the Abkhaz crisis which saw upwards of 200,000 crossing snow-covered mountains on foot (among team members were the wonderful Donn Krumm, Dayton Maxwell and Rick Hill). I was based for a couple of days in Svaneti in the northwestern part of Georgia on the border with Abkhazia. I flew there on an old Russian helicopter with fuel tanks inside the cargo hold where we were sitting...with the Georgian soldiers accompanying us smoking next to the tanks, In Azerbaijan, which received less attention but had equally serious humanitarian needs, I assessed the needs of the thousands who were living in dug out homes-homes they had literally dug into the ground-like a cave. Then there were the ethnic clashes in Russia's own North Caucasus between the Ossetians and the Ingush. The Embassy asked me to investigate (after they had themselves sent an intelligence officer down to see the dead) and determine what if anything could be done from an HA perspective. So in addition to my Russia work I spent a lot of time either doing humanitarian assessments, reporting cables that would come out from the embassy on the nature of the problems. Washington would then review the cable and make a policy determination led by this new "coordinator's" office. It was the first assistance coordinator in the State Department that would oversee all assistance for a particular region. They were now going to receive all the assistance funds that were earmarked not only for Eastern Europe but for the former Soviet Union (or Newly Independent States). Although initially we could design and approve projects based on traditional AID models and practices, over the course of the next couple of years the State Department, through their new Assistance Coordinator, became increasingly some people might say "engaged" others might say "intrusive" in our processes not only for designing our strategies but designing and implementing our projects and managing our funding. We had to seek approval for what was our CDCS equivalent. And for new programs everything had to be vetted through the State Department. Over time, after I departed Russia, AID officers became frustrated as they were constantly being second guessed as to why we were doing X, Y, and Z by political econ officers who did not know the first thing about development. That being said our portfolio, and here I will just speak to Russia, was a relatively nontraditional portfolio for AID. We were doing things like privatization of state-owned enterprises, land reform programs which the Agency hadn't done in decades, we implemented a coal mining project. We were doing political party development through NDI and IRI. We were doing election reform. In the health sector the number one problem in Russia for women was the lack of family planning services which had led to an extremely high abortion rate. One of the programs we developed which was considered very sensitive was a program to introduce modern family planning practices. We also worked very closely with the Centers for Disease Control on vaccine development. The Russians were not going to accept western vaccines because they had their own vaccine manufacturing

plants. But the CDC which had been working with Russian counterparts for years knew that the Russian factories could not meet international standards for production and in some cases vaccines were diluted. So we worked with CDC and a number of research institutions in Russia to improve the manufacturing process of traditional infectious disease vaccines for use in Russia. Things like diphtheria, measles and small pox. As a result of a Congressional earmark we launched the equivalent of sister city programs with hospitals. I believe we had 12 U.S. hospitals that were partnered with hospitals throughout Russia to exchange ideas and best practices and essentially, even if we couldn't say it due to political sensitivities, build capacity of Russian medical facilities to deliver improved health care. Now remember when I said earlier the Russians were very sensitive about how things were perceived because after all they had highly trained doctors that had done procedures that were still unknown in the west. Things like laser eye surgery which was routine in the former Soviet Union but essentially unknown in the West. These peer-to-peer partnerships allowed us to share our best practices with the Russians and vice-versa. So it was seen as equal sharing of expertise and best practices. Another Congressional earmark went to the Farmer-to-Farmer program in which we were to help facilitate through six U.S. agricultural counterparts the partnering of U.S. farmers with Russian farmers to help them improve agricultural production. Through these six Farmer-to-Farmer partnerships we welcomed dozens of American agricultural experts from ACIDI, Winrock, VOCA, Land of Lakes and a couple of others to work with their Russian counterparts. Again, because of Russian sensitivities, we shared our best practices in Russia and then the Russian counterpart would go to the United States and see for themselves how American operations work and share their own expertise. Again peer-to-peer. Congress wanted us to do a variety of special interest programs. One involved facilitating the entrée of American agribusiness into Russia. Cathy Norris, the wife of the MD oversaw this program. Ben and Jerry's ice cream was very interested in opening up operations in Russia. Russians love ice cream so they were welcomed with open arms. Ben and Jerry's is just one of many examples. These partnerships were slow to get off the ground, despite the hoopla, because it was too difficult to operate in the Russian environment in these early years when the operating rules and regulations were not yet in place.. We tried to help the Russians draft regulations but few took. We had many debates on this issue at post. The Clinton Administration expectations going into Russia was that we would go in, we would do our thing (we were given a billion dollars to work with in 1994), we would be successful and we would be able to leave within ten years, if not less. The Russians were smart. We could show them what to do and walk away. The privatization went very quickly. It would be successful. We would introduce democracy. We would have elections. They would get it and we would walk away. There was an enormous amount of hubris. There was an enormous amount of wishful thinking we could graduate our programs very quickly. The first strategy that we did in Russia, I think this was 1993 or 1994 the expectation was that by 1997 we would begin to wind down and by 2000 we should be out of Russia so literally eight years. But really, we were talking about generational changes and we were giddy with our initial successes and lost sight of the big picture. People had grown up with certain systems, with certain ways of doing business that you just can't change overnight. As we know change is hard . Neither the Russians nor we realized how much change was required and how much people would suffer in order to go through this change. And I mean suffer. This is where I would have disagreements with senior mission leadership. Privatization meant among other things farmers might own their land but farmers would be responsible for getting credit which used to be free before and which was now not available. They were responsible for buying their seeds and tools. Everything they needed to run their operations

which before came as part of the farming operation they now had to rent or purchase, but farm equipment wasn't available. People would have to purchase food or they would have to grow their own food. All of these things that the Russians took for granted because it was provided for the state they now had to provide for themselves. Inflation grew and many people, especially pensioners, became more impoverished. You began to see very successful privatization of state-owned corporations accompanied by thousands of people losing their jobs, and our programs weren't creating jobs. We began to see the growth of a very tiny wealthy class of elite businessmen and a growing class of increasingly impoverished Russians who couldn't understand how all the economic reforms that were being pushed by the west, all these democratic reforms that were being advocated by the west, why their lives were getting worse. Corruption was getting worse and yet under democracy, corruption was supposed to disappear. Disillusion was setting in. We needed to move ahead very quickly with these programs and show results. In fact, we were showing results, but these results were not going to last very long. The streets were full of beggars, many impoverished pensioners and young mothers.

I was in Russia for three years during which we had five vice presidential visits and I think four presidential visits. I can't tell you how many Secretary of State and high level officials we had. Everybody was coming out to Russia all the time. We were always gearing up for yet another high level visitor. We were constantly preparing briefing books and getting ready for the latest CODEL (Congressional Delegation). There were some funny moments though. I will relate one when it comes to President Clinton. People actually didn't mind when President Clinton arrived. We couldn't stand the staff that came before him. He usually sent three or four teams of advance workers for each Clinton visit. They were obnoxious people. But despite this, this President was welcomed because he would always spend real time with the Embassy community. He would speak with us and the families that had gathered, he was such a magnetic speaker. He didn't need to prepare talks. He could just talk. He was so folksy, he was just a natural. People felt very comfortable around him, unlike Hillary who of course was there and accompanied him, but who was very stiff and formal and always seemed ill at ease. President Yeltsin and President Clinton became good friends. They were both talkers, they clicked. Yeltsin was also known for his drink and because he did, he was frequently late for his meetings. The word from any presidential visit was because you never knew if Yeltsin was going to be late for a meeting with President Clinton, each Presidential site visit for usually a three or four day visit, had to be within a certain radius of the Kremlin in case Yeltsin called and Clinton had to go see him. So we viewed the Kremlin as a marker and no project site could be further than five kilometers from the Kremlin. Because if Clinton got the call he had to be at the Kremlin quickly. Well one of the factories that was being considered for privatization and investment by Hershey's chocolate was the well-known Red October chocolate factory which happened to be right across the river from the Kremlin. It was a perfect place to have a site visit because it was close to the Kremlin with a potential U.S. investor, Hershey's Chocolate. We knew that President Clinton had a sweet tooth. So I would be asked to serve as the control officer for this site visit, every time we were going to get a presidential visit, because the advance team always wanted to go out to the chocolate factory as they always gave us tons and tons of freebies. It really was very good chocolate. Each time we would visit, I must have visited a dozen times, they always had created the latest huge, I mean person huge chocolate figurine to impress the staffers as to why President Clinton should come to this factory. One time they did a huge all chocolate figurine of President Clinton. Another one of the president holding a small Chelsea. Another time they did it with President Clinton and

Yeltsin. These are all chocolate figurines. Each and every time the advance team would always recommend the site visit for a variety of reasons to President Clinton. Each and every time Mrs. Clinton said, “No, No, No.” We asked, “Why is she saying no?” Apparently she kept saying no because she was afraid if Bill got to the chocolate factory he would make a fool of himself by stuffing his face full of chocolate. Kind of like sending Bill off to the McDonalds. She refused to let him go to McDonalds which was another huge American investment because she was afraid he would be caught stuffing his face with cheese burgers. And it would be a bad photo op.

Back to the Caucasus for a moment. In 1993 and 94 I helped launch USAID operations in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Georgia was extremely personally satisfying but also challenging. I still had a lot of family in Georgia; members of my family were in the government first under Gamsakhurdia and then under Shevardnadze and later Saakashvili. I could call upon them for help in getting introductions that were necessary, but it was challenging because I also had to insure no conflict of interest because I was asking, through my reporting, for assistance for Georgia. I had to be sure I had all the data, all the evidence that backed up the needs that I was identifying. I also was asked by the embassy political office and by the regional affairs office in Moscow if I would be willing to travel to the North Caucasus and undertake some assessments there. They were reading my reports coming out of the Caucasus and were impressed by the depth of analysis and my ability to travel and they were hoping that my last name and the fact I spoke Russian would gain some entrée into parts of the Caucasus where we were having trouble gaining access or they just wanted a different perspective. So, I started travelling for the Embassy, again very much to Jim’s dismay, wearing my USAID hat to the northern Caucasus, Ingushetia, Chechnya, Dagestan, and elsewhere to report out on the growing political and economic problems there. There had already been conflict between Ingushetia and North Ossetia. A small area called Prigorodny where about 50,000 people had been killed and an equal number displaced. There were IDP camps, and there were clearly growing problems in Chechnya. So I began traveling down there and reporting out what I was seeing, what I was hearing. I had a Chechen friend who opened many doors for me, so I gained access to people and places the Embassy couldn’t get. I was told people considered me “a local”. In the winter of 1994, war broke out between Russia and Chechnya when the Chechens declared independence from Russia. It was a very short, very violent first war. I was in Grozny during some of the fighting and witnessed Russian bombing of civilian housing in which presumably many people lived. And again, reporting out on behalf of the Embassy. Much of it went back to Langley and elsewhere and over the years as I returned to this part of the world I was always asked to brief out at Langley. I had opportunity to meet with then president Dudayev and reported out what he wanted. There were now tens of thousands of IDPs, internally displaced persons, in Dagestan and Ingushetia. I was able to get humanitarian assistance that NGOs distributed to refugees and displaced persons. I worked very closely with the ICRC which gave me surprisingly, a lot of information, support and housing. In early February 1995 however an individual by the name of Fred Cuny (a very well-known and respected humanitarian) arrived upon the scene and began to make his presence known in Moscow and in the North Caucasus particularly Chechnya. He undertook a mission on behalf of sponsors and donors in the U.S. in conjunction with the Russian Red Cross. I ran into him in Nazran, the capital of Ingushetia. I was staying at the official guest house as a guest of the President of Ingushetia and he stopped by to see me. Of course I knew who he was by reputation.

