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

JAMES COX

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Q: Where and when were you born and raised?

COX: I was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on the 8th of January 1949, and spent my entire youth in Newark, Delaware, where my parents lived. My dad was a small businessman in the city of Newark after he came back from the war—World War II.

My mother was a war bride. She was born and raised in Lithuania. As I've thought about her youth in the course of my life, there are a couple of important points about her. She was 13 years old when the war started, and she was 19 years old when the war ended. So imagine a young, beautiful woman surviving that. These are inelegant terms, but she was a little bit messed up as a result of living all her teenage years in war. How could she not be? There are lots of stories I have learned over the course of my life about her. But more to the point of this exercise here, I will say that as a little boy—and I am the oldest of three children in the family and the only boy—when I was a little boy, like all little boys, I asked my mother to tell me stories. My father was working hard as he owned his own business, so we hardly ever saw him. He was gone 12 hours a day at work. The only stories my mother knew were Soviet Army, German Army and American Army. Of course, being a little boy, I ate those stories up.

There will come a time later in my discussions where I will reveal that I was probably in my late 30s before it dawned on me that for all those years, when I thought I was making my own independent decisions about the course of my life, the die had been cast when I was very young, by which I mean, it dawned on me many years later that the seeds for the course of my life were probably planted when I was a very little boy. I don't mean just becoming a Russian foreign area officer (FAO) in the Army and spending my professional life pretty much focused on the Soviet Union and Russia, but also the interest in foreign languages and foreign cultures. Even though I was a normal kid growing up in a normal community - I played baseball every day, and all my friends and I had a wonderful, idyllic American youth in the 1950s and 1960s - I always knew my mother was different than the other kids' mothers insofar as she had an accent, and couldn't speak English very well. In the early years of my schooling – I mean the first, second, third grade - my mother would say, "Jimmy, what did you learn, in English, today?" So my first teaching experience was as an elementary school kid, teaching my mother English after school. That's where I think I developed an interest in accents and sort of playing with language and with words. My mother would probably say that was when I began "torturing" her because of her accent!

Q: [Laughter]

COX: There are lots of little stories with that, too.

Q: Did she speak Lithuanian to you at all?

COX: No. I get asked that question a lot. You have to understand this issue from her perspective. She felt, like many millions of people felt, that Lithuania was dead and gone as a country. The Soviet Union had taken it over, and that was never going to change. In her mind, there was no future in speaking Lithuanian. Her future was in becoming an American, to the point where I think the most serious conversation my mother and I ever had when I was a young boy, probably 10 or 11 years old, when she turned to me and said something that was really troubling initially. She said, "Jimmy, do you realize the most important thing in your life has already happened?" I looked at her strangely. How can you ask a question like that to a 10 or 11-year-old? I said, "What do you mean? What are you talking about?" She said, "You were born in the United States." Which tells you the attitude, from her perspective, of how this country and my father saved her from the life of a displaced person in Europe. I ought to go back and mention just a little bit about how they met.

Q: Yes.

COX: My father was raised in Ohio. He was just a normal guy in Ohio. The draft caught him after about a year-and-a-half of college. So he, like everybody else, put on a uniform and trained, and he wound up being part of Patton's Army, racing across Europe. At the end of the war, he wound up in the Munich area. As the Army had gone too far—they were into Czechoslovakia a little bit and had to pull back because of the zones of occupation—he wound up cooling his heels like many hundreds of thousands of GIs in southern Germany.

He was, and I use the term with all due respect, just a simple guy. He was not a great philosopher or anything like that, but he made what turned out to be the most important decision in the formation of me. He looked around and he saw a million GIs going home, and he thought to himself, "There is no way on this earth there can be jobs for all those guys immediately when they get home." So he looked around, and he said, "You know, here in Europe, I've got a jeep, I've got gasoline, I've got money. I'm king. I'm just going to stay here for a while." He went to work for the United Nations, for UNRRA—the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, if I've got the acronym right, and he got a job in Augsburg at a hospital. He was known as the business manager, but basically he was the guy who paid everyone. He had no medical background. He was just the business guy for this hospital.

This hospital is located still today in a district of Augsburg I have come to learn was known as the Lithuanian district. For some reason I don't know, historically, perhaps

hundreds of years ago, Lithuanians, probably because of some pogrom or purge or whatever, settled in some number in this area of Augsburg.

My mother, her mother, and my mother's sister—the three women in the family—fled Lithuania in November 1944 as the Soviet Army was crashing into the Baltic States. They were actually evacuated by the German military because, to be perfectly frank, they were blond, blue-eyed Catholics. The Germans tried to take care of them. There are multiple stories about the long circuitous route of her trip, but eventually she wound up in Augsburg.

Because she was just a teenager during the war, as I mentioned earlier, she didn't have any skills, but she got a job in the same hospital where my father was the business manager as basically a nurse's assistant. She was drop-dead gorgeous, there is no question about it. My dad was the one American there. He was a good-looking guy. He was single. So for the old ladies of the hospital, as the story goes, their main function in life apparently was conspiring to get those two together. The hospital used to have what in the military we would call "dinings-in." All of the staff would come together for a formal supper. There was a head table, other tables would "T" off the head table. The old ladies always put my mother at one of the 'T's, right in front of my father, so every time he lifted his head from the plate, he saw her in profile. As the story goes, it took!

In Germany, in Augsburg at this point—I'm talking now 1946 and early 1947 (they got married in March 1947), there was a lot of destruction. Nobody had any goods. Industry was ruined. The only thing you could celebrate was birth, death, and weddings. My parents' wedding was a huge celebration. Question one was, what are you going to do for a wedding dress? The old ladies at the hospital got hold of my father's driver, who was a Ukrainian displaced person, and they gave him basically a direct verbal order: "Go get an Army silk parachute." He bartered and traded, and God knows what he did, but he found an Army supply sergeant and got himself an Army parachute. In those days, they were pure silk parachutes. He brought the parachute back to the old ladies who said, "Thank you very much. We've got it from here." They deconstructed that parachute and made the most gorgeous pure silk wedding dress for my mother. I've seen pictures. It was spectacular.

There was one more interaction that occurred before the wedding. The whole human endeavor of putting together this wedding, and putting together the wedding dress, was one of the more positive things happening in their lives at this time. But at some point they realized, "Oh my god, we don't have a wedding present!" Someone mentioned that in a nearby bombed out bunker they had seen a puppy. They got hold of my father's driver again and said, "Get that puppy. Get him to the Army veterinarians. Get that dog cleaned up. He's going to be the wedding present." The driver did that. The dog got cleaned up by the vets and was presented to my parents. He was my first dog. He lived until I was 10 years old.

Q: Wow.

COX: My parents got married in March 1947 in Augsburg and then moved to Delaware, where my father's uncle, who was already established as a dentist in town, helped my father get established as the owner of a dry cleaning business. I came along in January of 1949. That's where they stayed, and that's where I grew up.

I had wonderful early discussions learning about the exotic nature of my mother's background. Otherwise, I had just a normal kid's idyllic youth in Newark, Delaware. It was really a wonderful time to grow up there. I had wonderful friends and a wonderful life there.

Q: Describe a little what Newark, Delaware, was like in the late 1940s through the 1950s. What sort of town was it?

COX: The town has been, since the 1700s, a university town. The University of Delaware is there. In a manner of speaking, the University was the biggest industry in town, the biggest employer. Nearby, in Wilmington, Delaware, was the headquarters of the DuPont Company, so there were many, many chemical engineers who lived in the Newark area as well. There was a Chrysler plant nearby that started out making Chrysler cars after the war because everybody needed a car. During the Korean War, it made tanks for the Army. I remember my father was a member of the local Rotary Club, and they had a visit there one time. So my dad took me to visit the tank plant. You can imagine how much I liked that! That was great!

Q: Oh, yes!

COX: A year or so after the Korean War ended, the plant converted back to making Chryslers and did so until probably 10 or 15 years ago, when it went out of business. The University of Delaware bought the property and now is making a high-tech center there that is really going to shape the future of northern Delaware and of the University of Delaware. It's really a wonderful transition, if you will.

Q: So all of your primary school and high school education was in Newark?

COX: Yes, and in fact, about my high school education, this was the first time in any formal sense I realized I had a facility with foreign languages. We joke that I apparently got the foreign language gene. I took French in high school because that was one of the foreign languages offered. I don't remember why I took that instead of German or Spanish, but I did, and I really liked it. I found I didn't have to study very much, and I was doing very well. At that time, Newark High School was an amazing place. There were so many kids there who were the children of DuPont engineers and people already with a tremendous amount of education. There was, if you will, a strong base of values in education and learning. I fell into that crowd very comfortably. We started challenging our teachers, to be more specific. Those of us who were studying French liked it so much that we told our teachers we wanted to do more. At some point, the teachers got together and said, "Okay. For those of you who want to do this next year, we will offer French 3 in one semester and French 4 in a second semester. Who wants to do that?" About 12 or

13 of us raised our hands, and we did it. So I actually had five years of French in four years of high school.

Again, because of the University of Delaware—at the time I didn't know the story—there was a young Frenchman from southern France, who must have gotten a Fulbright Scholarship or something like that, who came and studied at the University of Delaware. He made a lot of friends and then went back to southern France. At some point, he became the mayor of a little town just 16 kilometers inland from Saint Tropez, right near the Riviera. I became one of the big beneficiaries of this because he wrote to his friend, who was then the mayor of Newark, Delaware, and said, "Let's do a twin town exchange program, where one year Americans go to France and the next year French kids come to America." As it worked out, I had a chance to go to southern France in between my junior and senior years of high school. I lived with a French family, which is a whole separate book because this family was so amazing, so phenomenal, that I have told people for decades they had more influence on my life than any other people, save for my parents.

I completely fell in love with southern France. This was the heyday, the glamour days, of Saint Tropez. The whole James Bond thing was taking off. Brigitte Bardot lived there and was swimming in the Mediterranean. The glitterati were all over the place there. And I was some simple kid from Newark, Delaware watching all this! I came home, and I had already made up my mind. I told my father and mother, "There's no way on this earth I can spend the rest of my life in Newark, Delaware. I have been to southern France!"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: I should pause here and say one of the things nobody in my family, to include me, can explain but everybody agrees happened—my first conscious statement, my first conscious thought as a kid, was that I wanted to go to West Point. Now, my father was only in the Army for the period of World War II. He didn't come from a military background. There was nobody in the family who was a West Point graduate. This idea formed before television was really a factor in most people's lives. Where and how I got this idea, nobody knows. Maybe I should be hypnotized or something to figure this out!

So carry that forward… I come out of France, I've got this French background, and I decide, okay, I'm applying to West Point.

Q: Because we are now just about going into college, or the West Point equivalent, before we leave Newark, you describe the level of education and such. Was it in any other way particularly diverse? Were there other kinds of communities there? Did you have exposure to anything like that?

COX: Well, yes. That's an excellent question, and a point I'd like to make. This is perhaps an indication of how idyllic my childhood was. Our schools were segregated until my second grade, when there was ordered desegregation of the public schools in Newark, Delaware. There was a small black community, and there was a building off on

one side of town that was the black school. I was six or seven years old at this point, so I didn't understand much about segregation. We never talked about it in the family. I never heard anyone say a disparaging thing about a person of color. Of course, I had hardly ever seen a person of color other than just occasionally in town. But then, in my second grade, into our classroom and throughout the school came these black kids. I have checked with my high school classmates, and they agree with me. My attitude about this was, "Wow, I just got six new friends." There were never fights. There were never problems. There were never protests. My parents never said anything negative. If they asked me how things were going, I said they were going great. To the extent a seven-year-old could be aware, desegregation was a seamless transition.

I'm sure at some other level, there was a little bit more going on. It bothered me immensely later, in the 1960s, when the country was coming apart over desegregation, racial riots, lynchings and all that hatred. I kept wondering, "Why didn't any of this happen here? Why are we so different?" I don't know the answer to that, but I am so relieved. As a result of that experience, when I became an officer in the Army and had to deal with a lot of black soldiers, there was absolutely no question in my mind they were just Americans. They were just soldiers to me. I never saw color.

Much to my father's credit, he went out of his way as a small businessman to help the black community. He delivered dry cleaning to everybody in Newark, and that included some of the black homes. It is a statement of fact that in most of these cases there was a mother raising children with no father around. My father was always very nice to these ladies. Some of them said, "Mr. Cox, could you give a job to my son. He's 15, or he's 14, and he needs to work a little bit." So my father would hire these young black teenagers. He would tell them basically, "You have to show up every day. I will pay you real money, but you have to not only do your work for me, but you have to do your homework. Because if your mother tells me you are not doing your homework, I'm firing you." Those were the ground rules. He was absolutely fair with these young men. Some of them turned out to be wonderful contributors to the community. I have heard them say how much of their success and character they attribute to my father. In a manner of speaking, my father didn't so much become their father but he gave them, at that critical moment in their lives, some discipline and some incentive that kept them out of trouble and made a big difference in their lives. My dad definitely made a difference. Let's put it that way.

Q: The other thing I wanted to ask about was, throughout high school obviously you are thinking about West Point, but were there other activities you took part in, other extracurricular activities? Did they have Junior ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps) back then, or anything like that?

COX: No, there was not Junior ROTC, which as an aside I will say I never have understood. I have never been a big fan of it myself. I think there is a time for military uniforms, and it's not in junior high school. But, that's me. I was a Boy Scout and loved the outdoors life. We were all playing cowboys and Indians and stuff like that when we were little. I loved my Boy Scout life and rose to be an Eagle Scout as well as the senior

patrol leader for the local Boy Scout troop. I'll be quite honest and say that when I first joined the Boy Scouts, I was a total wiseass. I was just a cut-up, always disturbing things. I was a very poor follower. One of the turning moments in my life was when the Scout leader got so frustrated with me that he pulled me aside, chewed me out, and he said, "I'm going to fix you. I'm going to put you in a leadership position." It was like someone flipped a switch in my head. I went from being a very poor follower to being happy as a leader. I was at least mature enough to realize what had happened. I am forever grateful to him for, perhaps out of desperation, taking a shot with me, that maybe what I needed to do was to be put in charge and then realize that it's not so easy dealing with wiseasses like me. In high school, in my senior year, I was elected president of the student government and served in that function for my senior year. Those were the two main activities.

In terms of athletics, I've never been an athlete. I mentioned earlier about playing baseball every day, which is true. In my 20s, when I got into my career and couldn't play baseball, I used to tell people my only regret about leaving my youth was that I couldn't play baseball anymore. It meant that much to me. In high school, I took up cross-country running. I was never more than a "B squad" cross-country guy, but it was a physical outlet and a good activity. But that's about it for other activities I was involved in.

Q: You mentioned that from an early age you were talking about West Point. How did your parents react?

COX: Well, my dad, of course, thought it would be great because it's a free education. My mother had nothing but admiration for the American military because, after all, they were liberators. She never spoke of it in quite such succinct terms as I just used, but I realized many years later I had internalized this notion. I wanted to be a liberator. The way to do that was to be part of the American military. It's really the legacy of World War II that almost all the good things in the world were a direct result of the American military. I was part of that rising generation of people who felt that way. And I liked the uniforms. I liked the idea of the discipline. Academics were not a challenge for me. Because I had a couple of accomplishments that stood out for West Point, such as being an Eagle Scout and the high school student government president, after I put in my applications, I was notified that I was a qualified candidate. However, I didn't have an appointment offered to me. Because Delaware is a small state—there's only one representative, two senators—those were the only categories I could apply through. It turned out Delaware filled its quotas, so as, a second alternate for one senator, fourth alternate for another, there was no slot for me. It looked like I wasn't going to get in. So I looked around. I was very much interested in studying foreign languages. Didn't know what else I wanted to do with my life. I became aware, probably in high school, of Army ROTC scholarships, so I applied for one of those. I applied to Notre Dame as well as the University of Delaware. I was awarded a full four-year scholarship from the Army ROTC—a full ride plus a monthly stipend - to go to Notre Dame, and I could major in foreign languages there. I thought, "Well, as things go, this is not a bad number two." My father was thrilled with it, of course, because of the Army ROTC scholarship. My mother thought this was all great. I was all set to go. My father made a $300 deposit to Notre

Dame, which was real money in 1967. The anxiety was lifted. I knew where I was going. I knew what was going to happen for the next four years. I couldn't look much beyond four years. That's asking a lot of a 17 or 18-year-old!

Q: Sure.

COX: So I was set. One day in late May 1967, I walked in the door from high school. It was only a couple weeks before high school graduation. My mother was in the kitchen on the telephone. She was waving frantically for me to come to the phone. I looked at her, saying, "What? What?" She put her hand on the phone and said, "Some officer wants to speak to you." So I got on the phone and timidly said hello. He asked me if I am James Cox. And said I said, "Yes." He then said, I am Colonel so and so calling from someplace in Washington. I am offering you a position at the military academy at West Point. I was just completely dumbstruck by this. I didn't expect it. I hadn't prepared anything, so I was just silent. He said, "Are you still there?" And I said, "Yes!" He said, "So, what's your reaction?" Trying to figure out something to say, I said, "How long do I have to think about this?" He said, "Well, about five seconds." So I took at least three of the five! And then I said, "I'll take it!" My mother and I started "pole-vaulting" all over the kitchen after I hung up.

Q: [Laughter]

COX: When my father walked in at the end of work, we attacked him with this news. During supper, everybody was happy and celebrating. At some point I said "Oh my gosh, Dad, you already made this deposit to Notre Dame!" He said, "Aw, forget the deposit. I don't care. I'm not even going to ask for the money!" It was that sort of environment, that sort of atmosphere in the family, when I was selected to attend the military academy.

Q: Okay, right, before you leave for the military academy, the other sort of background issue in growing up—was church or any other social organization a formative influence on you?

COX: My mother was an ardent Catholic, of course, from Lithuania. My father was a Protestant, but wasn't practicing. I was in a manner raised in the Catholic Church. Truth be told, as a preteen I dreamed about going into the priesthood. But then I discovered girls at about the age of 13 or 14, and that was the end of the priesthood! My Catholic experiences in Delaware—there were no bad experiences, but I never really warmed to the church. I always felt what was happening in church was not relating to me. It was not talking to me. To be perfectly frank, it was more like a fashion show to see who had the new dress on for Easter and things like. I was put off by the whole scene. The churches were modern. They weren't old cathedrals, and there weren't Gregorian chants and all that sort of atmosphere I very much more enjoy. The influences they had on me, the priests and the Sunday school teachers, were all positive, but nothing really lasted or attracted me for the future.

Q: The other thing I want to ask… Here you are, it's 1967. You know everything about the Vietnam War, and you are still going to West Point. Had the counterculture or the anti-war movement reached Newark, and did you have any reaction to it?

COX: That's a great question. When I went to West Point in the summer of 1967, the anti-war movement had not really taken hold. There was a lot of concern as we all watched the evening news. You sensed things weren't going very well, and how could it not being going well? I mean, this is the American Army, led by all these former heroes from World War II. In my case, it was more of noting this without being terribly concerned about it. However, my years at West Point were right in the absolute peak of the anti-war movement and also many of the casualties being experience by the military. I've told people I actually would not trade the four years I was at West Point for any other four-year period I can think of. It was so visceral. It was so at the surface. There was so much emotion. We lived with the war – and its effects - every day.

Our instructors were all war heroes—Medal of Honor winners in some cases—people who had lost a leg but had gone off to Stanford, Harvard or Yale, and they were really brilliant people. Some were writing books. But they hated the war. The dissidence inside the classroom was palpable when we closed the door, closed the blinds, and were alone with the instructor…. We cadets—this is something eternal at West Point—all cadets tried to get instructors to tell stories to get off of the lesson plan for the day. The instructors—not all, but some—would open up. They knew they were going to go to Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth for a year, and then go right back to Vietnam, and they hated the idea.

In conjunction with that, there were cadets from the class of 1968, who a year after their graduation, after their training, went to Vietnam and were being killed within weeks of arrival in Vietnam. We were having funerals for people who had chewed me out as a plebe two years earlier. I was surrounded by this.

One of the most emotional moments for me was as a senior. We rotated through different jobs in the cadet corps three times a year. In the winter period, I was made the first sergeant of my cadet company, which meant I had to put up all the guard rosters. It was a lot of paperwork. One evening, I was walking out of my room with papers arrayed in front of me in my hands because I knew the way to the bulletin board. I was going by dead reckoning. I was making sure I had everything I needed to put on the bulletin board. At some point, I just felt the presence of somebody, so I lowered the papers and looked. Walking towards me on crutches, with one-and-a-half legs, was the very same cadet who had my job two years before me. I stopped, looked at him and thought to myself, "Oh my god, is this me two years from now?" We lived in this environment, but it didn't dissuade me. I never felt like leaving West Point. I never lost interest in the Army. But we definitely lived with a lot of emotions about the war and our country's history…

We have a saying at West Point. We can be a little bit full of ourselves in some respects. One of our sayings is, "We make the history that others study." Now, there's a lot of truth to that. It's not just West Pointers, of course, who make history. Nonetheless, a lot of

West Pointers make the history that the rest of the world studies. It made me grow up fast, let's put it that way. But I was committed to the course I had chosen and I never wavered from it.

He was a captain already, that former cadet walking toward me on crutches. We invited him to supper that night to sit with us, and we just talked about his experiences during supper in the mess hall. It was Wednesday night, steak night. He was smart enough to show up on steak night, so we took him to supper. He was not our favorite cadet when he was a senior and we were sophomores, but that didn't matter at that point. We just talked to him and absorbed as much as we could about what was going on in the Army and in Vietnam.

About the time that incident occurred, President Nixon put out the policy change that he was drawing the troops out of Vietnam. The policy change became such a political issue that we were not even allowed to volunteer to go to Vietnam. I had resigned myself to the fact I was probably going to go to Vietnam, and then was suddenly told by the Administration, that, no, you can't even volunteer. Volunteering doesn't mean anything other than sticking your hand up in the air. Nobody has to pay attention to you. But we couldn't even do that. So I thought, "Okay, that's because I am still wearing cadet gray. Wait until I'm wearing green like everybody else." I made up my mind I was going to prepare myself every day after commissioning for the phone call saying, "You are going to Vietnam." I'll come back to this point later. It never happened. Now in the light of everything I've learned, I'm very, very happy it never happened. My thinking was, "I am now going to be in charge of 40 young soldiers and, by God, I am going to bring as many home as I possibly can. The only way I can do that is if I am the most capable, trained, expert lieutenant I can possibly be going into that situation." That was my thinking at the time.

Q: During the four years you are there, can you describe a little about how West Point educated people? I've never been in military education, so I don't know if they began with a certain philosophy of how they wanted to educate you, if it changed, that kind of thing?

COX: There was very little choice in the curriculum. Actually, I had a total of two electives in four years. But the story of academics at West Point starts with another one of these moments in my life. It starts as a brand new plebe during that first summer of training. At some point, we had to take placement tests for the coming academic year, so they could figure out who is going into advanced chemistry, for the proper placement into mathematics courses and things like that. One of the things I took was a placement test in French, knowing I would do pretty well. It seemed pretty easy to me. A couple of days later, I was called in by a major who was a foreign language instructor. He sat me down, just the two us, and he said, "You did really well in the French placement test." He continued, "You basically have two choices. The first choice is, if you want to stick with French, there are only one or two more courses you could take here, and you would be in a class with seniors." Now I was so terrified of juniors at the time, I couldn't imagine being in a class with seniors. I asked, "What's my other option?" He said, "Your other

option would be to take a different language, start a new language." This was The Moment. Without a moment's hesitation, I said, "I'll take Russian." After I answered, I actually had an out-of-body experience, where I stepped out of myself and looked back at me and said, "Where in the hell did that come from?"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: The truth is that I had never thought about a language other than French. He looked at me and looked at my aptitude scores, my ability to learn foreign languages, and he said, "Oh, you've got a strong aptitude score, which is important for Russian. You're in." And that was it. I walked out, and I thought, "Oh my god, what have I done to myself?" That was the first step on the road. Honestly, to my dying day, I will not understand where my answer came from. On the one hand, I know exactly where it came from, but because I had not anticipated it, I could just as easily have said German, or Spanish, or Portuguese. But no, I said Russian. I was in.

The curriculum when I was there was vastly different than today's. It has changed markedly in the 45 years since I graduated. It was an engineering school. There were forces already pushing the curriculum toward more humanities, psychology, area studies and things like that. But this was in the very early days. I had all of two electives – in four years! As for my electives, I took anthropology as one. With my second one, I took international law. I'm not quite sure why I chose international law. During that course, I realized there is no way law was something I was interested in. I loved the anthropology course. Of course, I was also studying Russian.

