

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

**AMBASSADOR EDWARD W. GNEHM, JR.**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*

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[Note: This is an interview in progress. Additional portions will be added as they are completed.]

*Q: Today is the 22nd of May, 2014, and an interview with Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm -- better known to friends and colleagues as "Skip."*

GNEHM: Correct.

*Q: Well Skip, in the first place when and where were you born?*

GNEHM: I was born in Carrollton, Georgia, and, in fact, grew up in Georgia.

*Q: Okay then let's talk about the Gnehm family. In the first place how the hell did you get that name and where did it come from?*

GNEHM: That is a very interesting question given the number of times in my career I was asked that question. Of course I got my family name from my father and grandfather. My grandfather was actually an immigrant from Switzerland where the family lived for centuries. But the interesting thing about my family name is that virtually all of the Arabs that I've known through the years have believed it to be an Arabic name as we pronounce it similarly to an Arabic family. My Arab friends just assumed that I was of Arab origin. And the Israelis believed that as well!

*Q: Being an Arab is quite handy.*

GNEHM: But in truth it is a Swiss-German name.

*Q: Well what do you know about the Gnehm family? What were they doing in Switzerland and why did they leave the Alps and go to Georgia?*

GNEHM: They were farmers in dairy country and my great-grandfather actually was a cook on a ship on the Rhine River. Family lore is that it was very bad economic times that led him to bring the family to New York City where he became a baker in one of the large hotels there.

*Q: When was that that they came over?*

GNEHM: It was just about the turn of the 1900s.

*Q: Well then what was your father doing in, is it Carrollton?*

GNEHM: In Georgia.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Well my father was born in the Bronx. Being a Southerner I never discussed that when I was a young kid growing up in the state of Georgia! My father joined the military when World War II broke out. The Army sent him to Macon, Georgia, where he was in charge of the NCO club at the base there. He had been working for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in its home office in Manhattan before the war. So when he got out of the military after the war, he remained in Georgia working for Metropolitan Life -- first in La Grange and then in Albany.

*Q: NCO means a non-commissioned officers; that is corporals, sergeants?*

GNEHM: Correct. It was while he was working in the NCO Club that he met my mother. She was a volunteer. They got married and that's when I came along. Since the NCOs called my father "Skipper," I picked up the name Skippy, the diminutive. I got rid of the last "py" at some point when I was in second grade. So that's what brought my father south and that's where he met my mother, whose family is an old Georgia family.

*Q: I see. Well now on your mother's side what- where did her family come from?*

GNEHM: Her family came from England to the then colony of Virginia in the 1700s. Over the years the family migrated first to North Carolina then on to South Carolina and, ultimately, to Georgia. That was in the days when the Creek Indians still roamed much of northwestern Georgia. Mom's family settled in Carrollton where they were quite prominent throughout the 1800s until the late 1900s.

*Q: What sort of schooling did she have?*

GNEHM: My mother went to LaGrange College in LaGrange, Georgia; my father started at Syracuse but didn't complete a degree.

*Q: Did Sherman's army pass through Carrollton?*

GNEHM: No, but my great-great-grandfather was actually a cavalry colonel in the Confederate Army of Tennessee. And my great-great grandfather on my father's side was in the Union Army. He fought the battle at The Wilderness. He was given the Medal of Honor for saving the American flag from capture by the Confederates.

*Q: So what was Carrollton like? I mean as a kid.*

GNEHM: Well, I actually didn't grow up in Carrollton. I used to spend my summers there but my parents moved from La Grange to Albany, Georgia, when I was 4. That is where I grew up and where I went to high school. My family (which included my two sisters – Barbara and Jane Ellen) lived at 1710 Lincoln Avenue, which I always thought was a weird street name in the south!

*Q: Okay. Well let's talk about Albany. What was it like?*

GNEHM: It was a very interesting city, located in southwest Georgia not so very far from Carter and his peanuts. That part of Georgia is famous for watermelons, rattlesnakes, and swamps in addition to peanuts, but Albany was very interesting city. It was a fast growing town in the '50s, '60s and '70s. There were two U.S. military bases in Albany. One, the Marine Corps Supply Center, is still there and supports Marines in the eastern United States and Europe. The second one was Turner Air Force Base, which was at one time a SAC (Strategic Air Command) base and sometimes was the base for other Air Force elements. The interesting thing about both of those military bases is that they brought into a community that was very conservative, rural, and agricultural people from all over the United States. The military families brought new ideas and broadened horizons in Albany. They were very active in the community -- very civic minded. For example, they were deeply involved with schools and promoted excellence in teaching and in building up the curriculum. They organized various civic programs, like bringing in an opera group or an orchestra -- programs that you would not have normally found in rural Georgia.

I was active in Boy Scouts. My Scout master was a Marine Corps captain and many other officers and enlisted men were volunteer leaders.

*Q: Oh boy.*

GNEHM: The military really made Albany a dynamic community.

*Q: How about being a kid there? Let's take sort of elementary school. What was it like? Was it sort of Tom Sawyerish or what were you up to?*

GNEHM: Well, it was a little bit like that because the house that I lived in was on the edge of town. A half a block from my house there were fields, woods, and swamps. So I spent my time climbing trees, digging in fields and running through swamps and pretending the Indians were still around and things of that sort.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: But it was, as you know, a very, very different time in those days. It was a segregated South.

*Q: As a very young kid did, you have much contact with what we call today African-Americans?*

GNEHM: Well, the answer is “no” and “yes.” I can remember exactly the day when I realized that there were people with black skin. I don’t know if you want me to go into that.

*Q: Yes, I would.*

GNEHM: It was really a dramatic moment in my life.

*Q: Well how did that come about?*

GNEHM: It was in Carrollton, Georgia, where my mom’s family lived. My aunt, a dowager aunt, at least she seemed to be in those days, was a great favorite. She always pampered me and fed me. She lived in a house not far from my grandfather’s and in the backyard of the house was an older wooden framed house in which a black family lived. The children in the family were my best buddies and every time I went to Carrollton I would race to her house to see her and then bound out the back of the house to see my friends. And then there was one summer! I’m going to say I might have been five or six. I bounded down the street, raced through the front door, said ‘hey’ to Aunt Katie Lou, and bolted out the back door headed for my friends. They were all standing on the porch looking at me headed their way when she yelled at me, “Skippy, you come back here this instant.” I turned around and walked back to her because her voice was unusually stern and angry. She waged her finger at me and said, “It’s about time you learned that white kids don’t play with black kids. You understand that?”

*Q: Good God.*

GNEHM: I sat down on her back porch looking at my friends across the yard and just bawled my head off -- but I never went back.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Until that moment I never realized they were black.

*Q: Well did this come up, I’m talking about particularly your early years, six sort of up through elementary and all, did it come up in conversations or was it just sort of acknowledged and one didn’t even, I mean the- the- you might say, what do you call it, the black/white problem, did it-?*

GNEHM: This is really a very interesting question and, as we get into it, I have a very interesting story to tell. When I joined the Foreign Service in 1969 and was in A-100 training, Ruth Davis, who later became the Director General of the Foreign Service, was in my class and was from Atlanta, Georgia. We were and remain good friends. One long

weekend (I think it was Memorial Day 1969) Ruth, the girl I later married also from Georgia, and I decided to zip down to see our families. Typical of our age group, we left after work intending to drive all night. We pulled over in North Carolina late that night for a cup of coffee. Walking into the diner, it was immediately clear from the face behind the counter that we were not welcome. All three of us knew instantly what the problem was -- two whites and a black! Ruth said under her breath "let's get out of here." I said "not on your life" and sat right down on a stool at the counter. So that was my first (and I guess only) civil rights protest that I participated in. We got our coffee, by the way.

I look back on my days as a youth and I'm just sort of astonished, more than that, taken aback, that I never questioned it (segregation), that I just accepted it. It was just the way things were.

For example, I remember going into the fashionable department store on a hot summer day and heading for the water fountain. One fountain was labeled 'white only' and the other 'colored only.' I went to the one marked for whites. I would never have thought to drink from the other fountain.

Then there was the railroad station in Waycross, Georgia, when I used to go home from GW (George Washington University) by train. When you got off the train, there you were at the terminal -- colored waiting room, white waiting room. And who was the porter? It was a black guy who handled the bags. If you ask if there was any exchange yes, there was, and it wasn't hostile; but it was an unacceptable relationship that was defined that way by society at that time.