*Q: Elizabeth, mention what was Mr. Cuny's reputation.*

KVITASHVILI: Fred was a famous or infamous depending on your perspective, humanitarian disaster relief worker, thought leader and humanitarian practice innovator. He was very well known for his work in in Sudan and for Bosnia where in 1993 he helped set up water systems for the trapped people of Sarajevo. While Fred was well-known in the international assistance community, in Russia he was a newcomer. Fred was from Texas. He could be loud and boisterous when he wanted to. He had a kind of outsized personality, wore cowboy boots and belt buckle and cowboy hat. He told me what he was up to. I asked if the Embassy was aware of his plans-going into Chechnya during the war-and he told me no. He wasn't even registered with the Embassy. I finished up my Mission, left Fred in Ingushetia on what I believed to be his first assessment mission on behalf of his sponsors, the Soros Foundation. I reported to Ambassador Pickering what Fred's plans were and there was immediate concern. Fred was a private citizen on a private mission so the Embassy couldn't stop him, but I was asked to be his "control officer", stay in touch and monitor his movements in case something happened. When he returned to Moscow to fly home, he started talking about his visit in Chechnya, who he met with, what he was doing and who his sponsors were and what he planned to do next (return to undertake his relief effort which included arranging a cease-fire and evacuating civilians from Grozny). Then Fred left Russia and next thing we know he is speaking to the US press. All this was picked up by the Russian intelligence community. I was advised by people in the embassy that what Fred was saying was cause for concern. Fred said he would be coming back in order to try and talk with Chechen President Dudayev. The Russians were trying to kill Dudayev yet Fred said he was going to try and assist him. Fred said he wanted to set up a humanitarian corridor in order to evacuate the wounded out of Grozny. Finally Fred alluded to his connections with the U.S. intelligence community. That set off alarm bells in the Embassy and probably with the Russians. Whether it was true or not didn't matter. The fact that Fred was alluding to possible connections meant he would likely be targeted by the FSB (former KGB) even though he said he was undertaking a humanitarian mission.. The humanitarian organizations supporting those affected by the war didn't want anything to do with him. A further complication for Fred, although he didn't know it at the time, was that the Russian newspapers were beginning to print negative articles about the Soros Foundation, saying it was a CIA front. Of course it wasn't, but nevertheless, when Fred said one of his sponsors was Soros, that raised more eyebrows. The Embassy communicated with him he should not return; they were now worried that if he came back he would be targeted and the locals he was working with would also be targeted. Before Fred left Russia I told him "The Embassy has asked me to tell you not return for your own safety." In early-mid March 1995 he comes back but he doesn't tell the Embassy. And he goes down to Ingushetia and departs for Chechnya with Russian Red Cross counterparts and he disappears. The next thing I know I am getting frantic calls from Washington and New York from among other people my old friend Don Krumm. Don was working with USAID but he had a long history with Fred working with him in other places. Don was calling on behalf of Lionel Rosenblatt, a former State Department official who at the time was the head of Refugees International, an influential advocacy group and Former Ambassador Mort Abramowitz whose wife Sheppie Abramowitz was the head of the Washington office of the International Rescue Committee, and, former OFDA Director Julia Taft. They were all worried and called me saying "Where is Fred? Where is Fred?" Of course I didn't know he had returned and disappeared. I was advised by Donn and Lionel, he had in fact returned several weeks earlier. I had been

assigned his control officer and I can tell you he didn't check in with me or anyone else at the Embassy. He just came back, went to the North Caucasus and disappeared. Within days I have "Team Fred" flying to Moscow. The Embassy was told we had to facilitate their arrival and take care of them and I was the stuckee. We had this team of four or five people including Fred's son, Chris; Rick Hill, another old friend of Fred's and someone I knew from my work in Georgia, Don Krumm and Lionel Rosenblatt. Several came without a Russian visa in their passports; one came without a passport! It was my consular nightmare and all of them demanding to go down to Chechnya and look for Fred. I told them, "There is an active war. I can't take you down there." But after a meeting at the embassy including I believe with Ambassador Pickering, I received permission to accompany the team of private concerned US citizens to go look for Fred. My contacts down there including the president of Ingushetia made available some special guest housing. And with embassy acknowledgement but not necessarily support I am down there with another embassy officer facilitating the search for this missing American, missing in Chechnya, along with three or four Russian nationals from the Red Cross including their interpreter, all of whom I had met on the previous visit when I had met Fred in Chechnya. For the next three or four months I was flying back and forth between Moscow and Ingushetia-Chechnya and Dagestan even though we were not permitted to go into Chechnya looking for Fred. This was not supposed to be an embassy responsibility because Fred was a private citizen who had gone down there without embassy knowledge. So we couldn't officially engage ourselves. But because I had been his control officer and had a lot of contacts in the area, I was assigned to facilitate as much as I could their search for Fred. Besides lots of people in Washington were now engaged as was the White House. I spent a lot of time traveling with "team Fred" talking to people trying to get information about what happened. It was ultimately an unsuccessful search. After about three or four months the team gave up the search from Ingushetia and flew home, but over the next couple of years the search for information through the variety of sources continued and I kept in touch with Don Krumm and Rick about any developments. Eventually the mystery was partially solved, and there was some closure for the family. Fred and his team were captured and executed. The family have some of Fred's bones and his burned passport. I don't think they ever came to any final conclusion as to whether he was killed by Russian intelligence or military or by Chechens who kidnapped him for money or information.

The last four-five months of my tour in Russia was spent going back and forth serving as the facilitator for the Cuny rescue team based out of Ingushetia. We had one last presidential visit over the Fourth of July, in f 1992. Ambassador Pickering had decreed that no one could depart post until after the Clinton Visit. Ambassador Pickering was the consummate diplomat, the Ambassador from central casting, a man with boundless intellect and energy. He knew something about everything. He had incredibly high expectations, and we met those expectations. You wanted to perform well for him. He was always looking out for us. He acknowledged the staff. He thanked the staff. He made you feel comfortable even though you knew that he knew ten times more than you did about everything. But he was always very patient with the junior officers as they briefed him. He really liked to drive. He was a big fan of motor car racing. His reputation preceded him of some of the stunts he had done elsewhere as Ambassador when he would take an embassy car and go off driving. There was already a story circulating among the Russian drivers at the Embassy about how once when he was ambassador he had taken an embassy vehicle, it was either Jordan or Israel and had gone into the desert where you are not supposed to go and an incredibly high rate of speed. In Russia he liked his driver to go really

fast. The roads in Russia were in terrible condition so the drivers were almost afraid to drive with him because they would be told to drive fast.

*Q: This is John Pielemeier on January 3, another interview with Elizabeth Kvitashvili. This is our third and we will move from Russia and Washington to do the next step in Elizabeth's career. Elizabeth please go ahead.*

KVITASHVILI: As John mentioned this is Elisabeth Kvitashvili, and it is now late in 1995 and I returned from Russia and began a little over five year period of assignments in Washington DC. All my positions/assignments were in the Bureau for Humanitarian Response which became a real home for me. Later the Bureau became Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance.

*Q: Spelled DCHA.*

KVITASHVILI: DCHA, Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance. But at the time it was the Bureau for Humanitarian Response under Douglas Stafford. I was recruited out of Russia to the Office of Food for Peace (FFP) and I will talk about that briefly in just a second. After 2.5 years in Food for Peace I was recruited by Rick Barton, then Director of the new Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) to serve as their program officer. After a year in OTI, I was asked by the then Assistant Administrator Hugh Parmer to go into the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance-OFDA. So during the course of the next five years I went from FFP where I was the deputy in the emergency response division, to OTI and then OFDA where I was the director of the emergency response division.

After my home leave, I started in FFP in September of 1995 and was immediately given two extremely large portfolios. I was given responsibility for managing all the emergency food assistance going into what was called the Great Lakes of Africa which was essentially Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda and Congo. There was a huge response as a result of the Rwanda genocide in 1994. I was also given the portfolio for Bosnia where the war was winding down as Dayton talks had begun. A year later, I was given the Afghanistan portfolio as well. During my time in FFP I spent a good deal of time traveling throughout the Great Lakes of Africa, Bosnia and Afghanistan. I'll start with the Great Lakes. As I said there were waves of refugees fleeing fighting in Rwanda in 1994 which created a huge humanitarian crisis throughout the region with countries hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees. Rwanda itself had tens of thousands of internally displaced people. The United States was the largest provider of emergency food aid to the hosting countries. But there was a lot of concern about whether or not our assistance was actually getting to the beneficiaries or affected populations. There was worry that the food aid was inadvertently feeding the "genocidaires"-Hutu rebels who had massacred Tutsi (and Hutu) during the course of a several month frenzy a year earlier. FFP was criticized by other USAID and State staff for feeding the killers. Because of the criticism and concern, FFP suspended delivery and distribution of our emergency food aid by the WFP for the Great Lakes region. I undertook probably a half dozen or so assessment trips throughout the Great Lakes sometimes in conjunction with UN and European Union colleagues sometimes in conjunction with the Refugee Affairs Advisor, a State Department officer based in Kampala at the time. A woman by the name of Carol Colleton. We traveled around the region trying to get a sense of what the true food aid needs were while also confirming our food aid was actually going to vulnerable

displaced/refugee populations. I was constantly trying to verify that our food aid was not going to the genocidaires, new rebel groups or active military. In the summer of 1996 my findings that we were not feeding "bad guys" led to the resumption of food aid distribution by our partners with new tougher requirements and distribution caveats in place. I did acknowledge that there were some diversions, but that the vast majority of vulnerable people did indeed benefit from US food assistance, including food for work.