Because I had come from Newark Senior High in Newark, Delaware, there was a whole cohort of us that kept pushing our instructors, "Give us more. Give us more." As a result of the top-notch high school I attended, I was placed into advanced chemistry at West Point. Honestly, we were using the exact same textbook I used as a sophomore or junior in high school. So I didn't have to work very hard in chemistry. I was in one of the top sections in mathematics because we took calculus in high school. The first two years at West Point, I didn't have to study much. I didn't have academic pressures on me because I came from this unbelievable high school. Then, of course, I got to the point where it was fluid dynamics and thermodynamics and electrical engineering, and I thought "Oh my god!" *[Laughing]* I got through all that stuff, but decided there was something about this Russian language that interested me, and, of course, my interest went beyond the language.

Our instructors were serving Army officers, one of which had some sort of native background in Russian. Two of them had served in the U.S. Military Liaison Mission (MLM) in East Germany. More discussion about this in a while, but I had never heard of this organization. These guys were running around East Germany in highly modified cars doing reconnaissance work on the Soviet military, basically watching the Soviet military prepare for World War III against us. One of the instructors brought in slides and gave a slideshow. I sat there looking at this, thinking "Oh my gosh! That is exactly what I want to do." It was the most exotic thing. It went beyond dreaming. What enemy lets you play

in his backyard while he's preparing to attack you? I learned the term for officers who did that kind of work. They were Soviet/Russian foreign area officers.

Just a moment about that program… The foreign area officer program was created in the United States Army, shortly after World War II. To make it a very simplified story, at the end of World War II, the US Army realized it was in charge of the world, basically, and realized it needed to deal with this. Of course, we didn't have area experts. Yes, there were a lot of people who spoke German in the Army, and French and Spanish, but we didn't have many people who spoke Russian. We suddenly realized we needed people who could help liaise and be the connecting tissue between us and foreign militaries. So the Army created this niche program, if you will, to create area experts for every area in the world. The Army now trains experts for the entire world. I became aware of that program and decided that is something I wanted to do. I needed to get into that program. We'll come back to that in more detail later.

One of the things I did at West Point was search for balance between academics and out of class activities. One day, I was reading some Mark Twain. He used what I considered to be a great line. He said, "I never let my schooling interfere with my education." I sat back, and I realized I am exactly the same way. Why work hard on getting an A, when a B+ will do, and I can have time to go do other things, read other things? That is basically the philosophy I took at West Point. It was a little bit suboptimal perhaps from an academic standpoint. One of the things I decided to do there, again because I was committed in my mind at that point to being the best soldier I could possibly be, I knew that would probably mean going to airborne school to go through parachute training. West Point has, and you won't be surprised to hear this, one of the world's best sport parachuting teams. They win competitions all over the world all the time. I decided as a cadet, as a sophomore, that I ought to join the sport parachute team and see if I actually had the courage to jump out of an airplane! I wasn't yet 21, so I had to get my parents' permission. They were both on the phone, and my mother started saying, "Dear God, why do you want to do this?" My father said, "Leave him alone! He's in the Army!"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: So they signed the permission slip. I don't want to digress too long on this, but I made two sport parachute jumps. It was frightening! I only had 20 minutes of ground instruction for this. I jumped off a crate forwards, backwards, right and left, to learn how to fall. The Army sergeant who was the noncommissioned officer in charge of the sport parachute team said, "Okay, Cox, grab a parachute. We're going." So it was just going to be me jumping out of the plane. We drove out to the airfield.

There is a big field north of West Point they use as a drop zone. They've got a target painted on it. As I was up in the plane—just a little Piper Cub kind of plane—I was thinking, "Oh lord, what have I done? What am I doing up here?" I have no business…! I'm scared to death! I literally had to lean out and grab the support strut for the wing, let my legs dangle, and then push off. The static line pulled my chute out with a good, solid jerk. For about 30 seconds, I was totally enthralled. I looked around the countryside - a

bird's eye view - enjoying life like I never had. I was alive, and I'd just done a parachute jump. And then I realized, "Oh my god, I have to land! I've got to bring my knees together, get my ankles together, so I don't break anything." I realized I was floating directly toward the target. On the ground, by the target, stood the sergeant with a clipboard in his hand. As I landed, I hit not more than three feet from dead center of the target. My first jump! The sergeant must have thought to himself, "I have a natural here." So he said, "Cox, get another parachute. You're going back up." I went back up. The thing about doing wild things like parachute jumping is, the first time you do it, it really is a thrill. But by the second time you do it, all of the rational fears associated with this activity come to the fore. So now I was really shaking, but I'd already done it once, so it wasn't quite as hard to let go of the plane. The story ends with me landing about three miles away from the target.

[Laughter]

COX: I was certain the sergeant took his pencil and scratched out my name on the roster.

Having done the two parachute jumps there, I then quit the club because it took an immense amount of time on the weekends to do this, and I needed my time for other things. I didn't want to be so committed to sport parachuting alone. We'll come to this later, too.

After commissioning, when I got to airborne school in the Army, there was no doubt in mind that I would have no trouble jumping out of the plane. When we got to jump week in the third week of the school, the first question was, "Have any of you ever jumped out of an airplane before?" I was the only guy who raised his hand, so they made me go first, which is exactly where I wanted to be. So that worked out really well.

I graduated in June of 1971, the first person in my family to graduate from college. I was engaged at that point to the lady who is still my wife. She was my high school classmate. I never would have survived had it not been for her.

Q: Ah!

COX: But for one year, our junior year in college, we decided to be angry with each other, which I think is the sort of "crisis" probably every couple goes through. Is this relationship meant to be or not? Well, we came out of it together, and were soon engaged. I graduated on the 9th of June in 1971. Five weeks later, I was married to Gretchen Gruber Cox in Newark, Delaware. The love of my life. We had an expression at West Point, which really describes my wife. She was my OAO, which stands for One and Only. It's a wonderful story. As you will hear more as I get into the details, she has put up with an awful lot with me (and the Army), but she's stuck with it. We have a wonderful family and a wonderful relationship.

Q: There is a question about the education at West Point. I understand your strategy of B+ because you had other interests and so on. Is there something in particular that is a

benefit for graduating at the very top of the class at West Point? Do you get any particular honors or first choices?

COX: The answer to that is yes in a couple small, fairly small, contexts. To be more specific, I graduated in the top third of my class. The two decisions that were affected by your class standing were first choosing which branch of the Army to go into. I was high enough to choose military intelligence with a detail to the armor corps, which meant I would have to serve in the armor corps for two years, and then automatically I would transition to military intelligence. So that was fine. The second time class rank becomes an issue is, based on your order of merit, you get to choose where your first assignment is. So places like Germany, or Fort Lewis, Washington, or some of the more attractive places are selected early. Again, as I said earlier, I was convinced I was going to be sent to Vietnam and wanted to be as prepared as I possibly could be, so I chose as my first assignment Fort Hood, Texas, which I had absolutely no problem getting because it was not one of the garden spots of the Army.

Q: Where is it located?

COX: Fort Hood, Texas, is about an hour or an hour-and-a-half north of Austin. It's in not quite eastern Texas. It's an hour-and-a-half south of Dallas, between Dallas and Austin. At the time, and it's probably still true, it was known as the largest military base in the free world. We had two full armored divisions, hundreds and hundreds of attack helicopters, and all sorts of high-level artillery units and things like that. In other words, we had 55,000 soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas.

My parents visited us when I was stationed there. It was the first time my father had been around the Army since he had left the Army. Each battalion had its own motor pool, and the motor pools were arrayed in one long line along the road—five linear miles of motor pools. I drove my father down the line. There were a tank battalions, artillery battalions, mechanized infantry battalions, signal battalions, and on and on for five linear miles. At the end is where my cavalry squadron had its motor pool. As we were driving the entire line, he was just looking, taking it all in. When we get to the end, I said, "You haven't said anything. What's your reaction?" He says, "I'll tell you. I haven't seen this much stuff since D-Day." He didn't use stuff, he used another word, but….

[Laughter]

COX: It is just awe-inspiring, the power the United States can afford to have in its military. After graduation and getting married, I went off to armor school at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and then to parachute school in Fort Benning, Georgia, which of course I pretty much aced. In fact, they wanted to use me as the wind dummy. The wind dummy is usually one of the instructors, who goes out first. The pilots have a general idea of what the wind strength and direction is, but there are changes from moment to moment. Especially with students who are not experienced, the first pass over the drop zone they have somebody who is experienced jump first. They have them exit the plane where they think is the optimum place, so he would hopefully hit in the middle of the drop zone. I

was in the door. Behind me, in an orange jumpsuit, was the colonel who was the commander of the parachute school. We two were going to be the wind dummies. I was ready to go. All of a sudden a strong hand grabs me and pulls me out of the doorway back into the plane. I was screaming because my adrenalin was pumping. My heart was beating like a locomotive. I yelled at the sergeant who pulled me out of the door, "What?" He said, "The winds are too strong. Sit down!" The colonel went out by himself. On the next pass, the sergeant said, "You're the first one out the door." I said, "Great."

My wife was invited to observe the jump. Spouses, girlfriends could come out to a bleacher area and watch hundreds of students, most of us young lieutenants, jump out of the plane. She said it was the most boring thing she'd ever seen because we all look exactly alike dangling from a parachute. She couldn't tell anybody from anybody. She didn't do it again. I made five jumps with the parachute school.

Going back to my theme of being the best trained officer I could possibly be, I volunteered for, because it was no longer required, I volunteered for Ranger school, which is probably the hardest training the Army has other than some of the special operations training, which didn't exist then—for Delta Force and people like that. It was eight weeks of no sleep, one meal a day, in winter. Part of the training was held in Fort Benning, Georgia, part in northern Georgia in the mountains, and the last third in the swamps of Florida. In the winter, there was snow on the ground in the mountains. We were not allowed to wear coats. We could only wear our fatigue uniform and long underwear. We could wear a scarf and gloves. And we could wear a hat, an Army cap. But that was it. No overcoat, nothing! I got so hardened to the cold. What they were trying to do, since they couldn't shoot at us, was to put us under as much stress as the human body could physically take. We all, at one point or another, hallucinated because we were so depleted of sleep and calories. Somehow I survived that, despite the fact that something like 35 to 45 percent of the class dropped out.

Armed with that, I went off with my new bride to Fort Hood, Texas, where I became a platoon leader in an armored cavalry squadron. The job of the armored cavalry typically is to provide flank security for a main force, or to be a reconnaissance element in front of the main force, or a rear guard for a main force.

Q: Just as a quick aside about Ranger training, I never observed it, and I certainly never have taken part in it, but I was on the Metro once and there were a couple of Army Rangers. One of them asked the other, "Hey, you got any Ranger candy?" The guy pulled out his Motrin. I just got it from that.

COX: Well, we didn't use the term, "Ranger candy," and we didn't have Motrin. I'll mention one other story about Ranger school. Sometimes it pays to be a skinny white kid from the northeast, and this was one of those moments. The temperature in the mountains of northern Georgia had to be in the 30s because the snow was not melting. We had no sleeping bags, no coats, and we were getting only two or so hours of sleep at night. What happened was, when we got into that sort of conditions, people started freezing up. First, we lost blacks from the South. They got frostbite. Then we lost whites from the South.

Then we started losing blacks from the North. I make a bit of a joke of this, but there is an element of truth to it, but what we had left was the skinny white guys from the North. I was one of them. Partly, I give credit to Boy Scout training. Partly, I was paying attention as these others were dropping out and thinking to myself, “Well, it’s one thing to drop out. It’s another to get frostbite.” The effects of it stay with you forever in future frozen environments.

Q: Right.

COX: I made up my mind that I might die out there, but I was not going to get frostbite. So rather than sleep, I would pick two trees about 12 paces apart, and I would just walk between the trees. I would fall asleep sometimes walking, but then I would hit the tree and it would wake me up. I decided that no matter what else happened, I was not going to get frostbite, and I didn’t. I wasn’t the only one who did this. We were being trained for small unit patrolling and those sorts of tactical activities. Because of the weather, there were a couple of hours at night where we could stand down and take care of ourselves, so to speak. Some people would just go to sleep. Sometimes when it was really bad, the instructor would build a fire and we could sleep like spokes of a wheel, with the feet toward the fire—not your hands, just your feet—all the way around the fire like that. I would do that for a little while with my hands tucked in my armpits, but then I would get up and walk between these trees just to keep the blood flowing. That made the difference for me. Of course, the instructors had recently served in Vietnam. When we had a chance, when we were not in training mode, we would talk to them. Most of these guys had done things like long-range patrolling, which very much appealed to me.

I also learned something else about my interests in the Army. The patrolling we did in the mountains of Georgia was 12 people, squad size. When we got to Florida, in the swamps, it was platoon size, about 40 people. I hated it because a platoon sounded like elephants. In the mountains, with 12 people, we were silent, and you never spoke. We would just use hand signals. When you spend that much time with a small group of people, you don’t have to speak to them. You can communicate with your eyes. Just a little blip of the eyes, or a little motion of a finger, and everyone knew exactly what you meant. You could be almost invisible. I found I really liked small unit operations. Out on one’s own, trying to avoid trouble, knowing you had to get yourself out of trouble on your own, started to appeal to me more and more. This is heresy for somebody who spent a career in the Army, but I became allergic to being around large formations because it seemed to me that large units often stumbled around like a drunk, heavyweight boxer. All this basic military training was pushing me in the direction I then followed up with later on.

I had an unusual experience at Fort Hood because I was only there for a year. My automatic branch transfer occurred to military intelligence. One of many fortuitous accidents in my life occurred at that point. I wanted to serve with the cavalry more, but with the armored cavalry regiments we had patrolling the inner German border. That was the job of two cavalry regiments that U.S. Army Europe had. I called up the detailer people here in Washington and asked to go study German or Czech. The officer, a captain, said, “Let me check into this. I’ll get back to you.” A day or two later, I called

him back. He said, “I’ve been looking at your file. We don’t have any positions for German or Czech, but I see you studied Russian at West Point. How would you like to go study Russian for a year in Monterey, California?” My jaw fell open. I said, “I’ll take it!” As a first lieutenant, I was sent to study Russian at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) in Monterey, six hours a day, five days a week, for 47 weeks. That constituted a huge leap down the road of becoming a Russian specialist in the Army.

We didn’t have any children. We had space available in my Russian class, so my wife was allowed to take Russian. She had never taken a day of Russian up until that point. Most people in the class hadn’t. She took the entire course gratis as a spouse, which paid huge dividends for her later when we served in Moscow, and even in Berlin when we had social events with Soviet officers.

Two things of note happened in the course of my Russian language training at DLI. One was the October 1973 Middle East war, the Yom Kippur War. We all got nervous because we had learned some Russian at that point. The Russians had gone on alert, which caused the US to go on alert too. We wondered if we were going to get deployed. That didn’t happen, but that set up a sequence of events for my future. In a couple of years, I got involved in the after-effects of the October 1973 war.

Close behind that, it was time for me to find my assignment coming out of DLI since it is a one-year school. Again, I called the assignment people in Washington. There was a new assignment officer. The very first comment made to me was, “Oh, you’re the guy.” I said, “Excuse me?” He says, “You’re not supposed to be there.” I said, “What does that mean?” He says, “There’s no position in the entire United States Army for a guy with your specialty as a first lieutenant Russian speaker.” I got incensed! I said, “Look! I didn’t cut the orders sending me here. I was sent here. So what am I going to do?” He said, “I don’t know.” He was very curt with me. Clearly, I was the square peg, and he was looking for a round peg.

Q: Right.

COX: I hung up the phone very upset and came back into the classroom. In my class, there were four majors who were becoming Soviet foreign area officers. One of them had a good friend who had just taken over command of a technical intelligence company that belonged to Fort Bragg, to the 18th Airborne Corps, but was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, which coincidentally is only 40 miles from Newark, Delaware, where our parents were living. This very nice major in our Russian class said, “Let me talk to my friend.” He did, and the next day he came in, and he said, “My friend, wants to talk to you.” So I called up the major at Aberdeen. He asked, “Lieutenant Cox, you are a former armor officer?” I said, “Yes, sir. Armored cavalry. I’ve done everything with tanks.” He said, “And you’re in the Russian language program.” I said, “Yes, sir, that’s right. I’m finishing shortly, and I have the second highest grade in the class.” At that point, he said, “Oh my god, my prayers have been answered!”

[Laughter]

COX: The Major had just come from being an assignment officer in Washington, so he knew everybody in that bureaucracy. He said, “Give me your social security number and your full name, and stand by. I’ll take care of this.” Within 48 hours, I had orders on my desk assigning me to Aberdeen Proving Ground. My parents and my wife’s parents were absolutely thrilled. I was too. I didn’t know what the future held. I didn’t know anything about Israel, which will come up later, but there I was – I had resolved my assignment dilemma. My wife and I drove cross-country from Monterey. When we got back to the East Coast, we told our parents, “You better enjoy this (assignment to APG, 40 miles from Newark, DE) because it’s never going to happen again! This is as close as we can possibly get!” It was wonderful.

I was assigned as a translator, French and Russian translator, to translate technical documents the Army was getting. But there was something else happening in the Army in 1974. What the Army leadership, the senior generals in the Army, were doing, figuratively speaking, was trying to wrench the Army’s mentality out of Vietnam and back to Central Europe, to the main enemy as Vietnam was winding down. Along came the Yom Kippur War. Among other things, the Israelis captured 1,000 Soviet tanks, brand new Soviet tanks, both in the Golan and the Sinai. Some senior U.S. Army officers were actually sent there as observers before the conflict ended. Lieutenant colonels were going around the battlefield seeing what damage Soviet tank projectiles did to U.S.-made tanks and checking out Soviet tanks, studying how they held up against US-made tanks. The decision was made at the most senior levels of the U.S. government that we needed some of those tanks to assist the transition of the US Army’s focus back to Central Europe. The word came down that the Army leadership needed a former armor officer and a Russian speaker. Bingo! Lightning struck right at my feet.

Q: Right.

COX: It took several months to put the trip together, but by the summer of 1975, a warrant officer who was a maintenance expert and an ordnance officer who was more of a munitions expert, and me—I was considered the turret expert, I knew how to fire tanks—the three of us were sent to Israel for three weeks where we were to be hosted by the Israelis and trained by them on Soviet armor, a relatively small collection of which we were going to bring back to the United States to start an opposing forces program.

There were some funny things that happened on the way to Israel. I was very concerned about the ability to communicate with Israelis. I said to a senior general at the Pentagon, “Sir, none of us speaks Hebrew”. He said, “Don’t worry. Everybody speaks English in Israel.” So we got to Israel, and it’s a good thing I could speak Russian, because every one of our instructors and everything we did was entirely in Russian. We had a wonderful three weeks there. I had an experience I’ve used for years in training younger officers in Russian, and in foreign languages, in general. I refer to foreign language capability as money in the bank. It’s there when you need it. But if you don’t have it when you need it, then you are in trouble. We were escorted by the Israelis everywhere we went. They treated us wonderfully. We had superb training. Israel still felt very much under siege at

the time, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War. There were terrorists coming ashore in rubber boats and things like that, shooting up buildings across from the U.S. embassy and elsewhere. There were a lot of things going on.

The last night we were in Israel we Americans decided to treat our Israeli hosts. We got a bunch of steaks and beer from the Embassy commissary. We told them, “Let’s do a beach party, north of Tel Aviv, on the coast. We’ll bring the meat and the beer, if you guys can bring salads or something. Bring your wives, your girlfriends.” In one case, one guy brought his parents who were from Brooklyn! They had moved to Israel in 1947. He was totally Israeli, but his parents were totally Brooklyn. They told me Brooklyn jokes from 1947 all evening. We had a barbeque on the beach, threw Frisbees, had a wonderful time hosting them and meeting their wives and girlfriends.

As the sun went down, Israeli patrol craft at sea started firing flares into the sky. We all paused, waiting for firing to start. No firing started, but the Israelis all went over to their beach bags and pulled out Uzis and charged their submachine guns. The three Americans were actually gob-smacked, looking at them like, “What are you doing?” They said, “What do you mean, what are we doing? In Israel, you never go to the beach without a gun.” We all started laughing, and said, “In the U.S., you never take a gun to the beach!” I’ve never experienced anything like this. We had a big yuk about that. No firing out at sea occurred but, unbeknownst to them, roadblocks had been set up as a precautionary measure outside of Tel Aviv.

That night, for the first time, we were not escorted by our Israeli hosts. They all went home with their wives, girlfriends and parents, and we were left to drive the 10 or 15 miles back into Tel Aviv to our hotel. We had not brought our passports; we had no ID. On the way back into town, there was an Israeli military roadblock. We rolled up in the car and a grizzled guy with a rifle stuck his face in and started speaking to us in Hebrew. I said, “No, no Hebrew.” He said, “How about Yiddish?” I said, “If we don’t speak Hebrew, what are the chances we speak Yiddish?”

[Laughter]

COX: I looked at him and said in French, “Do you speak French?” He said, “No, no. No French.” As a last resort, because there was no other choice, I said in Russian, “Do you speak Russian?” His face lit up, and he said, “Of course I speak Russian! I’m from Russia!” The two officers with me had no idea what was happening at that point. I was in the passenger seat talking across the driver, and the other guy was in the back seat. The Israeli and I were going on and on chatting. Suddenly, he got serious, and he said, “Wait. You said you are American officers. Why do you speak Russian?” I said, “I speak Russian because I learned it in University.” To change the subject, I said, “So where are you from in Russia?” He said, “I’m from Lithuania.” I said, “No way! My mother is from Lithuania!” His face lit up, “Oh my god!” Cars behind us started honking their horns, but he was completely oblivious to it. Now we are talking about my mother. I said, “Yeah, she left in 1944. She lived in Kaunas.” People are really getting irate behind us. He said, “Give my regards to your mother.” I said, “OK, thank you so much.” I turned to the

driver and said, “Go, go, go!” As we drove off, we dissolved into laughter. They said, “What the hell happened back there? What did you say to that guy?” So I told them the story. I said, “You know, sometimes foreign language knowledge helps.”

We brought some Soviet tanks back to the United States, and I became kind of a talking dog. We shipped them various places around the country. We shipped them to Germany at one point and made a movie at one of the big training centers to show what a Soviet attack would look like. The command in Europe had filled the bleachers with all the battalion and brigade commanders in Germany. We “attacked” them while the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) filmed it. At Aberdeen Proving Ground, of course, we had soldiers visit from all over the country to look at the tanks, listen to the tanks, smell the tanks, touch the tanks, and of course discuss with us, “How do you kill this tank?” We could never say no to a visit request. On the weekends, the Reserves and the National Guard wanted to come see us. Again, our policy was, we will never say no. So we worked seven days a week briefing soldiers, exposing them to Soviet armor. I spent hours driving Soviet tanks and shooting Soviet tanks in Germany. I essentially became a Soviet tanker. That assignment was a wonderful experience.

Recall at this point the Army’s “mistake” sending me to Monterey, the shear chance of getting the job at Aberdeen Proving Ground, and the coincidence of the October 1973 war – all of which got me to Israel. It turned out that I traveled to Israel not once, but twice.

I was sent to Israel a second time in winter, January-February of 1977. This time I was in charge of our team; I brought four sergeants with me. We worked near Haifa in a bone yard, a large field full of destroyed tanks. We were getting spare parts, and bringing some more vehicles home. This led to my second most favorite story where Russian language was “money in the bank”.

We had been in Israel for almost six weeks. It was a nasty winter in the U.S., but in Israel the weather was just beautiful. We wore cut-off blue jeans. We wore army boots because there was sharp metal around, but cut-off blue jeans and no shirt. We got brown like bears. It was just an amazing winter. Our body clocks got completely screwed up because in Israel the Sabbath starts on Friday, and there is no work on Saturday. Sunday is the first workday of the week. We conformed to their lives. We worked on Sunday, so Monday always felt like Tuesday…. Confusing, right?

At the end of each week, one of us would leave early with one of our rental cars and to go to the American embassy to stock up on steaks and beer and other food because we were living in a rented townhouse just north of Tel Aviv. We didn’t have much contact with the embassy. We were barbequing, cooking food on our own, or going out to restaurants. Each week a different one of us drove to Tel Aviv to stock up.

This particular week it was my turn to go to the Embassy. I left the sergeants at our work site. I got a late start, so I was moving fast. It was the second workday of the week. It felt like a Tuesday. I got to the backside of the embassy, and, to my horror, saw the parking

lot was empty. I had seen armed soldiers before I turned down to the beach where the Embassy parking lot is. The situation did not look good. I parked the car and went to the back door of the embassy, where there is a camera the Marine security guards monitor. I pounded on the door while looking at the camera. No answer. I thought, "This is not good."

