

Courtesy of Department of Defense
United States Southern Command

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

AMBASSADOR PAUL A. TRIVELLI

*Interviewed by: Dr. Bradley Coleman
Initial interview date: August 29, 2011
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Q: My name is Brad Coleman. I'm the command historian, U.S. Southern Command. It is 0910 hours. Today is Monday, 29 August 2011. I am interviewing Ambassador Paul Trivelli, civilian deputy to the commander and foreign policy advisor, U.S. Southern Command. Good morning, sir. How are you?

TRIVELLI: Great.

Q: I'd like to begin by talking—I know the historians at ADST [Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training] intend to interview you regarding your early diplomatic experience—but by way of context for our discussion of your time, here, at U.S. Southern Command, how did you become a Foreign Service Officer? What attracted you to the diplomatic profession?

TRIVELLI: That's an interesting question. I come from a middle class, lower-middle class background. I'm from New York City and even though I was part of a third generation immigrant family, the whole issue of being overseas and working [overseas] would never have occurred to anyone, and it still doesn't occur to us. In fact, when I went to graduate school at the University of Denver I had literally never been west of Buffalo, New York. I didn't even know much of the United States. But I must say as a kid, my mother was a big believer in magazines, and we had a subscription to National Geographic, which I read every month almost cover to cover. I became fascinated with the idea of living overseas and seeing other countries. Then, toward the end of my high school period I actually had saved my money from a job and took a three week tour of Europe with the YMCA—where you visit seven countries in twenty-one days, and that sort of hooked me, at least in general interest about being overseas. And then during my senior year of college, in the fall at Williams, it dawned on me that I better figure out what I was going to do next year, so I went to the guidance office, the career office, and there on the wall on a bulletin board—and of course this was in the days before internet—there was an announcement for the Foreign Service exam, and you could rip off a post card and mail it in to register for the test. So I said, "That sounds really interesting. Let me try that." And I sent that in and I took the test in the Post Office of a small town in southern Vermont. In those days it was a written test, sort of like the GRE [graduate record exam], but it also included an essay. You sat and had a blue book. Blue books are

probably extinct, but you wrote an essay in a blue book when you took the test. At that point, I actually passed the written portion, took the oral in Boston later in the spring. I didn't pass the oral. I don't know if the interviewers were being kind, but they said, "You're really too young to do this." I was only twenty, and they said, "You need to come back in a couple of years." I had decided to go back and get a master's degree in international studies, and I proceeded to Denver, got my degree and then took the exam again.

Q: You originally studied biology, right? As an undergraduate, you studied biology?

TRIVELLI: Yes, I did, I have a degree in biology. When I went to Williams, I thought I was going to be a medical doctor, but in my junior year I realized I didn't really like the coursework. I wasn't doing particularly well in it. I didn't particularly like the people in the pre-med program, so it all seemed rather—not the right thing for me. Meanwhile, I had always had a deep interest in American history and I started taking Latin American history courses and the basic economics courses, and then branched out into the so-called social sciences, and when I thought about graduate school, what I really wanted to do was to get a doctorate in American history, specializing in colonial American history, and I talked to one of my professors [Benjamin Woods Labaree] at Williams, who was well known in his field. And he said, "Paul, you know there are already more books about the Puritans than there were Puritans." [Laughing] "I can get you into a program, but you may want to think of a more useful and more practical solution." So I decided to go to graduate school and one of the reasons I was so interested at the University of Denver graduate school in international studies was that, to a large extent, they sort of let you design your master's program. They had a few core courses for the master's program, but you could take a few history courses, you could go over and take classes with the economics faculty. It seemed like a great mix for me. You had to have two specialties and my specialties were at opposite ends of the spectrum. I did a specialty in quantitative analysis and a specialty in European diplomatic history. And for the quantitative analysis, obviously, what saved me was my biology degree, because in those days quantitative analysis of social sciences was in its infancy, and if you were a science major that was a part of what you had learned, both in lab courses and in the math. It was fairly simple for me.

Q: At what point did you develop an interest in Latin America? Was that in the classroom or afterward?

TRIVELLI: It was actually—I took a course at Williams in Latin American revolutions. It seemed very romantic to me at the time. It fascinated me. I read several books at the time, not just about revolutions, but sort of about Latin culture and what you'd call strategic culture, now, I suppose. It was fascinating, so when I went in the Foreign Service—they give you this list of places you can be assigned and Latin America was at the top of my list just because of the personal interest and, in fact, most of us ended up going to Latin America because for most people in the Foreign Service, your first tour is as a consular officer. You'll be doing visa interviewing and, of course, they need lots of people in Latin America and Mexico. I ended up in Mexico City.

Q: You graduated from the University of Denver in 1978 and then retook the Foreign Service exam?

TRIVELLI: I'd actually taken the test before that. It's kind of an unusual story in the sense that I'd already finished my coursework in 1976, and they didn't require a thesis, but you had to write one major paper, which I had sort of procrastinated with and really hadn't finished. So when the Foreign Service said—"You've passed the exam"—I thought, "Gee, I better finish that paper and get my degree." And I did finish it. Karen Feste was my professor and she very nicely allowed me to finish it—it was, of all things, a quantitative analysis of Chinese economic assistance at that time. So I managed to very quickly finish the paper, get the grade, and get the master's degree in time to get credit for having the master's with the Foreign Service.

Q: At what point did you start learning Spanish?

TRIVELLI: Right after I came in the service. I did not take a modern language in high school. I took five years of Latin, which I guess I thought would—I don't know, my mother said I'd be able to write medical prescriptions. So I took Latin and there was no requirement at the time, and there still isn't, to actually speak the language to get in the Foreign Service. So after I took my A100 class, which is the Foreign Service introductory class, which lasted maybe ten weeks, I then took fifteen weeks of Spanish at the Foreign Service Institute. In fact, it was less than fifteen, it was about thirteen weeks and that's where I learned Spanish. Not very well, but I did learn it.

Q: And the A100—that was at FSI, also?

TRIVELLI: It was at FSI, but of course, FSI in those days—the current campus, the George Schultz Campus, of course, didn't exist. FSI was a series of buildings in downtown Rosslyn, right across from the Exxon gas station.

Q: I think of FSI as being the campus.

TRIVELLI: No, it was much smaller than it is today and much less cloistered than it is today.

Q: So what were your principal assignments as a Foreign Service Officer? How did those assignments prepare you for your work here in Miami?

TRIVELLI: My entire career before coming here I worked for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, including two tours in Mexico; El Salvador; Panama; Nicaragua, twice; Ecuador; and Honduras. So I just have a very deep background, obviously, in Latin America. I was also put into the senior [Naval] War College course. I went to the Naval War College for a year; they take a handful of civilians and put them through that course. That course was extraordinarily valuable in terms of understanding, better, national security policy, but also understanding the military and how its organized and

relating to some high quality 05s and 06s [grade officers] who are in that course. So that was very, very valuable. Certainly in my work in Central America, although most of my career I was an economic-commercial officer, I had a lot of contact with the U.S. military during the Contra era—and then certainly when I was DCM [deputy chief of mission] in Tegucigalpa. Not long after I arrived at that post, we had Hurricane Mitch. [Hurricane Mitch formed in the Caribbean in late October 1998. The largest storm of the 1998 hurricane season, it caused widespread damage in Central America and Mexico.] Of course, the military response to that throughout the region, our Joint Task Force Bravo, now in Soto Cano, really gave me a some practical knowledge of working closely with the military and the fact that Soto Cano, of course, was there [in Honduras] the whole four years that I was there—you have that as a constant liaison. We were constantly working with them. Although I'd never been a pol/mil [political-military affairs] person, I would say my experience with the U.S. military was reasonably high.

Q: How did your work as DCM in Honduras during Mitch help you during Operation Unified Response after the earthquake in Haiti? [The U.S. military mission in Haiti, Operation Unified Response, lasted from January to June 2010.] You experienced a major foreign humanitarian assistance/disaster relief [HA/DR] operation at the country team level—bring that experience up to a strategic, operational level in 2010.

TRIVELLI: Oh, yes. It was actually extremely instructive in both the military's initial response—and then what a reconstruction process looks like. In fact, I spent four years in Honduras and for the better part of three years most of my time was devoted to Mitch and the reconstruction process, both in the sense of working with AID [U.S. Agency for International Development] to try to guide them, but also dealing with all of the administrative issues having to do with what embassies have to go through when, suddenly, you have a development assistance program where the yearly expenditure was probably in the thirty-to-forty million dollar range and then, all of a sudden, Congress gives you four hundred million dollars to spend—and taps agencies who are not particularly familiar with working overseas. How do you deal with all of that and the expectations? One thing that taught me is that reconstruction is hard to do. It's hard to do well. It never goes as fast as you think it could go. It took us nearly three years, really, to spend that money in what, I hope, was the reasonably right way.

Q: What part did the military play in reconstruction projects in Honduras? How did you integrate USSOUTHCOM activities into the USAID-led effort?

TRIVELLI: Of course, the U.S. military played an important role, much as it did in Haiti for those first few weeks. The folks from Soto Cano—and others who came in from other places—did some of the basic engineering work that needed to be done to repair bridges, put in temporary fixes, to actually do clean up of some major highways and some downtown areas in the north.