I was also trying to assess whether our food assistance was cost effective. I was trying to answer the question was it cost effective to provide food aid from the US to the middle of Africa? We knew the answer—it was mighty expensive to feed beneficiaries in central Africa, primarily due to the transport costs. Corn and Sorghum had to be moved to ports in Louisiana or Texas then shipped to Mombasa or Dar es Salaam and then trucked hundreds of miles on mud tracks to warehouses operated by WFP. It was expensive and slow. At the time we wanted to introduce a new way of thinking about the delivery of U.S. food aid. FFP began to press for new ways of using our resources, not exclusively in purchasing U.S. food aid but perhaps in making small purchases locally or regionally in order to move food aid more efficiently. It was the first time we started discussing local purchase options. The other thing we started thinking about for the very first time was pressing to implement more food for work programs rather than direct distribution, so we could use food to help people grow more food or develop livelihoods which would allow them to purchase locally available food. Throughout the Great Lakes there was sufficient food, but people either didn't have access to markets because they were very remotely located or they didn't have access to goods or assets with which to bargain or trade. So under the direction of David Hagen and Tom Oliver in late 1996-early 1997 we started new discussions, new ways of thinking about how we might respond more effectively and efficiently using our commodity food aid and the cash that we had. I worked very closely with the Rwanda FFP Officer who was then Tim Shortley. This was a welcome new and novel approach that the Rwandans and others thoroughly endorsed. We also began to deliberate-- this is an idea spurred by the then deputy assistant administrator in BHR bureau, Len Rogers-- as to whether or not we might engage with the private sector in order to get them to direct more of their food which they were purchasing from throughout the continent directed to these countries for purchase. For example, U.S. based Cargill had operations out of Kenya and South Africa and they were purchasing a lot of grain and moving it around the continent. We approached Cargill to try and figure out how we could partner with them which would mean USAID through FFP would partner with Cargill and spur them to direct more food to some of these countries which were hosting the hundreds of thousands if not millions of refugees from the various conflicts in the area—Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Sudan. The discussions were somewhat fruitful in that they generated for the first time an idea about how we might engage with the private sector as a potential partner with us in doing emergency response. Indeed, Cargill started directing more of their attention to some of these countries We had a small Monetization Task Force that developed a concept of joint programming with the private sector but this idea was new to USAID and we didn't really have the structures in place to allow us to partner with them as we now do today with public private partnerships. It was one of the first instances where USAID really tried to think more creatively about engaging with the private sector to see what role they might play in helping address a humanitarian crisis. Similarly, in early 1997 we explored the feasibility of implementing an up to \$40 million monetization in food resources to support the Rwandan budget. This was to be done in conjunction with the World Bank.

Now in the fall of 1995 about the same time I was beginning my work on the Great Lakes program and just after Thanksgiving of that year, the Dayton Accords brought the Bosnia War to a close. Overnight, I was asked if I would go into Bosnia to undertake a new humanitarian needs assessment of the country with WFP. I was to determine what the USAID humanitarian response would be, focused on food aid. I believe I was the first official American into Bosnia right after Dayton. In early December, I donned a flak jacket for the first time and I spent three weeks on the road traveling throughout Bosnia with the World Food Program. My most vivid memory is of seeing the destroyed Croatian town of Vukovar and various Bosnian villages where you would see a pattern of wholesale destruction. I subsequently went back in early February of 1996 for another three week assessment. In conjunction with the EU, WFP, UNHCR and FAO we toured Croatia, Bosnia, Republika Srpska to see for ourselves the damage to the infrastructure, to the agricultural facilities to the bread factories, housing, all this to try to come up with a joint UN - EU- U.S. assistance strategy for how we were going to address the greatest needs and reach a common understanding. It was important then to determine how we would jointly respond so that we were working in complementary ways and not in a contradictory or a competitive fashion. I was told that this intra -agency Bosnia assessment was one of the first ever done. Based on the success of the Bosnia assessment, several months later, I participated in a similar exercise for the Great Lakes for a period of 6 weeks. The objective was to bring donor governments together with the UN and major NGOs operating in the region. We wanted to do one grand assessment with agreed upon needs, responses and priorities rather than multiple repetitious assessments. Communities everywhere were objecting to the multitude of visiting expert teams asking them the same questions and then coming up with separate as opposed to integrated response plans. I focused my recommendations specifically on what the west could do as far as humanitarian food assistance. I did not touch upon certain sectors that OFDA felt was their purview, like water and sanitation. OFDA would do their own humanitarian assistance assessment for Bosnia because they had a DART at the time based in Croatia. The fact that the Charge in Croatia was then Robert Finn was a bonus. Robert, who subsequently became Ambassador to Afghanistan in 2002 and under whom I served, had been the DCM/Ambassador in Azerbaijan when I was travelling through there and I became quite friendly with him. I would meet him on my way into Bosnia over dinner usually and get a briefing and good meal before I went inside. In addition the head of State's Intelligence and Research Balkans Office was a former Moscow colleague, Louis Sell. Louie had been Political Counselor in Moscow and Serbia, new Serbia intimately and I received excellent briefings from his Bosnia team prior to my travels.

*Q: A DART was what?*

KVITASHVILI: A DART is a disaster assistance response team. A DART had been based in Zagreb, Croatia since 1993 I think. They had been funding NGO operations in Bosnia during the war. DART members had never traveled into Bosnia because of the ban on U.S. government officials going into Bosnia during the war. After the war the DART quickly shifted operations to Sarajevo once when the Embassy opened. I coordinated with OFDA (Tim Knight was the team leader) feeding them my information and recommendations. Again, I limited my recommendations to what the U.S. government should do to address food insecurity.

*Q: Bosnia was it peaceful at that time? Did you run into any problems moving around?*

KVITASHVILI: It became peaceful after Dayton, so yes during my travels it was peaceful. The first time I went in, I drove via Vukovar, a Croatian city that had been essentially leveled by Serbian forces. It was a shock as here I was essentially in Central Europe and you looked at the city and it looked like the pictures you see of German cities after WWII. After Vukovar, we crossed into the Republic of Srpska which is the Serbian part of Bosnia and then on to Bosnia including Sarajevo, with visions of WW II destruction. I was struck by how little we had learned about war for here we were some 50 years later and mankind had gone to war when we had said never again. The second thing that struck me was when you drove through some communities you could look at a row of houses or a block of houses and you could see how there was very little damage done and how next door a house had been destroyed and the next house was OK, and the next few houses were destroyed. You would ask what happened here. What you learned is that neighbors had turned on neighbors depending on where in Bosnia you were located. The majority population in a village turned in many cases, not everywhere but in many cases, against their neighbors, their friends because they were of the minority, they weren't of the same ethnic or religious background. How could people do that as human beings to people that they had known since they were little? It was something I could not understand, something I could not fathom. Except that mankind is not good to his fellow man. I saw this pattern of action of man against fellow man throughout my career and have come to the sad conclusion that despite what we say, we are not good to our fellow human being.

Another point, in many cases I spoke to many Serbian men who had been under arms either formally or informally. The perception in the West was that the Serbs had lost as Bosnia was becoming an independent country. The Serbian men with whom I spoke repeatedly over the next year and a half when I was covering Bosnia all said the same thing The war is temporarily over. We agreed to Dayton because we are tired. We have been at it for four years. We have to earn some income to feed our families. We put our guns down (here was never any collection of weapons). They were allowed to retain their weapons or they didn't turn them in. So we put our guns aside now but at some point in the future we will pick up these guns and we will return to where we were before the war was over. I found that almost ominous because there was such anger among the three groups at what had happened, and the historical references people had made, not only to WWII where there was a lot of massacres by one group on the other but going back centuries to the time of the Turks and their occupation of this part of the Ottoman Empire. It was just incredible that people could still think about that today and say the battle is not over.

*Q: That is incredible.*

KVITASHVILI: I know. One thing I want to say is, particularly in Sarajevo, once food aid started coming in more regularly-the WFP and ICRC had been routinely feeding people who they could access --and I was going to soup kitchens or visiting people who had been displaced or were returning and needed to receive food assistance, you know the elderly, the handicapped, families who had many children , I learned the following. Even though people were receiving handouts because they were deemed vulnerable, in many cases women would say "we are a part of Europe. Bosnia was part of Europe. We used to vacation in Nice in the summer. We went to Switzerland to ski. We would go shopping in Paris, we ate chocolate and had coffee. We were

part of the civilized world. Look at what we have been reduced to.” People would complain about the U.S. food aid saying all the food aid we were giving them, “Europeans” was food for Africans. They were not used to beans and rice and sorghum. They were used to meat, and chocolate. This was not an appropriate diet for them. And by the way we don’t so much want the food although thank you we will take it, we are used to these apartments with electricity and hot water and that is what we want you to focus on. I point that out because the humanitarian assistance, the traditional humanitarian response on the part of the UN and donors was in fact calibrated on assistance that had traditionally been given to Africa and Asia with a more traditional agrarian diet. Here we were dealing with a relatively sophisticated, highly educated European population that had gone through the trauma of war. They didn’t so much want beans and rice but meat, coffee, chocolate, hot water, and shelter which was not part of our humanitarian response. We needed to do better.

*Q: Right. Did you try make some changes in what was delivered?*

KVITASHVILI: The international community was hampered by its inability to change, The traditional food baskets were identified by WFP and various NGOs that had been doing food assistance forever. They in turn were hampered by what was available from donors like the US which was corn, sorghum, wheat. In order to change the system the community had to change the way it approached the vulnerable populations and their needs. It meant starting a dialog on human-centered needs based on local demand rather than serving up a donor-driven response. It meant starting a dialog on locally driven development! On food assistance, it meant rethinking what food or assistance (maybe cash) to provide to give the best most cost effective response. It meant rethinking bringing in American corn from Kansas. We needed to provide cash that could then be used by populations to buy fresh produce. It meant you would have to move towards a cash-based response. Even though we were just beginning to talk about that kind of a change in our approach to humanitarian assistance, really everybody had commodity assistance, not cash and, FFP regs required you to buy American It is where a light bulb started going off in the international community and BHR back in Washington about needing to change our approach to humanitarian assistance and think about purchasing things more locally and changing the food basket. Our responses needed to be calibrated differently depending on the crises and location.