*Q: I can relate to that because as a teenager I grew up in Annapolis, Maryland, and it was segregated as all hell.*

*Well now, were you much of a reader, you know, as a young kid?*

GNEHM: Very, very much so. I was an avid reader as a kid. We had a very good public library in Albany. My mother, by the way, was a schoolteacher. She had given up teaching when she got married but went back to teaching when I was in elementary school. She was a history/geography teacher and sometimes English. So I early on developed a real interest in history. I used to read everything I could get my hands on about Rome, Greece, and Egypt. I also liked science fiction and, of course, Tarzan. I read every Tarzan book that came out.

*Q: Can you think of any books that particularly grabbed you?*

GNEHM: Yes, I was fascinated with the Iliad and the Odyssey.

*Q: Well how many were in your elementary school. Were you good in any particular subjects and not good in some subjects?*

GNEHM: Now there's a question I haven't thought about that in a while. I know the names of every single elementary school teacher I had; but I couldn't tell you some of my professors at university. I guess we're all that way. Our schools were on the larger side given that the population of Albany reached about 75,000 by the time I graduated from high school. I was a reasonably good student but by no stretch of the imagination the best in the class. I loved history and government. While I did well in biology, chemistry was a near disaster!

*Q: I assume the school was segregated.*

GNEHM: Yes it was at that time.

*Q: Did you get much in the way of southern history?*

GNEHM: Oh, yes. In those days, and I think it was in the eighth grade, you had to take a half-year of Georgia history and when we studied U.S. history it was usually with a southern approach to certain periods of time.

*Q: I take it the schools were boys and girls together.*

GNEHM: Yes, yes, definitely. Not in all towns in Georgia but in Albany they were.

*Q: How did you feel about your elementary experience? Seems you were getting a pretty good education.*

GNEHM: I think I got a very good education. Again, I believe it had much to do with the influx into the community of non-native Georgians, people who had a sense of excellence in education, expecting the courses to be good and the teachers to be good as well. They pushed the entire education system to higher levels.

*Q: Well this often is the influence of the military. They come in, I mean, they demand something more than you might say of the status quo.*

GNEHM: They were very active in the community--very, very supportive of community activities.

*Q: Did the military attract you? I mean, was this something that led you to follow what the military was up to?*

GNEHM: I can't say that it attracted me in the sense of thinking of it as an occupation. But I have to tell you that one of the comments made to me a number of different times in my Foreign Service career was 'Skip, you're one of the few people that I know in the Foreign Service that really seems to get along well with the military. You just seem to click together.' I think it goes all the way back to the fact that I grew up with them and developed a huge admiration for them as well.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I have a great appreciation for their discipline. I have a great appreciation for their sense of loyalty and certainly the relationships between officers and troops. It is the way they take care of people, their own. It was my Boy Scout master – Marine Captain Donald Clegg – who taught me basic skills -- how to work as a team -- and the ideals that are important in life. But I have to also tell you that my church was a very important influence as I was growing up as well.

*Q: Well what about religion? Was religion important for you and what was it?*

GNEHM: I was raised a Southern Baptist. That was my mother's denomination. Her grandfather was a Baptist pastor. In fact, the cornerstone of the First Baptist Church in Carrollton, Georgia, has my great grandfather's name as he was the pastor when the church was built.

I would say in terms of activities, non-school activities, it was scouting and it was my church that had the most influence on me as a youth. There was a very young pastor, Albert Cardwell, in the church that we moved to when I was very young. He had been a coalminer in West Virginia who had found his faith and become a pastor. He was a great pastor and could relate very, very well to young people and others. He was one of those men along with my Scoutmaster who had a big influence in my life.

*Q: Politically I assume your family was Democratic at the time?*

GNEHM: Was there anything else?

*Q: Yes, I was going to say.*

GNEHM: In Georgia in the '60s and the '70s? I have to laugh because it was only in the last few years someone asked me whether I was a Republican and had ever registered as Republican or Democrat. I said no, I've never been in either party. And then I got to thinking about it after I'd gone home. I remembered that I did register as a Democrat when I became eligible to vote. There were virtually no Republican candidates for any job in the state of Georgia when I grew up. Winners were always decided in the Democratic primary. Of course it is very different today.

*Q: What about foreign affairs? Did that attract you at all early on or did this come later?*

GNEHM: I was interested in international affairs from an early age. I remember the day very, very well when I decided that I wanted to be in the Foreign Service. I was invited by my eighth grade civics teacher, Martha Westbrook, to come back after school. She knew I was interested in collecting stamps and she said, "I have some stamps in my drawer that you're welcome to come look at." So I was sitting there in the afternoon. It had to have been in March-April or early May because I remember how bright the sun was coming through the windows. It was one of these glorious days, not yet too hot but

headed toward summer. I'm sitting there going through her pile of stamps, and she said to me, "Skip, what do you want to be when you grow up?" I said, "Oh, I don't know but maybe an archaeologist or a preacher because I liked history and my religious experiences. Then she said, "Well, have you ever thought about the Foreign Service?" I said, "What's that?" And she said, "Oh, it's ambassadors and people who represent our country and you live and work overseas." I thought to myself that sounds really interesting. "And you want to go to George Washington University because it's the best university in America for Foreign Service," my teacher added. And you know. Right then and there I decided I wanted to be in the Foreign Service and that I wanted to go to GW. I never wanted to do anything else in my whole life.

*Q: That's amazing.*

GNEHM: It is amazing.

*Q: Where were you getting your information? Was it TV or I guess radio more. Where was information about the world outside your town coming from?*

GNEHM: It was largely radio because I don't think we got a television station in Albany until 1960 or thereabouts. We could only get TV from Atlanta and it wasn't very good reception. But from then on, yes, it was television.

The newspaper in Albany wasn't that bad. It wasn't great; but it catered to the military and others who were living in the city but were from other states. This leads to another question about how I ever got interested in the Middle East particularly. I think it was due to my mother's interest in world events and history that I got interested in Rome, Greece, Babylonia, and Egypt. I often tell people in the Foreign Service that I don't think I ever heard about the Arab/Israeli dispute at that time. I might have gone to some other regions if I had; but I just wanted to go to the region to see the pyramids, to climb the ruins, and to visit famous historical sites.

Later I met the commander of one of the important wings stationed at the Air Force base, Colonel George Humbrecht, who had served in Saudi Arabia at the Dhahran Air Force Base. His son, Brian, was in my Boy Scout troop and Col. Humbrecht used to go with us camping. At night around the campfire, he would tell stories about his time in Saudi Arabia, about the king and how the military brought TV to the Kingdom. The religious figures in the Kingdom thought that it was against the Koran to replicate human images. They demanded that the King close down the TV station. The King was clever and got the military to run a wire to the palace. When they turned on the TV, there was a member of the ulema reading the Koran. The King asked the assembled clergy if television was bad when it propagated the faith. So the military got to keep their television station. It was his stories that began to pique my interest in the Middle East.

*Q: In many of these smallish towns and cities in the south there were small but rather influential Jewish communities. Was there such a community in Albany?*

GNEHM: There certainly was.

*Q: Did you have any friends or did you have any contact with them?*

GNEHM: My very best friend from the first grade, who's still a friend of mine today, is Jewish and from a prominent family in Albany area. The synagogue and the Jewish community were very much integrated into life of the city. In fact the head of the Boy Scout council for a number of years was Jewish as was the Chairman of the Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital, Albany's only hospital. Jewish children were in the public schools. I don't recall thinking of them in any different way from any of my other friends.

*Q: Yes, it's been my impression that anti-Semitism is really a northern manifestation.*

GNEHM: I never remember ever any negative thoughts about them. If I had any thoughts that they were different, it was my understanding that they were "Old Testament" people. If there were any negative thoughts it was about the Catholics.

Albany was a Baptist town (along with several other Protestant denominations). When one mentioned Catholics, the Pope was the target -- simply a rejection of the Papacy and its control over its adherents. Also they were somewhat separated from the rest of society -- at least those my age. They had their own school up to high school. So I did not have much interaction with Catholics my age until high school except through Scouting. There was a Catholic troop. I did not have any negative feelings toward Catholics myself; in fact I had many Catholic friends in Scouting.

*Q: Yes. And they were a bigger group too so enough to maybe cause a difference.*

GNEHM: Well, I think for most Protestants the pope was the problem.

*Q: Well I remember as a kid, hearing from some people, and I'm including some of my family, well you really shouldn't date those Catholic girls because if you marry one you know your children will have to be brought up as Catholics.*

GNEHM: Yes, I remember hearing that as well.