For most of Honduras, Mitch was more a flooding issue than a wind damage issue. It's a very mountainous country with lots of rivers and a lot of stuff just got washed away, and [there was] a lot of erosion in the hillsides. Certainly, in the first few weeks, it was a

matter of that kind of basic reconstruction and most immediately after the hurricane, they did search and rescue operations. In fact, a Soto Cano helicopter actually plucked the president of Honduras from a small town. [Carlos Robert Flores, president, Honduras, January 1998 to January 2002.] He was out on some sort of campaign swing and couldn't get back. This is all written, I'm sure, in the history. And then over the course of the next few years, the military did a series of what is now referred to as New Horizons/Beyond the Horizons missions to keep up that basic engineering and reconstruction work on an episodic basis. We did a lot of that and the U.S. military actually put up the [portable] Bailey bridge that was the first permanent link and back across from Tegucigalpa to its sister city across that river. Of course, that took several weeks, several months to do. So it was a constant issue of meeting as a country team, laying out the projects, bringing in the newcomers, and working with the Hondurans and the other donors. One of the things I did was—the ambassador and I sat on the official donors' committee that met on a pretty regular basis to sketch that out. [Ambassador James Francis Creagan, 1996 to 1999; Ambassador Frank Almaguer, 1999 to 2002.] I think when people look at Mitch—it was one of the first reconstruction efforts where donor coordination was actually pretty formal. It worked reasonably well.

Q: What years were you in Honduras?

TRIVELLI: 1998 to 2002.

Q: Were there any of debates, after the hurricane, concerning the transition, the withdrawal of the American military, like we had in Haiti? [Laughing]

TRIVELLI: [Laughing] No, no, but only because we have a semi-permanent base there [at Soto Cano]. So they [U.S. military personnel] sort of withdrew to their base and then did engineering after that. There was not a deep fear about security that you had after the earthquake in Haiti, although my own theory and a very personal one is that Mitch really did affect the social fabric of Honduras in an important way. I think when you get that many displaced people, you get that much economic loss—you lose jobs and you lose productivity—that really has contributed to a very sharp rise in criminal activity in the aftermath of Mitch.

Q: And we still see that today?

TRIVELLI: And we still see that today.

Q: You served as the U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua from September 2005 to August 2008. What were your major accomplishments in Nicaragua? I imagine that was exciting time for you, for a variety of reasons. After having spent a career as a Foreign Service Officer, it must have been gratifying to finally become a chief of mission.

TRIVELLI: It is gratifying. And, yes, you finally feel you have some control. Of course, you don't really have control, but you finally feel, "Hey, I can avoid the mistakes of all of these people who have been my bosses over the years." Then, you sort of go through and

commit a lot of them yourself. My time in Nicaragua was fascinating. For me, it was a second tour, so I'd known a lot of the personalities from my earlier tour. And really, it was very much bifurcated. The first half I was working with the [Enrique] Bolaños government, a very cooperative, pro-U.S. government—a consolidation of the return to democracy after the Doña Violeta election in the early 1990s. [Violeta Barrios Torres de Chamorro, president, 1990 to 1997; Enrique José Bolaños Geyer, president, 2002 to 2007.] And then, of course, after the election of Daniel Ortega [in November 2006], it flipped pretty dramatically and we faced a government that really, at its core, at its philosophical base, was pretty anti-American. We made a lot of efforts to actually talk with the Sandinista government, the transition team, to educate them about what the U.S. role was in Nicaragua and all the different programs we had. That may have had some positive effects, but I think as we've seen since then—although we have maintained relations, there's been a slow diminution of that relationship. And I think it was important for me both in the run up to the elections and then afterward to try to preserve some of that democratic consolidation by continuing to fund civil society groups interested in good government, in democracy, in anti-corruption, in electoral education, etcetera. And we tried to do more of a lot of that as well. I also had the pleasure to preside over the construction of the new chancery building, although I must say I had nothing to do with the planning or construction of it personally. When I got there the hole had been dug and when I left we had inaugurated it. That has its own set of challenges even though, of course, I'm not an engineer. The work is done by private contractors overseen by an office at State but that was a fascinating process. I was there during the implementation of the Millennium Challenge programs. Fascinating and an interesting philosophical change in American assistance, but really pretty effective and very directed—and, I think, very successful in Nicaragua. I was also there for the implementation of CAFTA, the free trade agreement, and we actually presided over the first shipment of food back to the U.S. market. [Dominican Republic—Central American Free Trade Agreement, Public Law 109-053, August 2005.] That is something that has again been very successful. Not for anything I did, but having been an economic-commercial officer, I was always interested in both trade policy and investment policy and we pushed that relationship. I believe it's been a great boon to the economies in Central America—and to the American economy, as well.

Q: How did you work with the U.S. military, USSOUTHCOM, during that time? Did you have contact with—I guess [General J. Bantz] Craddock would have been here and then [Admiral James] Stavridis. [General Bantz J. Craddock, U.S. Army, commander, USSOUTHCOM, November 2004 to October 2006; and Admiral James G. Stavridis, U.S. Navy, commander, USSOUTHCOM, October 2006 to June 2009. See oral histories SC-OH-20071221 (Stavridis), SC-OH-20090121-1 (Stavridis), and SC-OH20090616] How did you work with USSOUTHCOM and the U.S. military during your time as the ambassador?

TRIVELLI: Well, we continued to have—the military presence in Nicaragua was moderate in terms of the U.S. military. Interestingly, it really had been started by Mitch. In other words, during the 1980s and the 1990s, the relationship between the U.S. and Nicaraguan militaries—which was actually called the Sandinista military at the time—

was very cool and correct, at best. What Mitch had done, though—it allowed U.S. forces from Soto Cano to go into Nicaragua, particularly in the northern zone with the destruction of the town where several hundred people were killed. I think that was the beginning of the relationship back in 1998. There was a gradual uptick in security assistance with the Nicaraguan after Mitch—traditional IMET [international military education and training] and other kinds of things. We expanded that when I was there into the global peacekeeping initiative. We purchased a fair amount of equipment for the Nicaraguan military. Ironically, after the Ortega election victory, probably the piece of the Nicaraguan government that maintained the best relationship with the United States has been the Nicaraguan military. That continues, I believe, even today. The relationship is pretty professional. Nicaraguans have been good with counternarcotics, particularly with their navy. We retain a pretty good relationship. In terms of knowing Craddock and Stavridis, of course, the commanders visited Nicaragua, but when my eyes really opened—we had the defense ministers’ conference in Nicaragua. [Seventh Conference of Ministers of Defense of the Americas, Managua, Nicaragua, 1 to 5 October 2006.] Secretary [Donald] Rumsfeld spent—I spent about two-and-a-half days with the secretary, at the table and running around seeing a couple of sites. [Donald Rumsfeld, secretary of defense, January 2001 to December 2006.] Admiral Stavridis was on that trip. I got to know them fairly well.

Q: Stavridis was still the military assistant to the secretary of defense?

TRIVELLI: Yes, he was the military assistant at the time. So you get to see them and—I must say, Secretary Rumsfeld was very generous. He insisted he wanted me as the ambassador to be at his 7: 00 a.m. morning briefing, for example, and then we rode to the meetings together. I took him out to the volcano and a couple of other places—he rode in my car and we had great, entertaining talks. He’s a very personable guy.

Q: I believe it.

TRIVELLI: Yes, his reputation might be one way, but he was very personable.

Q: How did you work to integrate the military into the country team?

TRIVELLI: When I was there in the early 1990s, there was no MILGRP [security cooperation office] in Nicaragua. There was a very small defense attaché office, whose sole function seemed to be going out on these attaché trips that the local military arranged—this Potemkin village type arrangement. But we did have one [MILGRP] by the time I returned [as ambassador]. Again, after Mitch, there was the establishment of a MILGRP and it was—and unfortunately the MILGRP was not in the embassy. It was located in the Casa Grande, the old ambassador’s residence, which because of space limitations had some offices in it—the Millennium Challenge account, the MILGRP, much of DEA [Drug Enforcement Agency] was there. That always was a challenge to integrating people, but I always insisted that MILGRP be present for country team meetings, that they be present at the major working groups—including the law enforcement group, the democracy and elections group. I think that was a good

relationship. When we moved into the new chancery, all those people were under one roof. That was a huge plus.

Q: In August of 2008, you moved to Miami to serve as the civilian deputy to the commander, foreign policy advisor, USSOUTHCOM. What do you know about the selection and assignment process for becoming SOUTHCOM CDC [civilian deputy to the commander]?

TRIVELLI: Well, the selection for POLAD [policy advisor] is linked together with the DCM selection. You bid for the job. You write a special biography on yourself, why you would be good for this job. That goes to the committee, which looks at all the candidates. They establish a short list and then they forward the list to DoD [Department of Defense] for senior POLADs—it's actually forwarded to the combatant commander who chooses. In this case, I had bid on this job and then my predecessor decided that he was going to extend. He extended, so the job was not going to be open.

Q: And that was Lew Amselem? [Lewis Amselem, political advisor, USSOUTHCOM, May 2006 to August 2008.]

TRIVELLI: That was Lew Amselem. In the meantime, in another part of my bid list, I had put in to be the State Department senior faculty advisor at ICAF [Industrial College of the Armed Forces] because it sounded like an interesting thing to do and it's very often filled by an ex ambassador. I had actually been paneled into that job. Then, when Lew decided he wasn't going to extend, they took another look at the list and Admiral Stavridis called me and asked, "Would you like to do this? I think you'd be great in this job." I said, "Sure." So I was paneled into this job.

Q: What did you find appealing about U.S. Southern Command?

TRIVELLI: To be able to continue my work with Latin America in a real and meaningful way. I had a basic sense that Southern Command has more resources than the Department of State. I was fascinated—and part of it was my family. I sat down with my wife and kids and I said, "Hey, we have two choices. We can go back to Washington or we can go to Miami. What would you like to do?" And without any hesitation whatsoever, they screamed, "Miami, Miami, Miami!" So I went to Miami.