*Q: Did you find the food items that were provided were then sold or were they eaten?*

KVITASHVILI: Both. In Bosnia, farmers returned to the land, but it took two years before the agricultural system partially recovered from war damage. So many war-affected Bosnians needed food, but they also needed other things that we couldn’t give them, so on occasions food aid was sold. After two years I made a recommendation that we should reduce our food assistance and the Europeans started providing more cash instead of food aid as our food was not actually needed as the markets were functional. There were still many vulnerable populations, but the calculus had shifted because there was greater recognition that our food aid, which was meant to save lives, was less useful where markets were operating normally. The understanding that greater assistance to help people access markets was a better more cost-effective means of assisting people. FFP begun to reduce food assistance in Bosnia because of greater needs elsewhere. You now had war in Congo, huge caseloads in West Africa and also Afghanistan, which I will get to in a second. In 1997 I did another assessment in Bosnia, determining what the

humanitarian needs were, but this time I believed we need to shift away from humanitarian assistance, I briefed the senior leaders in the Bureau for Humanitarian Response and Rick Barton, then director of OTI, was in the briefing. He liked what he heard from me And asked that I be encouraged to transfer from Food for Peace to OTI which is what happened.

*Q: Yeah it was very new. Barton was the first director right?*

KVITASHVILI: He was. They had been created by 1993 I believe. They cut their teeth in Rwanda and then in Bosnia. I was asked to help OTI think about how they should program in Bosnia and the Great Lakes and a couple of other countries including Honduras (after Hurricane Mitch), Georgia and Lebanon. I also helped them create what became their surge roster of “transition experts”.

While in FFP, I had just begun work on Afghanistan where there was a huge amount of displacement. There was an ongoing civil war in Afghanistan, coupled with the beginnings of a drought and there was increasing concern in the interagency about Afghanistan. I had excellent working relationships with the State Afghan desk as well as PRM, so having worked on the Afghan portfolio already twice before, I volunteered to take on the humanitarian portfolio for the bureau (and really the Agency) on Afghanistan. I went to Afghanistan during the time of the Taliban starting in 1997-2000. I undertook assessment and later monitoring missions. I went a total of 5 times if I remember correctly.

*Q: Were you on your own; were you just traveling alone on these trips?*

KVITASHVILI: I usually travelled as a single USG person because travel inside was banned and there had to be a solid reason for going. Thanks to the UN (WFP) or the ICRC I had transport inside and they would accompany me. But on two separate occasions I travelled with other official Americans including my friend Brad Hanson, then Consul General in Peshawar and on another with then Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) Julia Taft and the Pakistan-based refugee officer Linda Thomas-Greenfield, two incredible leaders and role models to many in the foreign service. Sometimes however, I was with a particular French NGO which worked very closely with Ahmed Shah Masoud and with whom I had a very good relationship owing to my earlier history. I also traveled with CARE which was a partner organization of FFP/OFDA. I would fly into Kabul on the ICRC or UN plane from Islamabad. My counterparts in the Embassy were the refugee affairs officers who happened to be friends of mine-Linda Thomas Greenfield, who I just mentioned, and Tom Hushek, also a friend, with whom I had served in Russia. I worked very closely with them in Pakistan and PRM in general as they supported UNHCR and other UN agency efforts to care for the millions of Afghan refugees in Pakistan as well as coordinate humanitarian policy with the UN largely based in Islamabad. I was the USAID officer making the recommendations to Agency leadership on the assistance requirements, whether in support of WFP, UNICEF and the NGOs like Mercy Corps, IMC and CARE that were operational inside Afghanistan. I also served as a go between for certain Afghan officials and the USG.

Because of my existing on-the-ground contacts in Pakistan and Afghanistan among the Afghans, the Department allowed me to travel into Afghanistan after which I would provide detailed

debriefs to a range of interested USG officials. I was considered a very credible and knowledgeable eye witness to what has happening at ground level—I could also verify what the UN was saying about conditions on the ground. And I was an excellent briefer! I either travelled by road (there were no paved roads—they had mostly deteriorated or been bombed) or would fly in the UN or ICRC plane across the mountains. I had an opportunity to meet with very senior Taliban leaders in Kandahar at their request. This was 1999 and the country was suffering from extreme drought. The U.S. was cutting back on food assistance in response to Taliban excesses. An Afghan friend of mine who lived in Jaghatu, Wardak province, Afghanistan called me to say the leaders in Kandahar wanted to talk to me about the drought and US assistance. The State Department wanted me to talk to them, so I went and was accompanied by Brad Hansen, the Peshawar Consul General. The Taliban wanted to parlay over a resumption of US food assistance. The leaders welcomed Brad and I and treated me with respect since I was a known and respected longtime friend of Afghanistan, as was Brad. We discussed the humanitarian situation and human rights—I criticized their treatment of women, but it was an honest discussion with men close to Mullah Omar. The Taliban had recently closed the women’s “hammams” or baths in Kandahar and when I raised this as an example of their lack of respect for women they countered by offering to take me to see the baths myself. They told me the baths were in deplorable condition, unsanitary and needed to be cleaned. They reopened them several weeks later I was later told.

Another time I went by road to Bamyan, in the Hazarajat, a mystical site filled with spirits which “come alive” at dusk. I climbed the still existing Buddhas and continued on by road with WFP to Yakawlang an extremely poor area in central Afghanistan where only potatoes and barley grows, and people were always malnourished (poor water brought on dysentery so I was laid up for 4 days in this underserved area). A few weeks later the Taliban massacred several hundred Hazaras there. Travelling by road gave me a true sense of the difficulty in getting assistance transported; it afforded me a chance to see how desperate the situation was and report out. I travelled by road pretty extensively in Afghanistan during these visits and during my posting in 2002-03.

There were so many stories about Afghanistan I think I just must highlight a couple of vignettes because there is just so much I could say about it. So starting in 1996 with the Afghan Taliban then in power in Kabul, there were a number of American political activists who became very engaged in Afghanistan primarily because of the Taliban’s lack of respect for and treatment of women. Girls’ schools were closed. Girls were not allowed out of their homes. There were ministries created that were mindful about how women should dress. Women were poorly treated in areas that were controlled by the Taliban. Now the U.S. was funding at the time quite a number of primary boys and girl’s schools operated by NGO’s like Save the Children and UNICEF. In 1997, the Taliban decided that girls could no longer go to school and they shut all of the girls’ schools down. Pressure from US activists like Mavis Leno (Jay Leno’s wife) resulted in a USG decision to stop funding boy’s schools. The point being if girls can’t go then we ought not fund boys to go to school either. We wanted gender equality. Soon after we made that decision other donors reluctantly followed suit. So, I am in Afghanistan traveling around, and everywhere I go I am accosted by women who were begging and pleading with us to provide funding for the boy’s schools. I said, “Don’t you want the girls to go to school?” They said, “Of course we want the girls to go to school but it is more important for a boy to go to school.” I said, “How can you say that?” They said, “In Afghanistan, for women’s lives to improve we must have educated

men. We must have educated boys who value education, who grow up in a system that values women and values education for boys and girls. If we continue to have a bunch of uneducated illiterate men as our leaders, our lot will never improve. But if you educate the boys they will begin to understand why it is important to have their wives or their sisters or their daughters attend school. So please, we can't have another generation of young men who are illiterate and only know guns. We need a generation of young men who are educated and able to do more than take up a gun and go to war." And I came back and reported out what I had been told, and although there was much pressure from the feminist majority activists not to accede, when I told the State Department and the NSC what I had heard, people started shaking their heads and said, "You know that makes sense." We might have to re-think this approach. In fact, little by little funding was restored for the schools., although a smaller amount than previously. We began to fund UNICEF and the NGO's once again so they could reopen schools for boys. At the same time we asked the NGOs if they would secretly run girls' schools underground and they agreed to do that. There were any number of Afghan women who willingly opened their homes to serve as secret classrooms for girls. A second vignette: as a result of pressure to ensure gender equality, BHR (and other donors) began to require all food and cash for work programs, many of which were focused on small scale infrastructure rehabilitation activities, to have 50% participation of women. In other words, 50% of the workers needed to be female be it a road rehab project or sewage cleaning activity. NGOs started complaining they couldn't get women to participate and when I investigated—another light bulb moment—the Afghan women asked me as an American woman did I want to go out and do construction and clean sewage drains? I understood we were imposing gender requirements inappropriately.

*Q: Thanks-lets move on .*

KVITASHVILI: OK, so let's revert back to '97-'98 and I am now transitioning from OTI to the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance-OFDA. Beginning in 1997 there had been an agricultural crisis in Russia and the U.S. government through USDA and USAID/Food for Peace was contemplating a food aid response with funding from USDA and USAID. I was asked to review the proposal and I wrote a dissenting E-Mail to the new AA (Assistant Administrator) by the name of Hugh Palmer, former Democratic mayor of Houston, as Doug Stafford had retired. I sent my dissenting memo based on my own "expertise" (I use that term very lightly) on agriculture and food aid in Russia and my service there owing to the fact I had covered the agriculture portfolio while I was in Russia, and implemented programs there. The AA sent it on to Administrator Brian Atwood. The memo had resonance. USAID did not participate in the food aid program which was poorly and unsuccessfully implemented by USDA.

*Q: Could you just take a moment to describe the contents of the memo.*

KVITASHVILI: The initial memo that had gone forward, which I had been asked to clear on, outlined why we should participate. But it contained many factual inaccuracies if not errors about the state of Russian agriculture. I had been in communications with the Moscow Embassy Agricultural Counselor who was an old friend of mine. He agreed food aid was not necessary. The proposed program, was being used mostly as a political tool. The USG was trying to extract some concessions from Yeltsin. But my point was that food aid was not the right tool and if you used food aid, it would simply exacerbate the problem. Russian agriculture was in the process of

imploding and by bringing in concessional food, Russian farmers were going to be further hurt. My message resonated and the AA liked the fact that I stood up against the powers that be. He asked to see me and told me he wanted me to be director of disaster response and mitigation division in OFDA. I was put in a terribly awkward situation. The head of the disaster response and mitigation office was a foreign service officer who had a very good reputation but for whatever reason, she and the new AA didn't get along. He booted her out and I was put in the position. He brought me in because he very unhappy with how OFDA was planning for Kosovo which was getting ready to blow up. He saw opportunity for the bureau to make a mark. Now remember, this is 1997-'98 and Atwood is the administrator and he had been named a year or so earlier as the USG lead for humanitarian assistance. That was a really big deal. So Hugh and Brian wanted to be sure that the bureau was well positioned for whatever crises happened next. Politically Kosovo was very important on the Hill, there was a lot of pressure to be supportive of the Kosovar demand for independence from Serbia. Parmer thought Kosovo could be a game changer. Parmer asked me to help re-shape OFDA (even though I was only a division director) to be more forward leaning and better prepared to respond to crisis. Assistant Administrator Parmer was a hands-on, details-oriented AA. During the course of the Kosovo crisis he traveled out to the region many, many times to see first-hand our DART response. He wanted to be able to report out to Brian Atwood and the Deputies at the NSC what we were doing and make sure we had game changing impact. Kosovo was a relatively short term crisis and when it broke we had a DART on the ground first in Macedonia and eventually in Kosovo. I supervised the DART from Washington but went out on occasion on TDY to see operations myself. During this time in OFDA I worked with a number of colleagues to introduce new ways of doing business-- innovations to the operations that made us more flexible and responsive. We changed the way we managed the operations in Washington through the OFDA Ops center. We changed how we approached the communications and the directives between Washington and the field and, most importantly, with technical guidance from the US Forest Service, we introduced a modified version of the Incident Command System which was in use by the fire fighters throughout the Western half of the country.