I turned around and realized there was a little guardhouse at the entrance to the parking lot, by the barrier the guard lifted to allow entry. And the guard was there. So I went over to him and asked in English, "What's going on? Where is everybody?" He said, "No English. No English." He looked at me, and asked, "You speak Hebrew?" I said, "No." Then he tried Yiddish. I said, "No." I tried German, "Do you speak German?" "No." I tried French. "No." So there was only one option left to me. I asked him if he spoke Russian, and he answered, "Of course. I'm Russian." Switching to Russian, I asked, "What the hell is going on? Where is everybody?" He looked at me and said, "You're an American, right?" I said, "Yes." Then, very slowly, in Russian, he spoke to me as if I were a total idiot, "Today… is… Washington's… birthday." I burst out laughing. The irony was, a Russian Jew just told me that, one, we worked on Washington's birthday, a holiday, and two, there wasn't going to be any beer or steaks! The sergeants were not going to be happy. Then I said, "But what about the armed soldiers on the street in front of the embassy? What's that all about?" He said, "Oh, the Labor Party is having a congress, so that's just security. It's got nothing to do with the embassy." And I just laughed. I howled. I went back and told the sergeants. They didn't laugh nearly much as I did about this.

Q: It is January 24th, and we are resuming our interview with James Cox.

COX: My assignment at Aberdeen Proving Ground was drawing to a close in the late summer of 1977. It had been a wonderful experience, as I related in a couple of these stories, but it was time for me to move on. With the professional development training education system the Army has, it was time for me to go to what we call our Advanced Course, which is the company grade officers' course. This is a six-month course in Fort Huachuca, Arizona. I was sent there.

Q: Just a quick question… For those of us who don't know the Army forts and where they are located, what was Fort Huachuca like in terms of its location?

COX: Well, it's very much in the southern part of Arizona. Actually, it is only one mountain range away from Mexico. It got its start as a cavalry outpost like many places in the West. In fact, it became the home of the Buffalo Soldiers, which was the name given to cavalry units composed of black soldiers. They were called Buffalo Soldiers because, with their black, nappy hair, when it got dusty, they were said to resemble a buffalo. It's a history, a memory that is celebrated at Fort Huachuca, that the Buffalo Soldiers were garrisoned there. At the time, probably they were put there because it was about as far away from the rest of the world as the Army could put them. But they served with distinction. They were regular U.S. soldiers, and their heritage is something that we now celebrate.

The U.S. Army Military Intelligence School moved there from Fort Holabird, Maryland, sometime in 1960s as I recall. That's where I went for a six-month professional development education program. There is not much to say about my time there except I was communicating with the Department of Foreign Languages at West Point, they had invited me to return to be an instructor of Russian. It's a three-year assignment and involves going to graduate school en route. The Army said they were fully supportive of this. However, as the Army is wont to do, it also said, "You need to pay your dues first, so you have to go to Korea before you go to graduate school." I said, "Okay, that's fine. I understand that." When I left the intelligence school in Fort Huachuca, I went to a one-year assignment to the 2nd Infantry Division near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in South Korea.

Q: So this is 1978?

COX: Yes. I served in Korea from 1978 to 1979. I was in the G-2 shop, the intelligence section, of the 2nd Infantry Division and served as the G-2 operations officer. I was one of a handful of officers that deployed immediately during alerts with a small portion of the division headquarters, which we called the tactical command post. The main command post was a gaggle of huge trailers and trucks and hundreds of people, and I didn't want any part of it. I wanted to be out with three jeeps and 20 guys, a senior operations officer, and the assistant division commander. We went out first, and we came back last. We operated pretty much independently of the division. That was a wonderful experience.

It was a one-year assignment, an unaccompanied tour. My wife and I still didn't have children at that point. We were in our 20s and cavalier. I knew others had done this, so I paid her way over. On our own dime, she came to Korea. She rented a "hooch" in the local "ville," right outside of the 2nd Infantry Division Headquarters. We used to jokingly refer to her as the "illegitimate" dependent there because she was non-Command sponsored. The division commander at the time was an amazing officer with an unbelievable background. Had he ordered us to walk over a cliff, we probably would have done it. General David Grange, Sr., was the division commander.

The very first night, I brought my wife into the commanding general's mess, which was the dining facility for those of us who served in division headquarters. The division commander, MG Grange, came over and introduced himself to her and asked about us. I told him I was getting ready to go back to teach Russian at West Point and hoping to become a Russian foreign area officer, at which point he said he had also been trained in Russian by the U.S. Army. His story was that he had been a Private First Class (PFC) at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. Having survived that, he got out of the Army, went to college, got commissioned through Army ROTC, and came back into the Army in time for the Korean War. During that war, he had been the sole surviving officer in his battalion, twice!

Q: Wow!

COX: Every day at 5:00 o'clock—didn't matter if it was pouring rain or six inches of snow—he would walk out of his office carrying a sawed-off shotgun and his fighting gear to the helipad. The helicopter would come in and take him to the DMZ. He would spend nights on ambush patrol with soldiers up in the Demilitarized Zone. He would tell the sergeant when he got there, "I'm a squad member. It's your patrol. You tell me what you want me to do." He carried a sawed-off shotgun, which was a wonderful symbol. I have this memory seared in my brain of him walking to the helipad carrying his stuff, and the helicopter coming and taking him up north. The soldiers worshipped the ground he walked on. Officers, too. I found that, deployed as I was with this very small group with the tactical command post, he would routinely come to our site during training exercises and alerts. Oftentimes, senior South Korean officers would visit him there. I realized these guys had all been lieutenants during the Korean War. In some cases, they knew him, and now they were two- and three-star generals, and he was a two-star general. They had all survived that horrible war. I just had this overwhelming sense that as long as he was with us, everything was going to be okay.

It turned out to be a tremendous positive military experience. I will make one comic digression here. One of the most popular shows in the United States at that time was M*A*S*H. We captains were very sacrilegious, undisciplined. At division headquarters, we were the ones who did a lot of the work, but we were also the ones who kind of ran our own shop. It was a bit wild. We captains told our bosses, "We are leaving work at 5:00"—to go a few steps away to the officers' club annex, which was just a little beer place where there was a TV. On Armed Forces Network, at 5:00 o'clock, M*A*S*H would come on. We would just laugh and howl until we had tears running down our cheeks. I am here to tell you, in my opinion, the most accurate television program every produced was M*A*S*H because we saw everything they had in the show, including pinstriped suits where stripes went sideways! Then we would go back to work and be good officers after that. But the bosses let us do it! They didn't stop us from this, and sometimes they joined us. It was just one of these pinching experiences where you say, "Is this really happening? I can't believe it."

There was a darker side, and I mention this in the context of right now, in January 2018, we are very concerned about the situation in Korea. Without diminishing the current threat, I will tell you that there have been many times when we've been on the brink of conflict there. It happened at least twice during my year there, when war seemed to be right around the corner. In some cases, in the United States, the American public didn't know how tense things had gotten, but the Department of Defense and the president knew it. There were times when, secretly, additional aircraft carriers were moved into the area. One time, there were B-52s flying figure eights 24 hours a day over South Korea, loaded, waiting for something to happen. We got that close to war.

There was one time concerning tunnels underneath the Demilitarized Zone from the North Korean side to the South Korean side. Picture tines on a fork. The North Koreans would dig so far, and then they would branch out to the right and left and make the tunnels look like a fork. There was one time when all of these tunnels, even the ones that had been intercepted and blocked by U.S. engineers and South Korean soldiers, went

active. We knew from intelligence that some of the special operations forces the North Koreans had, in kind of a religious-like ceremony, disassembled their garrisons; i.e., were not planning to come back. We lost track of those units. We didn't know where they were. At the same time, the tunnels were all going active, as if the North Koreans didn't care that we knew. That's when the B-52s where flying figure eights over the country. We lived on needles and pins. The American public was not told this. My parents did not know this. Then, gradually, these "lost" North Korean units built garrisons in another location, and all the work in the tunnels stopped. What was that all about? Nobody knows. There were some hairy moments then. I feel for the soldiers and airmen who are stationed in Korea now. I hope we can somehow find a peaceful resolution to this current situation and the long-term situation with the Korean peninsula. It's long overdue at this point.

Being an intelligence officer and aware of the daily intelligence briefings about everything from North Korean infiltrators coming across the DMZ to these war scares, there were times I got very concerned about my wife. I actually created for her what I called the "war package." Like I mentioned earlier, we were still in our 20s. We had no kids. We both were healthy, young, and strong. I told her, when the whistle blows, when the balloon goes up, I will not and cannot spend any time worrying about her. I've got bigger responsibilities. She will be on her own. I made her carry with her, 24 hours a day, no matter where we were, three things. She had to have her passport. She had to have an open airline ticket, which we had bought—from Seoul back to the US. And she had to have $500 in traveler's checks. This was her "war package." In the Army, if you're on a field exercise, a soldier is never supposed to be more than an arm's length away from his weapon. The same rules applied to her. She could never be more than an arm's length away from her "war package." The only other thing I told her was, "Stay the hell off the roads because they're going to be crowded and shot up. Go cross-country. Get to Seoul. The Army will get you to Japan, and once you're to Japan, then you're fine. You can use the airline ticket and get home, get out of here."

Fortunately, she never had to use it.

My wife left Korea three months before I did because she got pregnant. I suddenly became a lot less cavalier about her ability to move off road in the case of hostilities. Her father got particularly pointed with me, saying, "Get that girl home!" So I sent her home when I went out on a big exercise in the spring, an annual exercise we do with the South Koreans. I knew it would only be six weeks or so after that exercise before I'd join her in the States. She went home with two tasks: One, to take care of herself. And two, to go to Bloomington, Indiana, where I had been accepted at Indiana University, to buy a house.

Korea turned out to be not only a tremendous military experience for me, but also one for her as well because she came closer than most spouses to seeing what the Army is ultimately about. We were always carrying guns. We lived within artillery range of the Demilitarized Zone. While in Korea, she taught GIs remedial math and English. Much to our horror, we learned something about American soldiers in the late 1970s that we were not aware of. We encountered soldiers who had only second grade educations. Second

grade! That's it. That's as far as they had gone. They entered the Army because they had no hope of getting a job anywhere else. Some of them decided the Army was a great home for them. They wanted to stay, but to stay they had to be able to get promoted to sergeant. They couldn't get promoted to sergeant unless they were literate and had basic math skills. The division commander was extremely happy that my wife and a couple other "illegitimate" dependents—spouses whose junior officers had brought with them to Korea at their own expense as well—were there because these women taught soldiers basic skills. I was a little bit concerned soldiers might not act correctly around my wife. No worries. My wife and the other ladies were their ticket to a profession, to passing the exams to become a sergeant, and there was no way they were going to let anything happen to their teachers. They loved their teachers. They were much more respected than I, a captain at that point, was. It all worked out very well, and it was a tremendous experience for her.

The Army does funny things to people sometimes. I had a degree in general engineering from the military academy, one year of Russian at the Defense Language Institute which was then five years old, and the Army sent me to get a master's degree in a subject I didn't have a bachelor's degree in. Moreover, instead of 18 months, the Army gave me only 14 months to get a Master's Degree in Russian – essentially two summers and the academic year in between. I thought of it this way: I was thrown into the deep end of the swimming pool and told, "You're on your own." Two months after I started my master's program, my wife gave birth to our first daughter, in Bloomington. Joy! Then my daughter decided she wasn't going to sleep for the first six months. No joy!

Q: Of course!

COX: I was in the deep end of the swimming pool, trying to keep my head above water. It was a rough few weeks at our house. Exhaustion was the ruling mood for a while. But, we both survived, and so did our daughter!

I had an experience in graduate school that ties in a couple of threads in my life. Indiana University is famous for its summer intensive Slavic language workshop. Students come from all over the country to participate in this. What this translates to, in a kind of practical language, is that over the course of the summer intensive Slavic workshop, you could do an entire year of college Russian. I did my senior undergraduate year in the first Slavic workshop, and then all my graduate work in the two academic semesters.

As I approached my second – and final - summer at Indiana University, walking down a hallway one day at IU, I noticed an advertisement for a trip to the Soviet Union on a bulletin board. This was the spring of 1980. A trip to the Soviet Union for six weeks, and its dates exactly coincided with the first summer session at IU. The first summer session was only six weeks long and it was when everyone took vacation because the second – longer – summer session was the famous Summer Slavic Workshop. The trip cost $2,200, which was all the money in the world that we had. I went home and talked to my wife and said, "This is an opportunity like no other." I also talked to my faculty advisor who said, "Go, Jim, go! Six weeks in the Soviet Union is worth at least an academic year.

When you come back, do a report, and I will give you credit for it." The Army wouldn't let me take vacation, but I could go on "study" trip. As long as I was getting credit for it, it was okay with the Army. So we spent all the money we had.

Q: Now this is 1980, basically the first full year the Soviets were in Afghanistan?

COX: Yes, and I'm coming to that. Summer 1980 was the Moscow Olympics, which we had boycotted because of the Soviet invasion into Afghanistan in December 1979.

I applied for and got a visa to the Soviet Union. The six-week trip included Leningrad and Moscow. We also went to Kiev, through the Caucasus, and to Central Asia. We even went to Siberia. It was a wonderful experience – and a tremendous education. However, there were no Americans in the Soviet Union because of the boycott. I think we ran into one other small group of Americans in the course of the trip. Most of the students I traveled with were from Texas A&M, and most of them were not Russian students, so their professor, who was about my age, and I, and one graduate student on this trip were the only people who spoke Russian in this group of maybe 15 or 16. We would go into a restaurant or store, and I would start speaking Russian, trying to help out some of the students. People would say, "Where are you from?" I'd say, "I'm from America." As soon as they heard I was American and that I obviously understood Russian, they would "beat me up", saying, "How come you're not coming to the Olympics? It can't be an Olympics without the Americans. During Vietnam, we never stopped coming to the Olympics!" This happened to me two or three times, to the point where I realized I had to put together a response.

I need to go back to something I talked about during the summer I spent in France as a teenager, long before I knew I was going to West Point. My French father was a retired, disabled French officer. His four children were born in Paris, Hanoi, Istanbul and Algiers, which tells you about his career. He was a rare Frenchman in that he loved America, and he hated Russia. He refused to speak a word of English to me. My French mother was the opposite. She was an extremely beautiful woman. They lived a very rustic, kind of bohemian lifestyle. She was the daughter of a career French ambassador. She was raised in Latvia, Poland, and all over the world. She spoke excellent English. She would speak some English to me during the day, but my French father would not even say "okay." Everything had to be in French. The summer I was in France, 1966, was when the United States started bombing the Haiphong oil refineries in North Vietnam. It was a major escalation. My French father used to sit me down in the evenings and lecture me. Basically, his message was, "You stupid Americans. The French screwed it up. You didn't learn anything from us, and I wish you 10 years of good luck in Vietnam!"

With that thought coming back to my mind in a hotel room in the Soviet Union, I figured out that's the message. I simply added to it, "You stupid Russians. The Americans didn't learn anything from the French. You didn't learn anything from the Americans. I wish you 10 years of good luck in Afghanistan!" I practiced it and practiced it, so I could deliver that retort as one run-on sentence so I could get it out without being interrupted. I used it all over Russia. People would get so frustrated, but that would stop the argument.

When I got to the Caucasus, to the country of Georgia specifically, I went into a restaurant one day. Remember, this was 1980. I experienced a "moment" of what was to come in the USSR. I went up to the bar to buy a Coke. The bartender completely ignored me. He walked right past me and dealt with the locals there instead – even though I was speaking Russian to him! Finally, I got really upset. I said (in Russian), "Look. I'm an American. I don't speak Georgian. I only speak Russian. Now will you get me a Coke?" The shock on his face! He said, "What? You're an American? Sure!" He got me a Coke. I said, "How much is it?" He said "No, no! No charge. You can't pay for anything here. If you're an American, you can't pay for anything here!"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: It didn't happen just there. It happened elsewhere in the Caucasus as soon as they found out I was an American. It wasn't the fact that I was an American who spoke Russian, but that I was an American. They refused to take my money. I thought, "Okay. That's telling me something, right there."

I came back from that trip as a much more experienced, wizened guy, and so much more ready than ever to become a fully certified Russian Foreign Area Officer in the Army. I finished grad school and immediately moved to West Point.

Q: Can I ask one question about grad school, the program at Indiana? Here we are, it's 1980, and it's a program about Russia, not just the language?

COX: No, it was the language, I got a Master's Degree in the Russian language.

Q: Okay. I was just curious if there was a particular bent to the approach, given world events?

COX: No. My approach was to concentrate on linguistics. My favorite instructor at Indiana was a gentleman who was brilliant in Russian linguistics and phonetics. He only had a master's degree. I sat with him one time. I loved taking his classes. I said, "Why is it you choose to live year-by-year, contract-by-contract? There's no hope for you to ever have tenure unless you get a PhD." That's just the way of life in universities. He explained to me something I already felt, but couldn't articulate. He said, "My concept of studying foreign languages is, I only want to know that which I can use on the sidewalks of life." I said, "That's it! That's exactly it. That's what I want. I want to work on the sidewalks of life. That's what I want from my study of Russian."

I'll mention one other quick story about my return from the Soviet Union at the end of the six-week period. Our route, both in and out, was through Helsinki, where we got onto a Finnish Air flight back to Kennedy Airport in New York. After six weeks in the USSR, I'm telling you…. After a dozen flights on Aeroflot, where we had gone from a period of being extremely religious to extremely fatalistic about surviving Aeroflot planes and

pilots, when I saw that shiny DC-10 parked there in Finnish Air livery, I wanted to go out and wax it. It was the most beautiful plane I'd ever seen in my life!

Q: [Laughter]

COX: And this was the year when there were a lot of DC-10 crashes. I didn't care! No problem at all.

I got on the plane. Settling in, I was counting the hours until I would get back to the States and get back to my wife and my baby daughter. Some guy was sitting next to me reading a news magazine. I looked over at the cover of the magazine. It was a picture of a volcano. I reached over, and I said, "Excuse me, what's that?" He looked at the cover of the magazine and said, "This? Are you talking about this?" I said, "Yes." I said, "What is that?" He said, "It's Mount St. Helens." I said, "What's that?" He looked at me and said, "Where the hell have you been?" Well, where I had been there was no political advantage to be gained by talking about Mount St. Helens. Mount St. Helens blew a couple of days after I flew into the Soviet Union. I watched Soviet television every single night I could. They showed riots in Miami, everything that was negative about the US, but they never mentioned a word about Mount St. Helens. At that moment, I concluded that on the subject of Mount St. Helens, I was the most ignorant person in the entire world. I never forgave the Soviets for that. It took me years to get caught up on Mount St. Helens. Even now, it's still kind of a blank in my life.

So I moved to West Point at the end of August 1980 and I was, as we would say, back in the womb, teaching cadets Russian. It had been nine years since I graduated. I had lived a lot of life already, and yet I didn't feel that much older than the cadets. It was a wonderful experience dealing with them. The newest development at West Point was the appearance of the first female cadets. It took me all of about five seconds to get used to the idea. The cadets who studied Russian tended to not be the ones at the bottom of their class. They had strong language skills or aptitudes, so academically speaking I had a better slice of cadets. The females in my classes were not just surviving; they were thriving. I thought, "I don't care how long they serve in the military, they are going to do fine." If they can thrive in what can only be described as a totally male-dominated environment, they will do fine in business as well as the military. It truly was a wonderful experience, and I have, as a result of teaching there, a number of "adopted" sons and daughters from the cadets I taught.

By 1983, I had studied Russian for a year in California and for 14 months in Indiana. I had taught Russian for three years. I had used it in a variety of countries, as you have heard. But I was still not yet a Certified Foreign Area Officer. What I then encountered was an attitude by my assignment officer that, "You speak so much Russian, you don't need to go to the Russian Institute in Garmisch, Germany." The Garmisch phase of Russian FAO training was the final step – advanced Russian training for two years. To my assignment officer I responded, "I don't want to go for two years, I want to go for one year. One year is important because I have to get plugged into the "network". I have to become known in this little fraternity of Russian speakers in the Army." At the time, the

Army numbered about 750,000. I don't know exactly, but there could not have been more than 200 Russian-speaking officers. When I call that group a little niche, it really was. We all knew each other. It was a fraternity in every positive sense of the word.

The assignment officer I was dealing with said, "Okay. I understand getting plugged into the network. I will send you for one year to the Russian Institute. When you finish up there, you will become a foreign area officer, but then you owe the Army. You are coming to the Pentagon to serve on the Army staff. " I said, "Deal!" At least it was close to Delaware. My attitude had always been, and you will see this as my career continues to be revealed here, I either wanted to serve at the very top or the very bottom. I didn't want anywhere in between. In the State Department, there is only a "top" and "bottom", but in the Army, there are intermediate headquarters in this gigantic organization we have. I had seen enough of these headquarters. I thought, "No. Not for me. I either want to be at the pointy end or I want to be giving advice to the most senior policymakers in the military. So I immediately agreed with the deal proposed by my assignment officer.

I moved to Europe for one year to Garmisch-Partenkirchen in southern Germany where the U.S. Army has had its advanced Russian language program since after World War II. Loved it! Because my language was generally better than most of the other students there—and I was there for only one instead of the usual two years - I was able to cherry pick the best of freshman year classes and senior year classes to attend. When senior officers, and by this I mean colonels who were army attachés in Moscow, or East European capitals, would come to Garmisch, there were a couple of us who always wanted to spend extra time speaking to them. We wanted to learn as much as we could of their experiences, about what life was like as a Russian foreign area officer working in an embassy. We would approach the visiting officer and offer to take him out to dinner, just the two or three of us, our treat. We would just talk shop at dinner. But afterwards we would return to one of our apartments where we would have dessert with our wives and not talk shop. I valued these experiences. It turned out that I made a connection there to an officer who played a critical role in my career a few years later. I'll come to that in a few minutes.

When I finished my year in Garmisch I became a full-fledged Soviet/Russian foreign area officer. Before I go on with my career, I'm going to take a minute or two and explain to people who don't come from a military background and may not have a full grasp of what it means to be a foreign area officer in the Army. The only example I can really use is the Russian foreign area officer, but what I say is at least generally true for the area specialists the Army trains for every area in the world

What is a foreign area officer? What does he do, and why is this attractive to some? What does one get from the program, and what does one give up to be in the program? First of all, these officers are trained in regional expertise—the history, the sociology, the demographics, the industries—of the country or the region they have chosen, and, most importantly, in the language of that country or region. The commitment one makes to become a FAO often means that you are taking yourself out of the mainstream of the Army. This is a decision that has, in almost all cases, career impacts in terms of potential

promotion into general officer ranks. But, what's more important is, if this is your passion in life, then the potential "cost" is well worth the benefits. I was willing to trade promotion opportunities, or potential, for the job satisfaction that this chosen field provided me.

Another way of explaining it is, I gave up command opportunities. There was no way I was going to become a battalion commander or brigade commander, all of which would lead to potential for higher promotion. However, what I gained was the opportunity to influence out of proportion to my rank, because I was the expert in the room with the ambassadors and with the three- and four-star generals, or senators, or congressman who would say "Well, what about this?" or "Do you know anything about this? What do you think about that?" That's where I, even as a major or lieutenant colonel, and eventually as a colonel, could say, "This is what I know about that."

There are a couple of examples where I had a significant impact on influencing a policy decision by having the opportunity to speak directly to a very senior officer, without having to go through the chain of command, because I was working in an embassy for an ambassador. The senior visitor was in my ambassador's office, and I had been invited to attend. The general asked a question, and, after the ambassador answered, I was asked for my views. Based on the complementary answers we gave, the general said, "Okay. That's it, that makes sense. That's what we're going to do." And that became a policy. That is very heady stuff.

One of the expressions we use is that foreign area officers hit above their weight. What is critical with a foreign area officer is, you may be a major or lieutenant colonel, but if you are talking to four-star general who is the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, or an ambassador, you can't think like a major or lieutenant colonel. You have to think like a theater commander or the president. They deal with big, global issues, not tactical, down-in-the-weeds issues. Many officers can't make the leap. They can't think "big" because they have never been required to do so. But if you can, that's your moment. You will find yourself included in the discussions when senior visitors have questions of policy. I was willing to trade off command opportunities and the possibility of promotion to general for the opportunity to influence people in such small group exchanges.

At this point, January 1985, I reported to the Army staff in the Pentagon. I was assigned to the perfect job for Jim Cox. I was made the manager of the total Army's foreign language training program. I managed the language training program for a three-star general from my desk as Major Cox in the Department of the Army. I loved the job, which provided me opportunities to learn exactly how "big Army" functioned.

One story I want to tell about my time on the Army staff was the day I got to my desk, the day I entered the Pentagon.

Q: And this is January 1985?