*Q: I mean this is part of the ethos then.*

GNEHM: I have to tell you that even as a young kid I had a rebellious streak. It wasn't just the Confederacy! I remember getting in really big trouble with the pastor that I mentioned to you earlier. It was 1960 and Kennedy was running for President. Of course, you can imagine in Georgia the idea of a Catholic becoming president meant that we were voting the Pope into the White House.

That meant that the Pope and not the President would be running the country! This particular Sunday the sermon topic was "Can a Tiger Change His Stripes?" It was clearly

going to be anti-Kennedy because he was a Catholic. I was so outraged by that approach that I wrote an anonymous letter to the pastor, really castigating the idea that he would preach and use the Bible and religion to attack Kennedy. I have to admit that I didn't have the courage to sign it. I slipped it under the door of his office before he got there and then scattered as fast as I could so that no one would see me near his door!

We're in church at 11:00, right, and he comes out to the pulpit. When he stands up for the sermon he said, I have never- and he's really angry- I have never done this in my entire life. I don't respond to anonymous letters; but there was one under my door this morning that deserves a response. He just tore into my argument! I just sat there trying not to show any emotions. I was sure everybody in the congregation knew it was me because I thought my ears and my face must have been red as a beet! Years later I admitted to him that I was the one who wrote the letter. And he said to me, "You know, you changed my life with your challenge to me. I was mad that day; but I thought of it later and you were right. And I've always regretted since that day that I preached that sermon."

Anyway, I have been a bit rebellious every now and then in my life.

*Q: What was social life like? I mean early on, I mean, were you sort of kids turned loose? In a small town, I mean and particularly in those areas they- the kids could sort of get out and play and come back at dinner time and that was pretty much it, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: Yes. Society in the South is a very hierarchical. It was different in Albany because of the military presence there. It tended to break through the traditional social structure. But it remained true that even in the high school there were students who considered themselves elite. They were members of this prestigious club and that exclusive organization. I wasn't in that group and they didn't have a lot to do with those students who were not in their elite clique.

But socially, there wasn't a lot to do in Albany?

*Q: Movies?*

GNEHM: There were movies. We went to movies on a really basis. In fact, going back to your question about black and white, I remember coming home one day from one of the downtown theaters. That evening my great-grandmother called from New York City, and in those days in the late '50s, you didn't make long distance calls very much.

*Q: Oh no.*

GNEHM: She had just heard on the news that there was this big demonstration, the blacks marching in Albany, Georgia, and she wanted to make sure we were safe. I had been downtown; I didn't even know there had been a march. It just wasn't evident and we told her that. But it goes back to your question about the relationships between-

*Q: Yes. Well, during the Kennedy and Johnson thing, you were still in school, were you?*

GNEHM: I was in high school, that's right.

*Q: Well let's talk about high school. What was high school like?*

GNEHM: High school was a lot of fun. School administrators had moved the ninth grade to middle school so high school was three grades. Football; big football team and the rivalry with the nearby towns were what it was all about during the fall. Big band; I did the band in junior high but not high school. There were various clubs to be involved in -- theater club and audiovisual club, things of that sort. I was pretty active at those kinds of things. In fact, I didn't play any sports. I was not a good athlete, to my father's chagrin, because he played first string football when he was in high school. But I was an announcer at football games and that was fun.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: That was good. And we often made trips to the away games.

*Q: Did you ever make a- sort of a senior trip up to Washington and all?*

GNEHM: We did. In fact, I should just step back a little bit and tell you that one of the things you asked me about, news and what gave me a broader horizon on life. Because my father was from New York City and his grandparents were still alive, the family took a two week vacation every summer. Every other year we piled in the car and made the two day drive up Route 1 or 301 to New York City. We actually stayed with my great-grandparents in the house that my father was born in.

*Q: Well, did you sort of get up to other places in the North?*

GNEHM: Yes. Often we would add other destinations to our trip. Once we drove up through New England. Another year we went to the Expo in Montreal.

*Q: And Washington?*

GNEHM: Right. You remind me of another story. You recall that I mentioned my eighth grade teacher who first mentioned the Foreign Service and George Washington University. Well, I had no idea how you got into the Foreign Service or how hard it was to get into the Foreign Service, or how I would ever get into George Washington University. I knew it would be costly. My father worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in Albany as the office supervisor. We had plenty of money that covered food and housing; we weren't destitute or hurting. My mother went back to school to teach to make extra money for me to have piano lessons and my sisters dance lessons. So we certainly were not poor; but we did not have money for college tuition. One day... and I have to tell you here that I have a great faith in God. I'm not a rabid proselytizer but I can attest to many things that have

happened during my life that were without question due to God's intervention. And here is one.

One day my father came home from playing golf when I was in high school, 10th grade maybe, and he said, "Skip, you'll never guess who I played golf with today." You know how a teenager reacts, "No, Dad, I'll never guess who you played golf with today" wishing he'd just finish and go away so I could do whatever I was doing. He pressed on, "You do want to know who I played golf with today." "Okay, Dad, just tell me, who, who?" He smiled and said, "Well, you know my good friend's wife's brother is assistant treasurer at George Washington University." At that point I was all ears! "Yes, I told him you wanted to go to GWU and he wants to meet you. GW is trying to get people from states like Georgia and Arkansas and California to come to the University

So I met him. He liked me. He invited us to stop in Washington on our next summer trip up to New York, which we did. And that man, John Cantini, got me a full tuition Scottish Rite Scholarship.

*Q: How wonderful. Boy.*

*Okay, well let's stick with high school for a little while. What year did you graduate?*

GNEHM: Nineteen sixty-two.

*Q: How did segregation affect you, particularly in high school?*

GNEHM: Frankly, it didn't very much. The school system was still segregated; the bus station was still segregated. There really hadn't been much change although there'd been demonstrations and protests in the black community. Martin Luther King was a very popular figure with them. But I have to say it and I say it not as an indictment but something that's important to keep in mind in history. 1960, if you remember, was the hundredth anniversary of the War Between the States (as we call it). In my city as well as other places down South there were great centennial commemorations of the events of 1861 and 1862. We went through all the battles of the war. It won't come as a surprise to anyone when I say that "Gone with the Wind" was the most and maybe still is the most popular movie in the South ever to have been filmed.

*Q: Yes. I swear she'll never be hungry again.*

GNEHM: Everybody who goes to see "Gone with the Wind" keeps hoping it will have a different ending! But, you know, we were incensed in high school at the Supreme Court's decisions and talking about how secession was an absolutely viable option 100 years later! Of course looking back and even just a few years after high school these ideas were clearly the most ridiculous thoughts one could ever have. But you're asking me about the psychology of the moment!

*Q: No, no.*

GNEHM: I can tell you what changed white opposition to segregation in the public school system -- specifically in high schools. It was football. When coaches heard that there were some really good football players in the black high school and that with them on the team we could whip the town up the road... Well, there was nothing stopping them from recruiting those players!!!

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: That's life. But not while I was there. Schools were still segregated.

*Q: Did your teachers ever bring up the subject?*

GNEHM: In my recollection when the issue did come up, it was more often in the context of the Federal Government telling us how to run our lives and not on the question of equal rights or the downtrodden part of society. The view I heard from whites was that "they had their schools and they don't want to be mixing with us." They had their own churches and clubs and don't want to mix with whites. And if you spoke of the Masonic lodges, the last thing in the world they wanted to be was part of a white lodge. So it was not a balanced discussion.

*Q: Well, when you went to George Washington how did it strike you? I mean Washington was-*

GNEHM: A small town.

*Q: Small but President Kennedy said Washington combines the efficiency of the South with the charm of the North.*

GNEHM: Yes, it's true, it's true. I often laugh when I think back at what changes were about to take place in my life. When I came from Albany, my father dropped me off on the corner of 19th and H where my dormitory was located -- Adams Hall. (It's not there now; the entire block is now the International Monetary Fund.) And then he drove off. I met more foreigners in the course of the next week or two than I had ever met in my life. You know, all these people speaking funny English from Long Island and New York and New Jersey! During those first few weeks as a freshman, I was stunned and then later really angry at how these "northerners" thought of me. They all assumed that, as a southerner, I was a secessionist and that we were secretly trying to break up the Union! One of my closest friends from those very first weeks was Mike Enzi from Wyoming. He faced a similar problem as I did with the "northerners." Being from Wyoming, a number of the freshmen from New Jersey and New York thought Mike (and his family) was out there still killing Indians and they attacked him for how the pioneers had killed off the Indians. Mike was really incensed, as I was, in the way they portrayed us. So the two of us decided, well, we'll just fix them. We'll just agree that everything that they're saying is true and we'll embellish everything to the hilt! So, yes, I admitted all my summers spent at Boy Scout camp were really training sessions for the succession to come! Mike

(who incidentally is now the US Senator from Wyoming) had equally good stories about Indians in Wyoming! He would tell how they got all the Indians into cantonments so that they can't get out and scalp more people and things like that. We had some fun.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: But it was an experience; it really was an experience coming to Washington.