*Q: What do you call that again?*

KVITASHVILI: The Incident Command System. It's a standardized approach to the command, control and coordination of emergency response used by the forest service for fighting forest fires. OFDA had an agreement with USDA and the Bureau for Land Management and their experts helped us modify the system to fit the needs of an international disaster response by OFDA. The modification and subsequent institutionalization, accompanied by a new series of handbooks and training over a period of about 18 months led to enhanced field and HQ operations and streamlined and clear communications, including within the inter-agency. Everybody in OFDA and eventually the Bureau understood what their role and responsibility was. The functions of the operations center were strengthened and clarified. And, for the first time, OFDA understood that a DART could be comprised of members of other Bureau offices like Food for Peace or even OTI. We began to take on more of a whole of bureau, a whole of agency approach, as needed. We included civil military affairs officers as part of the overall structure because after all in Bosnia and Kosovo the military played a significant role in the post war operations by having peace keepers and civil affairs officers on the ground. We began coordinating better and not stepping on each other's toes. So, these were some of the innovations

we began to introduce to disaster response.

In 1998 in addition to the war in Kosovo, a border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea breaks out coupled with an awful drought in southern Ethiopia, especially in the Somali region. You have the ongoing crisis in Afghanistan which I remain responsible for. Then in October of 1998, there was a late season hurricane which pummeled Central America for five days causing enormous loss of life, property and infrastructure. Hurricane Mitch devastated portions of Nicaragua, Honduras, and Guatemala. OFDA sent out DART teams to all three countries and Hugh Parmer, the AA asked me to go out as the FFP officer, even though I was in OFDA. This was the first instance we included the function of FFP as part of the disaster response and this represented the new way of thinking. Honduras was the most impacted. Because of my knowledge of Honduras, I was on the Honduras DART. Before the DART deployed Hugh wanted to undertake a humanitarian airlift to Honduras using DOD planes. So we flew down to the former US military airbase of Palmerola, now called Soto Cano, where our US food is offloaded along with Hugh, a large public relations team and myself. I worked out of the USAID Mission and undertook food needs assessments for the DART and Mission in Honduras only. As I said, this was the first time we had food aid officers on a DART. OFDA traditionally did not do food aid responses—that remained with FFP. OFDA traditionally focused on needs related to shelter, health water, sanitation and nonfood aid essential emergency items. But with Hurricane Mitch the DART needed to understand the food and agriculture situation because we would have a more integrated holistic response. I spent a couple of weeks down there looking at the food aid situation. At the same time as the hurricane response is occurring there is a terrible drought in Ethiopia and war breaks out between Ethiopia and Eritrea over this tiny portion of territory called Badme, on the border between Ethiopia and Eritrea

*Q: How do you spell that?*

KVITASHVILI: Badme. We already had a DART in Ethiopia to monitor the drought and report out on conditions—there was a near constant need for emergency assistance in Ethiopia. We didn't have a DART in Eritrea, but we had a USAID Mission whose Director was the former deputy director of OFDA, Bill Garvelink. He saw an immediate need to deploy a DART to Eritrea once the war broke out as hundreds of thousands were displaced throughout the country living in horrible conditions. Bill asked OFDA to deploy a DART and I went as the initial head of the DART. With a couple of other OFDA colleagues we undertook initial assessments, set up shop and began a joint response in coordination with our colleagues in Ethiopia. I deployed for a short period of time, 2 weeks. I had to return to Washington to direct the disaster response division again. I returned multiple times during the course of our emergency response but by late 2000 Melanie Mason was head of the DART and we are now preparing for another change in administration.

*Q: What was happening?.*

KVITASHVILI: In 2000, we had Presidential elections and Hugh Parmer was out as AA. I get a call in early 2001, from Andrew Natsios the likely incoming AID administrator which everybody in the bureau is very happy about because Andrew is an AID person and knows OFDA very well. I am asked to go and brief Andrew as one of his first briefers before he comes on board

officially--he wants to know what to be prepared for, "What is the biggest thing that I am going to have to be aware of or be prepared for?" he asked. I responded that I believed the one that people didn't really talk about was the one that could cause us the most grief, namely Afghanistan. At that time, Afghanistan was in the third year of a huge drought. There were upwards of ten million internally displaced people, displaced by conflict and food insecurity. We were seeing death by starvation as stated by reporters floating around the country covering the war and drought. I was able to get permission from State Department to send out a 2-person OFDA team to undertake a rapid assessment in Herat Province (where CNN was reporting out on the starvation deaths of children-OFDA was being chided for not doing anything.) The 2-person team, which included OFDA's Peter Morris, found high levels of child malnutrition and recommended OFDA and FFP fund an emergency response. Andrew wanted us (WFP really-we funded WFP) to flood the country with food in order to make food affordable to all who needed it. A study we later funded in February 2002 concluded USAID needed to prepare for at least a year or more of emergency assistance so that "the poor can maintain a minimum base of productive assets needed to prevent complete destitution" and to increase attention to emergency water projects". Sue Lautze led the team from the Feinstein International Famine Center at Tufts University.

Once Andrew came on board, we sent out DARTs to Pakistan and Uzbekistan to monitor the Afghan crises and fund emergency assistance activities (this is spring 2001-pre 9/11). In addition, the Agency created a Central Asia Task Force in DC to monitor the situation throughout Central Asia and especially in Afghanistan and report out all that was going on. Even though I was in OFDA, I began to spend more time on this Task Force which was headed up by a new political appointee who eventually became the new director of OFDA, Bear McConnell. Tish Butler was the deputy director of the TF and Chris Brown who grew up in Kabul was also on the TF. So, I am dual hatted again, OFDA and Central Asian Task Force but I was still traveling to Afghanistan. At one point I do a trip with the Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). Her name was Julia Taft, an old friend of Andrew and OFDA. She asked me to join her trip inside Afghanistan She was looking at gender-related issues as well as whether PRM should fund UN organizations to address IDP-related protection issues. Now this is an interesting point because there was a new debate beginning in the international community as to who was "responsible" for IDPs and their protection. IDPs worldwide were more prevalent than refugees. PRM and UNHCR clearly had the lead in responding to refugee needs, but there was no clear mandate for IDPs, other than their own host country government, and that was where the international community was seeing lots of protection issues. The host government was part of the problem in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan among other places. Within the international community there was no one entity that was responsible for either the protection or the well-being of IDPs, Previously the focus had been refugees—now, internal man-made or natural disasters were creating tremendous numbers of IDPs. So Julia, ever an innovative thinker, wanted to understand the issues of IDPs in Afghanistan and understand who is doing what in order to challenge the conventional wisdom why couldn't the "Refugee agencies" do more for the internally displaced? Somebody needed to. In many cases the governments were the perpetrators of violence against their own populations. So, we started to challenge the conventional wisdom and indeed this was a new debate within the UN and the EU as to who is going to be responsible for taking on and providing for IDPs. For OFDA, funding relief activities targeted at IDPs was not an issue, because OFDA usually took the lead within the

USG for relief towards IDPs whereas PRM funded relief for refugees. The debate was who within the UN system would ensure IDPs were afforded protection?

Throughout 2001 I am focused primarily on Afghanistan and when time allowed Ethiopia and Eritrea. Then 9/11 hit and things changed.

*Q: All right.*

KVITASHVILI: OK, so it is September 11. I am still working with the Task Force, but I am still Division Director in OFDA. Every week in OFDA we had our staff meeting in the 9<sup>th</sup> floor Ops center. with its TV screens everywhere. We started at 9:00 on Tuesday as I recall. All of a sudden, out of the corner of our eyes, we all see what is happening at the Twin Towers in New York. Tamra Halmrast-Sanchez, who was OFDA deputy director, contacts the office director. We go into emergency response mode once we see a 2<sup>nd</sup> plane hit the tower in New York. This is before any alarm bells go off in the agency and we quickly call down to Andrew, but we are told he is at the State Department in morning meetings with the Secretary's Senior Staff. Then it becomes clear there has been an event at the Pentagon and we decide OFDA should evacuate the building. Everybody was released. In OFDA we were concerned there might be attacks overseas in some of our embassies. We immediately stood up two emergency Ops centers and left by Tami's car for Virginia Square, near the metro stop, where OFDA had a secondary site and OPS Center always on stand- by. OFDA had created an offsite in the event the RRB was incapacitated or we had multiple crises, so we could continue operations. We had to drive by the Pentagon which was in flames. We immediately moved many OFDA senior staff to the off-site and set up operations through the next week. So that was 9/11 for me.

Shortly thereafter, because I had travelled extensively in Afghanistan and had done a lot of reporting out to the National Security Council and to DOD, I was called by Andrew to accompany him to Tampa to go and brief Tommy Franks, then head of Central Command. I gave a primarily political briefing along with an update on the humanitarian situation. My briefings were very well received by Franks and his senior staff. Over the course of the next two or three weeks up to about October 15, I briefed routinely to the Joint Chiefs, and at DOD and the NSC. In addition, I was asked to pinpoint locations in Afghanistan that were important for humanitarian reasons and should not be targeted for possible bombing. I was called at home at night by the DIA to discuss locations. I would speak with NGO and UN friends in Kabul who were giving me site locations and coordinates of hospitals and medical facilities. And this is all being done on an unclassified phone line. I didn't exactly know at the time the USG was preparing to go to war, but the bombing began October 15th. Andrew said I should give them as much information as I could without compromising myself and my duty as a foreign service officer.

By November, it is clear our military offensive against the Taliban was having success. Andrew wants to do a trip out there to highlight the humanitarian situation and be the first civilian leader on the ground in Afghanistan! DOD makes a military plane available to Andrew. Andrew was the President's humanitarian coordinator and had reason to go. And because it is clear there would be huge, in fact, there already were, huge humanitarian needs as a result of the drought and the war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, there was a solid justification for a road trip. And

Andrew was going to be the first USAID administrator in Afghanistan. Andrew asked me to accompany him as I was “the only one who knows anything about Afghanistan.” We get the military transport plane--Andrew, his press people and I accompanied by the Assistant Administrator for Europe and Asia.