COX: January 1985. On my birthday, I walked into my office, and I found on my desk a flag note from the secretary of the Army, which he had written to my three-star boss, the assistant chief of staff for intelligence at the Department of the Army. The note said, "Can't we do something about paying our linguists proficiency pay?" My boss had written on it, "Major Cox, your action." So my major priority was clearly established right there on day one. At the time, linguists working for the State Department had a proficiency pay program. So too linguists in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and at the National Security Agency (NSA). Military linguists did not. I said, "Okay, I'm just going to see what I can do with this." I found some old files, which indicated people had been talking about this for years, but nothing really had been done about it. Starting with a blank piece of paper, I literally drafted a law, a provision to go into the Defense Authorization Act, which is where laws are made for the Department of Defense (DOD).

Over the course of the next 16 months, I coordinated my draft legislation throughout the Army. At some point, the Office of the Secretary of Defense found out about my efforts. I got a call from a senior civilian on the secretary of defense's staff who announced to me - didn't ask - told me I was now in charge of this draft law for the entire Department of Defense and Coast Guard. I became the number one point guy in the Pentagon for getting this draft bill up on Capitol Hill. This was during the Reagan build-up years. Despite the fact money was flowing into DOD, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) had put out a memo saying, "No new initiatives from DOD this year." The legislative liaison people in the Army staff, the senior civilian I worked with, said, "Yeah, okay, right. But this is how we'll work around that. If the Department of Defense cannot push anything up toward the OMB then we'll get senators to pull it up. That's different, and OMB can't stop that." So we had a couple of meetings with staffers where at the end of the meeting, we all agreed we'd never seen each other before.

Q: Right!

COX: They pulled it up. It was Leon Panetta from Monterey on the House side, and Senator Simon from Illinois, who had written books about how Americans can't speak foreign languages. He was a huge proponent of this. It got pulled up to the Hill, not pushed up to the Hill. Nobody in OMB ever asked, "Where did this come from?" In the grand scheme of the Department of Defense, my $10 million a year program was a very small program. But success was never guaranteed, and, despite my best efforts, it almost failed.

On the evening the DoD Authorization Bill was being marked up, meaning put together, I happened to be in the office late. It was after six o'clock. The legislative liaison person I was working with called me and said, "Get down here right now. Some guy on the Hill is on the phone and wants to talk to you about the bill." Despite the fact that I promised myself I would never run in the Pentagon (there was enough stress already) that night I ran like the wind. Got down to his office, and picked up the phone. The legislative liaison person was on an extension. The person on the Hill said, "You want to authorize a maximum of $200 per month for these linguists?" I said, "Yes." He said, "I picked this up off the floor (of Congress). Somebody else had discarded it, but I want to save it but

we need to find a compromise here." I tentatively said, "Okay." He said, "How about if we do a maximum of $100 a month." I was quiet. Then he added, "And I need to know the Department of Defense position on this right now." So I said, "Just a minute." I put my hand over the phone. I looked at the legislative liaison person and said, "How in the hell can I get DOD's position on this right now?" He looked at me and he said, "You're going to give to him right now!"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: I got back on the phone, and I said, "I'll take it!"

The next day… Remember, this was October 1986. We had no computers in the Pentagon. There was a room, I swear to God, there was a room in the Pentagon that was full of old ladies in tennis shoes who were cutting and pasting the DOD Authorization Act as it had been finalized by the Hill. They put parts of pages together so sponsors of bills (like me) could see what language was approved. I entered the room and I shouted, "Who has the language pay?" Some lady said, "Over here." So I went and got it, and there it was. The only thing that had been changed was the amount. The truth about laws is that once you have a law on the books, modifying it is fairly easy. Getting the initial authorization is the incredibly difficult part. So there I was one for one with Congress!

That morning, my three-star boss called me in. He was just aglow. He couldn't believe that it had passed. He never asked me a lot of questions about the process, which was good. He told me, "I want to caution you right now. You will find in the wake of this success, there will be a lot of people around the Pentagon and elsewhere who will claim credit for this. Do not get angry. Do not get frustrated. You know why? Because the most important person in your world is me, and I know who did this!" I smiled at him. I said, "Yes sir! I got it. I understand."

At that point, I became somewhat of a "golden boy". I kept getting harder and harder things to do because I kept pulling rabbits out of the hat. Not because I'm particularly talented, but because I was just lucky in many cases. I cut corners sometimes. But that's what happens in Washington. If you get identified as successful doing something, more and more difficult stuff comes to you. Nobody wants to know how many corners you cut, just so long as you keep delivering results. I won't go into any other stories, but there was one where I thought I had landed in real bureaucratic trouble. A couple of years after I left the Pentagon, I found out that, despite the corners I cut – and the trouble I thought I was in - that project had come to be judged one of the greatest successes on the Army staff in 1987.

A couple of months after the language pay became law, a colonel who had been the Army Attaché in Moscow and with whom I spent time in Garmisch sent a personal request to the three-star general I was working for asking for me, by name, to be assigned to the U.S. Military Liaison Mission in Potsdam, East Germany, where he was now the Commander. As I alluded to earlier, I considered MLM the premier Soviet foreign area officer assignment. Some FAOs preferred to be analysts where they were surrounded by

books and newspapers analyzing Soviet military doctrine. But, recall, I was a guy who preferred to use my Russian on "the sidewalks of life". Someone had discreetly shown me a copy of the by-name request message. So when my three-star general called me into his office, I knew why.

The general said, "Did you see this message that came in?" I said, "Yes, sir, I did." He said, "Do you want to go?" I said, "Yes, sir, I do." He said, "Do you know what my opinion is?" I said, "I really would like to know what your opinion is!" I had a wonderful relationship with this three-star general. He said, "I will never hold a good officer back from a good assignment, and not many assignments get better than this. You're going!" I was ecstatic. I had broken the bonds of the Pentagon after two-and-a-half years. The stress there was unbelievably great. And I had just landed, in my view, the best job for a Soviet foreign area officer.

This was the summer of 1987. Two years before, in the spring of 1985, one of my friends, who assigned to the US Military Liaison Mission, had been shot and killed by a Soviet soldier in East Germany. I knew him well. His death was tragic and became a very hot issue between the US and the Soviet Union. His funeral at Arlington was attended by hundreds, including the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

So, with the memory of LTC Nicholson's death still fresh in our minds, I went home and I told my wife about the assignment request from the current Chief of USMLM. There were two things going through her mind. One was, of course, she knew of this friend who had been killed, so she knew the job was dangerous. The second issue for her was the idea of moving an encircled city, West Berlin, in the middle of hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers. I told her, "Look, I really want to do this. I know what I'm saying, and I know what it could cost me. But I'm asking you. I really want to do this." She said, "Okay. I understand, and I'm willing to support you. But what about this idea of moving to Berlin." I said, " I've been to Berlin. You will not believe how wonderful the experience will be there." The U.S. Army in Berlin was supported by German occupation funds, war reparations. I told her, "You won't feel like you're trapped there." So we moved to Berlin.

Q: And at this point you have how many children?

COX: Well, my second daughter was born in January of 1986 at Fort Belvoir, VA. She was about a year-and-a-half old. Two daughters - that was the family size.

I should probably stop here a moment for those who are not of the Cold War era, to explain this job and where it came from. I'll try to make this a short version. Picture if you will, the cessation of hostilities at the end of World War II. There were huge collections of Soviet, U.S., British, and, to a lesser degree, French forces in and around Germany. Once the shooting stopped zones of occupation were established. They were initially nothing more than lines on the ground. There were no fences. There were no signs. There was no law and order either. Germany was in a state of near total chaos and

destruction. Refugees from every corner of Europe were flowing in all directions, but mostly west.

The Soviets from East Berlin and East Germany, in general, were routinely kidnapping or shooting people. And not just in their sector. The situation was getting out of control. I have seen the (declassified) memos between Generals Eisenhower and Bradley, saying basically, “We’ve got to get these guys under control. What can we do?”

The British and the French were actually ahead of the US on the issue of exchanging liaison personnel. They embraced the idea of exchanging liaison personnel in 1946. At first, the American command did not favor the idea. But by 1947, we realized there was no better alternative, so in April 1947 the US also agreed to exchange military liaison missions.

Formal documents were signed exchanging numbers of officers to various sectors. The U.S. Military Liaison Mission was headquartered in West Berlin, which of course was free and secure. Classified information could be protected there. Our representational headquarters was in Potsdam, East Germany, in a beautiful villa that the Soviets provided for our use. The British and French military liaison missions were also headquartered in West Berlin and had representational headquarters in Potsdam.

The Soviets had three liaison missions in West Germany – in the US, British and French zones of occupation.

Until the early 1960s, there were no fences separating the various zones of occupation. However, signs were posted, “You are leaving the Soviet sector,” “You are leaving the American sector”, etc. But people were still freely moving back and forth. To compress the whole story, eventually fences went up between East and West Germany, and then around West Berlin to fence off West Berlin from East Berlin. In August of 1961, the Wall, as we came to know it, went up.

In the early years, the establishment of the liaison missions kept the Soviets out of the western zones. The military liaison missions conducted a lot of routine liaison with the Soviet forces. As well, U.S. aircraft occasionally strayed into East Germany and were shot down by the Soviets. U.S. forces couldn’t get to the pilots or wreckages, so the U.S. Military Liaison Mission went out to secure crash sites before the Soviets got to them, and to repatriate the pilots or their remains, if necessary.

In the early days of the MLMs, satellites didn’t exist. When they were developed, early versions couldn’t see through clouds. USMLM officers became the eyes and ears on the ground for the senior military leadership in West Germany. We were the trip wire. We knew if World War III were going to start, we would be the first casualties. On New Year’s Eve, Christmas Eve, we would all be out in the field making sure the Soviets were not gathering forces to prepare a sneak attack. Satellite technology improved and eventually they could see through clouds, so the early idea of USMLM as a trip wire changed. During my time at USMLM, 1987-1990, we were involved in a lot of bona fide

liaison work, such as arranging meetings between senior US and Soviet military representatives based in West Germany and East Germany, all the while continuing our observations of Soviet military training and equipment.

We carried formal identification documents provided by the Soviets, which authorized us by name to be in East Germany anywhere except in restricted areas. Maybe 30 percent of the country was declared off limits, but the other two-thirds was open to us. We had freedom of passage. We were the only US military who could travel in East Germany.

The Americans exchanged 14 passes -14 authorizations -with the Russians. The French exchanged 18, and the Brits 31. What the US did, and the Russians let us get away with was, instead of just 14 people—both officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs)—we basically had a blue team and a gold team. We had twice as many people. When our officers and NCOs would go out in East Germany, they would run hard. We would get two hours sleep at night, be out for two or three days at a time, and come back to West Berlin exhausted. Then, tag team style, another officer and NCO would replace the returning team in East Germany. We could never have more than 14 people in East Germany, but we essentially had one set of 14 resting while the other 14 were out there exhausting themselves.

Unclassified, overtly, we had the right to passage. What we did, with full authorization of the Department of Defense, was take advantage of our access to photograph and to take videos of Soviet military training. I used to consider us fender-level satellites on the Soviet military with the added perspective that we could actually talk to them. We were able to report volumes about their equipment, training, readiness for war, and morale. We watched them on tank ranges, conducting driver training, building bridges across rivers, snorkeling tanks through rivers, and conducting helicopter assault training to name a few examples.

Q: Right.

COX: One of the things we used to say to each other was, "If I gave you a blank piece of paper, what would design as the perfect job?" We would have created exactly what we were doing as MLM tour officers. We called ourselves tour officers, but we were really reconnaissance officers. I was a military intelligence officer, but we had engineer officers, infantry, artillery – almost all branches. We drew on everyone's expertise both of the US military and of our knowledge of the Russian army and the Russian language. Unique is an overused word, but this was a truly unique job. It had never existed before in history. We knew it couldn't last forever, and we didn't want it to end.

Let me provide some perspective. East Germany was about the size of Ohio. In this "state of Ohio", there were 400,000 Russian soldiers armed with the latest, greatest military technology the Russians could produce. When a new item of equipment was fielded it came to East Germany first. Then it was fielded to other countries such as to Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland. New hardware always came to East Germany first, and we were there to observe and photograph it. We routinely watched rail

lines for new equipment. We developed our own science called "tarpology," because equipment always was covered with tarps. We became experts at recognizing equipment based upon the lumps and bumps under tarps. If we saw half a road wheel, if the vehicle showed us "just a little ankle", that was all we needed.

It was an amazing job. We lived on adrenalin. I'm talking about adrenalin pumping non-stop for 54 or 72 hours at a time when we were on recon missions in East Germany. I would return to West Berlin from a tour feeling great. I'd go home, take a shower, and then just collapse as the adrenalin wore off. That was my life for three years. The job I had there initially was as a tour officer. Because I was a military intelligence officer, I was already identified to move up into a job called the Ground Production Officer, which meant I was responsible for complete, accurate and timely reporting from the Army element at MLM. There was also an Air Force element at USMLM, which had a mirror image structure. As a result of my position, I also had more contact with US commands in Heidelberg and Stuttgart, and routinely participated in conferences in London and Stuttgart.

There is another way of explaining what that MLM job meant. Unlike every other element of US forces deployed close to or in contact with potential enemy forces, we had no communications from our vehicles in East Germany back to our headquarters in West Berlin. We were unarmed, and our vehicles had no armor protection. We were totally vulnerable – the odds were against us, 400,000 to 2, we used to say – and that figured heavily in our risk-versus-gain calculus. If we got in trouble, we were on our own. There was nobody going to come to rescue us. There was no medical help other than getting, maybe, to a Soviet hospital or an East German hospital, in the event of a traffic accident or something like that. We took great pride in the fact that we were the only element of the US Military for which that was true. We were wholly on our own. We lived and we risked all based upon the decisions we made. We took great pride in the trust and faith our superiors had in us. Ironically, it was a good thing the Berlin Wall came down in November of 1989 because within a year or two, there would have been cell phones, and we would have lost that autonomy.

Q: Right.

COX: Another aspect of the Military Liaison Mission was that not very many people knew about us. We didn't talk about ourselves much. Berlin was a habitual stop by CODELs (Congressional delegations)—by senators, representatives and staffers especially from the armed services committees and the intelligence committees. Oftentimes, they would want to visit the MLM. Some at the MLM preferred a policy of no visitors. Keep them out. Don't tell them anything. But I had just come from the Pentagon, from the Army staff. I had a much better understanding than many of my colleagues about what made the big Army tick. My point was, you have to bring them here. You have to talk to them because when things go bad, you don't want people in Washington saying, "What are those cowboys doing over there?" You want people to say, "Now stop. Just a minute! It was a tragedy but you don't understand the contributions those guys are making."

Within three months of my arrival at MLM we had another shooting incident (September 1987), when an Air Force officer and an NCO were ambushed by a Soviet special operations squad. A young Soviet officer got excited and shot up the vehicle wounding the American sergeant. We recognized that in East Germany, doing what we did, we were always only a moment away from a trap or an incident.

In 1988, the 7th of December—I'll never forget—President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union made a speech at the United Nations. The Chief of Mission, Colonel Govan, and I watched Gorbachev's speech on the TV. Gorbachev surprised the world by announcing he was unilaterally withdrawing four tank divisions from East Germany, one from Czechoslovakia and one from Hungary. We were stunned. My boss and I agreed that this was a significant development, perhaps more of a political one then a military one, but it signaled big changes in the wind. Even though it was not a huge percentage of the forces in East Germany, it was more than symbolic. There was definitely a sea change happening.

I don't want to go into all the details of East Germans trying to flee the country, going down into Hungary and through Austria to West Germany. Before November of 1989, protests had begun in Leipzig. It looked like things were coming apart in East Germany. My fellow officers and I, on a quiet afternoon—those of us who were not on the road in East Germany—were sitting around the office discussing what was happening in East Germany. Someone asked, "How is this going to end?" I said, "Well, have I ever told you the story about the dreams I've had?" They looked at me and said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, because of my mother's background, the first international incident I took note of as a teenager was the uprising in Budapest in 1956. I read a number of books about it, and I took it to heart. I didn't particularly react to it, but I absorbed it. While I was a cadet at West Point in August of 1968, the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia. That's when I had a series of dreams. Not one dream, but several. The dreams were about me serving in capital city when Soviet tanks rolled in. My fellow officers looked at me and asked, "Do you think it's going to be Berlin?" I said, "No. Actually I don't have that feeling at all." But I would wonder to myself occasionally, "Where would I ever see Soviet tanks could roll into a capital?" But I felt strongly it was not going to be in Berlin.

On the night of the 9th of November, through an absolute accident of history, a new East German minister announced on TV at a press conference that travel restrictions were going to be reduced. He held a 3x5 card of talking points. Journalists immediately asked, "When will this take place?" He looked at his card, but there was no information about when it was going to take place. All he knew was what was on the card, so he shrugged his shoulders, and said, "I guess right away." I was watching TV, and thought, "Uh, oh, this could be it." But I was exhausted and I had to go to sleep because I had been burning my candle out in East Germany. However, East Berliners by the thousands were watching TV, and at his announcement started flooding down to Checkpoint Charlie. Of course, the East German border guards and police had no idea what was going on because they weren't watching TV. The East German border guards pleaded for instructions but

their superiors didn't know what was going on either. At some point an officer said, "Let them go!" So the guards opened the barrier, and the Wall became like just like a champagne bottle. Once the cork is out, it ain't going back!

The next morning, Friday, was a training holiday because Veterans' Day was coming up on the 11th of November. I didn't have to go to work. So Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday were all holidays for us. I didn't sleep. I just kept bouncing off the wall, going down to the Brandenburg Gate, watching the "Fall of the Wall" unfold. I knew my world had changed. It happened so quickly that neither East German security forces nor Soviet security forces were able to do anything.

The Glienicke Bridge, which has been made famous by the Spielberg movie, The Bridge of Spies, is the bridge we went across to enter East Germany. The CIA occasionally exchanged spies with the Soviets there because it was in the southwest part of West Berlin and went directly to East Germany. It could be easily controlled. That's the bridge we, and the Brits and the French military liaison missions went across to go to our representational headquarters in Potsdam and on our recon missions. We would come back to West Berlin across that same bridge. For all of us, forever, that is "our" bridge. Saturday night (two nights after the Wall first opened), the West Berliners announced they were opening up that bridge to the public, in general. The Soviets called us and expressed concern that someone might harm their soldier who manned the guard post there. The bridge was divided – Soviet checkpoint for the MLMs on one side and an East German checkpoint on the other side.

The Soviets weren't worried about the East German border guard. They were worried about their soldier. We assured them not to worry, that we would go down to the bridge and make sure their soldier was not harmed. In fact, the Germans totally ignored the Soviet soldier. He stayed in the guard booth. The Soviets thanked us for looking out for him

After that weekend, probably the next week, we met with our Soviet counterparts in Potsdam. These Soviet counterparts, or contact officers, were a combination of KGB and GRU (military intelligence) officers. They tended to be more worldly, more traveled, more educated, and of course familiar with foreigners who staffed the MLMs than average Soviet officers. We knew them very well, and they knew us. That evening we had a little social get-together with them. This was the most stunning thing about the Wall coming down from my perspective. Astonishingly, the Soviet reaction to the fall of the Wall was, "Whew! Boy, we got through that. Nobody got hurt. So now we just go back to what we had before. Everything's normal now." We Americans were just dumbstruck. We looked at them and said, "No! No! That's not it at all! It's all over. You guys are going home. We're probably going home, but you for sure are going home!" They looked at us and said, "What do you mean? We're over here. You're over there. We get a new tank. You get a new tank. Life is good!" We said, 'No! You don't understand what happened here. Your world just changed. You're going home!" They looked at us like we were crazy, but of course that is exactly what happened.

Q: Just a very quick, kind of off-the-wall question…. Among all of these KGB and GRU officers you interacted with during all that time in Berlin, one of them wasn't Vladimir Putin, was it?

COX: No. He was assigned to Dresden. Never met the lad. But I would like to share an experience I had that was completely overshadowed a few months later by the Wall coming down, that is almost forgotten to history. I mentioned Gorbachev had made his speech about unilaterally withdrawing forces. Our intelligence agencies wanted us to monitor the rail lines—there were only a few that went toward Poland from East Germany—and actually count the number of tanks that were being withdrawn. I think in the end, among the three Allied missions, we were able to physically show video of 90 percent of the tanks that were alleged to have been withdrawn. I'm sure we missed a few. We just sat on the rail lines for 48 hours at a time. Nobody harassed us. Nobody chased us. Even the East German Stasi police didn't bother us.

One night, I was out on a rail watch. My boss at the time, Colonel Govan, came roaring up on us in his sedan with his headlights out. Scared us to death. He jumped out of his car, walked over to me and asked, "How's it going?" Just then, we heard a train coming. We turned on the bright lights on our cars and counted 25 tanks on that rail line being hauled back toward the Soviet Union. Having finished with the train, Colonel Govan turned to me and asked, "How would you like to go Mons?" Mons is the headquarters of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Military Command.

Q: In Belgium?

COX: In Belgium. Yes. So I said, "Sure." And then I thought, "Wait…!"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: "Wait, what did I just say?" I said, "What am I going to do?" He said, "Well, you're going to come back to West Berlin tomorrow morning and clean yourself up. Then you and I are going to get in my car and drive straight through East Germany. I already coordinated our passage with the Soviets. Straight through East Germany to Mons, and we're going to have a meeting with General Galvin, who was the SACEUR. I said, "And what am I doing there?" He said, "Well, you're going with Galvin to London." I said, "Really?" And what am I going to do in London?" He said, "Well, you're going to be the interpreter for General Galvin." I said, "I'm not an interpreter." He said, "No, no. You're just going to go with General Galvin." I said, "And what's Galvin doing?" He said, "Well, Galvin is going to meet with the commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact, the first ever meeting with the commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact, a Soviet general named Pyotr Lushev. Organized by a British think tank, the Brits were hosting this. Civilian clothes completely. I went, "Really?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Okay!"

Imagine this: I went from my field uniform counting tanks late at night in East Germany, to the next day, after cleaning myself up and packing a bag, to driving a thousand kilometers, six hundred miles, from West Berlin to Mons. The next morning, I found myself in a conference room with General Galvin and Colonel Govan. Galvin sat at one end of the table, my boss in the middle, and I was down at the far end. Govan alarmed me because he started talking me up, saying wonderful things about me and my Russian language ability. My eyes got big. I started sweating. Finally, I raised my hand, and I said, "General Galvin, please, sir. I am not a professional interpreter. I'm a "B-squad-er" at best. If you want to chat with some guy over cocktails, I may be your guy, but I can't do serious interpreting." General Galvin, who was quite a gentleman, turned to me and said, "Don't worry. Everything's going to be okay. I know that."

The next day I joined General Galvin's party. We flew to London where we stayed in a beautiful hotel downtown. That night I accompanied the SACEUR into a room to meet the Soviets. General Lushev not only looked like he was cut from granite but also seemed rather uncomfortable in a civilian suit. He was accompanied by a bunch of guys who looked far more comfortable in suits. They were probably from the embassy, and I was pretty sure I knew who they worked for. On our side of the table there were some former British field marshals and air marshals. Some of these men were of a seniority that their cuffs were frayed. There was perhaps eight or so on each side of the table.

The Soviets on the other side of table looked around, sizing up the US/British side. They knew who the Brits were. They knew General Galvin. They knew everybody except me. I was the youngest guy at the table, too. The interpreter for this gathering was Margaret Thatcher's interpreter. I met him just before we all got together, and I told him, "You're doing the interpreting both ways." He said, "No, you're going to do one way." I said, "No. I am not an interpreter. You are doing both ways." I didn't want to leave any question mark out there. "You've got it. Both ways. You understand that?" He said, "Yes!"

I sat at the table feeling a little bit nervous. I was wondering, "What the hell am I doing here?" The Soviet opposite me had to be KGB. We had place cards in front of us. He leaned across the table, and in Russian, whispered to me, "Colonel Cox, where are you from?" I said, "I'm from the mission." He paused not recognizing what I meant. Sensing this, I said, "I'm from Potsdam, the Military Liaison Mission." He thought about it a second, and said, "Oh!" The Russians on both sides of him were whispering, "What? From where?" He shared my unit affiliation up and down the line, "Missiya, Missiya, Missiya." They all turned to look at me. I believe they thought I was there to "watch" General Galvin, to make sure he didn't say something wrong. It was so Soviet! I bit my lip, trying not to laugh. They were looking at me, and nodding, "Hmmm. We know who you are. You're the spook in the room."