*Q: Now you were there when Kennedy was shot.*

GNEHM: I was there when Kennedy was shot.

*Q: How did that hit the area?*

GNEHM: Oh, I remember vividly being in the dorm when I heard the news. I remember it was a snowy day – or at least gray and cold. Everyone was stunned and most were crying -- myself among them. It was a devastating moment, just incredible.

*Q: Well Kennedy in his inaugural address, called you for- not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country; did that particular tone and government work hit you at all?*

GNEHM: I think it hit everybody. The people around me, we were all young at the time, really saw him as a very motivating and inspiring figure. People loved him. And the quote you recited really meant something. There was a feeling that here was someone who was really looking to the future, forward, upward, you know, with hope. It was something that you wanted to be part of and it was just cut off -- was just murdered.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I think that was all our emotion. His assassination was very hard to comprehend.

*Q: Okay, now you're in Washington-*

GNEHM: I have to just tell you one thing, though-

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: -about that freshman year. My political science teacher in PoliSci One as it was called at the time, had a required reading, a number of required readings as professors do. One of them was Martin Luther King's book. I was incensed that I was being forced to read a book by Martin Luther King. I did not see him in a very positive light but as somebody who was causing all kinds of trouble and dissent and turmoil. As the semester went on, I realized that if I didn't read the book, I wasn't going to get the very best of grades and I better just start reading the book. I read it and I was very impressed. That

was part of my transition from where I'd been on the whole issue of race to where I ultimately came to in my life. It was my experience at George Washington that opened my thinking to different things and different views and different values.

*Q: Yes.*

*Well, how about the Cold War? I mean, this was, you know, at its height had the Cuban Missile Crisis and all this; had you thought much about the Cold War before and coming to George Washington was there a different perspective on it?*

GNEHM: Well it's a good question because it goes back to the military presence in Albany. We had B-52s stationed there. I mean these B-52s were going over our house every day. You could not miss them given the noise they made.

*Q: Well these were the biggest bomber.*

GNEHM: We knew what they were there for, what the military was there for and we were, I think, pretty conscious of the Cold War and the communist threat.

I think my earliest memory of any international event was at Boy Scout camp in 1956 when I heard the news of the Soviet military suppressing the Hungarian uprising.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: That's my earliest recollection of an international event that. That would have been two years before my civics teacher mentioned the Foreign Service.

*Q: What about the Middle East during this time when you're in college? I mean were you taking courses, were you- was this particularly interesting to you or were you looking elsewhere?*

GNEHM: I was an International Affairs major. The university really didn't have a Middle East program as it does today; but I was very interested in the Middle East for the reasons I gave you earlier. So I took all the Middle East courses that were available; but there weren't many.

*Q: My impression is that dealing with the Middle East, particularly in that time, there really wasn't much sympathy for what you might say the Arab cause but tremendous amount of sympathy for the Israeli cause. Did you find that at the time?*

GNEHM: I don't remember that as being that significant frankly at the time -- I mean at the university. It did become quite clear when I was actually in the region right after graduation. But in terms of the four years I was at GW I don't remember that this was a big topic of discussion. There were many Jewish students at GW, as there are still today; but I don't remember much activism.

*Q: GW always has fed off the government for teachers and did you find- were there any teachers with connections to the Foreign Service teaching you at the time?*

GNEHM: Actually no.

The professors that I recall and remember fondly were all full-time professors at the university, not adjunct. I know what you say is true, that GW had very close ties to the USG. They ran a graduate program for the military for a long, long time.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: It was a commuter school in those days. I don't think there were more than 1,700 resident students; a large number of students were from Virginia and Maryland.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: That's not true today. So in those days many students came in for classes and then went home.

*Q: Did you sort of feel the lack of a campus life?*

GNEHM: I was in a fraternity, Sigma Chi, and so I was pretty involved in university activities. There was a good active program for those who were on campus. Later got into student government and was president of the student body my junior to senior year and again a bit of a dissident. What I do remember about those four years is how my friends and I got to see some very important events that occurred during those times. I remember, for example, the funerals of both Presidents Kennedy and Herbert Hoover. Also the funeral of General MacArthur. And, of course, there was the inaugural parade for President Johnson. I even got to go to one of the inaugural balls.

*Q: Well we were both in Vietnam.*

GNEHM: So that was later, yes. But I do remember that when there were events like the ones I mentioned, we would go up to the Capitol or climb up on some monument to get a better view of events. As you mentioned in an earlier question, Washington was so different then. I love tell my students today about that and they just shake their heads in awe. It was a completely open city. Mike and I and others, when we got bored at night, would go up to the Capitol (and I'm talking about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning). When we went into the building, the guard would wave at us and we'd go down and underneath and through the tunnels beneath the Capitol. No one stopped us.

We used to go down to the State Department as well. Whenever there was a high level visit, a king of this or the president of that, the government would put the flags of the country all down Constitution Avenue and up Pennsylvania Avenue. There was always an exhibit in the lobby of State Department, not a big one but you know, an artifact or

two and pictures of important places in that country. We would go down there to see the exhibit. We would walk around to the front door (the C Street entrance), enter the lobby where there was always the guard usually in his chair leaning up against one of the post, often asleep. When we came in, he would set the chair down and say, "Hey guys, how you doing today?" We'd say just fine. We'd look at the exhibit. And then we would walk through the State Department and come out the 23rd Street entrance. There were no barriers. There were no cipher locks on the doors. Nobody said anything. It was just wide open!

When we wanted to study and the weather was good, we'd go down to the Lincoln Memorial and sit on the side facing the Potomac. It was a great place to read and study.

*Q: You know you could even go to the cafeteria.*

GNEHM: Yes. Nobody chased us away; nobody thought anything of it. So I have regrets that my own students today are not able to experience the city as open as it was in my student days.

*Q: Did you get involved in any demonstrations?*

GNEHM: Only at the university on university matters. I wasn't really involved in either Vietnam or civil rights protests.

*Q: Well how did Vietnam, while you were at the university- I mean, you'd come from a military base city or town, how did Vietnam strike you sort of there and through your college years?*

GNEHM: It wasn't the big issue during my student years that it became in the very late '60s into the '70s. In 1962, '63, and '64 the administration's view of the importance of being in Vietnam seemed to be the prevalent view of most people. By the time I was a senior, '65-'66, that was beginning to change. There were more and more questions as to why we were there, whether it was going well. I remember that every day there was a new tally about how many Vietcong had been killed. You wondered how many Vietcong could be killed and still have some Vietcong left. So students were beginning to question whether there was veracity in what the government was saying.

After I graduated, I went abroad for a year. When I came back to finish my MA in '68, there was a lot more activity, anti-war activity.

*Q: Well let's stick to the mid-sixties when you were at the university. Were there any reflections at the time of what later became sort of the symbols of the sixties, you know, free speech, protests against people who were over 30 years old, all that sort of stuff?*

GNEHM: Well there was and that was what I was intimating when I said earlier that there was trouble at the university. There was anger at the university by students who felt like they had been promised and promised and promised things, specifically a new

student union, and it never occurred. Then they put a student fee on top of tuition, a fee that was going to pay for the student union which was going to be built after all of us were long gone.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: And so there was anger. The president of the university had died unexpectedly and for the first couple of years I was there the provost was acting president. He was a very elderly man, not always there.

*Q: Not a simpatico figure.*

GNEHM: No. At all. And the board of trustees had a very old ‘think’ about their role. The board was completely isolated from students and, in fact, made it clear that dealing with students was not its business. So when I was the student body president, the anger had reached a point where I decided I could use it to try to get some change. I got all the student leaders together and we signed a letter - virtually every officer and every organization signed it- to the board of trustees. I admit that we made reference to Berkeley and noted that it wasn’t so hard for things like that to happen at GW if they didn’t begin to address our concerns. We demanded to meet with the board of trustees. Well, the board of trustees got the letter because we mailed it to every member of the board. Their first reaction was to have absolutely nothing to do with us, nothing to do with us at all. We were revolutionaries! We were probably right out of the Cuban model and Fidel Castro stuff and whatever! One of the members of the board of trustees was none other than J. Edgar Hoover, head of the FBI. Now, as president of the student body I got letters from many of the members of the board. I don’t remember any of them being nice but his was particularly nasty. I didn’t deserve to be an American. I didn’t appreciate all America gave me. Years later, when I was applying for the Foreign Service, I had forgotten that he was on the board of trustees when I did this.