*Q: Was it Kent Hill?*

KVITASHVILI: Yes, Kent Hill who was a Russian speaker and the AA responsible for Central Asia as Andrew wanted meetings throughout Central Asia. We proceeded to do a five-country jaunt using the DOD plane. In Germany we pick up the DOD plane which is a transport plane, unheated and uncomfortably cold. We went from Rhein Main airbase to Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan. We met with Ambassador Laura Kennedy. We assessed the relationship between Turkmenistan and the Afghans and talked with UN organizations providing assistance cross border into Afghanistan and to the few Afghan refugees that were in Turkmenistan. An overnight in Ashkhabad and then we flew to Kyrgyzstan for a day and then on to Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan not only do we have meetings at the Embassy (and our DART which has a small team there), but we drive south to the border of Afghanistan to the city of Termez. Termez was the crossing point for commodities from Central Asia into Afghanistan. There was a railhead there. From Termez, goods crossed the river on barges and then trucked down to Mazar-e Sharif, the northern capital of Afghanistan. We got a sense of what we might do in terms of moving humanitarian assistance cross border when it came to that. Next, we went to Tajikistan where we hooked up with Michael Harvey, then stationed in Dushanbe but part of the Central Asia Mission. Michael was an old friend of OFDA and Andrew. Mike had spent time in Tajikistan talking with NGOs, mostly French NGOs operating out of Tajikistan into northern Afghanistan. Then from Tajikistan we got on U.S. military helicopters, Chinooks, with several reporters. All the important reporters were hopping on our helicopters that were being piloted by Marines. We were being flown from Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan into the “capital” of the Afghan Northern Alliance, Khwaja Ghar, which held a sliver of territory along the Amu Darya river. We landed near Ai Khanoum the site of a former Greek trading post established by Alexander the Great. We spent about four hours being briefed by the Afghans on the situation. We were hosted by the founding director of the French NGO, ACTED which had long standing operations in northern Afghanistan and in Tajikistan. I had given them their first USAID grant back in 1984 while I was working the cross-border program and I maintained relations with them over the years. We just had the Marines for protection. There was a very famous photo, I think it was in Time or Newsweek magazine, of our flight. It was the first photo of operations in Afghanistan as seen from the open back end of the Chinook with the gunner sitting at the edge of a helicopter with his gun, watching the scenery. We flew back to Tajikistan and on to Kazakhstan and then made our way home. Then December 25, 2001, our US Embassy re-opened and three weeks later I am in Afghanistan with Jim Kunder launching operations for what will be a new USAID Mission in Kabul which re-opened in May 2002.

*Q: Just for a moment, once the trip was over what was the follow up? Was it basically briefing the White House? Were you involved with that? What was happening with the results of the trip?*

KVITASHVILI: We had to do initial trip reports and then Andrew briefed a variety of senior Bush officials. I believe he went to the White House to report out.. He comes back from one

Afghanistan meeting and says, “Elisabeth, they are going to reopen the Embassy in Kabul and we are going to open a USAID mission. “ Andrew asked Jim Kunder, a political appointee, to serve as the new assistance coordinator for Afghanistan. The Central Asia Task Force began to transition as we are now going to have our operations based out of Kabul and Jim is the head of this new entity while Bear transitions to be OFDA Director. Jim was the de facto Mission Director. I am asked to deploy to assist Jim set up operations, design new activities and monitor ongoing activities funded by the Task Force. Jim arrives the first week in January and I arrive soon thereafter and we begin our work. Just prior to the Embassy re-opening in December there has been a conference in which the main Afghan partners negotiated a new Afghan interim government. It is clear that USAID is going to devote resources towards Afghanistan but it is not clear where these resources will come from. At this point no one is really talking about development assistance. Andrew positions USAID to be a player in Afghanistan. Of course, the rest of the agency doesn’t have a clue as to what is going on. USAID does not work in a theatre of war. There was no structure to support us. How are we going to operate there? That will be another conversation.

*Q: All right. we will set up a time for our next session. I am so taken by what you are saying I am sort of blocking out everything else. It is quite fascinating and I like the details and I hope we can continue to move into them rather than slip past them.*

KVITASHVILI: I recognize that this is taking a long time and we have another 15 years to go. I had such an incredibly rich career with so many very special moments. I was lucky enough to be in the right place/right time with people and opportunities to change what we were doing. Afghanistan was the highlight of my professional career and despite the enormous challenges living and working there in the earliest days it was incredibly satisfying as you could see we were making a difference—we had impact. I lived in an underground bunker with 4 other female officers, without heating, for the first couple of months and we ate what few items were available in the local market. Our cooks were two Afghan Hazaras who spoke no English and whose idea of cleanliness was well, not on the same par as ours. Everyone lost weight....There were 2 useable bathrooms and one shower for about 40 civilians. The Marine detachment of about 100 had their own bathroom as did Ryan Crocker who was serving as Charge. In order to have a hot water shower, I rose at 5:30 before anyone else got to the bathroom also located in the underground bunker. The bunker had been built for Embassy staff to use during the time of the Soviet occupation when the city was occasionally shelled. It had been closed for about 15 years and was dank, cold and just plain horrible. But it was home for those of us who arrived those first few months. By the way, the male civilians slept in the Embassy either on the floor of our offices or on top of tables. Everyone pitched in to clean the offices as the Embassy had been closed since 1986 I believe. Eventually the Embassy received some “hootches”, unprotected single containers which served as housing for those assigned to post. I travelled the country by road on long field trips to assess conditions, make recommendations, monitor progress and everywhere I went I was welcomed, America was welcomed, by the Afghans. I stayed with Afghans, got to know specific villages really well, and became pretty good in Dari. My stories are destined for a short memoir for my children. Two lasting memories—one was a camping trip I did at Band-e-Amir in Bamyan with an NGO partner organization I was monitoring and the other, a walk through a portion of the Wakan, the most remote place in Afghanistan where I was welcomed by the Ismailis. This was an unsanctioned trip that got me into hot water with the

Embassy.

*Q: This is John Pielemeier with Elizabeth Kvitashvili. It is January 30, 2017. We are having our fourth interview. Elizabeth's astoundingly lengthy career started at age 23. She is now coming back from Afghanistan where she left us last, and I will turn it over to you.*

KVITASHVILI: Thank you John. My name is Elisabeth Kvitashvili and in the spring of 2003, late spring of 2003, I received an inquiry from then administrator Andrew Natsios about what I was planning to do after Afghanistan. He asked me to come back to Washington to create a new office which was eventually called the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation-CMM, which was to be housed in the newly created Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance Bureau-DCHA. Andrew was keen to launch this new “conflict” practice within USAID because he saw that USAID was increasingly engaged in countries suffering from instability and conflict and that neither the Agency nor the inter-agency had the analytical tools let alone programmatic guides to respond to countries that were in crisis and conflict. He asked me to come home and create this new office, get it started, and see where it went. Over the next 3 years I, along with the team of people with backgrounds in conflict analysis that I pulled together, launched a new practice of conflict management and mitigation in USAID and indeed in the inter-agency. We developed a Conflict Assessment Framework as well as a set of programmatic guides or toolkits on topics such as youth, land, natural resources, gender, that would help AID think about how to program against conflict factors. Tjip Walker led the development and launch of an Agency Conflict Risk List. Tjip also led our engagement with PPC on the development of a the Fragile States policy which drew heavily on our conflict thinking. My first focus was to bring together a unique, small cadre of technical experts followed by the development of the assessment framework which ended up being our first publication. We then began to sell our analytical services to the regional bureaus and quickly missions would ask CMM staff to come out and undertake conflict assessments and provide programmatic recommendations how to use our assistance to respond appropriately. We were asked early on to participate in an inter-agency assessment with State and DOD looking at rising instability in the Sahel. That assessment and its subsequent whole of government response became the Pan Sahel Initiative which later morphed into the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative. We also began to implement conflict sensitive programs with the small amount of program money we received. And we received an earmark to run a “people-to-people” program for Israelis and Palestinians. This was a very exciting and different assignment for me as I was not only setting up a new office from scratch but also introducing a new way of thinking about and programming in conflict settings. It wasn't business as usual. CMM had to convince USAID staff that they couldn't ignore risk or conflict factors—where we could, we needed to understand the risk factors and use our development assistance smartly to address them. There was skepticism within the Agency about whether we should, in fact, think about issues relating to conflict as people thought Afghanistan and Iraq were one-offs, aberrations. Most missions believed they were going to operate in a steady state of development challenges but not conflict and instability. So, our office had to convince people otherwise and of the value added of undertaking conflict assessments and trying to understand what could possibly happen in that country if certain challenges, certain development challenges weren't addressed in an appropriate manner. Using use all of my powers of persuasion and owing to the technical strengths of my CMM team we articulated a plan on how to mainstream conflict management and mitigation throughout the agency so we would be viewed as value added and

not just another initiative on the part of an Administrator. We spent a lot of time working with all regional bureaus educating people on the changing circumstances and the conflict factors, such as rising youth frustration and ethnic disenfranchisement that we were seeing. USAID/Moscow came calling given the continuing volatility in the North Caucasus and I found myself back in Moscow working with Terry Myers and his team. Later other CMM staff returned to help the mission design a couple of “conflict-sensitive” programs for this region. In 2007 I was asked to be the acting deputy assistant administrator for DCHA while I was still the head of CMM. I was dual hatted for about 6 months and became DAA for DCHA and Neil Levine came in as CMM’s new Director.

*Q: Elizabeth let me interrupt you there. As you were setting up this office where were you finding staff? Were these foreign service officers who had come into AID from additional backstops? Were you hiring new foreign service officers. Were you hiring mostly GS (civil service) officers. How were you staffing this new office?*

KVITASHVILI: I had been given a number of people on detail who actually proved to be instrumental in helping set up the office. First was Linda Howey who had launched the Greater Horn of Africa initiative. We also brought on board a very intelligent woman by the name of Sharon Morris who brought technical expertise and enormous credibility. She was our senior technical lead. Then by hook or by crook I was able to recruit people to the team because I knew people who were looking for interesting things to do. At the same time, I was able to take advantage of what was the Presidential Management Fellows and AAAS programs; with program funds I recruited a couple of PASAs who brought enormous technical skills to the team. My team was full of superstars, many of whom remain in the agency today. I remain extremely proud of the team we created at CMM. I did not have any foreign service officers other than myself. At least initially I knew it would be hard to get foreign service officers because it was still a new office. We needed to make a name for ourselves first.