Q: What did Stavridis say to you during his pitch to you on the phone? Of course, he remembered you from—

TRIVELLI: He did remember me. Well, they always say they remember you. I don't know how true that is, but he said, "You really impressed me when we were together in the ministerial and you really impressed the secretary and you have a great background." He did give me a sense of the vision he was trying to impart at Southern Command in terms of making it a more interagency kind of place. That all sounded very fascinating [as did] the fact that I was going to be in a civilian deputy slot, as opposed to just an advisor slot. So I thought it was a great opportunity.

Q: So he presented that to you as a concept?

TRIVELLI: Yes, he did, in very general terms.

Q: So what are the principal duties of the civilian deputy to the commander, USSOUTHCOM? It was a new position that was created upon your arrival.

TRIVELLI: Yes, although to be fair, I think Lew actually filled it for a few weeks before his departure. Really what it is, is kind of an amalgam between civilian deputy to the commander—remember this is a legal distinction because of Title 10 issues—and sort of the old POLAD, foreign policy advisor duties. So I do both. I do some of the more traditional POLAD duties, which is first just advising people on Latin America and on the State Department and on embassies. I served as the link between Southern Command and our ambassadors, DCMs, and political counselors overseas—and then back to the State Department, particularly the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. It's really a matter of making sure everybody knows what everybody else is doing, making sure our policies are aligned, and that there are no surprises. That is important work. The extent to which I can do that, I think, it is really good. Of course, the civilian deputy commander designation actually empowered me, in a sense, with some kind of operational responsibilities here at the command related to strategic planning, strategic communication, security assistance, policy, as well as the traditional duties. Basically, I end up sticking my nose into just about everything, in a way that I think a POLAD, simply put, probably can't. Obviously, there are some things I can't do—and that's probably good. I don't get involved in the real Title 10 [command and control] stuff. Nobody consults me when they're going to move a ship from point A to point B, except in the most general terms. And that's good, because I really know nothing about those things, but I think it really is important to have a senior person on staff who knows how the State Department runs, how embassies run, how parts of the national security staff run, and has some background in Latin America. One of the unusual things in SOUTHCOM—and something that surprised me—a lot of the senior staff, very often, does not have a background in Latin America. There are obviously folks in the organization that do. We have fine military folks who are long time foreign area officers. Obviously, there's a civilian staff here with long experience, but a lot of the upper level folks don't have experience—or they have very little experience in Latin America. So I believe it's important to have someone here who has that perspective.

Q: As a senior State Department diplomat, did you have any problems, or encounter any difficulties, integrating yourself into a Department of Defense combatant command—culturally or otherwise?

TRIVELLI: You know, a lot has been written about the clash of cultures between the State Department and the military. I remember a very clever essay someone did about Mars and Venus—one is one and one is the other. [11 Rickey L. Rife, "Defense is from Mars, State is from Venus: Improving Communications and Promoting National Security" (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Research Report, 1998).] You can

guess which one is which. And to a certain extent that's true. Obviously, the Department of Defense, the U.S. military tends to be more rank conscious, tends to value planning, etcetera. And, of course, you have services here that have been at war abroad for a decade. You tend to forget that here at Southern Command, but it colors everything everybody does. That said, I thought the adjustment was somewhat less difficult than I would have guessed and I think it's for a couple of reasons. First, this is a joint command and I think that my POLAD colleagues who are in service billets with the Army or the Navy, I think that kind of military mentality probably colors their tours more than mine because here at a joint command it is more flexible and more cooperative perhaps and less single minded, perhaps, at a joint command than at a service command. I also think with Admiral Stavridis and then General [Douglas] Fraser, they made it very clear from the very beginning. [General Douglas Fraser, U.S. Air Force, commander, USSOUTHCOM, since June 2009. See oral histories SC-OH-20100104 (Fraser), SC-OH-20100607 (Fraser), and SC-OH-20110906 (Fraser). (All unclassified)] In fact, Admiral Stavridis actually published an announcement introducing me and telling everybody who I was—but more importantly, what he expected me to do and be able to do within the command. [Memorandum for the USSOUTHCOM Enterprise, "Civilian Deputy to the Commander and Foreign Policy Advisor, U.S. Southern Command," Admiral Stavridis, 28 August 2008. (Unclassified)] I was allowed to do that. So from that point of view, the adjustment was not that great. I think what probably was the most difficult was just the logistics of being a State Department officer and not being in Washington and not being in a post overseas. The State Department is not sure how to handle you but that's a State issue.

Q: Because of the lack of a support structure?

TRIVELLI: Right, there's no real support structure here and it's even hard to get your State Department e-mails or telegrams. Everyone wants to make sure they get paid and so forth, so getting that ironed out was probably the toughest thing. But the other parts of it were very interesting and I think when you think about it, like every bureaucracy, even if you're in a senior position, a lot of your ability to work and influence really depends on the interpersonal relationships you establish, your own personal persuasiveness, your ability to articulate the energy you put into the job. You're not sort of magically imbued by the title with influence. It takes your ability to work within the bureaucracy—to show people that you bring some amount of value to the organization. Any POLAD or any civilian deputy really needs to do that. I remember sometimes you have conversations in your life and you remember them because they strike you. I remember having a conversation at the Naval War College with one of my carol mates, tucked into the upper floors of the library. We were talking about—this was 1995, 1996—the differences between the State Department and the military because having these conversations is one of the reasons they invite civilians.

Q: And your carol mate was a uniformed [service member]?

TRIVELLI: Yes. I said, "You know, I know there must be a difference, but you guys really must have it easy because in the end you can give people direct orders." And he

said, “Well, you know Paul, if you get to the point where you have to give someone a direct order in the military, you’ve already lost the battle with him or her. It’s really a matter of leadership and persuasion more than anything else.” And I thought that was a very interesting and profound thing to say and I hadn’t really understood it. In so many ways, that’s also true here. I don’t think you can come into this building and start giving people direct orders, you wouldn’t last very long. There are enough people here who are suspicious of having a civilian in the deputy position, so I don’t think you want to be throwing your weight around in that way.

Q: You think there are people who are suspicious?

TRIVELLI: Yes, I think there are people that are still a bit uncomfortable with the notion. I think there are people in this building that are uniformed military who are uncomfortable with—when you look around this building, at least half the workforce is civilian. Many of them [uniformed personnel] have never worked in that kind of environment. I don’t know that they know how to react. It’s perhaps softened by the fact that many of the civilians in this building are actually ex-military, but even so, this is a fairly civilianized place. It’s more like working at OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] or the Joint Staff in Washington, but a lot of military folks that come here don’t really have that background.

Q: Also, there are relatively few active duty personnel here. A lot of the uniformed personnel are reservists.

TRIVELLI: Yes, they’re reservists or National Guard members.

Q: During your time at USSOUTHCOM, you’ve worked for two commanders: Admiral James Stavridis and General Douglas Fraser. How did they differ in their management style and leadership philosophy? From your point of view, how were they the same, how were they different?

TRIVELLI: That’s a great question. I think what I have found is that in terms of the implementation of our strategy and our programs here, [there’s] actually very little difference. I don’t think that Southern Command is doing a lot different now than they did three years ago. I think that’s a good thing. That said, it’s pretty obvious that Admiral Stavridis and General Fraser are very different people. Admiral Stavridis was an idea man, an idea a minute, very verbal, very energetic, in a constant motion kind of way, and really pretty visionary. He’s a person who saw the need for a new vision at Southern Command. He articulated it, put it into the organization, and pushed it through the bureaucracy. I think he did that pretty successfully. General Fraser comes from a different service, which has a different philosophical background perhaps. That being said, he’s a very smart, very measured, very articulate, and a directed guy, but I think in a different way. But again, if you take a look at Command Strategy 2016 and Command Strategy 2020, there’s no real difference between those two documents. But Stavridis and Fraser certainly are different people with different personalities, both of whom have been very successful.

Q: Did they differ in their utilization of the civilian deputy to the commander position?

TRIVELLI: I think that they were pretty aligned. My duties have not changed. In fact, my duties have increased with General Fraser here because in the last reorganization [in 2010], he decided to link the strategic communication and public affairs shops to me, which had not been done in the past.

Q: Earlier, you mentioned the introduction from Admiral Stavridis to the staff, which was dated 28 August 2008. In that letter he wrote, "Ambassador Trivelli is primarily responsible for overseeing the development and ongoing refinement of USSOUTHCOM regional strategy, command strategy, theater campaign plan, theater security cooperation." What is the USSOUTHCOM strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean?