*Q: Head of the Bureau of-*

GNEHM: Federal Bureau of Investigations. I was thinking to myself later after I’d got into the Foreign Service and, obviously, gotten my security clearance “how did I ever get my security clearance?” Anyway, I guess he was with the FBI at the time but never mind. The result of our letter actually caused a division within the board of trustees, which they did not reveal to us. It led to the resignation of the then-chair. The new chairman called me and said, “I don’t care what the others do, I’m meeting with you.” That broke the ice. This was in the spring of ’65. And just to take this story just one step further, during that trouble I got called in by the then-vice president who wanted to be president. He knew he was popular with the faculty but not with the Board of Trustees. He urged me to lead a student demonstration on campus on his behalf hoping that would help him get the job.

*Q: On his behalf?*

GNEHM: Yes. And I refused. Coincidentally, there was a selection committee for a new president underway at this time.

I got called back from Georgia in August, being told I needed to come back on some unspecified university business. I assumed it had something to do with the student protest. In fact, the person that they had selected to become president of the university had refused to give them an answer until he met with me as president of the student body. So I was taken to a hotel, The Washington Hotel on 15th Street, up to a room where I met a man by the name of Lloyd Elliott. He said to me: "I have read your petition to the Board of Trustees and I have discussed the points you raised with the board. I wanted to meet you to discuss the problems you raised and, frankly, I want to know whether I should come to GW. I will weigh my decision heavily on whether you think the student body would find me an attractive person as president of the university. He then proceeded to describe how he would approach issues similar to the ones we had raised. He then asked again whether students would accept and support him. I told him that, if he dealt with students and with issues as he had described, I had no doubt that he would have student backing. It was a very interesting approach. From that meeting Lloyd and I became close friends until he died in 2013.

*Q: What was his background?*

GNEHM: He was president of the University of Maine and prior to that President of the University of West Virginia. He was actually from West Virginia. He was a gentleman of a man and what he said he would do when he came was what we had been asking for -- just attention and movement and that is what he did. He was a great president. This story tells you that my GWU experience was a very good one -- meaningful. I was very active throughout my four years as an undergraduate and learned a great deal about people and bureaucracies.

*Q: Well tell me, what did you find you needed to do to run for president of the student body?*

GNEHM: Well I had been on the student council the year before. I was the Freshman Director so I ran the freshman orientation program. As Freshman Director, I had access to all the freshmen and they got to know me and like me. That gave me a good of block votes when it came to the following year elections. Also I was in a fraternity that was part of a fraternity coalition. Four different fraternities pooled together their votes. Since there was not a big resident student population, fraternities had a lot of influence on elections. So I ran the second year as the coalition's candidate for student body.

*Q: Well I would have thought it would have been a difficult time because you had some really- people's names sort of ring around- ring today in Berkeley and at Columbia and other places. I mean it was the time when the class of '60, I use a term of the sixties, when they were really sprouting wings and getting an awful lot of people- I mean it was a great time to be a sort of a dynamic or even a demagogic leader. And you had all these*

*egos, these 21 year old egos in the act of- you know, running around. I would have thought that you would have found this a little bit difficult for a Georgia boy.*

GNEHM: Well I had been a fairly active person prior to my election and I think personality-wise I had made lots of friends around campus.

*Q: Well considering what actually didn't happen. I mean this is a time when some universities really went haywire. I mean it was not a very pleasant time for a lot of college administrations and you know, freedom of speech was not a- there were a lot of boycotting. I mean a lot of things were happening.*

GNEHM: Let me put it this way. The administration of the university and the trustees were attentive to all these things going on nationally and were, I think, deathly afraid that it could erupt on the GW campus.

*Q: I can certainly understand the despair of the times.*

GNEHM: And so when the student letter came, intimating that things could go like Berkeley, it was the leadership of some trustees that really averted a more radical turn among students. It enabled me to channel student frustration in a positive direction. Yes, you are right. I was in those days still basically conservative. I wasn't one who relished demonstrations; but I was willing to lead one if that had been necessary. I saw a real chance to get what we wanted without having to be radical and my challenge was to convince all the other student leaders on campus to follow my lead.

*Q: Well we're talking about youth, volatility. This is a period when you were considered to be a 'has been' if you were over 30. I mean original sin did not apply to this particular cohort that you were with. If there had been people on the campus who were just thirsting to get out there and demonstrate and occupy and raise hell.*

GNEHM: No, we were a small a group back then. There were not the numbers of students backing the more radical faction to be able to cause significant unrest at GW. It was still a mainstream sort of campus.

*Q: Well, so you're getting ready to graduate in '66?*

GNEHM: Yes, I graduated in May 1966. I took the Foreign Service exam December 1965, as a senior and flunked it. In those days it was a raw score. I got 69; 70 was passing. The letter from the State Department said, "Thank you so very, very much for your interest in the Foreign Service. You came so very close we hope that you will take the exam again next year." I still have that letter! Well, I wasn't as devastated as you might think. I was unhappy. There was no doubt about that because I still didn't have any interest other than the Foreign Service. But I had received a Rotary Fellowship for a year of non-degree post-graduate work. The university that they chose from my list of suggested universities in the Middle East was The American University in Cairo. So I

knew I had something to do for a year and I was going to the Middle East for the first time!

*Q: Alright, let's talk about your year in Cairo. Was this the University of Cairo?*

GNEHM: No, it was The American University of Cairo.

*Q: American University of Cairo.*

GNEHM: Which is one of several American founded universities in the region. The American University in Beirut and Robert College in Istanbul were two others.

*Q: What was it like? You were there in 1966?*

GNEHM: Yes, I was there for the academic year 1966-67. So this is an example of something I said earlier. I seem to end up in places where wars break out! I didn't get to take my exams the second semester due to the outbreak of the seven-day war in June 1967 between Israel, Egypt and several other Arab states.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I often tell students, don't wish for your not having to take exams because you won't get credit! It was an interesting year.

Again, this was my first experience in the Middle East so everything was new. It wasn't an easy year. Nasser was in power. There were all kinds of Middle East issues at play that led towards the '67 War. The spring was much worse than the fall, no doubt about it. There was a lot of animosity toward Americans. The American University at that time was just trying to hold on because the nationalism in Egypt worked against anything called American. AUC had been an elite school prior to the '52 Egyptian revolution. So it was suspect as part of the former regime.

*Q: What was the student body like?*

GNEHM: It was largely Egyptian; but there were a number of students from the region -- Palestinians and others -- but largely Egyptian. I was studying Arabic and taking courses on Middle East politics and history.

*Q: I mean, at the university did you feel the hand of Nasser and his apparatus?*

GNEHM: Only in my relationship with Egyptians and that included even students at the university. The Egyptian students were always welcoming inside the university compound, in the canteen and in the classroom; but they were very reserved -- cautious -- when off campus.

*Q: Egyptians are really a very nice-*

GNEHM: They're very wonderfully nice people and as students we did things together. We went out in feluccas in the Nile in the late evening. They would sing and strum their instruments and beat their drums -- laugh and cut up. Wonderfully nice people is certainly correct.

I did notice that I did not get invited into Egyptian homes. As I got to know students better, I understood that they were very wary of the government's watching them and their families, especially about connections with Americans. They just didn't want to get in trouble. So it was one thing to go on a felucca in the Nile when you're a bunch of college kids; it was something very different to go to a home.

Because I was in Egypt as a Rotary fellow, the clubs of the Eastern Mediterranean district of Rotary International were technically my hosts. There were three clubs in the Cairo area, the main Cairo club, the Giza club, and one in Heliopolis. The Rotary clubs were considered proletarian, elitist, part of the old class and many of the members of the club were elderly. I visited these clubs from time to time as I was told to do by Rotary International; but even they didn't invite me to their homes. Only one family the entire year actually took me out to a restaurant. I think they were wary, again, of the government and possibly being called in for questioning. Many of them had lost property through sequestration or nationalization after the revolution in 1952.

As we get into the January/February timeframe, there was a sequence of events that are well known and documented that led to the outbreak of the '67 War. The tensions in the community went up dramatically.