*Q: All right, thank you. I interrupted your flow.*

KVITASHVILI: That is OK. There is a lot to say about CMM and if it is OK with you I will have an opportunity to add a few thoughts later. (One addition—even though I was in CMM, at the time of the Asia Tsunami in December 2004, I was asked to be a part of the DART for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was in the midst of a civil war between Tamils and the Sinhalese-led government. Mission Director Becky Cohn asked that I be part of the DART to ensure the humanitarian response didn’t somehow further exacerbate tensions between the rival communities. One of my findings later captured in discussions about resilience was that our thinking on sequencing was wrong. Generally, our programming sequencing after a disaster was to bring in the humanitarian/disaster relief, then 18-24 months later start transitional assistance followed by development assistance. But in Sri Lanka you could immediately see that development programming was needed in conjunction and at the same time as the assistance from OFDA. We needed to sequence our assistance and plan jointly not separately. We needed to be, to use a military term, “lashed up” at the same time to respond the Sri Lanka crises.

In 2007, I was asked to go up to the front office and was made deputy assistant administrator under AA Mike Hess. I spent 2 ½ years as the deputy assistant administrator overseeing the

conflict portfolio, the democracy and governance portfolio, the newly launched Office of Military Affairs which I helped Tom Balthazar launch, working with and at the same time fending off the new State Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization, spending time in inter agency policy committees debating how to deal with the growing number of unstable countries around the globe. DCHA also began to spin out seriously the conflict portfolio into a new thought area, that of counter terrorism which evolved into counter insurgency. The issue of programming against counter terrorism and insurgency had become front burner issues already by 2004. Somalia had exploded once again, we had the Iraq insurgency and the Sahel was growing increasingly unstable. Violence in Afghanistan exploded. In discussions within the inter-agency between State, DOD and the intelligence community it was clear we were not dealing with simple conflict, but in some cases terrorism and increasingly insurgency which required different analytical and programming tools and approaches. Generals David Petraeus and James Mattis and a cadre of their top officers including H.R. McMaster, were the thought leaders in DOD highlighting these new challenges requiring new approaches. The Counselor at the State Department was then Eliot Cohen and he asked me to join him and several experts from throughout the inter-agency, including David Kilcullen and Janine Davidson, to serve on a counter insurgency working group which would develop an interagency counterinsurgency framework drawing from historical examples of counterinsurgency approaches including from Vietnam. This working group also launched the Center for Complex Operations, now housed at the National Defense University in 2009. At the same time as we, the civilians, were developing our strategy, the military was developing new doctrine and field manuals focused on counter insurgency and they wanted civilian participation, including that of CMM. CMM staff and I spent time much time starting in 2004 working with military colleagues at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania and at Fort Leavenworth helping DOD draft a new Counterinsurgency Field Manual (COIN FM). Once completed the new COIN FM became the new bible if you will on how to conduct counterinsurgency warfare. The counter insurgency doctrine relied heavily on civilian input drawing on our guidance to focus on understanding root causes of the instability and conflict and providing civilians with security, so development could take hold. This approach was eventually labeled “hearts and minds” with a focus on “clear, hold and build.”

At the same time as we were doing all this work related to counter insurgency and introducing and educating the Agency about this evolving approach, there is also a looming crisis in Somalia. So this is late 2008, early 2009, and Al Shabaab has taken over in Somalia which is also in the midst of one of its periodic droughts. Except FEWS is warning this is an exceptionally bad drought. There are now hundreds of thousands of displaced throughout Somalia because of fighting and drought. Reporting from the UN and NGOs still operating inside Somalia suggest epic levels of malnutrition. With Al Shabaab in control and demanding bribes to transport food and other humanitarian assistance it was increasingly difficult for humanitarian agencies to operate. And at one point several our NGO partners were kicked out of Somalia by Shabaab as they were accused of collecting information for intelligence purposes. There were very few partners in the country at a time when we had this mounting humanitarian problem. Mrs. Clinton is the Secretary of State at the time. There was a lot of discussion in the foreign policy community about terrorism and Mrs. Clinton and her staff wanted it to be very well known that she was not soft on terrorists. When we understood from our partners that they were being taxed by Al Shabaab to deliver and distribute food aid, State made it very clear that USAID and its partners must guarantee that 100% of our assistance was being used by non-supporters of Al Shabaab and that none of our assistance was being taxed. Unless we could guarantee or show

proof we would be in violation of some provision, I forget which. The GC, warned us that we could be jailed if in fact our assistance did benefit Shabaab. So, we had to suspend our assistance when there was this looming humanitarian crises and FEWS warning of tens of thousands of possible drought-related deaths. The Treasury Department got involved as well through some type of ruling that made it impossible for implementing partners to operate in Somalia because of course no one could get a guarantee that nothing was going to accidentally or unintentionally slip into the hands of Al Shabaab. We had to ask WFP and remaining NGOs to provide all kinds of documentation that effectively said you are telling us everything is 100% fine and if it isn't you are going to be subject to all kinds of penalties. USAID officers were asked to sign documents as well. Of course, no one wanted to sign because there were no such guarantees in operations like Somalia. So, we were stuck. This was something that was happening as I was a DAA and we were having these raging battles with the inter-agency because we are warning of a massive disaster, we used the "F" word, "famine", which no one wanted. It was mess that everyone washed their hands of, save the few brave officers in DCHA who kept pushing back. Eventually, after I left DCHA for another assignment, we were able to find a way to get assistance to some vulnerable but not until there had been thousands of famine-related deaths.

*Q: Just a note, FEWS is...*

KVITASHVILI: Famine Early Warning System. And indeed, after the fact, a study that was done by Tufts University's Feinstein School of Nutrition and led by Dan Maxwell confirmed that this initial suspension caused tremendous loss of life. Assistance did resume, but the damage had been done. FAO, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, had seen the markets were actually full of food in Mogadishu. Somali traders were continuing to import food, but people didn't have resources with which to purchase the food. So, USAID supported FAO which devised a voucher system whereby people who had been deemed the most vulnerable by WFP and FAO were given mobile and in some cases paper vouchers with which they could purchase food in the market from vendors who had been pre-vetted as being non-pro Shabaab. In summer of 2009 I received a call from Moscow asking if I would be willing to go out on TDY to Moscow and serve as acting mission director. As I needed an overseas assignment and the job I had bid on had been delayed, Moscow was very appealing. In October 2009, I left for Moscow just as I was assigned to USUN Rome where DCHA had a humanitarian counselor position. I went out to Russia on a five month TDY as acting mission director and then went to Rome where I assumed the position of humanitarian assistance counselor for FAO and WFP under Ambassador Ertharin Cousin, a friend of the President and Secretary Clinton. Now the five months in Russia were fantastic for me because it was like going home. I knew many of the FSNs, many of whom I had hired. The DCM in Moscow was an old friend of mine from Honduras where we had been junior officers together. There were a number of people in the embassy with whom I had served in Moscow in the early 90's. It was a fantastic five months there and I was very sad to depart but I had my next assignment and I served in Rome for the next two years as the humanitarian counselor.

*Q: While you were in Russia for this five month periods what was our status of the relationships with the Russians. Eventually we were asked to leave. Was that on the horizon while you were there?*

KVITASHVILI: When I arrived it was fall of 2009 and we had just launched the reset with the Russians so relationships were very good. There were working groups that had been set up to deepen relationships in a number of key areas, like what we had in the early 90's. Starting in 1995, the so-called Gore-Chernomyrdin Commissions chaired by then Vice President Gore and Premier Viktor Chernomyrdin set up thematic working groups which advanced dialog between the U.S. and Russia. In 2009 we had the same format but we also planned to jointly implement activities of mutual interest in technical areas like space, natural resource management and health. But some of the groups did not resonate as well with Russia. There was one on civil society development that the Russians were not keen to advance. That working group was chaired by Mike McFaul who was then the Senior NSC advisor on Russia. His counterpart was a Putin senior ally by the name of Surkov who was a very difficult individual, but someone with whom Mike had a relationship. Anyway, relationships were good at first. I was a known quantity to the Russians and they let me travel to the North Caucasus a number of times when no one else in the Embassy was permitted to negotiate a new strategy on how are we going to engage with the North Caucasus governments to reduce conflict and enhance employment opportunities for young men as a counter to joining the rebels. During my time we hosted Richard Holbrook on one of his last trips before he died.. He came to Russia to negotiate with the Russians on matters pertaining to Afghanistan. When I left, there was still no full-time replacement for Mission Director. In fall 2010 Charles North arrived to take up the role. After Charles arrived the relationship with Russia began to deteriorate. Ambassador McFaul had arrived in Russia and for whatever reason the relationship began to deteriorate almost as soon as he arrived. But by then I was in Rome working on three things for Ambassador Cousin: Somalia and the Sahel, nutrition and enhanced relationships with the Rome-based agencies, WFP and FAO. Somalia was still a problem and there were new humanitarian crisis in Niger and Chad where I TDY'd a number of times. Ambassador Cousin was a close colleague of Gayle Smith who was at the NSC at the time. Gayle had asked Ambassador Cousin if she could come up with innovative thinking about our food assistance program in Somalia which was still struggling. The Ambassador tasked me with devising a new strategy on how to approach humanitarian assistance and food aid in Somalia. So, I TDY'd out to Kenya and spent about two weeks talking with a variety of individuals including Greg Collins. I am wearing my old DCHA hat drafting a four-page strategy for Ambassador Cousin that she transmitted to Gayle. In fact, most of what I outlined, which is still classified, was adopted and subsequently AID and most of the humanitarian community shifted the way they programmed humanitarian assistance into Somalia. I spent time in the Sahel trying to get WFP and FAO and even UNICEF, even though UNICEF did not fall under my writ, to work more closely together to address growing malnutrition in these countries. As much as the USG talks about whole of government approaches, in order to tackle food security issues in Africa, FAO and WFP needed to work more collaboratively rather than as competitors. USUN and FFP pushed the agencies to address food security in a more integrated and holistic fashion. I was tasked with identifying areas where the U.S. government could prod WFP and FAO to work more collegially together in order to advance food security. Ambassador Cousin wanted to be sure that our little mission played its part in helping to advance President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative by getting WFP and FAO to step up to the plate and speak more strategically about how to address food insecurity and devise new ways of implementing food security programs. I also focused on nutrition-related programing and strategy due to increased emphasis on the Thousand Days and Scaling Up Nutrition Initiatives launched by the President. The Thousand Says initiative was an attempt to focus partners on insuring children were fed well

during their first thousand days when their brains were forming, and to insure they became healthy. We were about ensuring good nutrition would launch a child into a better adulthood. We had to be sure that WFP and FAO partnered nicely on this Thousand Days initiative to be followed then by the Scaling Up Nutrition initiative.