Q: Right, right. [Laughter]

COX: We finished. It was a pleasant meeting. To remind, this meeting occurred in May of 1989. It's the first and only ever meeting between the SACEUR and the commander in

chief of the Warsaw Pact. Not much other than pleasantries were exchanged. We ended with a cocktail reception. Thankfully, the British interpreter stayed with General Galvin. I turned to the US brigadier general who was the military assistant to the SACEUR, and I said to him, “Hey, sir, do you want to have some fun during cocktail hour?” He said, “Let’s go. Let’s do it!” So I was his interpreter, doing the best I could in Russian. We had a good time.

Then I flew back to Berlin, pinching myself and wondering, “What kind of world do I live in?” I mean, I was a reconnaissance officer, deep in dark East Germany counting tanks, and two days later, I’m sitting with the SACEUR in London, across from the commander in chief of the Warsaw Pact. How does this happen? Of course, the historic nature of that meeting got one-upped when the Wall fell in November of 1989.

A couple of weeks before the Wall came down, my boss, Colonel Govan, who was being promoted and preparing to move to Moscow to be the defense attaché, came to my office at the Mission and asked, “How would you like to serve in Moscow?” I told him, “That is my dream.” He said, “Okay, I’ll call the assignment people”. So, once again, I didn’t have to do any work for an assignment. You can see why I refer to the Russian FAO community as a fraternity.

I left Berlin in July 1990 and came back to the States for basically a school year, nine months of attaché training and other preparations before departing for Moscow. I went to Moscow in the summer of 1991.

Q: What did attaché training like do? Was it useful preparation for your tour?

COX: In my case, it wasn’t much because I had the experience of serving in the military liaison mission. Being in the presence of a Soviet intelligence officer was no big deal to me. In fact, I’ll tell you a little sidelight here. The Department of Defense was using polygraphs on all their officers they were sending to Communist countries. In general, this was just a security scope polygraph, which meant they asked questions to see if you had had any contact with Soviet or other Communist intelligence agencies.

I sat down with the polygrapher. I had never been polygraphed before. He said, “The way this works is, I’ve got a bunch of questions. We’re going to go over the questions now, before I hook you up, and we’re going to make sure the questions are worded correctly, so you can say yes or no to each one. Nothing more; yes or no are the only acceptable answers.” I said, “Okay.” He said, “The first questions is, have you ever had contact with any Soviet KGB or military GRU officers? What would be your answer?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “What do you mean, yes?” I said, “Yes. Every day and every way.” He said, “Where the hell have you been?”

[Laughter]

COX: I said, "I'm just back from Potsdam, from the Military Liaison Mission. He said, "Oh, okay. We've got to rewrite that question." It took off from there. That polygraph lasted about 10 minutes. That was it. I got the green light to proceed.

In fact, I didn't do much attaché training. Once again, the Russian FAO "fraternity" helped me increase my FAO experience base. BG Roland Lajoie, at the time the senior Russian FAO on active duty, commanded a new organization, the On-Site Inspection Agency, formed when I was in Potsdam, to provide arms control inspectors for new arms control agreements. One day I dropped in to General Lajoie's office to say hello. It didn't take long for him to say, "Cox, you don't need attaché school. You're going to come out and work for me." I said, "Okay!" So I worked for him for about six months and made trips to Europe and the Soviet Union to conduct arms control inspections.

Q: Just very quickly. The inspections you were making were to verify that the weapons controlled under the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty were being properly dismantled or removed?

COX: Yes, exactly. The real inspections involved the INF Treaty. However, most of the work I did was involved with what we called "mock inspections" for a different treaty. The United States was getting ready for the entry into force of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, the CFE Treaty. Arms control inspectors, especially those of us who'd had contact with the Soviets, were flying to West Germany to hold inspections of U.S. Army facilities, to familiarize commanders with the protocols of the CFE Treaty. I played the role of a Soviet officer, as did others of my colleagues. We were the inspectors from the Soviet Union, training U.S. escorts what they could do and couldn't do, and what rights the inspectors had.

Q: Very interesting.

COX: I will mention this, and I'll come back to this point. There was one lecture in particular at attaché school that I absented myself from. It was the block of instruction on embassy evacuation. In many areas of the world we've seen political turmoil, social turmoil, countries falling apart, leading to embassy staffs having to be evacuated. There is a whole set of rules for civilian and military diplomats in embassies if evacuation is ordered. I didn't go to that class because, why would I? I was going to Moscow, to the most stable country in the world. The only way anything was going to happen to me in Moscow was if the Politburo took a decision to throw me out of the country. That would give me 48 hours. So I didn't feel I needed to go to that class.

As summer 1991 approached, I was getting ready to be posted to Moscow. My family and I got our visas. We bought 3,000 pounds of nonperishable goods to send with us to the embassy. I went first, which is often the case for these foreign assignments where it helps to have the government employee there first to help set up house, get the lay of the land, and get some things delivered. Then the family comes. It's a little bit less stressful like that.

In my case, I arrived in Moscow in early June. My family didn't come until early August. That was really good because when I got to Moscow, General Govan, who had been the chief of the U.S. Military Liaison Mission in Potsdam, was now the defense attaché and getting near the end of his tour. He took me aside and said, "General Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is coming here for a counterpart visit near the end of July. I want you to be the lead action officer, or planning officer, here to interface with the Soviets on this. I was pleased to learn that another former MLM officer, a good friend of mine now on the Joint Staff, would be my US contact for planning the visit. He would also be a member of General Powell's delegation.

So, once I got settled in Moscow, I made one operational trip to Moldova, and then I was grounded. Every night at about 8:00 o'clock in Moscow - noon in Washington - I would call my friend on the Joint Staff, and we would go over details. It was really easy to work with someone who had the same background and knew how the Soviets operate. My boss would listen to one-half of the conversation, but he knew exactly what was going on, and felt comfortable with the visit planning.

The trip would formally start in Moscow and would go all the way to Vladivostok, requiring a little more than a week, as I recall. The trip plan called for me to fly to Helsinki to meet the delegation, brief General Powell about the arrival ceremonies, and to fly with the delegation to Moscow. Powell brought a very small delegation: his wife, Alma, the four vice chiefs of staff (Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps), the J5, a three-star officer, his military assistant, a military doctor, my colleague from the Joint, and his aide. That was it. No security, no communications.

As I flew to Helsinki to meet and brief the delegation, I tortured myself trying to figure out how to "set the scene" without assuming too much knowledge or boring them. General Powell had earlier been the deputy national security advisor. He had been to Moscow before. What could I tell him that would keep his attention? The four vice chiefs of staff, I was pretty sure, had never been to the Soviet Union, so everything would be new to them. I lost sleep over that briefing.

When I met them in the Intercontinental Hotel in Helsinki, on a Sunday afternoon, after losing sleep for two days, I had finally come up with my line. They had flown to Finland the day before to shake off some of the jetlag. They entered the room where I was waiting to conduct my briefing. They took their seats, and I noticed General Powell kind of put his head down. He said, "Okay, Colonel Cox, go ahead." This is how I started: I said, "Gentleman, tomorrow at 10:00 o'clock, we are going to fly 90 minutes to Moscow. You're going to look out the window as we're landing in Moscow, and you'll probably think to yourself, Oh, it's just another big city. But you will be wrong, because we are leaving one world behind, and we are entering a totally alien world." At which point, General Powell's head shot up. I knew I had everyone's attention. I went on from there telling them what I knew of the arrival ceremonies. It was a huge pressure relief to finish that "meet and greet" briefing.

To set the stage for General Powell's trip, remember that Desert Storm, the first Gulf War, had occurred just a few months before in February-March of 1991. Desert Storm was the first war that we could watch almost entirely on CNN. And not just we, but the entire world, to include the Soviets, watched it on CNN. Here was the guy, General Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who had just presided over the destruction of an army that was equipped with Soviet equipment and trained by Soviet officers. The defeat of the Iraqi army required only100 hours.

The morning after I briefed the delegation, we boarded General Powell's plane to fly to Moscow. After the greeting ceremony at the airport, the first event was to be the laying of a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, which is right by the Kremlin. This is standard protocol. When we got on the plane in Helsinki, there was already a huge wreath that General Powell had bought. The wreath must have cost a fortune. It was huge! No one person could carry this wreath. It barely fit through the door of the plane. It required an entire table and two rows of facing seats. I knew immediately this would really impress the Russians. That wreath was a tremendously positive gesture.

We landed in Moscow. I took the wreath to the Kremlin to get ready for the ceremony where the Soviet honor guard was waiting for it. The young Soviet officer, a lieutenant, had a little triangle about 18 inches high expecting a normal two-feet in diameter wreath. We had the wreath in an embassy van. We got to the site and opened up the back doors. The lieutenant looked in, stopped dead in his tracks and got a look on his face that was priceless. There were two privates standing behind him. He told the privates, "Come here and grab this wreath." He told somebody else, "Get that stand out of here!" He told the two privates with the wreath, "You're going to stand there and hold this wreath!" Because there was no other way to do it! His eyes just bulged when he saw that wreath. The sergeant from the defense attaché office (DAO) and I just smiled.

General Powell arrived for the wreath-laying, which was a beautiful, moving ceremony. The Soviets were truly honored by this. After a day or two in Moscow the trip across the Soviet Union commenced. It went pretty much by the schedule, which was exhausting. You can't go across the Soviet Union, and not have it be exhausting.

Q: Twelve time zones, or ten time zones?

COX: Right. Let me mention a sad truth that many Russians do not think well of people of color. In Powell's case, however, the Soviet generals, across the vast Soviet Union, treated him like a rock star. There is no better way to describe it. They would literally elbow each other out of the way so they could get up to him and shake his hand. With General Powell, they did not see color. They saw a brilliant military officer, a world-class respected military leader. It was awe-inspiring to watch this. I remember thinking, maybe there is hope, both for them and for us in the United States, that if ever there was a man of color who could run for President, this might be the guy right here.

Q: Very briefly, I sat in on two meetings with Powell, two small meetings, in 1990 and 1991. They related to military confidence-building measures under the OSCE. But I was

amazed. I had never seen anyone run a meeting as well as Powell. He had practically no notes and very amicably ran the meeting so that it came out exactly as he wanted.

COX: Right! It was just one of the most wonderful experiences of my life to watch him. I was with him almost 24 hours a day, almost non-stop, for over a week. I was just the "fly on the wall." I didn't have any responsibilities really, so I just observed everything going on around him. I couldn't get over their reactions to him and how he never skipped a beat, never missed a step. The Russians, as the Russians are wont to do, were trying to pour vodka into him, often starting at 9:00 o'clock in the morning. He did all sorts of things to avoid drinking the vodka. Occasionally, he would even dump it into a potted plant. They never seemed to notice.

Q: [Laughter.]

COX: He never allowed himself to get sucked in on the vodka drinking. There was one time when, because of time zone changes, we flew all night to southern Siberia, which meant we were up for 36 hours before we had a chance to put our heads on a pillow. We all got exhausted, but he never let it show.

We eventually got to Vladivostok, where we had a program there as well. After the program, we went to the airport, and there with all the spotlights on it was the gleaming "United States of America" plane. I'm telling you, those four-star generals could hardly wait to get up on that plane and get out of there. Within minutes, the plane took off. Left on the runway with the Soviet chief of the general staff and some Russian staff officers was Brigadier General Govan, his wife, and me. We had been told we were going to hitch a ride with the chief of the Soviet general staff on his plane, all the way back to Moscow. General Powell's doctor had given me a sleeping pill - THE sleeping pill - he called it. It knocked me out. We refueled in Novosibirsk, which is in western Siberia. I was vaguely aware we were landing, and vaguely aware when we took off. We landed at a military airfield outside of Moscow early in August at about 4:30 in the morning after at least ten hours of flying. We had 12 hours until President George H.W. Bush was due to land in Moscow for a summit.

Q: [Laughter.]

COX: So the embassy was in full flush getting ready for the summit. There was one priceless moment when, as the president typically does when he goes to an embassy, he met with the embassy community. In Moscow, at the embassy, there is an underground basketball court, which the Secret Service loves because it's very easy to secure. The spouses, kids, and dads were all invited to be down there to meet Secretary and Mrs. Baker, President and Mrs. Bush, and Ambassador and Mrs. Matlock. The moms mostly dressed their kids like they were going to first communion. My youngest daughter, Jessie, who was five dressed differently.

Out on the street, on the sidewalks of Moscow, Bush-Gorbachev Summit t-shirts were being sold. We bought the smallest t-shirt they had, but my daughter was so little that like

any kid wearing a t-shirt, it came down to her mid-calf. So she showed up with the t-shirt on, the summit t-shirt. Ambassador Matlock talked for a minute or two and then introduced the President. President Bush came to the podium. He talked for a little bit, and then said, “Now, let’s have a photo. Somebody bring that little girl up in the Summit t-shirt, right there.” He pointed at my daughter. The parents were in the back, and the kids were in the front. She couldn’t see her mother. So the ambassador’s wife comes down off the stage and takes my daughter by the hand up onto the stage. The President kneeled down next to her and put his arm around her. It was flashbulb time! All these flashbulbs went off. There was lots of noise and commotion in the room, laughing, cheering, photo taking. My daughter was absolutely terrified. She didn’t understand who that man was with his arm around her. And, she couldn’t see her mother. As soon as it was over, she burst into tears, and we reclaimed her as fast as we could. That photo now is a prized family possession. It was just really cute.

Q: Oh, of course!

COX: By the end of the Summit, I had been in country two months. My family had arrived only a few days before. I had already seen and done a lot; and I was utterly exhausted – still jet-lagged from the Powell visit, too.

Q: You just had your two highest officials in the entire U.S. government back-to-back!

COX: I was so far behind in writing reports and doing all sorts of basic attaché stuff that I was thinking, “Finally I am going to get a break.” About a week or so later, it was Monday, the 19th of August.

I got up early that morning, and was sitting at the dining room table having my cereal and a cup of coffee. My family was asleep. My practice was to sit down just before 7:00 a.m. to have breakfast because at 7:00, with my little shortwave radio sitting right in front of me, the BBC News Moscow service came on. I was not totally awake. I hadn’t even consumed my coffee. The BBC announcer started reading the news. At some point, because I was not awake, I had not realized that he had stopped reading the news. When he started speaking again, he stammered a little. He said, “Um, ladies and gentleman, um, I’m going to stop the regular news program at this point because I have been handed a special announcement. I have been asked to read it first.” Then he said something along the lines of, “We have been informed that President Gorbachev has been removed from power.” I stopped eating and just stared at the radio. He continued, “For health reasons.” My eyes almost popped out of my head because that is a euphemism for a change of government. He then added, “An emergency committee has taken over the Government of the Soviet Union.”

My apartment was in the upper part of the embassy compound, so I immediately swung around in my chair and looked out the dining room window toward the Russian White House, which is only 200 meters away from the embassy. I didn’t see anything out of the ordinary. But I knew that something big was happening. I ran upstairs, shook my wife awake and essentially gave her an order, “You will not leave the embassy compound.

Something is happening. Gorbachev has been removed from power for health reasons. I don't like it. I've got to go. Do not leave the embassy no matter what. You and the girls stay here." And I was gone.

I ran down to the core of the embassy, the classified area where the substantive sections of the embassy were. Of course, it was early, just five minutes after 7:00 o'clock. Nobody was there. I went into my office, and paced like a caged lion waiting for somebody else to show up. I was thinking to myself the first thing we need to do is go out and do a sweep, a drive by of all the power ministries—Ministry of Defense, KGB Headquarters, Central Committee, and the Kremlin—and look for anything out of the ordinary. Within a few minutes, the Army attaché, Colonel John Reppert, arrived. He lived in an apartment outside the embassy and had just driven across town. I virtually attacked him as he walked into the office. I said, "What's going on? What did you see out there? Gorbachev's been removed from power!" He looked at me like I was crazy. He said, "What are you talking about? Nothing's going on out there." I said, "It was on BBC. We've got to go! We have got to make a sweep!" He said, "Grab your stuff. Let's go."

We got in his car. He drove, and I basically reverted to being a USMLM tour officer. I felt like I was back in East Germany. I was giving my boss driving directions. "Go up here. Turn right. Turn left." So we made a sweep of the key buildings in Moscow and saw absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. Fathers were walking their children to school. People were lazily walking down the sidewalk, going to work groggily. No extra police. Nothing! We're scratching our heads, saying, "What the heck is going on?"

As we approached the embassy on our return from the sweep around Moscow, we saw a column of military trucks on the road on the far side of the embassy. Instinctively, I said, "Go! " The military convoy was taking one lane of the road. He said, "What should I do?" I said, "Drive to the other side of the trucks so you can pass them, and "run" them. We'll look at the license plates." We knew how to identify the military units in the Moscow area. At that point, we were driving directly toward the Moscow Zoo to a traffic light at a "T". Strangely, the Soviet military vehicles were stopping at the traffic light. I thought, "No Soviet military force deploying would stop at traffic lights; they routinely posted soldiers, traffic regulators, at every intersection to signal which way for the drivers to turn. Something is not right." When the light turned green, we saw an armored tracked vehicle turn left. "Whoa! That is not normal. Let's go back to the embassy." By then other military attachés and embassy staff were beginning to report in.

I immediately went back out on the street. I had studied revolutionary warfare at West Point. It was one of the core courses. Our studies included coups, most of which had occurred in Central and South America. Nonetheless, there is kind of a protocol for how a coup typically unfolds. The major questions that morning were: What is going on? What role is the military playing in this? Who are the good guys, and who are the bad guys? Regardless of the answers to those questions, something has to happen within the first 24 hours of a coup. Either the incumbent has to flee or be killed, or the coup plotter has to flee or be killed. It's essentially that simple.

By about 9 a.m., tanks were pouring into Moscow. I was moving like a machine, as were the other officers. Tanks were taking up in positions around the Kremlin and around the Russian White House near our embassy. Armored personnel carriers were also pouring into Moscow. There were soldiers all over the place. I looked up one street, a block or so away from the embassy, and saw several military trucks parked. I turned to walk by them. A group of junior officers, the platoon leaders, were standing in a group on the sidewalk talking among themselves. I noticed the trucks were from an airborne division, which is garrisoned several hours drive south of Moscow. I walked up to the officers.. (I was in civilian clothes.) In my best, most polite, Russian, I asked, "Excuse me. Can you guys tell me what's going on?" They turned and looked at me, but not one of them said anything. Total silence. I thought to myself, "Well, you know, if I were in their situation, I would act the same way." Obviously, I was a foreigner. I said, "Okay, never mind. Thank you." I turned and started walking away.

This is when everything in my career came together—all my training, all my instincts, and my desire to find answers to my main questions. The column of trucks was literally parked nose-to-tail, and the canvas flaps were down on the trucks. I figured the trucks had to be full of soldiers. I walked back three or four trucks and looked over my shoulder. The officers weren't paying any attention to me. I got between the trucks. I took a deep breath, and I said, "This is it. I'm all in." I climbed up on the back of the truck, threw open the flap. I totally startled the armed Russian soldiers sitting inside. Russian is a very beautiful language even when swearing. It's a very rich language, let's put it that way. I knew enough about militaries that all soldiers all over the world, in every army, complain about their officers. So in my best Russian, I launched into a run-on sentence. I'm going to clean it up for the purposes of this interview, but using all the profanity I could think of, I talked to them like a soldier. I said, "Aw, man, I'll bet these damn officers got you up at oh-dark-thirty this morning, and you have no frigging idea what you're doing here, why you came here. This is really screwed up." I went on and on and on until I ran out of breath.

Then I stopped and waited, hoping someone would say something. I was standing on the tailgate, leaning into the truck. They were looking at me like, "Who in the hell are you? And where did you come from?" Seconds felt like years at that point. I was thinking to myself, "This is not going well. I better back out," when one soldier leaned forward, and answered me in G.I. Russian, "You are right, exactly right! These damn officers have no idea what's going on. They got us up at 3:00 o'clock in the morning and said, 'Grab your weapons! Get on the trucks!' This is the most screwed up thing I've ever been involved in. This is a total cockup!" My eyes were huge now. He just told me everything I wanted to know. My next thought was, "I need to wrap this up." I commiserated with them, saying, "Oh, man, I feel so sorry for you guys! I wish you the best of luck. Bye." I got back down off the truck, walked back out to the sidewalk, and I realized I was shaking. I said to myself, "I just paid the United States government back for every dollar spent on my Russian training."

Q: No question!

COX: I came back to the embassy, and reported what I had learned. The military did not appear to be the instigator of this action; I believed they were being played by the coup-plotters. I returned to the front of the Russian White House and was standing by the tank for that iconic moment when Boris Yeltsin, who was the Russian Federation president, came out of the Russian White house and climbed onto the tank to address the crowd. I was 20 feet away from him, taking it all in. Again, because I had studied revolutionary warfare at West Point, I was sure somebody was going to shoot Yeltsin. He had a couple of his bodyguards behind him, but he was completely unprotected standing on that tank. I thought, "Oh no, this is it. This is the perfect opportunity to assassinate him." Yeltsin, on the tank, spoke to the world, calling the putsch illegal and urging Russian people to resist. He said all the right things. And nobody shot him.

However, that was the last time he appeared in public during the failed coup without people holding a flak jacket across his chest and protecting him a lot better. When he finished speaking to the crowd (which included some international press) Yeltsin talked to the soldiers and shook their hands. The soldiers were very calm, not aggressive at all. Russian civilians at this point were putting flowers in the machine gun barrels on the armored vehicles and giving the soldiers candy, bread, cigarettes, and flowers. The soldiers were just standing around. The order to deploy military forces to the capital, in and of itself, was not an illegal order. But when the army got to the capital, they slowly realized they were being played by the coup-plotters.

The first night, August 19-20, we military attachés took turns walking around the Russian White House. We just kept making loops. We changed shifts every two hours. I was with the air attaché. We chose the 3 a.m. to 5 a.m. shift because I figured if anybody was going to assault the Russian White House, that would be the hour to do it, and I wanted to be there if it happened. We kept ourselves awake by talking about how we would take down the Russian White House if we had to attack it. This passed for entertainment at 3:00 o'clock in the morning. But nothing happened. So, by dawn on Day 2, I was becoming convinced this coup was really screwed up.

Nothing much happened on August 20, the second day of the coup. I decided to go to sleep just before midnight, only to be awakened by violent pounding on our front door by a Marine security guard, "Everybody in the underground basketball court now! Grab your kids. Go now!" What had happened was the Russian military had decided they wanted out – of the coup and Moscow. The military was bivouacked in various sports parks and open areas around the city. At midnight, they dispatched a reconnaissance element to find a way out of the city because many roads had been blocked by buses and construction materials - whatever the "defenders of the Russian White house" could find. In their own inept way, they were trying to prevent a military assault on the Russian White House. However, a pirate radio station misinterpreted the military's action as the lead element of the attack on the Russian White House.

Spotters on our embassy roof saw what happened. There is an underpass just a baseball's throw away from the embassy. There was a large group of young "defenders of the Russian White House" on the overpass who saw the military vehicles pass beneath them.

The underpass was dark. The army vehicle drivers didn't realize there were barriers blocking the road in the bottom of the underpass. The vehicles were moving quickly, didn't see the barriers before they hit them, and then the vehicles ran into each other. Nose-to-tail, boom, boom, boom, boom. The young guys up on top of the underpass rained Molotov cocktails down on the military vehicles. Inside the vehicles were young soldiers who meant no harm to anybody. They were just trying to find a way out of the city. But, now, burning gasoline was seeping through the hatches, dripping on them. Panicked, the drivers desperately tried to back up, turn around and drive away. The vehicles were hitting each other and the walls of the underpass. In that chaos, they ran over and killed one guy. Another young man jumped on top of an armored vehicle and knocked on the hatch. The sergeant inside opened the hatch and blew him away with his machine gun. So, now two dead. A third was also crushed by the vehicles. In all, three young people were killed in that underpass that night. When the spotters on the embassy roof heard the first shots they told the Marines, "Get everybody down in the basement." They too felt this was the beginning of an attack on the Russian White house.

We woke our daughters up. Our younger daughter (5) was just limp. Our older daughter (12) freaked out totally. What freaked out my daughter more than being awakened at midnight was, as we got to the basketball court, the Marines were turning it into "Fort Apache." They were turning over tables at the top of the stairs leading down to the sunken court. They were wearing their fighting gear: flak jackets, shotguns, and helmets. That scene was too much for a 12-year old who had just been awakened at midnight. We got down to the basketball court where the Regional Security Officer (RSO) and other staff members were putting mattresses out on the basketball floor for the families. Once we got my older daughter quiet - I literally had to pet her like a dog to get her to go back to sleep - I turned to my wife and said, "I've got to go. You'll be alright."