I remember one incident vividly. My American roommate and I were taking the train down to Maadi where we attended church on Sundays. We were on the train and between two stations. Some young Egyptians on the train started spitting on us and shouting epithets. We were scared that something would actually happen to us. When we got to the next station, we went out of the train, just left and found our way back to town. That was the only really bad scary moment or experience that I had. I certainly never encountered any hostility from my colleagues at AUC; but we stayed out of crowds and decided not to be as free moving around town during that April and May period.

*Q: Did you leave there before the war started or were you there when the war started?*

GNEHM: Your question prompts a side story. During my time there in Cairo, censorship was extremely heavy. "The Herald Tribune," "New York Times," "Newsweek," "Time," -- none of these were allowed in on a regular basis except for the diplomatic community. I learned early on that the American Ambassador got "The Herald Tribune" on a daily basis. It was delivered to the in-house library at the embassy. So I went there on a regular basis and got to know Nadia Risk, a long-time Egyptian employee of the embassy who ran the library. She told me that, if I came by a certain time and the ambassador wasn't there, she would let me read his paper. That was how I got my news during the months I was in Cairo. I mention this as I got to know several people at the embassy. I went to the

church in Maadi. The choir director, Jeri Bird, was the wife of a political officer at the embassy by the name of Gene Bird.

She befriended me and my roommate. Frankly, we were both losing weight having trouble finding wholesome food. They took us home every Sunday after church for lunch. The Birds became lasting friends.

At one point in early May Gene called me to the embassy and said, "Skip, you need to get out of here. You don't want to stay. It's not going well." I said I had to finish my classes. He said you're not going to finish; you need to get out of here. So what does this intelligent young student do? He flew to Amman, Jordan, because he had promised the Amman and Jerusalem Rotary Clubs that in the course of the year he would visit them. So I took a service taxi from Jordan to Jerusalem. The president of the Rotary Club in Jerusalem was Anton Atallah who had been foreign minister of Jordan. When I went to his place to say hello, he asked what in the heck I was doing coming to Jerusalem at this moment? "Don't you know this place is going to blow up?" he said. He took me up onto the wall of the old city, looking westward over the no man's land toward where there were Israeli flags. Here we were standing, of course, in what was still Jordanian territory at that time. He said I'm showing this to you tonight; you're going to have lunch at the Rotary Club tomorrow; and immediately after I'm putting you in a taxi back to Amman. "You're getting out of here. You shouldn't even be here." It was during my flight from Amman to Istanbul and home when the June 1967 war broke out.

*Q: Did you find that you identified with the Arab cause or how did you feel about this war?*

GNEHM: Well in Cairo I was getting some news. I could still tune into VOA (Voice of America) and I was reading the ambassador's newspaper. It looked to me like the two principal antagonists were sparring off at each other. Each was goading the other and making the wrong decisions. They seemed trapped in a deadly tit for tat routine. And there were other parties on the Arab side goading as well. I was very conscious, for example, of the Syrian attacks on Nasser, calling him a quisling, that he was secretly pro-American and whatever else and he would never do all the things he was saying he would do against Israel.

I remember when Nasser made the decision to ask UN forces to leave the border between Egypt and Israel.

It seemed to me a disastrous decision. Then when I heard, as everyone did, that the secretary general actually acquiesced and withdrew them, I was stunned as were most people I spoke with. It was a dramatic development and it wasn't necessary. Everything I heard in Cairo from Egyptians indicated they were shocked; they didn't believe the Secretary General would withdraw the UN force.

*Q: Yes. For somebody who's not familiar with this, a UN force was keeping the two sides apart, the Israeli-*

GNEHM: And it had been there from the '56 war.

*Q: I mean they were still there and Nasser demanded they depart?*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: They had the head of the UN-*

GNEHM: United Nations secretary general.

*Q: -withdrew them, which, you know, sort of uncorked the bottle.*

GNEHM: Yes and then precipitated the steps that followed. Everyone in Cairo (that is of course a grandiose statement) -- all the Egyptians with whom I had conversations, like some of the Rotarians, all felt like Nasser was pushed into calling for the UN force to depart because of the Syrian propaganda. People were saying that Nasser acted under pressure but that he never ever intended for the UN force to withdraw. That was the opinion of the street.

*Q: Yes, and the general feeling in the diplomatic community is, what a stupid thing to do --getting that force out of there.*

GNEHM: Yes, the Secretary General could have easily prolonged this withdrawal for months and months, during which time any number of things could have happened but probably not war. But once the UN force departed, it was only a matter of time before Egyptian forces would occupy the former UN positions, particularly the position at Sharm el-Sheikh. Sharm el-Sheikh is at the narrow point where the Gulf of Aqaba connects with the Red Sea. It is the access point for the only Israeli port facing the east. The Israelis had already made clear that any attempt to block the Strait to Israeli shipping would be considered an act of war.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: It was also just a matter of time before the propaganda in the region, especially Syrian, was now saying "you've got it, what are you going to do, Nasser?" Of course he ends up closing the strait. It was just a sequence of events that could have been avoided.

*Q: Let me tell you. I think for anybody looking at the history, looking at us, seeing how, you might say the stupidity on the part of leaders got into a war that wasn't necessary and-*

GNEHM: That was another thing that I learned that year in Nasser's Egypt and that was the ability in those days of a state to in fact convince everybody all the time. There was that famous saying, "you can convince some of the people all the time but not all the people all the time."

*Q: It's the Lincoln statement.*

GNEHM: Right.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Nasser proved that that was wrong. In that period of time and that context he controlled the media. He controlled the propaganda. The Egyptians still celebrated Victory Day when supposedly their forces defeated the Israelis. It was in fact the day that they lost a huge battle in the Sinai with many Egyptians casualties. But the propaganda said this was a victory day and it's celebrated as such to this day. They have even issued postage stamps to commemorate the victory!

*Q: I'm looking at the time; it's probably a good place to stop. But when you left Egypt and Jordan and all, did you come away with a desire to continue your interests in this area?*

GNEHM: Absolutely. I was more entranced than ever.

*Q: What grabbed you?*

GNEHM: Well, I traveled all over Egypt. I wasn't as studious a student as perhaps I should have been; but I saw Egypt, got to know people, got to go places, and got to see things. I liked the Egyptian people. I was very much taken by them in spite of the negative observations that I mentioned previously.

By the way, before we close, I took the Foreign Service exam in Cairo that December and you know what grade I got?

*Q: What?*

GNEHM: Seventy, the one additional point from the year before that I had prayed for! But I had passed!

*Q: Well actually I took the Foreign Service exam in '54 and I got a 69.75 and they averaged me into the Foreign Service.*

GNEHM: Good for you.

*Q: So anyway. Okay, Skip I've put it down here where we are so we're going to pick up when you are leaving Egypt and coming back to the United States and all hell's broken loose in the Middle East and you've taken and passed the Foreign Service exam. We'll pick it up from there.*

*Okay. Today is the second of June, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you came into the Foreign Service when?*

GNEHM: I came in the Foreign Service in February 1969, but there was an interesting little interlude.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I came back from Cairo where I had been studying as a Rotary Fellow at The American University in Cairo. I finished my MA at George Washington University in the '67-'68 year. I had passed the Foreign Service written exam which I had taken in Cairo in December 1966. I passed my orals and was offered a position in a junior officer class after I graduated in August (1968). And then President Johnson froze employment for Federal Government (BALPA – Balance of Payments crisis) The State Department said they were not able to bring in new officers but that they had approached the Navy to see if they were interested in hiring for their internship program. The Navy was willing to take me as a management intern.

So I went to the interview with the Navy and I told the Navy, “You have to understand. I really want to be in the Foreign Service; that’s always what I wanted to do.” And they said, “Oh sure, once you come here you’ll change your mind.” So I started working after Labor Day that year for the Navy. Two months later the State Department called to say that they had special permission to bring in a junior officer class in February. “Are you interested?” I said, “Absolutely.” I informed Navy that my two months with them had not changed my mind and that I was accepting the offer to join the Foreign Service.

*Q: What were you doing in the Navy?*

GNEHM: I was working for what was then called the Bureau of NavShips. My office was responsible for procuring items for the Aegis Class Frigates, which were still on the drawing board at that point in time.

*Q: Okay. What was you're A-100 class, being the basic officers' training class? What was your class; how big was it and what was its composition?*

GNEHM: I'm recollecting 38 in my A-100 class. It was a mix of people. All of us were told that the classes prior to the hiring freeze had all been assigned to Vietnam, that being where the need was. Our class, we were told, was going to be assigned globally to fill vacancies that had been left unfilled for quite some time.