TRIVELLI: The strategy is nested within the larger U.S. government strategy vis-à-vis Latin America, whether it's the GEF [Guidance for Employment of the Force] or whether it's the document that the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs produces at the State Department, laying out the basic pillars relating to democracy and governance, economic development, social assistance and security. We take our cues from there. In fact, if you take a look at the development of the strategic planning process, here—very clearly you can draw that string all the way from the GEF to an individual project that we do in the field. Now, that certainly was not the way before I came here. I think that our policy, SOUTHCOM's policy, is based on five basic premises, five core beliefs that we have about what U.S. national security policy should be vis-à-vis Latin America. One, you need to think about national security in its broadest sense. It's more than just balance of forces. The truth is Latin Americans are our geographic neighbors. This is, in fact, our neighborhood. We're part of that neighborhood. If people in the neighborhood are secure, democratic, and prosperous—that's good for the United States. That means the region won't attack us. It means we can buy their goods and they can buy ours. It means we can invest in that region, it means that there is a certain sharing of values. So to the extent that Southern Command can focus its strategy and its activities on supporting our neighbors in those ways, it really contributes mightily to national security. We also believe that the chances of traditional state-on-state warfare in Latin America are low. It could happen. I guess anything could happen in the world. There might be a border dispute or some government falls, but the chances are low and the chances of the United States being directly involved in one of those conflicts are probably even lower. Ergo it probably doesn't make sense to take this organization and the 1,500 people in this building and keep planning for wars that are just not going to happen, or probably not going to happen. When you think about how you use the instruments of national power in other ways—we also believe that development and security are really two sides of the same coin. They are, in fact, interrelated. That unless a country in the region has at least some minimal level of security, it will be very difficult to improve the development and the economics and the prosperity of that country, because if the security situation is bad, kids can't go to school, people can't go to clinics, people can't go to work, investors, domestic or international, won't invest, etcetera. And if you flip that over and you're in a country

where most people have a job and most people have access to education and health care and there's decent infrastructure, well you're probably not going to have a major security issue because that's probably a pretty prosperous place. The notion is a simple one, but it's actually kind of new and powerful. Certainly, early in my career, assistance professionals, whether with AID or NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] in other countries, shied away from doing much with militaries, foreign militaries, local militaries or even police for that matter. It's only in the last few years that there's been that realization that security is really an essential element to development. I think that's a positive development. We also believe that we are facing some very complex, tough transnational problems in Latin America and those require, by their very nature, a whole of government, interagency approach, however you want to term it. It requires interagency solutions for the United States and for Latin American countries. The best example, of course, is illicit trafficking. That's not a problem we can stop at our border. We need to enlist the assistance of other people in Latin America to stop it. It's also a problem that's enormously multifaceted. Take a look at the drug war or narcotics trafficking and it's a law enforcement problem, it's a detection problem, it's a public health problem, it's a borders problem, it's a courts problem, etcetera. So that means that in the U.S. approach to it, it has to be multiagency. In fact, DoD is not the lead, but we can be supportive. And also as nations like Colombia look for solutions in the field, I think, they have learned in their struggles against the FARC [Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] and against drug cartels that whole of government solutions have to be done. So the lesson is that you need whole of government solutions and you need cooperative solutions throughout the region. And, I think, if you take a look at the problems in Latin America that we face, whether it's illicit trafficking, whether it's mass migration, whether it's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, DoD is not the lead agency for the U.S. government response to any of those, but I think parts of the resources that DoD have can be properly utilized to support other agencies in that effort. There are some things that the U.S. military does very, very well. And we should use those people and those skills in those ways. I think that's perfectly proper.

Q: So within that larger strategic context, how have you, as the civilian deputy to the commander, been involved in the development and refinement of the command strategy, theater security cooperation activities—

TRIVELLI: When I first got here, the whole notion of having a strategic planning process, per se, was really just in its infancy. The J5 [director], General [David] Fadok, and his folks had really just begun to sketch out what that might look like—and much to their credit they did it in a very successful way. [Brigadier General David Fadok, U.S. Air Force, director, Policy & Strategy Directorate, SCJ5, May 2008 to May 2010. See oral history SC-OH-20100324 (Fadok). (Unclassified)] And the notion that you have some end states, you have a strategic framework, and you have intermediate military objectives—they had to be fleshed out for both activities and effects, they have to be linked to the myriad of security assistance activities that we do in a given year—we just had a conference a few weeks ago [at USSOUTHCOM] and I think it's like 1,400 [activities] that have to be linked to that. And then the fact that you need supporting plans from both your components and the MILGRPs—and then you have a rigorous and

continuous assessment process. That whole notion was actually very new and was literally on a little piece of paper when I got here. I think the J5, General Fadok and now General [Steven] Shepro— much to their credit and that of their very talented staffs— built it, made sense out of it, and implemented it over the last couple of years. [Brigadier General Steven Shepro, U.S. Air Force, director, Policy & Strategy Directorate, SCJ5, since May 2010.] That is a major accomplishment. I know shortly after I got here within a couple of months, Dave Fadok and I went to Washington to present this general concept to OSD, Joint Staff, State Department, AID, and DHS [Department of Homeland Security]. And people kind of nodded politely and their eyes glazed over and I think they thought we were a bit crazy, but again because of the very good staff work and the persistence of J5 that has really been built out over the course of the last three years. In a military fashion, perhaps it's been overbuilt. [Laughing] But my understanding in talking to people from Joint staff is that Southern Command is far ahead of the others in the development of that kind of process. I think it's to the good. I think it's useful to be able to link back what we're doing to some basic objectives, rather than to keep doing the same things every year because we've already done them and we think they're pretty good ideas. And there really has to be an intellectual basis to this.

Q: We do a much better job, now, than the day you arrived, of coordinating and synchronizing—

TRIVELLI: Yes. And I think the other piece of that is also the synchronization with the other pieces of the U.S. bureaucracy that worked these issues. There is literally a two-day conference every year in Washington where all the agencies give their input and learn about what we're doing in the next campaign plan. We encourage the MILGRP commanders to have input into embassies' yearly planning document. We've also gotten a bit of control over our components, which were just doing stuff out there sometimes, without letting us know. I think to put it into some reasonable coherent whole, I think, it's a huge step forward. Doesn't mean it's perfect, but you literally can now link discrete activities back to some larger intellectual principle. I think that's important.

Q: Since the time of General [James] Hill, elements in this staff have been working to integrate USSOUTHCOM into the larger interagency in a more coherent and sensible way. [General James Hill, U.S. Army, commander, U.S. Southern Command, August 2002 to November 2004.] I think it's interesting that our current vision statement reads: "We are a joint and interagency organization supporting U.S. national security interests, and with our partners, improving security, stability, and prosperity in the Americas." ["Command Strategy 2020," U.S. Southern Command, July 2010.] Are we today an interagency organization? If not, how close are we to achieving that objective?

TRIVELLI: In all fairness, I think this is a vision, you know, a vision.

Q: Yes, it's the vision statement.

TRIVELLI: Right, it's the vision. It doesn't have to be today. This is sort of where we're headed.

Q: So how close are we to becoming an interagency organization?

TRIVELLI: We certainly—there are thirty plus non Department of Defense civilians working in this building. And then there are all sorts of outreach efforts, like the one I describe where we go to Washington to work our plans. The interagency is not absolutely, fully integrated into this command, but it's a lot further along than others. I think some of it has to do with what the interagency people do. Some of them see themselves simply as liaison officers for their home agencies—someone who passes information. Others are being used as integral parts of the SOUTHCOM apparatus, working for SOUTHCOM to some extent. I think that's very positive.

That said, I think it's extraordinarily useful to have people here who can reach back into their organizations—and those people also understand what SOUTHCOM is doing on any given day. I think it's useful to have a DEA person, a Treasury person, an AID person, and several State people to do exactly that. It doesn't mean it works perfectly or that somehow SOUTHCOM has given up its DoD or military character, but I think those working relationships are much closer. I think that there's nothing like having people sit with you in the building to understand you. Even in my own case, even though I had contact with SOUTHCOM and the U.S. military for many years, the intensity of the experience of actually sitting here for three years is very different, more positive.

Q: One of the things that you've done as the CDC is negotiate and handle a lot of the MOUs [memorandums of understanding] or agreements with various interagency organizations. That's been part of your portfolio?

TRIVELLI: Well, the J9 [Partnering Directorate] has done most of the mechanics of that. Certainly, if you take a look at which directorates I work most closely with, the J9 is one of them. I've always maintained an interest in keeping that program alive, by keeping the relationships between SOUTHCOM and other agencies useful. I know we just had another discussion about that. In fact, we have a budget to pay for the salaries of some of these folks. Some people in the building don't like that. They don't quite understand why we're spending money on this. I think for that first go-round, we have to spend money on it. Not all of our interagency people are funded by us, but several are.

Q: In what other ways have you worked to advance the interagency vision here at SOUTHCOM?

TRIVELLI: Wow, I think a couple of things. First of all, making sure the J9 survived the reorganization and became focused enough that people [at USSOUTHCOM] understood its role. I did a lot of work with that. I think in my day-to-day work, I spend a lot of time reaching out to the interagency, mainly the State Department and other agencies, and back down to embassies. That makes it rather interagency. I also spent—it's interesting, I do the command briefing a lot. I talk to local people, here, in the community, representatives, and students—like our War Colleges and APEX [senior civil servant classes]—and also to foreign military and military students, like when the Chilean War

College and the Colombian War College comes through. I know some people here think I like to do it because I'm some sort of ham—which may be true—but I think what's important is that they see a civilian State Department officer doing the command briefing for a Department of Defense geographic combatant command. That sends an important message about how we value our relationship with the civilian piece of the U.S. government.

Q: Do you like being the face of SOUTHCOM in that way?

TRIVELLI: Yes, I think it's important. And I think that, also, because of my background in Latin America, I can give a broader view of what we're doing with some credibility. You know, practice makes perfect. After you've done it a number of times, you get better at it, although my jokes remain the same.

Q: They're good jokes. [Laughing]

TRIVELLI: Well, of course. They are. [Laughing]

Q: In June of 2009, internal discord in Honduras—I don't think we're allowed to call it a coup, yet, but it resulted in the ousting of President [Manuel] Zelaya. How did you help organize or shape the U.S. response to that crisis?

TRIVELLI: I think we finally did decide it was a coup.

Q: It is now officially called a coup?