I went to the entrance to the core of the embassy and awaited what I was sure to be a bloody assault on the White House. The Marine in Guard Post One was the only other person there. We talked to each other to keep each other awake. He was a wonderful young Marine. He turned to me, and he said, "Hey, sir, let me see if I've got this right. I've been here three months. We've had an embassy fire." (That predated my arrival.) He continued, "We've had General Powell's visit, we've had the President here for a summit, and now we've had a coup. That's it, right? There's nothing else is there? I've pretty much seen it all, right?" I just laughed. I said, "That's right! To the best of my knowledge, that's everything. Nothing else can happen." He said, "All right, just wanted to be sure. It's good to know." We were both laughing because what else can you do at a moment like that?

Dawn arrived on August 21, the third morning of the coup and still nothing major had happened. I was convinced the Russians had no idea how to conduct coups. That morning, we got word at the embassy that the Russian military had been ordered to clear out of Moscow – traveling in any direction – to be outside the outer ring road by 5 p.m. So all the roads were jammed with military vehicles leaving in all directions at the very moment our brand new ambassador, Robert Strauss, arrived in Moscow.

At the embassy, my boss informed us that, when our new ambassador arrived he would come directly to the Defense Attaché office where I would brief him on the coup from the military perspective. When he arrived – late because the Russian military had clogged the major road from the airport - I welcomed him by saying "Sir, I think you deserve credit for scaring the Russian military out of Moscow!" He replied, "Nah, you don't need to say that. I already told Jim Baker I'm taking credit for that!" So that's the way we started off the briefing! That was a pretty unusual first day in an embassy for an arriving ambassador.

In the aftermath of three days of non-stop quasi-coup, I was quite emotionally and physically exhausted... I remember thinking, "I don't know if I can do two years of this!"

Ambassador Strauss's first full day at the embassy started with a country team meeting. The Defense Attaché returned from it and informed us the Ambassador had decreed, "Gloves are off. Call any contact you have. Don't go through channels with the Foreign Liaison sections of the MFA or the MOD. We have to figure out what's going on, what's next." None of us had any contacts with senior Soviet/Russian officials except me. I had one from the Powell visit, an officer I met in Vladivostok, who was one of the reformers on Yeltsin's staff. I said, "I have this one contact." I was told, "Call!"

I called to the Russian White House. A secretary answered. To set the stage here, it is important to recall that Yeltsin's staff had not slept for three days. And they feared an assault by a KGB unit at any moment throughout that time. They hadn't slept or showered in days, and they were still terrified. The secretary told me the officer I called for was not there, but General so and so was here. Would you like to talk to him?" "Yes!" I heard, "click," then his voice "Da!" I introduced myself, telling him I would like to come speak to him. He answered, "How quickly can you get here?" I said, "Sir, it's only a couple hundred meters. I can be there in 10 minutes." He said, "Give me 20." He instructed me to come to a specific entrance. I managed to get out, "Yes, sir. I'll be there. Thank you." He hung up the phone. I was sweating; this was a big deal! I had just been invited to visit a Russian general. A group of my fellow officers were standing behind me. My boss, Colonel Reppert, said, "Well, it looks like Jimmy is going to have all the fun today." He told our new defense attaché, a Navy admiral who had replaced General Govan just before the coup. The admiral responded, "Tell Cox I'm going with him." I got my notebook, and we headed over. We had to walk over and around barriers and all sorts of trash left over from the coup. When we got to the specified entrance; there was an escort waiting for us. He motioned us in.

The very first thing we saw inside the building on the ground floor was a stack of gas masks. Clearly, they had expected the worst. We got to an elevator, and our escort motioned us to enter. He punched a button and we ascended for a while. As the elevator bounced to a halt, the Russian escort motioned me to the door. The door opened. I took a step, looked up and stopped dead in my tracks. Facing me was an unshaven guy in a suit, wearing a flak jacket, bloodshot eyes, and pointing an AK right between my eyes.

Q: Wow!

COX: I completely froze. My hands went up in the air. I literally fell back into the elevator. The others had to catch me. I thought he was going to shoot me right between the eyes. That's when I realized how much they were still on alert inside that building. I grabbed our Russian escort and said, "God dammit! You go first!" I pushed him out of the elevator, and then we followed behind. That was the last adventure of the morning, but I will never forget those bloodshot eyes. And ever since that day I've been reluctant to be the first one off an elevator.

Q: I can't think why!

COX: In the immediate aftermath of the failed coup, we – American diplomats and especially Russian-speaking US military officers - went from being enemy number one to friend number one, literally overnight. I don't want to go through all the pedestrian sort of stuff we did in Moscow prior to the coup, but post-coup bought two major changes. One was we put our cameras away. Suddenly, overnight, nobody in Washington cared a bit about military equipment or facilities. Washington wanted to know what are the Russians thinking. What are they doing? What are they saying? And, in a total reversal of pre-coup life, Russian officials wanted to talk to us. How we spent our days became a function of two things: time available and our ability to speak Russian. For those of us who were the better Russian speakers, it was a feeding frenzy.

We were faced with something that had likely never happened in Russia, certainly not since the Russian Revolution. We had to start thinking about the "opportunity cost" of spending time talking to someone. For example, at receptions or even by phone, people wanted to speak with us. They were from all over Russia – from places and facilities that I knew nothing about. I didn't know who might have been doing, say, secret weapons research, or who was just a loony. The "opportunity cost" calculation was daunting: if I talked to A, then I wouldn't have time to talk to B or C. At times it became difficult to figure out our next move. And the leadership of Soviet government and military was changing rapidly. People were moving around or being retired. It was a monumental task trying to keep up with "who is who".

Another change involved the surveillance we had. After the failed coup they disappeared. We had been under heavy surveillance all the time up until the coup, and we got used to it. One of the good things I will say about surveillance in a place like Russia was that if someone hassled us on the street, the surveillance would take care of them. So I welcomed surveillance when my wife and daughters were out. We understood that nothing would happen to us unless the Politburo took a decision. That was during the Soviet times. Post-coup the surveillance just melted away. So I lost a lot of confidence about my safety and that of my family. I didn't want my wife going very far because crime started increasing. Then, a few months later, I left the embassy to do something, and was swarmed by surveillance . They could not have been more obvious. I believe they were signaling, "Okay, we're back." Strange sounding, perhaps, but seeing them was somewhat of a relief.

There are a couple of stories I would like to mention here. One of the challenges I had was figuring out how to explain what attaché life was like for us in Russia post-coup and post-Soviet Union. Having thought about it a long time, this is what I told friends and family, "I have become a military journalist, a military correspondent who is striving to be an investigative reporter. If you want to understand my life here now, that's it."

Q: Today is January 25th, and we are resuming our interview with James Cox.

COX: Before I leave the attempted coup in Moscow in August of 1991 entirely, I have one final story I feel compelled to share. At some point on day one of the coup, after I had spoken to the airborne soldiers in the trucks, I had pretty much established, at least in my mind, and reported back in the embassy who the good guys were, the bad guys, and why the military had been deployed to Moscow. After that – the time was now late morning - I decided to relax for a moment and "take in" what was going on around me.

Tanks and armored infantry vehicles were pouring into the city right past the U.S. embassy on two different roads, crisscrossing each other, believe or not, like a complex dance. In the middle of one intersection there was a small, raised traffic island. For whatever reason, I decided that would be a great place to stand to observe both lines of vehicles. As I started across the street I almost fell because the tanks were so heavy that the street was heaving up and down. I stumbled and thought, "Don't fall here!"

I got across the street to the traffic island. As soon as I got there, I realized that was probably the worst place to observe what was going on because I had to keep turning my head. All of a sudden, it struck me—my dreams when I was a cadet at West Point when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia, and my conversation just a couple years before in Berlin before the Wall came down—about being in a capital city when Russian tanks rolled in. The sudden realization was such a shock to my system that my head felt like it pitched to one side as if I had been struck by something. My entire body started shaking. I couldn't believe it, this was it! The dream had come true! Never in my wildest thoughts had I ever thought it would be Moscow! This story sounds apocryphal, I'm sure, except there were officers - witnesses - from Berlin, one of whom called me after the coup and said, "I remembered our conversation in Berlin! This was it!" I said, "Yes, yes, it was!"

Q: Incredible.

COX: There is one final comment about that particular story. I got back across the street, stumbling again because the tanks were still heaving the road as they passed. When I was out there, I was dressed in dark civilian slacks and a white shirt. I had shed my jacket and my tie, my typical embassy uniform, hours before. Over my shoulder I had a small black gym bag, which contained my cameras. Unbeknownst to me, on a raised ramp to a building, right next to the intersection, a Paris Match photographer was taking pictures. Paris Match darkened the photos of those ominous creatures of war passing by me. Several weeks later, as I was walking down a street in Moscow, I saw the Paris Match "coup edition" in a news kiosk.

I paused, recalling that, when I was studying French in high school, after the Kennedy assassination, the pictures in Paris Match were totally different than the pictures in Look and Life magazines - or any others in the U.S. press. As a result, the seed was planted in my head that Paris Match does things a little bit differently. They have different photographers, and they have different angles on stories. I saw the "coup edition" of the Paris Match, and I thought, "Well, I've got to buy this." I took the magazine home. Flipping through the pictures with the intent of adding this to my collection of souvenirs from the coup, I paused on a page with the photo of that traffic island with tanks lumbering by. Initially, I didn't recognize myself. I looked at the photo and thought, "Oh, look what the photographer did here." By darkening the photo, the scene looked so ominous, so threatening. And there was one guy standing out there on the traffic island, wearing dark slacks and a white shirt, just like I had. And he had a bag over his shoulder just like me. Then it hit "Oh my god! That's me!"

It was a "moment", to be sure. It still makes me wonder about the power of dreams and the coincidences in life that occur, and what forces, what fate, brought me to that spot at that moment. Of course, I am very happy I wasn't shot, that it was just somehow synapses exploding in my brain that my dream had come true.

Q: Let me ask you here then, looking back, were you in danger? Was the situation so fluid that some guy with a gun could have just shot you?

COX: Well, I guess. There were plenty of guns and ammunition in the hands of Soviet soldiers around on the streets. But nobody was getting shot anywhere, other than that horrible incident I relayed where the military was trying to find a way out of town at night on Day 2 and those excited, maybe even liquored up, young men with Molotov cocktails who rained gasoline bombs down on the vehicles. Otherwise, it turned out to be a remarkably peaceful event. But, to be fair, it was one trigger pull away from potentially turning into total chaos. I didn't feel particularly threatened. The Russian military was taking a very passive stance. When they parked their vehicles, it was clear they didn't know what to do once they got to Moscow. They had been told to go to a specific place, but once they got there, they just parked and awaited further instructions. It was clear they had no idea what they were supposed to do. They were not acting aggressive with anyone.

So, no, I don't think I was under much threat there, but if things had gone south, we all would have been sheltering at the U.S. embassy because as I said at the beginning, the Russian White House was only 200 meters away from the Embassy. Those in the Russian White House feared a KGB special forces assault on the roof of the Russian White House. Had that occurred, it would have become a massacre involving thousands of civilians "defending" the White House outside. Had shooting broken out, bullets would have been spraying all over the U.S. Embassy compound.

There is a wall around the Embassy compound. The wall is six or seven feet tall but something easily scalable, especially by terrified people seeking safety from bullets. That's why, when the shooting started outside the embassy on the second night of the

coup—that incident with Molotov cocktails and that military unit trying to find an exit—the embassy security officers and the Marines got everybody who lived on the compound down into the underground basketball court where there was some hope at least of physical protection had an attack started.

The coup was a very close run thing in the sense that it could have gone either way. I was told, I don't know this for a fact, but I was told the Pentagon issued alerts to the U.S. Air Force to put transport aircraft on standby at Frankfurt to fly to Moscow in case we needed to evacuate the embassy staff and families. So much for my brilliant call to absent myself from the embassy evacuation class during attaché training…

I had been in country for less than three months. Thankfully, things slowed down a bit after that.

There was a panic of sort that occurred in the Pentagon and in Washington in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet government in the fall of 1991. The fear was that the Soviet economy had collapsed and Russians would soon be starving, which of course could have led to civil war. All the measures of the Soviet economy went to zero, just fell off the chart. If you walked into a store, there was nothing there. Shelves were bare everywhere. But on the sidewalk, tables and booths had been set up. People were selling things, not controlled or measured by the government. The city resembled a giant flea market. Capitalism of a sort started blossoming on the sidewalks of every city in Russia.

Go back to my statement about how I viewed myself as having become a military correspondent – one striving to be an investigative reporter. There were so many stories begging to be told in those times in Russia. To the best of my knowledge, here is a story the Western press completely missed. Within a few days of the end of the coup, for the first time in Russians' lives bananas showed up on the streets of Moscow. I was overwhelmed by this. A Russian friend called my wife and asked her, "How do you eat a banana? Do you eat it like an apple, or do you eat it like an orange?" It was a stunning question. How do you eat a banana? That prompted me to wonder where that banana came from. What was the transportation network that got bananas – just-in-time ripe bananas - from Africa or Central America or from wherever to the streets of Moscow – in a matter of a few days – using new, untried transportation networks – for the first time perhaps ever? I never learned the answers to my musings.

This is just one small indication of the degree of change that was occurring. There was no large-scale starvation. Times were hard, and inflation was rampant wiping out savings and pensions for older people, but I don't believe people were starving. The Department of Defense took all the war rations we had stockpiled in Europe for World War III and set up a program to fly in airplanes full of freeze-dried, military-style rations that had been stockpiled for years in Western Europe. We had close to 750 Air Force flights into the Soviet Union, from, say, September 1991 until sometime in the summer of 1992, distributing those rations to local communities. The flight crews paid cash for fuel to fly back to Frankfurt. The air attachés travelled all over Russia to meet the planes to help the crew, who of course, did not speak Russian. That occupied the Air Force officers for

about a year after the failed coup attempt and the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union.

I want to say a word about the other embassy employees I worked with. The State Department officers, the commercial officers, the agriculture officers, the science and technology officers, the labor attachés, the other military officers I worked with, the senior people, the deputy chief of mission, and the ambassador—Ambassador Matlock initially, and then Ambassador Strauss. The U.S. embassy staff in Moscow at the time was about 300 Americans. It blew up to about 1,000, I understand, in the years after the Soviet Union collapsed because our relations with Russians expanded dramatically. I was impressed every day with the people I interacted with in the other sections of the embassy. I had never been in the company of so many marvelous, highly educated, highly trained, enthusiastic, dedicated government employees in my life. It often felt to me like a hand-picked team. I believed in my heart then, and I do to this day, that only the best were being sent to Moscow.

I was honored to be among them, to have been selected in my own channels to be one of the people who served in that country, which was never easy for an American diplomat. It was not easy for us even after the Soviet Union disintegrated, but it was a different kind of "hard". We were no longer enemy number one. But getting anything done remained troublesome, inconvenient, especially because institutions throughout the country were falling apart. Nonetheless, it was one of those experiences where, when my family and I left Moscow in July of 1993, we knew we had had an experience that was truly second to none. What we had witnessed and experienced in Russia!

Q: Just a very quick question. During this period of hyperinflation and the collapse of various government organizations, did the dollar end up being a currency of choice for a while?

COX: Absolutely. In fact, there were lots of inconsistencies that developed in the Soviet pricing system. Inflation was just going through the roof, but the government-established prices, say for Aeroflot tickets to fly from Moscow to someplace thousands of miles away in Russia never changed. In the defense attaché office our routine was to spend one week in the office followed by one week on the road, year round. When we weren't traveling we were in the office writing reports, preparing for future trips, doing things in Moscow, talking to people in Moscow. One of our priorities was to travel all over the country to develop a sense of what was happening outside the capital.

I know this is going to sound crazy, but it's absolutely true. There came a time when to buy a Coca Cola cost as much it did to fly from Moscow 1,000 miles east. Our travel budget was denominated in dollars. We couldn't spend it. There was no way we could spend our travel money when it cost only a dollar or two to fly thousands of miles on Aeroflot. As an aside, flying on Aeroflot wasn't worth more than about a dollar or two. You took your life in your hands going with them.

Another example. My wife and I started staying in suites in Kiev when we traveled to the Consulate and, later, the new Embassy. We would stay in a suite for three dollars or five dollars a night. It was the same in St. Petersburg (Leningrad). There, we would stay in a suite in the Astoria Hotel that now costs probably $3,000, but we were paying five or six dollars for the suite. That was the sort of price craziness going on there at that time.

Then there was the appearance of fast food in Moscow. McDonald's had opened a restaurant in Moscow in about 1990. For anybody who thought Russians were hopeless people in doing business and providing good service the McDonald's I observed in Russia was the cleanest I have ever seen. Young people who started out working behind the counter were getting real money for doing real work, providing a real service at a high standard. Just watching them was an astonishing experience.

Where did the food come from? McDonald's somehow, though God knows how, bought collective farms. They raised their own cattle. They grew their own potatoes, lettuce and tomatoes. They had their own bakeries for baking bread for the buns. They were very successful using Russians to do the farming and raising the cows. Beef production was so successful that, despite lines out the door at every McDonald's restaurant, there was always excess hamburger, which the Canadian leadership of the McDonald's store in Moscow then offered to the American, British, and other Western embassies. We were thrilled to pay market price in dollars for fresh ground beef.

McDonald's also figured out how to deal with rampant inflation. The McDonald's people didn't know what to charge for a Big Mac meal. But there was always a waiting line out the door. The cost of a hamburger tomorrow needed to be different than the price today because of inflation. Inflation was just that wild. So they created a Big Mac index—you hear sometimes about the cost of Big Macs around the world—I think it must have started in Moscow because the managers of the McDonald's in Moscow set prices for the hamburgers so they would always have a modest-sized line, not a long line. If the line got too long, then the price was too low. If there was no line, then the price was too high. They modified prices based upon having the ideal line of, say, six to eight people.

At the end of two years, my time was up. We had been posted to the Soviet Union, but we left from Russia. While there, I was honored the Army had selected me for promotion to colonel. I was coming back to the Pentagon.

Q: You're at the end of a tour, unbelievable times, rarely happens in history, but you are exhausted. Was there any understanding within your organizations, the military or the larger organization of the U.S. government, to deal with the issue of exhaustion and resilience and helping you recuperate from what was a really overwhelming kind of thing?

COX: I don't want to be flippant, but 30 days leave is the best medicine. I don't know if I am the best example, but the way I chose to live and work, there was no way I could relax in Moscow. I was constantly reading every bit of Russian press I could find. It was all about staying on top of the situation, which was very fluid. The only time I could ever

relax was when I flew outside the country to go with my family skiing in Germany, or back to the United States for summer break, or something like that. At that point, I would just go cold turkey. I would completely, totally let down and veg, relax to the max. As soon as I crossed that border flying back into the country, my metabolism stepped up, my heart rate went up, and I would dive back into what was going on and spend a few days getting back on top of all the changes that had occurred while I was away. I always needed to develop a sense of the current state of affairs.

In Russia after the coup, I perceived the country was changing fundamentally about every four to six weeks. I went to my boss and suggested that we needed to sit down and rearrange our priorities of what we should be looking for, for what had become relatively more important in the course of the past few weeks. Events were moving that quickly. There was no way Washington could keep up with changing our reporting requirements, so we did it ourselves. Through the rest of my time in Moscow, every four to six weeks we would get together, sit down with a blank piece of paper and determine our new priorities for reporting. That's the way we organized ourselves.

Q: And, of course, going on in Washington as well, which is a distraction, is the national election.

COX: Yes, although I have to tell you, I had other things on my mind.

Q: I don't mean the national election would have affected you on the ground in Russia, but it would affect the focus and attention that goes on in Washington.

COX: Well, true. But we military attachés all worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), so domestic politics was not a concern for us in Moscow. But, yes, it's a good point.

My family and I returned to Washington. I was to be promoted to colonel in a few weeks and was returning to the Army staff. We moved back to our home in Vienna, Virginia, which had been, since before departing for Berlin in 1987, our home base. Transition home for our girls involved running across the street to meet their friends who, in a very un-Washington way, never moved away. Life was really nice for all of us at that point.

Q: And your girls were grade school age?

COX: Yes. The oldest was by then getting close to high school, and the younger was still in elementary school.

Q: Okay.

COX: I reported into the Pentagon to work for people I had worked with before. They too had been promoted in the six years since I had last been there. I had immense respect for the gentleman who had been promoted to be the deputy chief of staff for intelligence at the Department of the Army. When I told him I wanted to work on the Army staff, he

said, “You’re not working anywhere except the Army staff! You’re going to work for me.” I told him exactly the job I wanted, managing an office of 40 foreign area officers (mostly military officers, but also a few highly skilled civilians) who had regional expertise that covered the entire world. I bring this up because it is important to understanding a little more about what foreign area officers do.

I had officers who were sub-Saharan African specialists, Chinese and Korean specialists, Russian specialists, European specialists, Latin America—the works. I had the entire world represented. We actually worked not just for the deputy chief of staff for intelligence, but also for the entire Army senior leadership.

I’ll explain. Things happen in the world every day, so young intelligence officers on the intelligence watch would notify the Army leadership that, for example, some political candidate in Mexico, who looked like he was going to win the election, had been assassinated. I’m making this up just be illustrative. The chief of staff might not recall why that candidate’s death is important to the US Army. That sometimes resulted in a question, “Why is this important to me?” He might not be that blunt, but the young intelligence officer, who is just not a regional specialist in the world, wouldn’t know the answer. So a call would come down to my office. “Send your Mexican FAO up to the Chief, right now!” And of course my Mexico FAO was a really sharp guy. He already knew that this political candidate had been shot, so he would report to the chief of staff of the Army and say, “Sir, this is why this is important to you. You actually met him on your last trip to Mexico, and he was going to be more favorable to building closer ties with the U.S. Army. Now that he is out of the picture, the other candidate is less so. This is the why you should care.” In a meeting that lasted less than a minute, we made the Chief comfortable, reminded him of why the report from the Watch Officer was significant. We were, if you will, the explainers, the so-what guys for the Army leadership. It was a great job. I worked with wonderful people in that job.

I’ve gotten a little bit ahead of myself. When I found in late summer I was going to get the job managing the group of FAOs on the Army Staff, there was a caveat. The caveat was that the job was not going to be available until November. So I faced a minor dilemma: what to do in the interim? I had been running in the fast lane for several years already. But there was no way I could just sit around for three or four months. It would have killed me. Knowing there were new embassies being established by the State Department in all the new republics of the former Soviet Union, I requested from my new 3-star boss permission to go back and play in a new embassy someplace. He reluctantly agreed, adding, “You better be back here in November.” I promised to do that. I went to DIA to see if they were interested in a “volunteer” and found Kazakhstan needed a temporary defense attaché.

I very quickly got approval from State. Although I had never met him, I was known by the young ambassador, Bill Courtney, the US Ambassador. He welcomed me to his Embassy.

After two flights taking me halfway around the world, I arrived in Kazakhstan to be the temporary defense attaché for six weeks. This was a totally different experience for me in number of ways. First of all, in Moscow, even though I was a relatively senior officer, I was only an assistant military attaché. There were many senior people assigned in Moscow. In relative terms, Embassy Moscow was huge - at least 300. Now I was in Kazakhstan, where the US had basically rented a house on a main street in Almaty, Kazakhstan, to serve as the U.S. embassy. I don't recall exactly, but there couldn't have been more than 12 Americans on staff, including the Ambassador. A number of us were temporary people there to help get the embassy established. It was great for me because suddenly I was a big fish in a very small pond as opposed to a guppy in the ocean called Embassy Moscow.

The ambassador welcomed me warmly and took me into his office. He knew I was an experienced guy. He knew I was a good Russian speaker. Even though we were in Kazakhstan, Russian was still the lingua franca throughout the country. He made a request of me, which I thought was really strange at the time. He said, "The only request I have for you is, I want you to wear your uniform every day." We never did this in Moscow. We only wore uniforms on the Fourth of July or to national day receptions at foreign embassies. I thought, "This is going to bring too much attention to me. I don't like to bring attention to me." He sensed my discomfort. He said, "No, trust me on this. They will see you, they will recognize you as an American, and they will want to talk to you." And that was exactly what happened. More than once I would be walking down the street in my uniform and some Kazakh would come out of a building and say, "Hey! Are you an American military officer?" I would say, "Yes". They would say, "Come here. I need to talk to you." I would go in, sit, and find out what he wanted to tell me. It was a spot-on decision on the part of the ambassador.

I spent a wonderful six weeks in Kazakhstan, which culminated with a visit by Secretary of State Warren Christopher. At that end of the SECSTATE visit, I flew back to the United States. I went back to the Pentagon and took up my position there.

Beyond what I've told already about the job in the Pentagon, there is not much to add, so I'll move to the next thing, which is that I wasn't on the Army Staff very long. My immediate boss when I was in Moscow, the army attaché, had been selected for promotion to Brigadier General and to return to Moscow as the defense attaché. He contacted me and requested that I return to Moscow with him. I asked, "In what capacity?" He said, "Not as an attaché; we are building a new office."