*Q: And how about composition regarding male, female, minorities?*

GNEHM: Well, we had a core of women in the class and we also had a number of African Americans. In my class was Johnny Carson, who later went on to be Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.

Ruth Davis, who later became Director General of the Foreign Service, was also in my class.

*Q: She worked for me. How did you find the training? Did it acquaint you with the Foreign Service?*

GNEHM: It did. I thought the training was very good. I think there were eight weeks in A-100. One of the things that it really did was build strong bonds between us in the class, which is something that I know they still do quite well. Yes, I learned a lot in that time.

*Q: Where were you assigned?*

GNEHM: Well, that was the shocker! When they announced assignments in those days, they didn't have anything like the Flag Day they have today. Everybody gathered in the room and a person from personnel stood up to read out our assignments. By the way, when we entered the Foreign Service and met our personnel officer, we were told to list five countries where we would like to serve. That was the only way we had to indicate where we might like to be assigned. I wrote down five Middle Eastern countries. When they got to my name to announce my assignment, they said, "Edward Gnehm, Saigon." I was shocked, having been told that none of us were going to Saigon. Three of us, I think, ended up assigned to Vietnam. This was the beginning of a really interesting saga.

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

GNEHM: Not very long. That's the saga. I arrived on the 28th of August; I remember it well.

*Q: Sixty-nine?*

GNEHM: Yes, 1969. And I departed the day after Christmas that same year.

Before we get to my time in Saigon, you need to hear a little anecdote, which is related to my background in the South.

I met my wife, Peggy, here in Washington during the time that I was in A-100. That lead may sound very ordinary; but it so happened that her parents lived in the same town, Macon, Georgia, where my parents lived. My mother was having a back operation and my wife's mother was a Pink Lady volunteer in the hospital. She was asked by the doctor to visit my mother to explain her experience with the same operation. That's when they discovered that each had a child in Washington. Each sent us a message about the other and so we started going out together here in Washington.

So, back to my assignment to Saigon. The reason why I inserted the story of how I met my wife-to-be was that Peggy and I had talked about getting married. She left Washington for Atlanta in the middle of August to go back to Emory University, her alma mater, for an MBA. My intentions were to fly from Washington to Atlanta, spend

some time with her, and go on to Saigon. Personnel told me that was impossible. I had to go directly to Saigon; they were in urgent need of me. There was to be “no passing go” - just go straight to Saigon.

Well, you’ve already heard that I’m a bit of a rebel at heart. So I bought my ticket routing myself through Atlanta and spent the long weekend with Peggy and then flew on. I did have a stop overnight in Japan in route to Saigon. On my first day in Saigon I went to the Personnel Office to find out in which section of the embassy I was going to work. (In those days you were assigned to a post and the post decided where in the mission you would work -- not like today where you are assigned to a specific position.) When they saw me and I introduced myself, there was a great deal of commotion and clearly some confusion. You could see it. People were talking and mumbling to each other. They told me to sit down for a while. Finally, after about an hour the assistant came out and said, “Mr. Gnehm, our personnel officer is actually out of country and we’re not sure where in the embassy you’re going to be assigned.”

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: So the assistant told me to just take off a few days until the personnel officer gets back. Walk around town; get to know Saigon. And I’m thinking to myself, I’ve never been in a war zone in my life and I don’t even know how to get from here back to my hotel, much less wandering around. And, of course, I was thinking back to the Department’s insistence to get to post immediately!

*Q: This is the Foreign Service. You’ve got to hurry up, you’ve got to be there immediately and get to the post and they don’t know what to do with you.*

GNEHM: I’m going to jump ahead of you though to about two months later. So that would have been in October or late October/early November. Elaine Shunter was the personnel officer.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: By the way, I was assigned in due course to the commercial attaché office. But here it was about two months after my arrival at post and Elaine called me, “Skip, I need to talk to you if you’ll come over.” I said, “Sure.” I went into her office and she said, “Skip, we have a problem.” I thought to myself ‘I haven’t done anything that bad.’ She said, “The problem is that we abolished your position last February and you have to be out of post by the 31st of December. Otherwise we will be over our staffing limit.” “Well,” I thought to myself, “Well, there’s a blessing,” but I tried to keep a very straight face so it didn’t look like I was excited about being kicked out of Vietnam!

But in the meantime, I am working as the Assistant Commercial Officer. My boss was an older well seasoned officer who was happy to have a younger officer to whom he could pass any number of onerous tasks.

*Q: Who was this?*

GNEHM: I can't remember his name, but the job I was given will tell you how vitally important I was. I was given one of those old computer printouts. You know, the ones that looked like an accordion! It was a huge list all of the surplus military equipment that had been sold over a period of time. I was told to go out and find the buyer, ascertain that he still possessed the material or to whom he had sold it, and then, if necessary, follow up with the new owner. This effort was to verify that none of the material was going to the Vietcong, right?

Well, here I am climbing around Saigon in what are overgrown jungle fields littered with rusted equipment trying to find the code numbers on various pieces of equipment. It was ridiculous!

*Q: A make work shop.*

GNEHM: It was awful -- truly awful. I did not learn a lot about commercial work nor did I think that I had contributed anything to the war effort.

The secretary to the commercial attaché was Mary Hall, wife of the administrative counselor at the embassy. She had heard that I had to leave the country. She was very upset and wanted to help me. She decided early on that I was like her son and she treated me very nicely. She was a very nice person; but her efforts to help me were not what I wanted. She said the required departure was bad for my career. She was determined to find me another position in Saigon. She came back to me the next day to tell me that there were vacancies in the CORDS program. CORDS was the rural pacification program. Well, that was the last place that I wanted to go. And I said, "Mary, why don't we just wait and see what Washington has in mind for my new assignment before I go interview for a position in CORDS?"

The next thing I know she had made an appointment with Ambassador Colby, who was head of the CORDS program!

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: -and so I end up at the Ambassador's office. His aide, a major in the U.S. military, came out and asked me exactly why I was there. And I said, "Well, I'm here because Mary wants me to meet the Ambassador about a possible job in CORDS." He asked me if I wanted to be in CORDS." And I said, "Not really." The aide said that in that case we would be wasting Ambassador Colby's time and I returned to my office. Well, when Mary heard what I had done, she said, "You'll never go anywhere in the Foreign Service. This is the end." She called her husband, who then called me over to talk. Anyway, the long and short of it is that I had signed up for R&R (rest and recreation) in Hawaii in December. I was to meet Peggy and I intended to ask her to marry me. Mary thought I should not leave the country with no assignment because at any moment it might come in and it would be bad if I were not there ready to go to the

new job. I went anyway. She was very upset with me at this point. As I said earlier, I knew her intentions were to help me.

I got to Hawaii. I met Peggy. I did ask her to marry me and she accepted. I called my personnel officer in Washington who said, "Haven't you gotten your orders yet?" I said, "No, I haven't." "Oh", he said, "I thought your orders had gone out. If you didn't get them, I am glad you took your R & R."

Well, when I arrived back in Saigon, Mary was there in her husband's car at Tân Sơn Nhut Airport to pick me up. Her first words were: "You may have ruined everything. Your orders came." I told her that I had spoken to Washington and they were not upset that I had taken my R & R. Mary said Washington did not matter in this case. You are being assigned to Kathmandu as the ambassador's staff assistant and they want you there 'yesterday!' So that is how I learned about my next assignment. It is important to point out that Ambassador Carol C. Laise, the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Nepal, was the wife of Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, the U.S. Ambassador in Saigon.

*Q: Yes, there was this commuting ambassador.*

GNEHM: Exactly. When the President asked Bunker to take the ambassadorial position in Saigon, Bunker made his acceptance conditional on there being a plane that could shuttle between Kathmandu and Saigon whenever the two could have time together. The President had agreed.

I think I returned to Saigon on the 22nd or the 23rd of December. It so happened that the T-39 was flying to Kathmandu on the 26th of December, the day after Christmas, to pick up Ambassador Laise. I was to go on that flight. I was told not to worry. There are no other passengers. I would be able to take all of my belongs on the plane with me. Right!!!. So my friends and I spent all Christmas Day packing. The Admin people gave me cardboard boxes and some packing material. Truth be told, I did not have much as Saigon was a limited shipment post. I had bought a stereo system, however, and had my clothes and other personal items. Because we had very little time and were trying to get it all done quickly, I didn't really pack thinking anything other than getting it done, right? So the top drawer with all the underwear went into one box. The next drawer with shirts went into that same box and so forth until that box was full. And so I packed box after box until all was packed.