TRIVELLI: Yes, the lawyers decided that it was a coup, so I think we're okay [to call it that]. I think we did two things really right away. One was to get the commander and the military deputy commander at the time—General [Glenn] Spears—to reach out to the Honduran military and make very clear what our policy would be, and that we were not very amused by any of this. [Lieutenant General Glenn Spears, U.S. Air Force, military deputy commander, U.S. Southern Command, June 2006 to July 2009. See oral history SC-OH-20090319 (Spears).] And, of course, that was done in careful coordination with the ambassador and the Department of State. We needed just to make clear to those folks that what they had done was wrong, that we hoped they would support putting Honduras back into the democratic track, whatever that meant at that time. So that was number one. Number two, very, very quickly, we—the State Department, Ambassador [Hugo] Llorens, the national security staff tried to set the ground rules for what the mil-to-mil relationship would be, what U.S. policy would be during this period. There was actually very little discord. I think we all understood that mil-to-mil relationship had to reduce itself to a bare minimum. The J5, I thought, did a very good job about laying out what the planned activities were and crossing most of them off the list. We had to be clear to the Hondurans that they would not get rewarded for having done what they did. For whatever reason they decided to do it—it wasn't something that the U.S. government was going to reward them for in any way. And then, conversely, after the election of President [Porfirio] Lobo and his inaugurations, we did the reverse. [Porfirio Lobo Sosa, president,

Honduras, since 27 January 2010] We laid out what we thought we could do usefully with the Hondurans and how we would slowly ratchet that back up, presuming that the government acted in a normal democratic fashion, which it largely has. In the end, I think our policy, writ large, was actually pretty successful. In the end, it ended up restoring—or getting the democratic process in Honduras back on track in a reasonably good way.

Q: In one of Fraser's oral history interviews, he talked about how the USSOUTHCOM deputy commander had contact with senior officials in Honduras. That was General Spears, not you? I was unsure if he [Fraser] was talking about his civilian or military deputy commander.

TRIVELLI: Yes, it was Glenn Spears who called the military on a couple of occasions. I actually got phone calls from two ex-presidents of Honduras. I got a phone call from one, and then one came to see me in the weeks following, because I think they wanted to understand in a more important way what we were really thinking. I think that they probably had the idea that SOUTHCOM would be more supportive of the interim regime than the State Department was. Everybody has the idea that the U.S. government doesn't speak with one voice, and you can play pieces off against each other. Normally that's not true. I think they were probing with me what the policy was in terms of Honduras.

Q: These are people you had worked with—

TRIVELLI: Yes, these are people I knew from my tour. I had very interesting indirect conversations with them. First, Carlos Flores called me.²¹ He was actually in New Orleans. He spends a lot of time in New Orleans. He has a house there and he's a graduate from LSU [Louisiana State University], and his kids went there, so he was actually in Louisiana. And then Ricardo Maduro actually came to Miami—and he asked me to have a drink. So I went over to have a drink with him at the Biltmore [Hotel]. He was in his tennis whites—this is very Ricardo Maduro. [Ricardo Rodolfo Maduro, president, Honduras, January 2002 to January 2006] He's a very wealthy businessman. Good people, both of them, but I think that a large chunk of the Honduran political class had convinced themselves that the coup was somehow legal and justifiable. And in fact, there are people in the U.S. government who believed that and, I think, continue to believe that. In fact, I think that battle is still being fought with some folks on the hill [U.S. Congress]. But in the end, I don't know what else we could have done, quite frankly.

However different our policy outlook might be with President Zalaya, he was democratically elected and he was undemocratically removed from office—and not only that, he was expelled from the country. So that's probably not a good precedent. It's not something we should return to because—there are lots of examples in Latin America where presidents have been removed unconstitutionally.

Q: So where are we in the process of restoration of bilateral military relations?

TRIVELLI: We're pretty much there. I don't think we're withholding anything that we would have withheld. It was really a combination of the civilian government returning and demonstrating its democratic credentials—and then there have actually been some shifts in the highest reaches of the Honduran military. The people directly involved in this are no longer there. So we're working with them. I think it is sort of an object lesson, though, in the sense, that one would have thought, given our long relationship with the Honduran military, if anyone would have understood how we would have reacted and been respectful of the democratic process, it would have been them. In fact, they weren't. I think they knew in their heart of hearts that the United States wouldn't be happy, but I think they justified it for themselves in a very legalistic sense.

Hondurans have a tendency to look at things in a legalism kind of lens, as opposed to someone who looks at justice, and I think for domestic political reasons, which are sort of understandable, they sort of convinced themselves that this was the right thing.

Q: We talk about the positive impacts of military-to-military contacts. One key reason for engaging in Latin America is to create among our partner militaries respect for the rule of law and democratic processes. So in some ways, this is counter to all our preconceptions. We had a long and healthy mil-to-mil relationship—it's just surprising and somewhat disappointing.

TRIVELLI: It was. You're exactly right. That's why I say it was a good object lesson because maybe the military hasn't internalized some of these visions as deeply as we had hoped that they would have. On the other side of the ledger, one of the points I make on the command brief is that as Latin America came back from being an area of largely military or authoritarian governments in the late 1970s to a continent of virtually all, at least nominally, democratic governments and civilian led governments—really the only exception by 2001 was Cuba. The Latin American militaries have really transformed themselves in important ways. They are, for the most part, smaller, more professional, more respectful of human rights, more respectful of civilian authority than they certainly were in the 1970s. That is really important. And part of the reason that's true is the engagement of folks like SOUTHCOM, like the State Department, like WHINSEC [Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation] over several decades. I think we can take at least some of the credit for that transformation. It doesn't mean that those militaries are perfect, but when you think about human rights abuses and military governments in the 1970s, they really seem a world away. It's hard to imagine them coming back. Even the Honduran coup, as misguided as it might have been, didn't really establish a military government, they quickly turned the reins over to a civilian.

Q: So what were the larger diplomatic impacts of the situation in Honduras in Central America and beyond? In a strange way, it aligned us with the [Hugo] Chávez group, for example? [Hugo Chávez, president, Venezuela, since February 1999.]

TRIVELLI: Yes. That was all very uncomfortable wasn't it? [Laughing]

Q: [Laughing] You're the diplomat. It can be uncomfortable for you. As a historian, I found it amusing.

TRIVELLI: It is. It was. I mean, I think it certainly made Mr. Chávez, Mr. [Rafael] Correa, and Mr. Ortega pretty nervous. [Rafael Correa, president, Ecuador, since January 2007] I think they look at this and say, "Maybe the imperialists have found an antidote to Chavismo, to Bolivarianism?" They have won a pretty constant stream of victories for over a decade and this was a setback for them. But you're right, though, it was odd that we were on the same side of Chávez in terms of looking for the return of Zelaya—and if that's impossible, go ahead and go through with the electoral process. The whole year, almost, had a certain few kind of comic opera aspects to it that are just priceless. I don't know if anyone will write a good history about it—you should think about that, Dr. Coleman. But the scene of President Zelaya playing Hokey Pokey on the border putting the right foot in, right foot out—and then later being secreted into the Brazilian embassy and claiming he's being battered by Israeli cosmic rays. You couldn't make that stuff up if you tried.

Q: The other interesting thing going on at the same time was planning for the closure of the U.S. forward operating location at Manta [Ecuador]. From your seat, what were the major diplomatic aspects of that process?

TRIVELLI: I thought it was extraordinarily well done. I really do give the command here a lot of credit for that. As you know we had a ten-year lease. The Ecuadorians informed us, as described in the agreement—they did not want to renew the lease. Southern Command, the U.S. government, the embassy, and the State Department—rather than behaving somewhat petulantly about it—actually did a very good thing, and that was [to say], "We will leave as good tenants." And that means doing it in an orderly fashion, turning over the facilities in good working order and in a reasonable fashion. Trying to leave behind, in fact, equipment and so forth for the community and for the airfield itself. I think it was done in as good a way as you could do it. It really should be considered a model. I salute the Air Force, which was the executive agent for that. It was very complicated. If you take a look at the computer lists of just the number of inventory items we had there, trying to figure out what can stay and what can go. People spent a lot of time going through that and going through it in a very efficient way.

Q: Why was that important for the United States?

TRIVELLI: It was important because we did not want to damage the long-term relationship with Ecuador. The history in Ecuador, as we know—we had facilities in Galapagos [and at Salinas] during World War II. And the Ecuadorians always believed, rightly or wrongly, that we sort of bugged out and left them holding the bag. This was done in a much more reasonable and fair way.

Q: I had an informal, unrecorded conversation about this with Ambassador [Heather] Hodges. [Heather Hodges, U.S. ambassador to Ecuador, October 2008 to April 2009] She told me she was very pleased with USSOUTHCOM and the U.S. Air Force's

handling of the situation. Perhaps less satisfied with our friends in Ecuador, but very pleased with USSOUTHCOM. I know you had a lot of contact with her throughout—

TRIVELLI: I did. And she made it very clear what she wanted. I've known Ambassador Hodges for many years and I thought it was a very sensible way to proceed. The Ecuadorians—I'll just leave it at that.

Q: In late October, Ambassador [William] Brownfield signed the DCA [Defense Cooperation Agreement] in Bogotá. ["Supplemental Agreement for Cooperation and Technical Assistance in Defense and Security Between the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Colombia," signed in Bogotá, Colombia, 30 October 2009. (Unclassified)] How did the DCA improve or enhance U.S. posture in the region?

TRIVELLI: Well, the DCA really represented, I believe, a codification and a wrapping up of both agreements and standing operating procedures that the Colombians and we have worked together over for many years. So it really is kind of a legal cleanup, if you will, of the kind of security assistance relationship we have with the Colombians and we have had, now, for many years. As you are well aware, that agreement has been challenged by the Colombian legal system. In fact, it's not actually in force. And even though it's not in force, we are able to continue under our own agreements in a pretty satisfactory way. The signing, however, did engender a strategic communication issue, because there are folks in Latin America, including the Brazilians and the Paraguayans, who didn't really understand what it was going on and reacted in a negative way. Some people believe it might be a basing agreement, where we would establish a permanent U.S. base in Colombian territory. Of course, the agreement doesn't do that. It was never meant to do that. I think the president of Colombia made then a very skillful effort in personal diplomacy in reaching out to his neighbors and explaining what the agreement really was. [Álvaro Uribe Vélez, president, Colombia, August 2002 to August 2010] And after that, the objections sort of went away. Now, of course, the fact that it hasn't been implemented—and it's not clear it will ever be approved by the Colombian legislature—it's almost a moot point, by now.