At the time, we called it the Defense Programs Office because we were striving to do more partnering with the Russians. Frankly I was going to go with a "checkbook" with $30 million dollars in it, essentially to buy things from the Russians. We wanted to reconstruct our entire relationship with the Russian military to increase cooperation between our forces. There was a lot of wishful thinking going on, to be sure, but nothing would ever improve if we didn't try. I agreed to go back. I went home and told my wife. She was not very happy about the idea of going back to Moscow.

Q: Quick question. When you are buying these bits of technology or bits of military equipment, were they for giving to U.S. contractors to remake for U.S. aircraft? Or were they for study? What was the ultimate purpose?

COX: Well, I think the ultimate purpose was both. It was both for deconstructing and reengineering, and studying the rest.

Q: Okay.

COX: But I never got to that point. I was moved to the Office of the Secretary of Defense where my job was to hire about 5-6 people to staff this office in Moscow, for which I was going to be the chief. But, fate intervened - truly diplomatic fate. I had just returned from a quick trip to Moscow in the spring of 1995, two months before I was due to move back there. I had gone to attend a conference, which allowed me an opportunity to see what had changed in Moscow in the two years since I had lived there, to look around and kind of breathe Moscow air again.

In the ministry of defense in Russia, the Foreign Liaison Department has always been composed of Soviet, now Russian, intelligence officers. They were our initial points of contact in the MoD. They found out I was at a conference in Moscow, called me up, and requested that I drop by their office. I was amazed how collegially they greeted me. They said things like, "We remember you. We liked working with you. You speak good Russian. We have heard you are coming back, but we understand you're not going to be an attaché. Explain to us what you are going to be doing here." In general terms I explained the new office I was staffing. They said, "This sounds wonderful!" As I said, this was two months before I was due to move back to Russia. I had already applied for my visa. So I thought, "Wow, this assignment might turn out to be really great."

I came home elated that everything was going to be fine. I walked back into my office in the Pentagon and one of my closest friends from the State Department, who had been the former chief of the political internal section at the embassy, Wayne Merry (who has been interviewed for this project) sat me down and said, "You've got a visa problem. And any visa problem is a big problem."

Unbeknownst to me, the U.S. government had denied a visa to a Russian colonel attempting to return to Washington for a second assignment. It turned out I was the only American colonel returning to Moscow that summer. The Russian security services overruled the Russian military and denied my visa. As I was soon to learn, they put me on the visa permanent denial list.

So I was unable to return to Moscow, which put me in a terrible position for the summer of 1995. A long diplomatic effort was undertaken by the Ambassador and General Reppert in Moscow to try to change the decision of the Russian security services. Eventually, after months of back-and-forth, the Russians finally said, "What part of 'no' don't you understand?"

In my own way, I refer to the summer of 1995 as The Endless Summer. Because I was in diplomatic limbo, I didn't have a job and the Army couldn't reassign me. I had staffed the new office in Moscow – they were all there except me. I went to the Pentagon every morning just to read the Early Bird news summaries so I could not get to the neighborhood pool at home before 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon. That summer I read a lot of books. I was in a world-class funk, thinking, "I've had such a phenomenal, dream-like career. How can it end like this?" In my head, I knew this was just diplomatic life. Visas get denied sometimes. You just deal with it and move on. But in my heart, it was killing me. This was the lowest point in my career.

After I had received the final denial, one morning I walked into the Russia-Ukraine-Eurasia policy office, where I had been working, and said to myself, "I am going to find a job for me today." I looked at a book that listed every country in the world where the US has military attachés. When I turned the page to Poland, I discovered there would be an opening for a defense attaché in the summer of 1997 – two years in the future. Of course, to go to Poland, I would need to study Polish, which would fill the year of '96-'97. Without hesitation, I called the military assignment people and requested Poland. Their consideration of my request didn't take long. They penciled me in.

Q: But you still would have a little bit of time that you would need to fill between 1995 and 1996?

COX: Right. I became basically just another colonel on the staff of the secretary of defense. That leads me to the one unbelievable moment I had on Secretary Bill Perry's staff. In 1995, we were working with the Russians to create joint peacekeeping standards and dictionaries. For example, take the word "checkpoint". What does a checkpoint mean to a Russian soldier? What does a checkpoint mean to a UN peacekeeper? We were melding together these concepts with the Russians to come to a common understanding. Peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia was the big issue at this point. Secretary Perry was trying to get the Russians to go there to help NATO conduct peacekeeping operations after implementation of the Dayton Accords. The Russians were resisting the idea because it would put them under the control of the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, who of course is an American four-star officer.

The minister of defense in Russia at that point was Pavel Grachev, the former Russian airborne forces commander. He was coming to the United States at the invitation of the secretary of defense. At the time of his visit to the Pentagon, there were a hundred or so Russian soldiers already in Kansas doing a joint peacekeeping exercise with U.S. soldiers. Minister of Defense Grachev had an all-day session in the Pentagon with the secretary of defense, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other senior Department of Defense officials. I was not in the room, but I was informed that all day long the US side tried to get the Russians to understand how much better it would be if they would work with us in Bosnia. All Secretary Perry got in response was "Nyet, nyet, nyet."

The very next day, Secretary Perry and Minister Grachev and delegations were to fly to Kansas on Perry's plane. My boss, a Deputy Assistant Secretary, came to me and said she wanted me to create a briefing and to present it to Minister Grachev on the plane. She told me I could have only four slides, and some of those slides had to cover the itinerary in Kansas. But, she added, we needed to try again to get turn Grachev on the issue of cooperation in Bosnia

What I did was I used every bit of FAO skill I could think of. Russian President Yeltsin had just attended a summit at Hyde Park, New York, with President Clinton. Yeltsin, at the end of that summit, had issued a statement, which was one of the more presidential things he ever said. I can't remember exactly the words now, but it was something like, "Our relationships with the United States are not day-by-day, or week-by-week. They are for months. They are for years." It was very presidential, very future-oriented. It was truly a wonderful statement. So, at the bottom of the first slide that was about the itinerary in Kansas, I inserted that quote from President Yeltsin in a text box.

As I started to brief Minister Grachev with Secretary Perry sitting right next to me on the plane, Grachev, who was accompanied by three senior generals and the Russian defense attaché from the embassy in Washington, ordered me to stop. He pointed to the text box, and asked, "Did my President really say that?" I said, "Yes, he did." He held up the slide, and turned to his other generals, "Look at this. This is right. This is true." Secretary Perry, I'm certain, was as stunned as we all were. Assistant Defense Secretary Ash Carter (who was more recently served also as the secretary of defense for President Obama) was standing right behind me. The airplane was very noisy so everybody was leaning in. We all sensed something was happening, but nobody knew what exactly.

When the Russians were finished talking among themselves, Grachev put the slides back on the table and I continued. I turned to the next page, which covered more of the itinerary. However I had inserted another text box at the bottom. I just made something up. What I inserted was, "The world expects leadership from the Russian Federation and the United States of America." That was it. None of my seniors had even reviewed the slides. Again, Grachev yelled, "Stop!" He didn't care about the itinerary. He turned to his fellow generals, "Look at this. This is absolutely right. The world expects leadership from us. We have to step up and be leaders." At this point, I was about to faint because I had expected the opposite reaction - that Grachev would get angry with me for our continued attempts to change his mind. Instead, something totally unexpected was happening.

Secretary Perry's military assistant then ordered everyone out of the front section of the plane except for Grachev, Secretary Perry, and the US interpreter. I was told in the last hour of the flight to Kansas, faxes were flying back and forth to the NSC and to the White House. When we got to the site of the peacekeeping exercise, Secretary Perry told the host, a two-star general who was running the exercise, "We're going straight to a press conference."

At the press conference, Secretary Perry and the Russian minister of defense announced that they had agreed to subordinate Russian soldiers to the overall command in Bosnia.

The journalists who followed Secretary Perry in the Press Plane reacted with surprise. They hadn't expected real news!

[Laughter]

COX: At the press conference, I stood in the back of the room behind the cameras. I walked up to a Russian general I knew from my Moscow days, and I said to him, "I tend to get excited at moments like this, but this sounds like real news." He turned to me and he said, "Listen to me, Cox. This is big news. This is really big news!" To this day, I do not know why Grachev's change of mind happened on the Secretary's plane. I don't know if overnight, before we got on the plane, the Russian minister of defense said, "Nyet, nyet, nyet is not going to work. We need to come up with another answer." Of if I struck a chord in him. The one thing I attempted by the insertion of my text boxes was to play to Grachev as a big guy in the world, that he was not just minister of defense of some weak country. I wanted to acknowledge him as an important player. Regardless of the reasons why, something important had happened that day and in fact the Russians did send their forces and worked with US forces for a couple years in the region.

I should add that the amazing experience on Secretary Perry's aircraft occurred just days after the Russians in Moscow had finally and forever said "no" to my visa request. I thought, "That's pretty ironic."

But by that point my visa denial had stopped bothering me. When I returned to Washington in '93, there were already rumblings about possible future expansion of NATO. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, a security void had been created in Eastern Europe. The Warsaw Pact had disintegrated. Soviet forces were cascading back to the Soviet Union, and then, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, back into Russia leaving a vacuum in Central Europe. I, like many people who were Russian experts, didn't like the idea initially. But eventually I came to understand I had a little too much Russia bias, Russia focus, in my thinking.

Q: A lot of people were against it, and there were very serious scholars who said, "This is a bad thing."

COX: Exactly. So, I read everything I could get my hands on about the pros and cons of NATO expansion. In the course of about 18 months, I became convinced that NATO expansion was the answer. That was the huge attraction of assignment to Poland. Coincidentally, by helping Poland, I felt I could also help Lithuania, my mother's birthplace

Q: Well, of course, very long ago, in the Middle Ages, Poland and Lithuania were one nation.

COX: Right, right.

Q: Obviously with some different ethnic issues and a different language, but there were connections between Poland and Lithuania.

COX: Right. And there is still is a bit of sniping between them. There is this "big brother, little brother" thing sometimes. But that has receded in the modern era.

I hoped that by going into Polish training in the summer of 1996, that I would get to Poland about the time it was formally invited to begin the NATO accession process. If NATO expansion was going to happen, I wanted to be in the middle of the maelstrom. This was going to be my capstone moment. To go back to a theme, a thread, in my career and the dream I had as a little boy, I wanted to be a liberator just like my father and the "greatest generation" were liberators. This was going to be my opportunity.

I started Polish language training in 1996. Slavic languages being what they are, it is not uncommon for people who already know Russian to add Polish. My Polish instructors were forever screwing up their faces because I kept speaking Polish with a Russian accent and I would throw Russian words in where they were not welcome. The truth of the matter is, I do not know anyone who speaks both Russian and Polish who doesn't get them all mixed up. You can't avoid it. There is, I'm guessing, about a 50 percent overlap of the vocabulary.

Here's my "proof" about how the two languages are hopelessly intermixed in my head. One time I was talking with a small group of Ukrainian officers in Warsaw. I mentioned how it had become impossible for me to speak Russian anymore because the Polish was then foremost in my mind. We had had a few drinks, and they said, "Go ahead. Say a paragraph in Russian." As I did, they started laughing because Polish words were sprinkled in my paragraph. They said, "You speak perfect Ukrainian!"

[Laughter]

COX: So the sad truth: My Russian is corrupted hopelessly and forever. But that was the cost of doing business.

As it turned out, at the end of my Polish training year, three weeks before I was to move to Poland, the NATO Madrid Summit occurred, where formal invitations were issued to Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary to begin the process of gaining entry into NATO. It was not a foregone conclusion that they would get in. They had to fundamentally change their militaries to meet NATO standards, and that often required votes by the parliaments to change their laws and practices. As well, all member nations of NATO had to approve their entry before it could occur. Flying into Poland was the beginning of another tremendous chapter in my professional life.

Poland being a middle-size country, the US Embassy was not nearly as big as Moscow, but it was much larger than the fledgling embassy I had experienced in Kazakhstan. The ambassador we had when I first arrived in Poland had an amazing background. His name

was Nicholas Rey. He was a political appointee and probably the best example of why political appointee ambassadors, when chosen carefully, can be magic.

Nicholas Rey was born in Poland, fled with his family at the beginning of WWII and then spent his career in NYC. The Clinton Administration had nominated him to be the Ambassador to Poland. He had native ability in Polish, which was great. Beyond that, he was a direct descendent of the first Pole who wrote using the Polish language, in the Middle Ages. That Pole's name was Mikolaj Rej. That is like having "George Washington XVI" as your ambassador!

Things were happening fast and furious with the onslaught of concern and effort to help Poland's military gain approval for joining NATO. Ambassador Rey knew, like we all knew, that of the three countries, Poland was the one country that could not stumble. To be perfectly blunt, if the Czech Republic stumbled, it was not going to threaten the whole process. But Poland was the largest country with the largest military among the three, so in Poland everything had to go right. This resulted in a lot of tension at times.

The Polish government and the ruling elites of Poland were phenomenal, amazing, talented people, committed to fundamentally changing their country. Poland's priorities in 1997 were just two: First NATO accession, then European Union (EU) membership. There was not much talk about the EU during the time I served there (1997-2000); it was all about NATO. To create a military that would meet Western standards we knew the greatest challenges were not about equipment, but rather mindset – the human element.

To elaborate, within NATO, there are lots of different tanks and lots of different airplanes, but all the militaries use the same procedures. The armies of NATO have common understandings of what defensive maneuvers are, offensive maneuvers, and patrolling maneuvers. Addressing the human element in Poland meant the education system had to change, which meant that laws had to be changed that would permit the deployment of Polish forces out of country, and on and on. The finance and economics of the country were already being changed. Sometimes, I felt like everything was being changed in Poland – at the same time.

I worked with very closely with the minister of defense, the chief of the general staff, and the other senior officers in the Polish military, all of whom had spent their careers in the Warsaw Pact. They didn't know anything else but the Warsaw Pact. They were excited about not having Russians dominating them. They were excited about the prospects of getting into NATO. But change is hard when you're in your 50s and you've never known anything else but a particular system.

I wasn't alone as a NATO defense attaché. The other NATO countries had wonderful people in Poland as well. We were all committed to the same goal, to help the Polish military. We, the NATO attachés, would get together to optimize our assistance efforts. I can't remember all the details, but, for instance, Denmark had a great English language training program. So, we agreed that Denmark would take the lead on that. Each NATO country had its own strengths. The Brits had military schools in Britain for junior

officers. The US excels at professional education like the War College and the National Defense University as well as a host of other schools and training centers. I was genuinely impressed with German actions. There were Polish officers going to German schools, and German officers coming to Polish military schools - unthinkable things from just a few decades before. Remarkable times.

In the U.S. embassy, I was dealing with a core group of people. We called ourselves the Pol-Mil (political-military) team—the ambassador, the deputy chief of mission, and the political counselor, who had been a friend of mine in Moscow during my time. The deputy chief of mission was a tremendous guy who later became the ambassador to Lithuania.

When I arrived in Poland, the ambassador, Nicholas Rey was near the end of his term. He was replaced by a career State Department officer, Daniel Fried, who was a long-time Russia specialist and had served in the Soviet Union. I knew of him, but I had not met him. He didn't have that Nicholas Rey pedigree, but he had served in Poland before. He knew a lot about Poland and he knew a lot of Poles. He spoke Polish beautifully. Even though he was a totally different person than the previous ambassador, it was a seamless transition. He was also a graduate of the U.S. Army Russian Institute in Garmisch, where I had received my advanced Russian training.

After about a year in Warsaw, our deputy chief of mission, John Cloud, left and was replaced by Mike Mozur, who was also a graduate of the U.S. Army Russian Institute. He was actually my classmate in Garmisch. At one point, the chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation, an Army colonel, the deputy chief of mission, and I were all Garmisch classmates. Ambassador Fried was also a Garmisch graduate, but from a different year. Once again, we enjoyed the benefits of the "Russian FAO fraternity", this small little brotherhood. We always had stories we could tell each other to loosen up things, to lighten up the moment.

It was an amazing experience, working again with the State Department officers there. Because NATO enlargement was the dominant issue, ninety percent of everything we did at the embassy was focused on that. Ambassador Fried turned to me one time, and said, "You know, Cox, if it wasn't for your stuff, I wouldn't have anything to do here!" It was essentially a true statement. We were all committed to the same goal. It went beyond supporting the policy, which you have to do no matter where you are, no matter what the policy is. If you love what you are doing then working hard is not so onerous.

Of course, NATO was one of the big issues in Washington at the time, so it seemed to us that the entire United States government and Congress came to Poland, one airplane at a time. Staffers too. And think tankers. Everybody wanted to see what was going on in the three invited countries. We had guests all the time. One of the challenges we had was - and this is the case in every embassy all the time, all over the world – trying to hone the takeaway message. What is the one thing we wanted each delegation to retain? I'm not belittling their capabilities to take away more than that, but what is it they can really hang their hat on? At the time there was a lot of concern in the United States among some

groups, such as veterans, that Poland was a former Communist country. “Are you sure you want them in NATO? Are they going to be security consumers or are they going to be security providers? ” These were kind of the issues that every group coming to Warsaw had, but every group also had a slightly different focus. There were senators from the Intelligence Committee who needed to hear a certain message. If they were from the Armed Services Committee, it was the same message but with a slightly different focus.

When the Pol-Mil team had the time – and we didn’t often have much time - we would get together in the ambassador’s office before briefing a group of visitors and say, “What is the best takeaway message for this group?” It’s not like we were selling something, but rather trying to find the best way to pitch the core message. I became enthralled with the idea of finding just the right words to communicate an important concept.

One time, we were briefing a group of visiting senators in the embassy conference room. We hadn’t had a chance to address the “message” with Ambassador Fried or the deputy chief of mission before our briefing. When it was my turn to speak in a flash I changed what I was going to say. An idea popped into my head. I said to the senator who was in charge of the delegation, “Senator, for a moment, let’s just put NATO aside. Just forget NATO for a second. If we bring Poland into the Alliance, we will have “cousins” on both ends of Europe. What could be better than that?” His head shot up from his notes, he looked at me for a moment and proclaimed, “I got it!” I saw they were all nodding their heads. The people who were briefing after me said this came as a shock to everyone. We all realized what I had said was true, of course, but we had never actually used those words. So the briefer after me said, “Well, since Colonel Cox brought up the subject of cousins on both ends of Europe, let me explain to you how they are already. And the briefing took an entirely different form from our normal messaging. It was a successful visit by the senators, and I believe they returned to Washington with the right message, one that had resonated with them.

The State Department informed us that they were going to bring an airplane full of leaders of veterans’ organizations to Poland for a visit. We planned a big reception at the ambassador’s residence. My task was to invite every Polish officer who had gone to an American military school, whether it was parachute training or the Army War College We wanted them to speak with the veteran organization leaders, which is exactly what happened. I thought it was a brilliant, non-conventional, “campaign plan”. The leaders of the veterans organizations did not have constituents in one specific area, like congressmen. Instead, they had long membership lists that spanned the country. They had a wonderful reception speaking to lots of Polish officers. I imagine their e-mails once they returned home read something like this: “I have been to Poland. It’s amazing what is happening there. We want these guys in. They’re our brothers. They are going to contribute. Tell your senator to vote ‘yes’ on NATO expansion.” When it finally did come up for a vote, it was 91-0 in the U.S. Senate for Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary to be accepted into NATO.

My challenge in Warsaw as a defense attaché was that this was an entirely different world I was suddenly working in, meaning Poland instead of Russia. Even though I worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) almost all of my work in Poland was policy work. My bosses were really the Secretary of Defense policy staff, NATO policy staff, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe policy staff, the European Command, and the U.S. Army Europe policy staff. I had a dozen bosses at least, including multiple assistant secretaries of defense, DIA, the State Department, and, of course, the ambassador. I never had conflicting guidance because everyone was pulling in the same direction.

What my job required in Poland bore little resemblance to anything I had learned in attaché school in Washington. Somehow, I just intuitively knew what to do. A close friend of mine, the chief of the Office of Defense Cooperation (ODC), told me at one point, "You know, you're completely redefining what a defense attaché does. Are you comfortable doing this? You're way out there!" I said, "I know exactly what I'm doing. I've never been so confident about anything in my entire life." It was exhausting work, but tremendously rewarding work. I could never say no to a good idea, regardless if the Poles came up with it or we did. We just somehow made it work.

I had a great relationship with the chief of the general staff in Poland. He was an older officer; he certainly grew up in another era. He took me aside one day and said, "James, I want you to know I don't understand all that you and those other NATO defense attachés are doing, but I trust you guys." That was an incredible statement for the chief of the general staff to tell a foreign military officer.

The issue for Poland's military was to develop as many of the interoperability capabilities they could by the time they would join the NATO Alliance. As I mentioned earlier, all the NATO allies had programs ongoing with the Poles, but I took mine a step farther. I went to the chief of the General Staff and told him I wanted to create a special working group, the "Interoperability Working Group". I wanted to work with his senior officers on the general staff. NATO had published a long list of the capabilities Poland needed to develop in several categories—communications, military training, education, etc. I wanted to ensure we targeted all our resources as best we could to help them.

Q: Everything all together known as interoperability?

COX: Yes, which is probably a word somebody created about that point. The chief of the general staff agreed. He put the word out to the chief of plans and policy to get the necessary people together. The Poles were going to have to bare their souls about their deficiencies relating to the interoperability standards they needed to attain. The only way we could figure out how to apply our resources effectively was if they told us exactly what their problems were, which was asking a lot. The Polish general we worked with ordered his staff officers to bare their souls to us in our meetings.

At first it was like pulling teeth. It was just horrible. After a while, we started showing success in some categories, which were then held up as examples. We kept this special

group going until they entered NATO, at which point NATO took over direct interactions with the Polish military on interoperability. But our group worked; it was a tremendous success. We got a lot of kudos for it.

I had several senior U.S. military officers come to visit Poland. We would take them around, and more than once they turned to me at the end of their visit to say, "Cox, I don't know exactly what it is you are doing here, but keep doing it. Things are just going so well." So we did. It really was a tremendous experience.

Now, to kind of cement the notion of how I had this tremendous positive working relationship with Ambassador Fried. I would say to anybody reading this, you hope and pray when you work in an embassy that you can have a close relationship with the ambassador, because if you don't, life is not pleasant. But if you do, you can get so much work done.

We built a lot of trust between us. Here is an example of an unprecedented approach I took to my job as the Defense Attaché (DATT). I occasionally called the Polish DATT in Washington to coordinate some thoughts with him, especially when senior Polish officers were heading to the US on counterpart visits. One day when the Ambassador and I were alone I told him of my calls to the Polish DATT. He got quiet a moment and then told me he did the same thing. He occasionally called the Polish Ambassador in Washington as well. We both laughed at our respective admissions.

Not surprising, the Polish government was observing the interactions between Ambassador Fried and me. One day, near the end of both Ambassador Fried's and my stay in the country, the Polish military intelligence agency invited us to speak to Polish officers being trained to become military attachés. They told us they had long noted the close working relationship we had, and how effective we had been. They asked us to speak about our relationship, addressing such issues as: What should an ambassador expect of a defense attaché? What does a defense attaché need from his ambassador in terms of support? How did we develop this relationship? We agreed, of course.

It was another magical evening. We sat on the stage together and spoke to the Polish officers about each other without particularly speaking to each other. It was an evening I'll never forget.

I have one final story about Poland. Secretary of Defense William Cohen came to visit Poland. This was a big deal. He was not the first senior visitor I'd had, for sure. I liked to change itineraries – again, to highlight a specific point or convey as specific message. In Secretary Cohen's case I wanted to showcase "return on investment" for all the DoD resources spent on training and schooling Polish officers. The secretary's staff initially did not like my idea, but I insisted the first event he would do would be a breakfast with Polish officers.

I had arranged a big breakfast room at the hotel where Secretary Cohen was staying. I invited about 20 Polish officers to join us. They ranged in rank from a Polish West Point

cadet to a Polish general officer who had gone to a U.S War College. I placed a Pole in every other seat. They were all English speakers. The secretary of defense had a West Point cadet on one side and a Polish general on the other side. There were probably 40 seats for breakfast. The SECDEF entered, sat down, and made a few brief remarks. Then he invited everyone to enjoy breakfast." At that moment, the room exploded in conversations! Exploded! I saw people turning their heads right and left, they could hardly figure out whom to speak to. It was fantastic.