Also in Rome was this Committee on World Food Security, the CFS. It is a body, but not an organization, comprised of the member states of the FAO that meets on an annual basis to review the status of world food security. It had been rebirthed two years before I had arrived partly due to Ambassador Cousin and her efforts to get this organization to be more focused on food security at a time when the President was launching his Global Food Security initiative. Starting in 2011, one of the work streams which was identified by the CFS was the development of guidelines on land tenure and its importance as it related to food security. So, the U.S. raised its hand to serve as the lead in chairing these intergovernmental negotiations for the landmark “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests”. This was a 2-year effort during which I supported Dr. Gregory Meyers who was the head of the land office in AID Washington and together we served as co-chairs of this 18-month initiative to draft, negotiate and get CFA member approval of the VGs. Gregory was the technical lead given his vast experience and expertise. We made a great team. Negotiations were successfully conducted with representatives of over 120-member states of the CFS as well as representatives of the private sector and civil society.

During the 18 months we had probably six negotiating sessions with all the member states in Plenary. You are up on a podium and you have 100 people out in the audience and you are trying to negotiate word by word, page by page a 40-page document. But, we were able to get these voluntary guidelines approved, and that was a singular success for the U.S. Later I was asked to serve as chair for another CFS workstream. During 2013-15 I chaired the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the "Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crisis” during. As with the VGs, negotiations successfully conducted with representatives of over 120 member states of the CFS as well as representatives of the private sector and civil society organizations.

In the meantime, in the late summer of 2014, Ambassador Cousin had left to become the Executive Director for the World Food Program and we had a new political appointee who arrived as Ambassador, David Lane. He wanted to bring on board his own people, and my assignment was ending. I was selected as the DAA for the Middle East Bureau and started there in February 2014 after my home leave. When I came into the bureau I was to replace Chris Crowley who retired in summer of 2014, so my first months were spent shadowing Chris. I eventually assumed his portfolio overseeing the countries of Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan as well as the bureau of human resources function and the technical services office. The rest of the Bureau was overseen by acting AA Alina Romanowski as the political AA had departed soon after Chris retired. During those first six to eight months a good bit of time was spent on human resources related charges. The bureau was in the process of splitting from the Asia bureau with which it had been merged for several years. Several functional offices had remained in a shared

services arrangement including the technical office and the budget and finance function. When I came into the Middle East bureau they were in the process of slowly separating those shared service offices so that each bureau would have their own technical services their own program shop, their own admin shop. There was a tremendous amount of paperwork required to complete this separation and creation of new offices within the bureaus. Finding operating expense money to staff the offices was a challenge. I spent the first year of my assignment working with the admin team and Alina to create the positions we needed and finding funds to bring in staff which we did This was during another Agency rightsizing exercise led by Agency Counselor David Eckerson, and I was able to argue for more staff for Middle East given the staffing challenges we had. I was also learning about my portfolio travelling to the field missions to get a first-hand impression of our operations in Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Yemen was in the midst of developing a new country development and strategy statement while facing tremendous humanitarian concerns. We were working very closely with the Hadi government in their effort to introduce a measure of democratic reform to the country post-Arab spring. We supported a new biometric voter registration effort and discussions on the drafting of a new Constitution. Fighting broke out and we had to evacuate the Mission staff twice. Eventually we effectively closed our operations while keeping our FSNs in place. Yemen was a very sad story and still is as all our development gains have been lost. I remain very bitter about our support for the Saudis over Yemen. Then there was Iraq. In theory, our mission was supposed to shut down, but it was clear that the situation was deteriorating in Iraq. We were able to position ourselves to remain in place rather than shut down, but we were permitted only a handful of direct hire staff and TDY support was needed from the desk and technical offices. But we remained operational with a budget of about \$30 million. In the winter of 2014 we received a new AA, Paige Alexander who had most recently been AA in the Europe and Eurasia Bureau. She recruited Mary Ott who was Director in Egypt to replace me in spring 2015. Before Mary arrived however, the Bureau had to work closely with her on an unforeseen problem that occurred. With the Arab Spring had come increased instability throughout the region. Several missions were evacuated to Washington. Yemen was evacuated twice, Egypt was evacuated. Jordan was partially evacuated as was the Gaza/West Bank Mission. Iraq was already down to a minimal staffing level as was Lebanon. And then Benghazi happens and Chris Stevens is killed.

*Q: Did you know Chris Stevens?*

KVITASHVILI: I did. I worked with him when I was Director of CMM. The CT Bureau had asked me to accompany Chris to do an assessment of Islamic extremists in Darra, Libya. Chris wanted me to accompany him; I knew him from some other work that I had done with him. But we didn't get clearance from the Head of Diplomatic Security to go. After Benghazi, a wholesale review of US presence at our Embassies was undertaken. Ambassador Anne Patterson from Egypt became the Assistant Secretary in the Near East Bureau in Washington. She and Under Secretary for Management Pat Kennedy decided it was too unstable in the Middle East and the U.S. government needed to reduce its overall footprint throughout the region. In addition, the Egyptian government didn't like the fact there was a "regional" presence based in Cairo, people who worked on non-bi-lateral activities. A decision was made to reduce USAID's footprint in Egypt and move regional functions elsewhere. I spent five to six months trying to find and negotiate approval from Pat Kennedy and Ambassador Patterson for a location with sufficient space where we could open up a new regional office. The space needed to accommodate not only

technical functions but also the regional financial and legal functions all of which had been based out of the regional platform in Cairo. Also, some staff from our other missions which had been downsized needed a new location from which to operate. Long story short after negotiating with Pat Kennedy's office we were finally able to launch a new regional office in Frankfurt, Germany. In the old space that had been occupied by the RIG at one time when they had an office there. When we opened in the Europe and Eurasia region.

*Q: It was the regional inspector general's office.*

KVITASHVILI: Right. The offices had been vacant for a number of years. Pat Kennedy was eager to fill that space and not pay rent on an empty building, so we grabbed it and were able to set up shop for our regional affairs office as well as what we called our mission staff in exile from Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. Eventually the M Bureau decided to set up a new regional M Bureau platform in Frankfurt as well. Four months before I left my job in ME we opened up Frankfurt and assigned staff began to flow in so that by the time I left we had a new regional operation in Frankfurt under the leadership of Monica Stein-Olson. Things were beginning to become more normalized after what had been almost two years of staff displacement and insufficient staffing. Then in May of 2014 as my time in USAID was coming to an end, I had one last opportunity offered to me. I didn't want to end my career in the Middle East. I had wanted to serve in the Middle East since I first came to USAID over 35 years earlier given my background, degree in Near Eastern Studies and rudimentary Arabic. So to finally work on the region even if it was a DC assignment, well, I was really happy. But the 2 ½ years were exceedingly unpleasant both professionally and personally. I didn't want to end my career on such unpleasant terms. Asia bureau, which original home, was looking for an interim mission director for Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka had undergone a very vicious civil war which had now ended. The ruling regime proved to be incredibly corrupt and committed many human rights abuses. In the fall of 2014 it was decided that the USAID mission was going to close by spring 2015. In January 2015, the government called for snap elections and lost, they were kicked out. A new reform-minded government is elected. They reversed the policies of the previous administration and committed to democratic reform and reconciliation with all parties. Secretary Kerry goes out to Sri Lanka in the spring of 2015 and a decision is made USAID is not closing. We are going to support the new government. USAID now needs to ramp up programming after being in rapid close out mode. I was asked to come in, restart programming, restaff the mission and plan for a new CDCS. I arrived in May 2015 and began to work with the enthusiastic team. We began a new recruitment of staff and multiple new program designs. It was like starting up anew. It was wonderful. I had been out to Sri Lanka before as part of a DART for the Asian Tsunami. I had seen Sri Lanka before but didn't really know it. When I arrived, and began my work there, the first thing I did was to travel out and get to see the country side and see the projects. It is indeed a beautiful country and the people are wonderful. The next six months were spent working with the Sri Lanka staff including the wonderful FSNs to develop a new program. The Assistant Secretary for South Asia came out. That happened to be Nisha Desai former USAID AA for Asia. She assured us that we were going to get program resources for Sri Lanka as a reward for all the promises the new government made on election reform, reconciliation and addressing the human rights abuses that occurred. So, we had money to play with and support from Washington and it was a pleasure to be out there, I was in a mission, in a country which had a positive trajectory despite all the negativity, of the past ten years of the civil war and the human rights abuses. I was able to close

out my career later that fall on a very positive note that left me feeling really good about my career, feeling that I had made a small contribution. It was so much better than leaving after the Middle East Bureau which left a very negative taste in my mouth for any number of reasons. I felt good about finally ending what I felt was a wonderful personally rewarding career. It has been a life full of amazing adventures, meeting amazing people and I learned so much. I have a lifetime of stories to share which do when I teach at Georgetown University. I explain that even though we have everything we want here in the United States sometimes we just don't know, we just don't get it. We must spend more time listening to our counterparts, the people we are trying to help. We think we know better, but I have learned that in many cases we don't nor do we have solutions for all the problems. Sometimes we need to let go and let locals find local solutions where possible.

*Q: Let me just ask you one more question. This last post in Sri Lanka it is post conflict so you were a good choice to go there. Were there any things you tried to implement as part of the program that you had learned from other post conflict circumstances?*

KVITASHVILI: Yes, one point in particular. If the root cause of whatever started the conflict hasn't been sufficiently and appropriately addressed, then the affected population may be reluctant to engage and may not take ownership of the activity. They may not be willing to move as quickly as you are. They want local security, justice and restitution and may be less interested in a donor-driven agenda. Reconciliation is extraordinarily important and it has to be locally led, must involve communities and individuals with technical advisors in the background in a supporting role. The Sri Lankans insisted that their reconciliation process be Sri Lankan-led and not the international community. The Sri Lankans said they didn't want a lot of outsiders telling them what to do. But many in the international community were wary of Sri Lankan motives and were not convinced reconciliation would involve all the affected parties. Indeed, the Tamils preferred international participation as they didn't fully trust the government. It was a tough situation, but in the end the Sri Lankans must do what they feel is best to move reconciliation forward.

*Q: Both of those remind me of when we had a brief encounter together in Rwanda and were trying to put together a post conflict transition plan. A similar situation and similar time frame.*

KVITASHVILI: Exactly. I am sure there are other things that will come to mind after we hang up.

*Q: Well this is a wonderful interview and series of talks. You have been very well prepared. I know you have done a lot of research in preparing for these conversations. I want to thank you and I am going to cut off the machine and then I will tell you the next step.,*

KVITASHVILI: OK, thank you, John.

*End of interview*