Q: Did you anticipate the strong opposition in South America to the agreement? Did you or others in the U.S. government or USSOUTHCOM foresee that?

TRIVELLI: We understood that there needed to be strategic communication strategy related to it. Essentially what happened was that the Colombians let the cat out of the bag before any strategic communication, mutual cooperative [plan] really could have been put in place and implemented, so we really needed, then, the president of Colombia to make a personal effort to put that back. It's interesting though. In some countries, there's always a lot of willful misinterpretation of things. Ironically, of course, the Brazilians signed a DCA with us not long after this and there was no uproar in Latin America over that. Now they're somewhat different types of agreements, but they are Defense Cooperation Agreements. And, in fact, we have—I don't know the exact number, but I know DoD has signed dozens of these around the world. It's not an unusual occurrence.

Q: This is not unlike the Fourth Fleet situation the summer before—we could have or should have anticipated—

TRIVELLI: And we did. What it was, was the timing of the announcement got—

Q: Coming out of the Colombia side—

TRIVELLI: Coming out of the Colombian side before we had mutually agreed to talk about it in public. That's what threw this off.

Q: I think the defining event of our time together at USSOUTHCOM has been the operation in Haiti. [Operation Unified Response, January to June 2010.]

TRIVELLI: Yes.

Q: And you thought there wasn't enough to talk about for an hour? [Laughing]

TRIVELLI: Well, you know, when you get a former ambassador revved up, we'll talk forever.

Q: So how did you learn about the earthquake in Haiti? This was Tuesday, 12 January 2010.

TRIVELLI: Right. It was around five o'clock in the afternoon, if I remember correctly. It was the end of the working day and we were getting some media alerts about it, but it certainly was not clear at the very beginning, to me anyway, that it was the catastrophic event that it was. When I went home, later that evening—the first reports came in and I realized this was very serious. And then the next morning, the interagency, DoD apparatus started to ramp up.

Q: What do you remember about the first days?

TRIVELLI: I remember being on the phone and e-mails an awful lot, because whenever there's a crisis, Washington just likes to talk on the phone for hours. [Laughing] But in all seriousness, one of the ways we do interagency coordination is to go on these conference calls and get lots of people on the line and talk about what we all are doing. In this particular case, a series of conference calls started, first at a really high level. I was on a call twice a day with—I think you have all the details of all of this, of course, but I was on a conference call with Cheryl Mills, counselor for the Department of State; the AID administrator, Dr. [Raj] Shah; the number two at the National Security Council, Tom Donilon; and some other very high ranking people to start talking about the response. [Cheryl Mills, counselor, U.S. Department of State, since May 2009; Dr. Raj Shah, administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development, since December 2009; and Thomas Donilon, deputy national security advisor, January 2009 to October 2010.] Interestingly enough, I was on as the SOUTHCOM representative. That's not to say that

General Fraser did not also talk to those people. In fact, he happened to be in Washington, but I was the voice of SOUTHCOM for the interagency during those first several days and then for more than a month afterward—as the rank of the people on the call declined—all of the details that had to be attended to in terms of the U.S. military response, the civilian response, evacuation of American citizens, etcetera.

Q: So General Fraser got back the night of Wednesday night, 13 January. Do you remember your first contact with him when he returned to Miami? Because he was at the Defense Senior Leaders Conference in Washington and then came back on Wednesday evening and there were several meetings that night and Thursday morning was sort of the “come to Jesus” meeting. I don’t know if you have any recollection of those—

TRIVELLI: I wasn’t in the stuff that went on all night—I was in the “come to Jesus” meeting. I think what happened, in all seriousness, is that the response to Haiti from this command’s point of view in the very beginning—it was a very military response. It was very operational and I don’t think people thought about including me in that because it really was about—how do you figure out where all the planes and ships are and get them there as fast as you can. So that all went about in its own operational sort of way and I really didn’t talk to people about it. I was more concerned with being on the phone and talking to the interagency about their response and how we could help.

Q: How were you feeding that information, that experience on the phone calls? How were you feeding that back into the SOUTHCOM enterprise?

TRIVELLI: We actually did summaries of these calls and got them into the watch and the leadership very, very quickly.

Q: What were the [policy] issues associated with Operation Unified Response? How did you work to straighten the interagency out on those issues?

TRIVELLI: Well, I don’t think that I was able to straighten them out. [Laughing] I think that they had their own idea about how things should work. Disaster relief is one of those topics that fairly smart people who have some experience in policy think that they must be good at it, even though they’ve had no personal experience. In fact, it’s a very, very tricky thing to do well. Thankfully, we had a lot of people in our government, particularly in OFDA [Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance] who now have a lot of experience and know how to do it well. I’m talking on these phone calls and others—there was an issue of how big our response should be. Not only on how big it should theoretically be, but how big we could afford it to be given all of the other demands on the U.S. military at the time. Certainly the president made it clear that we would do everything we humanly could, which they did. But I don’t think that people thought through—it’s hard to think things through in a complicated way in a short amount of time, obviously, and the amount of resources thrown at the—provided as a solution was very substantial as you know, more than 22,000 people. I think that there was also the issue of security. The folks in Washington were very concerned that the security situation in Haiti would get out of hand. I think that was part of their thinking. They were very concerned about a possible

mass migration. Therefore, it was important to bring the relief needed so that would not happen. I think that it's one of those times when despite the fact that people on the ground in Haiti at the embassy and General [Ken] Keen, who happened to be there, were saying, "We don't really think the security situation is that dire, we think MINUSTAH [United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti] will be able to handle it." [Lieutenant General P. K. (Ken) Keen, U.S. Army, military deputy commander, USSOUTHCOM, September 2010 to June 2011; commander, Joint Task Force Haiti, January to April 2010. See oral histories SC-OH-20100208 (Keen), SC-OH-20100227 (Keen), SC-OH-20100401 (Keen), SC-OH20100506 (Keen), and SC-OH-20110506 (Keen). (All unclassified)] Washington didn't think so. I believe the nightly news, which tended to sensationalize some of the reaction by the Haitian people who were displaced—that influenced some people in Washington.

Q: You found that sentiment strong at State?

TRIVELLI: No, I think that was a White House [issue]. State's first reaction, much like SOUTHCOM's first reaction, is to give the benefit of the doubt to your ambassador and MILGRP commander. They are the people that are there that are living in it. And, of course, we had the luxury of having the military deputy commander there, by coincidence, and he was saying the same thing.

Q: And Ambassador [Kenneth M.] Merten was saying the same thing? [Kenneth Merten, U.S. ambassador to Haiti, since August 2009. See oral history SC-OH-20110204-2 (Merten). (Unclassified)]

TRIVELLI: Yes. Ambassador Merten, who is a very experienced, very calm guy, was saying that too.

Q: What about remains recovery, AMCIT [American citizen] evacuation issues?

TRIVELLI: As we worked through this, of course, I had to turn to those issues. One was just the evacuation and working—I spent a lot of time on these calls. In fact, the second half of the calls tended to be on AMCIT issues. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out how State Department officials, including some in Miami, could get to Haiti to do their work to help reinforce the embassy. It took a lot of education here and a lot of phone calls to make sure that they could get on those aircraft that were moving back and forth. In general, military folks don't like to put civilians in their aircraft unless they're told to do so. And then making sure we had the right authorities that in this giant shuttle that was going out that Americans could get on those planes when they came back, the C-17s and other aircraft. And then, figuring out when these Americans land at these bases—who is going to meet them? They're not documented, who's going to put them through immigration? So there was a lot of scrambling that had to go on in terms of making interagency sense. That's why these calls are useful—to make sure that these people could be met in a reasonable way, both in a humanitarian sense and a legal sense. A large U.S. air base in CONUS [continental United States] generally doesn't have customs facilities. They don't really have immigration officers, except in a very nominal way.

Q: I think some people lose sight of the fact, too, that from a country team perspective in a crisis of this sort, the number one responsibility is to take care of your personnel and your number two responsibility is handling and dealing with American citizens.

TRIVELLI: Yes, that's exactly right.

Q: You are the representative of the United States and you're servicing the American population in that environment.

TRIVELLI: Yes, an ambassador and consular officer's first responsibility is the safety and welfare of Americans. I mean that's largely why American diplomatic missions were established in the first place in the late eighteenth century.

Q: Did you have a lot of contact with Ambassador Merten, on the Haitian side, and [Chargé] Chris Lambert on the Dominican side? [Christopher Lambert, U.S. chargé d'affaires ad interim to the Dominican Republic, August 2009 to September 2010. See oral history SC-OH-20100421-3 (Lambert). (Unclassified)]

TRIVELLI: Yes, that's how a lot of stuff got in there, including people. [The U.S. government used Dominican airbases and overland routes to deliver humanitarian assistance to Haiti] I had daily contact with them for several weeks.

Q: And they were on the phone calls too?

TRIVELLI: Yes. At times the number of people on the call was actually limited by the technology. You can put a hundred and fifty people on the call, and they were all there. And they all had an opinion.

Q: And who was running that, Dr. Shah?

TRIVELLI: Only in the very beginning. After that Under Secretary Patrick Kennedy from State. [Patrick Kennedy, under secretary of state for management, since November 2007] He is a very, very experienced, very savvy, very calming, very knowledgeable guy would could get hold of that morass of a hundred and fifty people and mold them into one useful conversation.

Q: How did you organize those calls? Was it by issues or topics or organizations?

TRIVELLI: By topics, and then to the kind of political situation, aid situation first, then the second half of the call—and people could drop off—would be the AMCIT welfare, including the recovery of remains and flying them back to Dover, which I think was the first time we've done that in U.S. history. It was rather groundbreaking, very sad, but groundbreaking.