At the end of breakfast, Secretary Cohen said, "This has been a most enjoyable breakfast Would each of you Polish officers please tell me what school you went to, and when you went to it." So they did in turn. It was everything from airborne school, to War College, to Fort Leavenworth Command and General Staff College, the Air Force Academy, everything—an amazing array of US military schooling. After everyone had spoken, one Polish colonel who had gone to the U.S. Army War College six years before, raised his hand and asked, "Mr. Secretary, may I say something please?" Cohen said, "Sure." I had no idea what he was going to say. He said, "Mr. Secretary, I have served 32 years in the Polish military. I have never met the Polish minister of defense. And today I am having breakfast with the U.S. secretary of defense."

[Laughter]

COX: Holy cow! The whole room got misty-eyed. Cohen couldn't stop talking about that breakfast. He went from there directly to the prime minister's office and then to the minister of defense's office. He mentioned the breakfast at press events. Then he flew to another country in Europe. There, he again mentioned the breakfast he had with the Polish officers. I felt vindicated. That was an unambiguous display of "return on investment".

There are many more stories I can say about my time in Poland, but I honestly felt like I had to flee the country to get away because it was so special, so wonderful. Whereas my experience in Moscow was primarily about failed opportunities, Poland was just the opposite. Poland was my "graduation exercise" as a foreign area officer. Poland was exactly what I was looking for in those dark days of 1995, during my endless summer, when I was denied a visa to go back to Russia. As I finished my 29th year of commissioned service and exited Poland in the summer of 2000, I knew I had had a great run. At that point, I thought I was going to go home and just do whatever for my 30th year.

Q: And retire?

COX: And retire, of course. The military is a young person's sport. Even though you are in your early fifties and still in the peak of your performance capabilities, you are shown the door. Those are the rules; it happens to everybody. I thought I would go home and figure out something new to do.

But others had a different idea. Two colleagues, one a contemporary and one a former boss, started twisting my arm to return to Garmisch to take over the leadership of the training program for future Russian foreign area officers. I said ‘no’ a couple of times, and then I finally realized ‘no’ was not the right answer, and I should do this.

Since I had departed Garmisch at the end of my FAO training in 1984, The George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies, a German-American joint venture, had been established there. Its mission was to teach the newly independent countries of the Soviet Union and East Europe about such things as the rule of law, civilian control of the military, countering terrorism, reducing crime and stopping the trafficking of women. The training of future foreign area officers became one branch of the Marshall Center.

So, I changed my mind about returning to the States in 2000. Instead, I chose to spend my 30th year teaching – and mentoring – young foreign area officers. The Director of the Marshall Center submitted an application to the Secretary of the Army to extend me for a 31st year in my position. It was approved and, as a result, I spent two years training future Russian foreign area officers.

Q: In this period of being in Europe for five years altogether—Poland and Garmisch—was your family with you?

COX: Yes, of course. Well, I say that, but my oldest daughter was actually at the University of Delaware studying while we were in Poland. My younger daughter went to the international school in Warsaw, and then to an international school north of Garmisch, at Starnberger See (south of Munich).

While I was in Garmisch training future Russian foreign area officers I was often asked, “What are you going to do after your retire?” My answer was, “I have no idea.” Enter once again, General Govan, who had retired from the military a few years before and had been hired by the State Department as the senior conventional arms control negotiator to work in Vienna, Austria. In that capacity, he was continuing a line of former officers who were both Russian experts and well known in the State Department who were hired as arms control representatives.

As he was preparing to leave Vienna after several years there, he suggested that I apply to the assistant secretary for Arms Control at the Department of State to replace him. It took a little while to work out the details, but I was hired in the spring of 2002.

In April of 2002, I borrowed a van from my neighbor, loaded my clothes and a bicycle, and drove five hours from Garmisch to Vienna early in the morning. At one o’clock in the afternoon, in a suit, I sat down at a meeting with international diplomats at the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as a State Department officer. I became the chief arms control delegate for the United States in Europe.

Q: Today is January 25th. We are resuming our interview with James Cox.

COX: Just as we broke for lunch, you asked me to address an issue I should have brought up on my own, and it's a fairly important one—to explain a little bit more to listeners or readers who don't have the background into what the U.S. Army Russian Institute was that changed into the George C. Marshall Center in the southern German town of Garmisch-Partenkirchen.

The U.S. Army Russian Institute was formed in 1947 and kept that name until the early 90s when it was subsumed by the George C. Marshall Center in Garmisch. The Russian Institute provided advanced Language Training for Foreign Area Officers. It was the last step in the process of becoming a certified Foreign Area Officer, in this case for Russia and the Soviet Union. But it wasn't a language school per se, like the Foreign Service Institute is, or the Defense Language Institute is.

When I was a student there in 1983-84, the Russian Institute training program was primarily an area studies program about the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries taught exclusively in Russian. Since we couldn't study in the USSR, Garmisch was the "immersion" program for the students. By conducting an area studies program in Russian, our instructors enhanced our Russian language abilities.

What changed with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the new countries, the former republics of the Soviet Union, was that, by the time I returned to Garmisch in 2000, there were a lot of in-country training opportunities. Embassies welcomed staff augmentation and were happy to receive young foreign area officers in training.

The training environment for Russian foreign area officers when I was the director in the years 2000-2002 was as follows. The officer and his family would move to Garmisch, where the spouse and children would live, go to school, and establish a home base. The officer would get some orientation and language training in Garmisch and then depart for six-eight weeks to an embassy somewhere in the former Soviet Union. Most often, FAO trainees would support the Office of Defense Cooperation in that country. What better way to learn about one's future life in an embassy than to be an understudy there for a permanently assigned staff member!

When these young officers returned to their "home base" at the Marshall Center they had the opportunity to enroll in programs at the Marshall Center. Although the Marshall Center programs were geared to foreigners, the staff and faculty welcomed FAOs attending. Here's why. The FAOs were getting to know people from the ministries of foreign affairs or defense in countries where they could be serving within a few years. A number of times I've referred to the FAO community as a wonderful "fraternity". The Marshall Center permitted expanding that definition of fraternity to include officers and civilians in future host countries. What we were helping our FAOs build was essentially a Rolodex of contacts.

Let me return to my State Department employment. In April 2002, I drove to Vienna for the first six weeks or so because my youngest daughter was still in school in Germany

until June. I went ahead to find out where we were going to live and to learn my job with the State Department working for the U.S. Mission to the OSCE.

My time in Vienna was fundamentally different than that of my predecessors. General Govan, had been the primary US negotiator in Europe for the adaptation of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Without going into a great deal of detail, the adaptation of that treaty was essentially stillborn. Political problems emerged almost immediately after the signing of the A/CFE Treaty. Congress made it essentially impossible for the adapted treaty to be submitted for ratification by the U.S. Senate.

My time in Vienna, even though I was the arms control representative, was not spent doing any new negotiations. My job, in terms of arms control, was primarily one of maintenance of the current treaty, which, at that point in its life, didn't require a lot of effort.

Instead, my time was spent primarily with a political-military body at the OSCE, known as the Forum for Security Cooperation, or FSC. This organization was suffering from a bit of a bad reputation as a place where good thoughts went to die, and where strange thoughts often emerged. Some viewed it as nothing but a "talk shop" that didn't accomplish anything, or, worse, made mischief. I decided I was going to try and turn that perception around because from September to December of 2003—about a year-and-a-half after I got to Vienna—the United States was scheduled to rotate into the Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation.

Q: How long does the chairmanship last?

COX: I would say about an academic semester—fall semester and spring semester. The rotation order of the chairmanship for the Forum for Security Cooperation was strictly one of marching around the room. I should perhaps at this point describe who was in the room. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe grew out of the Helsinki Accords. At the time I was there, there were 54 nations represented. We used to refer to the OSCE as encompassing "Vancouver to Vladivostok". All the countries of Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the North American countries of Canada and the United States were members.

I loved working in the international setting with 53 countries in the room. I enjoyed meeting everyone and tried to bring positive energy and influence into this organization. My life got complicated, to make it sound personal, because I became aware in the late autumn of 2002 that the United States was preparing to invade Iraq sometime in early 2003. This gave me no sense of comfort from a personal professional standpoint because I knew that the US delegation was going to move into the chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation in September 2003. Likely there would be a lot of bad feelings about an invasion of Iraq.

Q: So you would be dual-hatted? You would both speak for the U.S. and manage the talks for that period?

COX: Correct. Actually, when we got to the point of me moving into the chair of the FSC, there was one of my staff sitting at the U.S. chair as well. If guidance came from Washington to say something about a particular subject, the representative sitting in the U.S. chair would make that presentation, not me. I would simply recognize the speaker and essentially control the ebb and flow of discussion in the large room with all 54 nations there. The Chairperson almost becomes extra-national; i.e., not belonging to any nation when in the chair.

The U.S. invasion of Iraq in March of 2003 became one of the greatest challenges I faced in my professional career. It made my work at the OSCE suddenly not nearly as pleasant. Almost every delegation in the meeting room was upset with the United States over the unilateral decision to invade Iraq. Whereas I had worked for months to establish my reputation – and a rapport - with the delegations at the OSCE, overnight they became frustrated with me – as a senior representative of the US - that they found it difficult to even speak to me. I had to deal with that. They also had to deal with that.

Nonetheless, the clock was ticking toward the US Chairmanship of the FSC set to begin in September of 2003. To make a plan for the US Chairmanship, my ambassador and I held an "off-site" session with much of the US Mission to the OSCE augmented by representatives from the State Department. I knew I was going to be in the chair on behalf of the Ambassador. I pitched the idea that we should reenergize the Forum for Security Cooperation by bringing in a host of top-notch speakers on a variety of subjects of security concern to the countries of the OSCE.

I explained that what we faced was essentially a physics problem. Every meeting started with the room quiet. I likened it to a vacuum. Nature abhors vacuums. My idea was to fill that room – that vacuum – with our good ideas before someone else filled it with their bad ideas.

We worked very hard to do just that. I had great support from the State Department arms control people in Washington. We invited a series of top-notch speakers to address the FSC specifically on issues that would likely spark interest in the OSCE, such as nonproliferation issues, and developing norms and standards for enhancing control of fissile material. The director of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) came to discuss emergency management –how to deal with natural crises like forest fires, floods or hurricanes. Although that is not a security issue in the traditional OSCE sense of one country attacking another country, natural disasters require a military-like response. The FEMA presentation generated a lot of positive OSCE discussion.

We also arranged guest speakers to talk about MANPADS, or Man Portable Air Defense Systems. These are shoulder-fired missiles, which in the wrong hands can bring down a civilian airliner. Obviously, here we are not talking about conventional military conflict, but rather terrorism.

Q: And by the way, a surface–to-air missile did destroy an airliner over Eastern Ukraine.

COX: Yes, it did. Not during my time in Vienna, but yes it did. That was not a shoulder-fired missile, but rather one launched from a vehicle. But the point is the same.

One of the famous buzzwords at the OSCE is SALW—Small Arms and Light Weapons. The OSCE had created a program to deal with excess SALW, and it has enjoyed tremendous success. It focuses primarily on the countries of the former Soviet Union offering assistance to deal with - control and destroy - excess weapons. To illustrate, Ukraine and Belarus had masses of excess weapons – some dating back to World War II. Often they were stored in poorly secured bunkers. We did a lot of work and spent a lot of time talking about international support to demilitarize or destroy those excess small arms and light weapons.

Although the SALW program started before I got to the OSCE, another program closely related to it was developed while I worked in Vienna, and it, too, became an extremely important part of the OSCE. The counterpart to small arms and light weapons is munitions. There were huge quantities of excess munitions that the Soviet military had stockpiled all over the western part of the Soviet Union—in Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova.

SALW and Excess Munitions generated a lot of positive discussion in the Forum for Security Cooperation. Many delegations told us that the US Chairmanship of the FSC was a huge success. To go back to my physics analogy, we had done exactly what we set out do, which was to fill the meeting room with good thoughts and important things people could really sink their teeth into. For several years after the US moved out of the chair, the OSCE was still discussing these subjects, pursuing substantive enhancements to agreements, and making very positive references, such as, "As the U.S. delegation brought up two or three years ago, ….,". I'm proud to say we had support from all delegations at the OSCE, not simply from our best friends.

Another nice thing about the SALW and Excess Munitions programs was that I found as the chair of the OSCE I was becoming identified as a friend of a country that is normally not considered one. That is the country of Belarus, a country that has a long history of human rights problems and a number of other issues. But because they had vast quantities of excess small arms/light weapons and munitions, their ministry of foreign affairs saw opportunities to get foreign assistance from the OSCE.

The Belarusian delegate at the OSCE came to me one day in what had to be one of the more comical conversations I had with any delegates at the OSCE. He started by saying, "You know, you're the first American diplomat who doesn't just yell at us!"

Q: [Laughter]

COX: I too chuckled for a few moments. I told him, "You know, it all depends on the issue. Getting rid of excess SALW is one Washington fully supports." He said, "Well, we want to be the first country to start a program of destruction of small arms and light

weapons, but we have a problem. Our military says it's all classified, that we can't share it with the OSCE. But we know they are just old-thinkers. Would you mind, as chair of this body, to come and explain to them how this program works because frankly they don't trust us, the MFA". He added, "But you being a former military guy and now the chair of this Forum for Security Cooperation, you carry a little more weight. So would you come?" To which I said, "I would be happy to, however we have to have a little talk first."

I explained that back in 1995, I was denied a visa to return to Russia. I had made a couple of other attempts later, to include when I was director of the FAO training at Garmisch, to go back to Russia, thinking perhaps enough time had passed. But I was still on the denial list for whatever reason. I knew there was visa reciprocity between Belarus and Russia, so I took my diplomatic passport and xeroxed the page that had the numbers and my picture and gave it to the Belarusian representative. I explained to him, "Look, you need to check this out. Depending on what you come back and tell me, I will go to Washington and ask for permission to travel to Minsk, which I don't think will be a problem. But you need to understand there are three possibilities, as I see it. One is, you come back and tell me there is no way you can get me into your country. If that happens, out of respect to you I will not say a word in public about it. The second possibility is, you say everything is fine. I try to enter, get arrested and thrown in jail. If that happens, I'm telling you, I will create so much hell…"I was exaggerating, of course, because I didn't even want them to consider that option—"that you will rue the day you ever spoke to me". The third option would be you come back and say, yes you are on the visa denial list but we can get you in and out." Then, I handed him the xerox of my passport and advised him to go check it out and let me know."

A day or two later he came back and said, "Well, there are actually three visa denial lists. One is a Belarusian list, and you are not on that list. There is a Russian list, and you are definitely on that list. There is also a third list, which is a joint Russian-Belarusian list, signed by both presidents. If you were on that list, even God couldn't get you into the country, but you are not on that list. So it's just a Russian issue. A deputy foreign minister from Belarus assured me they would be able to get you in, no problem. So I said I would check with Washington." Washington responded immediately that I could go, fully supporting the idea.

I flew to Minsk. The law of unintended consequences, or the "stuff happens rule," occurred as I got to passport control. They'd had a shift change, and the 19-year-old soldier, who had just come on duty and had not been briefed about me, was sitting at the computer as I handed over my passport. A deputy foreign minister was waiting on the other side of passport control for me. A senior Belarusian representative from the OSCE was behind me. (He traveled with me.) The young soldier's eyes got big when his computer screen showed to automatically deny me entry. At that point, a tug of war started. The deputy foreign minister was yelling at him from one side, the OSCE rep from the other. I was thinking, "Oh no, here we go!" But they get me into the country.

I stopped at the U.S. embassy to pay my respects and introduce myself to the ambassador, whom I had known by reputation for many years and thought highly of. I also talked to the U.S. defense attaché for a minute. The next day, I had my meetings, kind of a joint meeting with ministry of foreign affairs representatives and Belarusian military officers, to explain the whole OSCE program of assistance to the best of my ability. There was no final decision during the meeting, but I had done all I could do.

Not unexpectedly, there was another tug of war at the airport as I tried to depart. I got out of the country okay without any serious issue. My heart rate went up only a little bit. Within a week or so, to my delight, Belarus delivered to every nation in the OSCE a comprehensive list by type and quantity of their excess small arms/light weapons for which they were requesting assistance with destroying. I, of course, as Chair of the FSC sang their praises because they were leading the way with their openness. Other nations watched to see what happened with Belarus. Several countries, I think Canada, Germany and a couple other countries, said "We'll supply money—$10,000 here, $20,000 there—whatever it takes. And we have experts who can come in and do the project in Belarus." And it worked! It was a great success. Belarus got a lot of credit, deservedly so. It was a tremendous coup, a successful move inside the OSCE, which I was very proud to have played a part with.

Following that, other countries came forward—Ukraine, countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus—with requests for munitions disposal and/or small arms disposal. Both programs became growing enterprises at the OSCE.

The U.S. chairmanship of the FSC, the Forum for Security Cooperation, ended at the year-end Ministerial Council in Maastricht, the Netherlands, because the Netherlands was the overall chair-in-office of the OSCE in 2003. The next country in line took over the chairmanship of the Forum for Security Cooperation, and I was able to breathe deeply and relax again for the first time in months.

By the spring of 2004, my youngest daughter was graduating from high school at the American International School in Vienna. My wife's parents' health was beginning to fail. I decided that 33 years of service was probably as good a time as any. It was time to return to the United States with my family and to close this chapter in my life.

Q: Before you leave Vienna, I just have two questions about the Forum for Security Cooperation. Of course, you're right, during this period the U.S. invaded Iraq with all of the explanations as to why. And, of course, in the UN, France led opposition to the U.S. military operations in Iraq. Was there a lot of difficulty in the NATO caucus in the OSCE at this time, or did it just sort of swallow hard and figure, "Well, we've just got to keep going?" Just a little atmospherics on that?

COX: The atmospherics were actually very interesting. The other NATO countries generally took the position that the invasion of Iraq was not a Vienna issue. "We have lots of Vienna issues,"—in other words, issues that are inherently part of the writ of the OSCE to deal with—"There's nothing that we NATO countries can do about this, so why

waste our time talking about it in Vienna. It is being dealt with by other bodies, other people, and in other places." It was not an OSCE issue. But to that point, I was always extremely nervous about the fact the Russian delegation, or the Belarusian delegation, or some other delegation might bring it up just to increase the discomfort of everybody – especially the US delegation about the invasion of Iraq.

The Russian delegation was headed by a very professional arms control diplomat. He'd had years of experience doing this. He was much more steeped in the traditions of diplomacy than I. Because we had a good relationship, he came to me one day with the Belarusian delegate in tow and said, "We need to talk to you." I said, "Okay." We went off to a corner. He said, "We want you to know that the decision has been taken formally in our capitals, Moscow and Minsk, that we will not bring up Iraq here in the OSCE." They said, "It's not a Vienna issue, so we're going to stay clear of it totally." I thanked them profusely. My heart rate probably went down a little bit at that point. Nonetheless, I continued to have some latent nervousness that their countries' position could change in a heartbeat, but it didn't.

Much to my delight, and I think the delight of all the other delegates in the room regardless of their personal or professional view of the U.S. decision, we kept that issue out of Vienna because in fact there was nothing we could do about it. It was not our issue. It didn't start with us, and it wasn't going to end with us. So that's the way that played out.

Q: One other technical question. The Vienna Document had the whole list of the confidence-building measures that the FSC, the Forum for Security Cooperation, was also responsible for implementing or resolving implementation problems. In the early 2000s, and I don't remember which year, through NATO the U.S. was involved military activities in Kosovo, and there was a requirement in terms of reporting or being open to observation under the Vienna Document that created some difficulties for the U.S. while it was carrying out the NATO activities in Kosovo. Were you there for that?

COX: No. That's another one that would have been a sticky one. No, fortunately, the bombing in Yugoslavia happened in 1995 before I got to Vienna, so it was not an issue I had to deal with.

Q: That's it. Those were the two stand-out things I wondered about during your time in Vienna.

COX: I should add perhaps this statement about the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which by and large is not well known. Certainly, the name recognition is nothing compared to NATO, for example. So what is the difference between these two organizations? In the OSCE, all nations in Europe and Eurasia are members (and therefore have a veto), including Russia. In NATO, Russia – and a number of other countries - are not members. The decisions made by the OSCE are politically binding, not legally binding. By that I mean, when you have a formal arms control treaty that is ratified by the U.S. Senate and the other nations' governments, it becomes a

legally binding international document. That means, if there is an allegation that one party is violating the treaty, it can go to international court to be resolved, and there can be concrete penalties if that is found to be the case.

That's not what we were dealing with in Vienna. We were dealing with politically binding agreements. Not treaties, but agreements. One way to understand this, just to make the point, is there is no "hard jail time" if you violate a politically binding agreement. Some people therefore think, "Well, they're worthless." There are no teeth in them, no penalties, so they are not worth the paper they are written on. Which I take extreme exception to because even though it's true there's no real penalties if a country abridges a politically binding agreement, there are public humiliation and embarrassment. Anyone who has served in a diplomatic environment understands that no country likes to be embarrassed publicly. There is tremendous power – leverage, really – that other countries have over a country that seeks to avert being publicly humiliated and embarrassed because they have done something against an agreement they had agreed to.

The OSCE deals primarily with politically binding agreements. I came to develop a tremendous respect for them. There is definitely a place in Europe, in North America, and in the larger world for an organization called the OSCE. In fact, there are countries around the world that have asked the OSCE to talk to them about reducing tensions between neighboring countries. Countries in Africa and Asia have approached the OSCE for information about how it does its work. In its own quiet way, I believe the OSCE is making a fundamental contribution to security and safety, not just in Europe but elsewhere in the world as its mechanisms, techniques, and practices, which have evolved over the decades since the 1990s have potential applicability elsewhere in the world as well.

It was with my head held high and a great sense of satisfaction, professional and personal, that I closed out 33 years of U.S. federal government service—31 in the Army and two-and-a-half in the State Department—and headed home.

At this point, I would just like to offer some concluding thoughts that might be applicable to anyone who has taken the time to read my contribution to this oral history project. I'm hoping there will be young people in the future who have enough curiosity to consider my thoughts.

After my 33 years of representing the U.S. government in one form or another, I want to leave you with these thoughts. I found not just that I was able to pursue a profession, but I was able to pursue my passion. Without getting too airy-fairy, the important thing for anyone entering adulthood and a career is to try to find your passion. If you are interested in what you're doing, and especially if you love what you're doing, you can put up with almost anything in pursuit of that passion. If you do then the many ups and downs that will occur will be moments you can work through, that you can endure and emerge out the other end stronger and better and more experienced.

You have probably concluded that I have been very fortunate in my career, even lucky beyond all expectations. I truly was in the right place at the right time at some very dramatic times as I pursued my passion. I of course didn't know I was going to be in the right place at the right time, but I was in these places because I wanted to be there, where the "action" was, where my dreams were leading me. It was my goal to get myself there. The rest history provided to me.

My goal, as I mentioned earlier in my presentation, which started as a childhood thought but grew to have an element of seriousness to it, was to become a liberator like my father and the "greatest generation" during World War II. My efforts with the U.S. Army as a Russian foreign area officer in East Germany, as a liaison officer, and then later as a military attaché in Russia, didn't have really the liberation tint to it, but I genuinely felt that I was carrying on the great liberation actions of the WWII generation when I worked in Poland as a defense attaché helping the Poles enter NATO.

I often remind myself that I started out just being a kid from Newark, Delaware, who loved baseball, played cowboys and Indians, and later played army. I had an early dream to go to West Point. That was perhaps the first of my dreams that came true. You'll recall from my earlier comments, as a young cadet I didn't yet know what my passion was, or what I was going to wind up doing. Face it, no kid does. You have all sorts of thoughts. You have interests. But you don't know much about the world, and you certainly don't know much about careers that might be available to you. My journey started with the study of French in high school, just because it's what I chose. I learned in the course of studying French that I had a facility for foreign languages. And I liked them. Then, you may recall, at West Point, when offered to take another language, I chose Russian, even though I had never anticipated the question, never prepared an answer, never given it a thought. It just came out. Or did it?

Along the way I was fortunate to find mentors, some of whom I have mentioned in this interview. But there were many others to whom I am just as deeply indebted. I believe it is extremely difficult to succeed in life without mentors helping to guide you even as they set an example worthy of emulation. Find them. Listen to them. Cherish them.

My choice for most of my life was the United States Army and the service of my country. Along the way I met hundreds if not thousands of others in the military, in the State Department, and in other government agencies who shared the same enthusiasm, and the same passion in many cases, for the work that needed to be done, for the work we in one form or another shared in our service. I traveled the world, I planted roots in several places in Europe as well as in the United States, and I shared my love of travel, for languages and for foreign cultures with my wonderful spouse and my two remarkable, talented and beautiful daughters, who both have acknowledged they got the language gene and a love of foreign travel from their parents. How wonderful is that?!

I have had a great run, I have no regrets, and I would not change a thing. Thank you for your interest.

End of interview