Q: Typically, how long did those conversations last?

TRIVELLI: In the beginning they could definitely last two hours. And we'd do two a day, sometimes three a day.

Q: How did Operation Unified Response affect U.S. relations with Brazil?

TRIVELLI: I think that it probably was a great stimulus to it. As you know, General Keen and the Brazilian general [Florian Peixoto] who was head of MINUSTAH knew each other from having gone to school together, so they had a good personal relationship. I think that General Keen and the task force did a really good job working with MINUNSTAH and the Brazilians—figuring out what we would do versus what they would do so those two could be separated and we would not offend the sensibilities of Brazil and the other MINUSTAH members. I think that all of that really served to reignite the interest in the Brazilian military of having a better relationship with the U.S. military. Ironically, of course, at one time we had a great relationship, fighting together in World War II.

Q: But there were challenges along the road. Initially, there were concerns that the United States would be taking over security. The Brazilians pushed back on that.

TRIVELLI: That's exactly right. That's why it was important to establish those responsibilities. MINUSTAH made it very clear that after they recovered from the initial shock—of course their headquarters building collapsed—that they were in charge of security and they and the other MINUSTAH members could handle it. The U.S. security role was often just linked to some force protection issue related to our forces or perhaps an event we were actually helping organize [such as the World Food Program aid distribution], but we never assumes the overall security of Haiti or Port-au-Prince.

Q: So you were able to help USSOUTHCOM interpret some of those reservations that were coming from the Brazilians?

TRIVELLI: Yes.

Q: You didn't go to Brazil with General Fraser did you?

TRIVELLI: No

Q: He went in March [2010].

TRIVELLI: I did not. I think Brazil is actually a real challenge for SOUTHCOM and for the U.S. government, just in the sense that—one, of course, the president's visit to Brazil has gotten the entire U.S. government apparatus kind of Brazil crazy. So everyone is engaging with them in every possible way. But also, it takes a lot of imagination to engage with Brazil. And the reason that I say that is that here at Southern Command, we're used to a series of security assistance activities, which are really designed towards

folks who need assistance and need our doctrine and equipment and education and need resources. Brazil is, of course, a very different case. They are a nation that's wealthy, a lot of pretensions on the world stage. They have a very professional, sophisticated military. So you have to engage with them in a very different way and think up other types of activities to do with them. In some ways that's harder. It may be less expensive, because you're not giving them resources per se, but how do you exchange information? How do you share intelligence? How do you learn some lessons from the Brazilians on some of the things that they do well? Those are kind of new avenues for Southern Command. I think we've responded pretty well, but it's different than the traditional model of security assistance.

Q: Is the Brazilian-American relationship better today than when you arrived?

TRIVELLI: Oh, yes, I think so. I cannot take any credit for that, I'm just saying that I think the whole series of the whole U.S.-Brazil relationship is much better. In fact, there are more than a dozen formal consultation and working groups that we now have with the Brazilians. Everything from army staff talks to combating racism talks to alternative energy talks. It's really a full range of discussion. I think the Olympics and the World Cup probably give the U.S. government another entre to discuss with the Brazilians our experience with security surrounding large public events—but those are the sorts of things we have to work on.

Q: In 2008, just before you arrived, USSOUTHCOM underwent a major transformation from a J-code system to an enterprise model. Do you think it was necessary for USSOUTHCOM to return to the J-code system to conduct the operation in Haiti?

TRIVELLI: That's a tough question to answer because I'm not a military officer. As an outsider's point of view, it was not clear to me exactly why we did it. General Fraser thought it was important, the other staff thought it was important, they did it and it sort of worked. So that's fine. But I don't know that the problem was so much the way we were organized as the sheer scope of the response. This is a very small command. It hasn't had 22,000 people in the field for many, many years. So I don't know. I think the problem was that we just didn't have enough people to do the kind of task you need to do when suddenly you're tasked with moving large amounts of forces in the field. It's not something that we habitually do here. It's not part of our general day-to-day missions. So I don't know that our organization was at fault as much as the smallness of our staff and our general daily unfamiliarity with moving large amounts of people.

Q: Do you think USSOUTHCOM should return to the enterprise model, or do you think it's better to stay in the J-codes model? The decision has been made—

TRIVELLI: The decision has been made. I don't know that the commander is ready to reorganize again. I think it would drive everyone a bit batty. I think that the system that General Fraser went to is a bit of a hybrid. It did preserve J9 as the Partnering Directorate. It did preserve J7 [Stability Directorate] as kind of the holistic directorate in the sense of trying to capture all the security assistance work that we do downrange.

From that point of view I think it's positive. I see from where I sit, though, an increase in stove piping and one directorate not being as familiar as they should be with their sister directorates. One thing that strikes me, in a place like Southern Command—and it's true of almost any bureaucracy—but there are relatively few people who watch the whole enterprise on a daily basis and have some general idea what everyone is doing. The vast majority of people all the way up to general officers really only focus on their own directorate. That's understandable, but someone needs the bigger picture. So under that kind of arrangement, the more stovepipes you have, which we've now grown to nine, the more difficult it is for communications to flow. It argues that you have to have a very concerted effort to have cross directorate communication through a series of boards and cells. I think that's probably not working as well as it could.

Q: I think that's a problem we face and will continue to face for many years to come. One of the features of the 2010 reorganization was the assignment of public affairs and strategic communication [offices] to you. What is the importance of strategic communication in Latin America and the Caribbean?

TRIVELLI: Strategic communication, I think, is important to any organization—any large organization, like ours, that undertakes lots of different things. Like I said, we have 1,400 different security assistance activities set for next fiscal year. There has to be the establishment of overarching messaging and then the synchronization of that messaging. We need to make sure that we and OSD and the embassies and State all are talking about what we're doing in essentially the same way. A great effort has been made here to—every time we do an execute order, any time we do a deployment, there's actually a strategic communication plan that's attached to that that people need to follow. It's to try to avoid all the missteps that you already mentioned like the DCA, like Fourth Fleet. And I think it's particularly important in Latin America because there are two overarching anti-U.S. narratives that have played out in Latin America for many years. One is the narrative that the United States is essentially exploitative, interventionist, wanting to take over countries and steal their resources and people. That's sort of the Chavista narrative that has its roots in the dependency theory dating back to the 1960s. And then the opposite narrative, which is almost as pernicious, is that the United States has forgotten about Latin America, doesn't do enough and doesn't really care. And, of course, that drumbeat has grown with our continued involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan in the war against terror. So because those narratives are so persuasive, it's important to strategic message in the right way. That's why we have that shop. I think they're pretty effective, too, quite frankly.

Q: What's the best way to counter our critics in the region?

TRIVELLI: I think there are two important ways. One is how do you message, and I think that this administration—and I'm talking White House and the visits to the region by the president and the secretary of state—have adopted a different tone that is more cooperative in nature, more willing to listen, a tone that has accepted some responsibility for the war on drugs. In other words, the U.S. consumption of drugs is part of the problem, which makes people in Latin America feel as though we're more cooperative

and taking them into account. And even though policy may have not changed very much, tone I think has and I think that's appreciated. The other thing that you do and influence the debate is by doing. Something like the [USNS] Comfort, the hospital ship which can treat 100,000 people over the course of its four or five months deployment, is a strategic communication tool because people can see with their own eyes what U.S. military power can do for good. And that's amplified in the case of the Comfort and many many things that we do. And it's not just U.S. military, it's U.S. civilian doctors, U.S. government civilian medical personnel, medical personnel from other nations, medical personnel from NGOs, and local ministry of health people working together to make these things so successful. So when you can reach out and touch people's lives in a real way—if you're treated 100,000 people, you've created 100,000 new friends for the United States. And I think that it's very important. I know that there will be arguments as we go through efficiency drills here at the Department of Defense about those missions and about a lot of the things SOUTHCOM does, because we don't concentrate on the kinetic, but they contribute to our overall policy and how Latin America sees the United States and how it views the U.S. military—those types of activities are extremely valuable.

Q: So looking forward to the efficiency studies and everything else that's coming toward us, how important is USSOUTHCOM for the United States, for American diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean?

TRIVELLI: Well, it's as important as the U.S.-Latin American relationship. And this is an issue which, I think, the United States has forgotten a bit. Obviously, the U.S. policy apparatus both civilian and military is focused elsewhere in the world, and rightfully so in the last decade. That said, Latin America is important to the United States. It's important demographically. We have fifty million plus Latinos living in the United States. It's important economically. We trade more north-south than we do with the Pacific or with Europe. Citizens from Latin American and Caribbean nations send back to their countries more than \$50 billion a year and this place is geographically close to us, so if people want to do us harm, one of the ways is going through our closest neighbors. All of that argues that that relationship has to be close. I believe that the work that Southern Command can do in an interagency sense, in a 3D sense—defense, diplomacy, and development—is very important. I think that the relationships that Defense Department and the State Department have built in recent years were much closer than we were ten or twenty years ago. For better or worse, the State Department has kind of adopted the Defense Department's quadrennial review and tried to link together smart power. So I think Latin America will continue to be important and USSOUTHCOM will continue to play a role. I also think that it's important that we not forget our history and not forget what's important. I'll give you a great example—talk about efficiencies. Lately, in this building, I heard some fairly senior officers argue that we should do away with the Human Rights Office here at Southern Command, because that's a State Department function. Well, if we've learned anything from fighting against insurgencies of one sort or another over the past few years—the treatment of populations by militaries is a key ingredient to success or a key ingredient to failure if you don't do it correctly. It's vitally important that we understand human rights in the field and that more importantly that our Latin American

partners understand. And we tend to forget these things, and people will talk about a retreat to core missions. I think you have to understand that in this part of the world what USSOUTHCOM does is a core mission to the extension of military power and the broader relationship.

Q: You mentioned the State Department-Defense Department relationship and that it is fairly close now. What has been the trend in regards to State-DOD relationship? I suppose there's been a gradual coming together, but it has been non-linear. What have been some of the major milestones over your time as a diplomat?

TRIVELLI: I think that we, certainly State and DoD worked very closely in Latin America during the 1980s because of the advisory role that the U.S. military played with militaries in places like El Salvador. I think that in Latin America the closest cooperation comes in disaster relief, as we talked about—Hurricane Mitch and the Haiti earthquake. Again, those events demonstrated a very close civil-military relationship. Certainly, more recently, the secretary of defense has been a great booster of State Department and more than once in public stated that State Department should be better funded. The secretary of defense has a great personal relationship with Secretary Clinton. [Robert Gates, secretary of defense, December 2006 to July 2011; and Hillary Clinton, secretary of state, since January 2009] I think you're seeing that even more. Because I think the U.S. military would like not to have to do all the non-military stuff that it's called to do. Even in reconstruction work in places like Afghanistan and Iraq. You can only do that if someone else in the U.S. government is funded to do it. That takes a lot of resources.

Q: In July of this year, the White House released its new strategy for combating transnational organized crime. What are the principal features of the new strategy?

TRIVELLI: I am certainly no expert in this, but the strategy doesn't say much about the Department of Defense, actually. It's mostly law enforcement—it has a lot to do with asking for new legislation and new authorities for different law enforcement pieces and the Justice Department to better combat the organized nature of crime—that's what makes it so difficult.

Q: What is the proper role for the Department of Defense in counter illicit trafficking, combating transnational organized crime?

TRIVELLI: First of all, we need to be supportive and not be out front. Secondly, Title 10 does give us the authority for detection and monitoring for air and maritime routes into the United States. That makes sense and it's probably something the military probably needs to do, not only for illicit trafficking, but also for other warfare related reasons. I think we can work with those parts of foreign militaries that are given a counter-narcotics role. Often these are navies or coast guards and we can work with them much the way we would work with them outside of that context—and perhaps equipping and training some Special Forces type folks that are involved in the counter narcotics fight. I would say, thought, the fighting illicit trafficking in terms of our neighbors' militaries—they're not so crazy about playing that role. They recognize that drifting into law enforcement can

get them into trouble. And just like the U.S. military is not comfortable in law enforcement, our partners generally are not as well.

Q: Can or should the Department of Defense do more?

TRIVELLI: Probably not a lot more than it's doing except perhaps—I think in terms of authorities, probably not. I think that some types of technologies that the Department of Defense can develop because of its resources might be very useful, such as radar that can see through jungle [canopies] and stuff like that. Yes, from that point of view, I think that they could be useful, but I think what's interesting about this is that no matter how well resourced DoD is at this point, the folks at JIATF-South [Joint Interagency Task Force South] tell us that they can only respond, or the friendly nations can only respond, to less than 40 percent of the tracks that they know are out there. So even to be able to respond to direct threats of known ships or planes that are likely moving narcotics we would have to more than double our activities in the Caribbean or the Eastern Pacific.

Q: Our interdiction actions.

TRIVELLI: Yes, our interdiction actions.

Q: Because our detection and monitoring is—

TRIVELLI: It goes on. And, in fact, we already know more than we can respond to.

Q: What impact has the Wikileaks revelations had on American diplomacy in Latin America and the Caribbean?

TRIVELLI: Well, directly, of course, it contributed to the departure of the U.S. ambassadors in Mexico and Ecuador. [Heather Hodges; and Carlos Pascual, U.S. ambassador to Mexico, August 2009 to March 2011] Part of that had to do with the host governments' disquiet with the supposed revelations in those cables. I think certainly people, foreign government officials, and others are probably less candid with us now that those came out because they assumed that any conversation they had with us will be protected. Unfortunately, these alleged cables have been leaked.

Q: How frustrating is that to you as a diplomat?

TRIVELLI: I think it's very frustrating, because just like a newspaper reporter, if you start revealing your sources, you're not going to be able to write too many more stories. It's really the same with us. One thing that's surprising in a diplomatic career is how much people want to talk to us or are willing to talk to us—how open members of the local community are with U.S. diplomats. And if they feel that their confidences will be betrayed, obviously, they're less willing to talk to people. It's a matter of trust.

Q: Looking back on your career in Latin America and the Caribbean, what have been the broader trends? Have you had time to fully absorb and think about it? I mean it's a very different place, today, than it was when you started.

TRIVELLI: Yes, it's a very different place. Democracy has been successfully installed in most countries and those roots have deepened, not perfectly, but certainly the trend was in the right direction and continues to be in the right direction. When you ask Latin Americans what the best form of government is a majority of them say, "Democracy." That is important. I think that what a lot of Americans also don't understand is how developed certain parts of Latin America have become. We're at the point now where there are several nations—Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico—which really are at the cusp of being first world nations. They are well resourced, have educated classes, and very sophisticated structures, governmental and private. That is something you didn't really see certainly thirty years ago. I think that the much broader understanding of human rights and Democratic rights in Latin America, again not perfect—I think there's also been a lot of wars fought in Latin America, small wars. And I think that the whole traditional elite structure that really is a holdover from the colonial period and extended through much of Latin America to one extent or another all the way to towards the end of the twentieth century has really shifted and it's because of globalization, communications, because of civil upheaval in some cases, but it's a very different place than it was thirty years ago in many ways.

Q: A better place?

TRIVELLI: Oh, I think without a doubt. It's a more prosperous place. It's a fairer place. It's a place with greater opportunity for more of its citizens. And that's the last piece that Latin American governments really have to put in place—stronger institutionalization of democracy and economic policy and then a broader sharing of the benefits of those gains with their populations. A lot of progress has been made in that regard, but it's going to take a lot of time.

Q: What have you told the incoming CDC, Ambassador [Carmen] Martinez about USSOUTHCOM? Have you warned her? [Laughing]

TRIVELLI: Oh, I have. [Laughing] She came in and spent the better part of two days with us already. That's very positive. And I have been sending her documents for several months. Hopefully she's kept copies of those and will be able to read them. I think I've told her several important things. Well, I've told her several things—they may not be important. One, it's a great job and she will be treated in kind with the professionalism and courtesy and resources in such a way that's probably better than any other time in her career in the Department of State. People do respect ambassadors here and they respect civilians and they're delighted to have someone like her onboard. I also told her that there's a fair amount of continual education that has to be done here, because of the SOUTHCOM staff. The sorts of issues we've talked about in terms of interagency, consulting with embassies and other agencies, consulting with our host governments and governments in the region—unless you keep reminding people, those lessons can get lost,

so you always have to keep reminding people that those issues are important because it's not the normal military way. You're always fighting that battle as you will within the bureaucracy, but I told her it really is a very fascinating job and a tremendous job.

Q: So, three years in Miami—did it change in any way your perception of the U.S. military?

TRIVELLI: Yes. Although I had a very favorable impression from my work at embassies, I think that I am impressed with how thoughtful and cerebral some members of the military are, particularly at the upper levels. I think it's fascinating that the United States can still produce people who both are military warriors and statesmen or diplomats in important ways and that, to me, is very comforting to know that we can find those people and they can learn those skills over the course of their career. I think that on the negative side, I suspect that the decade of war has for some officers—and I have noticed this—almost an overconfidence in what the U.S. military can do, and you have to be very careful. Also not a lot of confidence in what U.S. civilian government can do. The thought is, "Well, civilians couldn't do it, so the military has to do it." I think you have to be very careful about that kind of attitude. So that to me is sort of the cautionary tale.

Q: What's your most memorable moment as the civilian deputy to the commander, USSOUTHCOM? Is there a moment that sticks out in your head as being particularly memorable?

TRIVELLI: Like anything, here, there are a thousand memories—such as going to Port-au-Prince pretty soon after the earthquake and seeing that devastation. It is a real lesson. You can see the photographs and talk to people, but until you can see it and smell it on your own—you can't really internalize what had happened. I think the ability to see parts of Latin America that I hadn't seen before was fascinating. Then there are these kinds of odd things you remember. For example, the Pan American [Development] Foundation, which is part of the OAS [Organization of American States], does a fundraiser on a cruise ship here in Miami where they give out the Heroes of the Americas [award], and the J9 [director] got me to do this and I went out there— this was a fundraiser in Miami, east coast elite, in this docked cruise ship having this very elegant dinner. Then we were escorted into the ships' theater and saw a group of Ukrainian ice skaters go through their paces and then they awarded these prizes to these really humble folks in Latin America who were involved with very small NGOs dealing with indigenous rights and such. And they're looking around—they've never seen an ice skater. It was just such an odd experience. On one hand, all of this good work in all of these issues in Latin America and then [on the other hand] you're drinking special drinks and watching Ukrainian ice skaters on a ship. It was just very odd.

Q: Looking forward, what are the major challenges facing USSOUTHCOM and the United States in the region?

TRIVELLI: I think it's going to be a resource issue. Hopefully the United States— whether the amount of resources that Congress and the president deem to give to State

and AID for its development projects, as well as SOUTHCOM on the military side—I just hope we don’t retrench too much. Obviously, there are some budget battles that are looming and the fiscal situation is serious. But people have to recognize the importance of the region and of what we all collectively do here.

Q: Ambassador, I have chewed up your morning. I sincerely appreciate your time. This has been a pleasure for me as a historian.

TRIVELLI: Glad to do it.

Q: Congratulations on everything you’ve accomplished as a diplomat, everything you have accomplished here at USSOUTHCOM. I know at times it has been difficult. I’ve certainly enjoyed watching you work. Thank you, very much.

TRIVELLI: Thank you, Brad.

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