I arrived at the airport early the morning of 26th of December. It was about 3:30 or 4:00 on a dark and foggy morning. Who takes me? Mary Hall. As I said, Mary was really very nice and trying always to be helpful. She did not have to take me to the airport that morning.

When I arrived in the small military hut that served the VIP aircraft, the pilot said, "Where have you been? You know we've been waiting for you; we got to go, we got to go, we got to go. Come on." I said, "Okay, I'm ready, I'm ready, but what about my things?" He said, "What do you mean your things?" I said, "My things that are going

with me.” “There’s no room in the airplane for anything,” he replied with some considerable irritation. I said, “Wait a minute. I was told that I could take my things with me on the plane to Kathmandu.” And he said, “Look. Get on the plane; whatever space you can find you’re welcome to fill up.”

So I climb up the steps located toward the back of the aircraft and I look forward toward the cockpit. The plane is full of vegetables, watermelons, cheese -- all kinds of stuff going up to Carol Laise to refurbish her larder. There was an empty seat, which I took, and room for one suitcase and I think a carry-on. Everything else I had to leave. I didn’t know when that plane took off whether I had 20 pairs of underwear and no pants or 15 shirts and no underwear. I had no idea what was in that one suitcase!

From Saigon our flight path to Kathmandu headed out over the Gulf of Tonkin en route to Bangkok, then on to Calcutta, and over India north to Kathmandu. Above the Gulf of Tonkin I heard uproarious laughter from the cockpit. One of the pilots comes back and says, “Yeah, they did it again. Our support personnel never do our flight clearances properly. They forgot to get a flight clearance over India so we are going to have to spend the night in Bangkok; yea, whoopee!” I’m thinking, “Hmm, this is really great. At least I’ll find out what’s in that suitcase; that’s for sure.” Then I remembered that there was a big PX (Post Exchange) in Bangkok and ended up buying a package of this, a package of that, so that I knew I had at least something of everything that I would need to be fully clothed!

Next day back at the airport I was told that there was going to be a bit of delay in our departure. I said, “Okay, doesn’t matter to me, I’m not going anywhere.” Why was there a delay? The fruits and vegetables!!! The plane had sat out on the tarmac all the previous day in the heat. All the fresh items had spoiled and had to be thrown away. I watched as the crew shoveled the vegetables and other stuff out of the plane. Of course, you know I could have brought all my stuff on the plane had it not been filled with food! So anyway, in the end I did get to Kathmandu.

*Q: Okay, before we leave that, would you describe your impressions of Saigon? I was there, by the way. I was consul general there during this time but would you describe your impressions of our presence in Vietnam?*

GNEHM: My impression of Saigon, it was a bustling alive city with no lack of movement -- people everywhere, open markets, traffic jams. There were certainly many uniformed Vietnamese forces and our forces, of course, but I didn’t find it overwhelming or scary, as I expected to find it. I remember going up on the roof of one of the hotels; I’ve forgotten the name of it.

*Q: Rex or something like that.*

GNEHM: Yes. It was a nice place to eat dinner. You could hear rumblings of artillery fire off in the distance and see lightning-like flashes on the horizon.

I remember taking one boat trip on the Mekong River as part of my efforts to find purchasers of surplus material. I had heard stories about Vietcong attacks on the river but everything was just as normal and as calm as it could be. I think it was a relatively peaceful period in South Vietnam.

*Q: This was after the Tet Offensive and it really was quiet.*

GNEHM: Yes. I made a lot of friends at the embassy in the short time I was there. Many of them were in the consular section because that's where many of the younger officers are assigned. Also, by the way, it was during this period of time that the US allowed personnel to visit Cambodia. So I got to take a very trip with some friends to Phnom Penh and then drive overland to Angkor Wat.

*Q: So what was your feeling, by the way, about our involvement in the Vietnam War at that time?*

GNEHM: Well I guess I fell into that group of people that thought we were there for good reasons and that things seemed to be going well. At the time I was there, I thought it was going to be successful.

*Q: That's pretty much the way I felt too.*

GNEHM: I wasn't against the war in particular.

*Q: Well then okay. You were in Nepal from when to when?*

GNEHM: From that late December, 1969 until June of '71. So it was an 18 month tour. I was curtailed when the Department abolished one of the two junior officer positions in the Embassy.

*Q: Okay. Well first let's talk a bit about Carol Laise, who was a well-known Foreign Service officer, ambassador there and she was Director General too, wasn't she?*

GNEHM: She was indeed.

*Q: How did she operate and what was your impression of her?*

GNEHM: That's a big question. She was a very formidable person and she was very strict, very set in what was right and wrong as a diplomat, as a representative of our country. In my experience with teachers, the really strict ones are the ones you learn the most from. I learned a hell of a lot from Carol Laise in the time that I was there. And I had some unusual experiences with some good stories, including the fact that I came home, got married and brought my wife back to Nepal. I greatly admired Carol. Later on in my career, I became her desk officer in Washington and subsequently her aide when she was appointed Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. We became very close. I have another story from when she was Director General which I will relate in due course. I got

to know both her and Ellsworth Bunker very, very well. I would say that she was a terrific person. You know, any woman in that day and time who became ambassador had to fight it out in a very male environment. So she was tough and rightfully so. Throughout my career I treasured my friendship with Carol.

*Q: What was the sort of political-economic but particularly political situation in Nepal?*

GNEHM: At the time I was in Kathmandu, the country was still a Hindu monarchy. The then King's father, King Tribhuvan was the monarch who restored the monarchy to power. A number of years earlier the Rana family had usurped authority as hereditary prime ministers. Tribhuvan was actually captive in the palace before he fled to India. In the end the Ranas were overthrown and he returned to Nepal. His son, Mahendra was on the throne when I served in the embassy. The monarchy was still very much respected in those days. The monarchy was credited with having rid the country of the Ranas who were not considered good rulers.

There was a lot of rivalry between Nepal and India. There was a great deal of angst in Nepal about Indian influence and meddling in Nepalese domestic affairs.

China was the other factor. The Nepalis were very much afraid of Indian dominance and were using their initiative to build up their relationship with China to balance the Indian one. In fact it was not a balance simply due to the geography and to the significant ethnic and economic ties to India. The US often got involved in attempting to reconcile India and Nepal even though the Indians generally rejected our involvement.

One of the issues I remember, where the Indians squeezed the Nepalese a lot, was over trade. There was a bilateral transit trade agreement between the two that served as the basic document governing trade between the two countries. The Indian port of Calcutta was and remains the main port for Nepal -- a landlocked country; but as it is in India, goods going out of Nepal or coming from abroad to Nepal had to pass through India. The Indians squeeze the Nepalese in trade whenever they do not like the politics.

*Q: Well did the Chinese have representation in Nepal and were they much of a factor?*

GNEHM: They had a large embassy and an aid program, particularly road construction, and the first road they were building was the first highway connecting Kathmandu and Tibet, which had the Indians apoplectic. The road was finished. The Chinese are good road builders; but it has not been easy to keep the road open. As the road threads its way through miles of the Himalayas, the avalanches and the floods in the rainy season, the monsoon season, continue to wash away the road.

*Q: The Indians must have stood in memories of the 1962 Civil War between India and China.*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: Up in the mountains where the Indians didn't do very well.*

GNEHM: That's right and the Indians constantly reminded the Nepalese of past Chinese aggression and intentions.

I think while I was in Kathmandu, though I may have the timing wrong, I remember that Sikkim had a hereditary ruler and the Indians actually deposed him because they thought he was getting a little too cozy with the Chinese nearby. It was an interesting time to be in Nepal. The country was still very much like it probably had been in the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s. Not like today. I've been back recently (2012) and it is so overpopulated; the whole Kathmandu valley is city now. In my days there, it wasn't. There were beautiful green fields and scattered homes that separated the three main towns in the valley.

*Q: We had Peace Corps there though, didn't we?*

GNEHM: We had a large Peace Corps presence and a large AID mission (United States Agency for International Development). Peace Corps volunteers were scattered all over the country.

*Q: Yes, I've read some accounts of it took two days for Peace Corps volunteers to get to the village where they'd be dropped off at a point in a road and then all they had to do is walk for two days up in the higher regions.*

GNEHM: That's right. Peter Burleigh was the Nepal desk officer in the Department. He came out to visit Nepal during my assignment; he'd been a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepalganj, located in the western Terai region south of the mountains. I got to travel with him back to visit the village. I remember how excited his many Nepali friends were to see him again.

*Q: What was our main policy towards Nepal at the time?*

GNEHM: Our policies were to establish good relations and to assist the country to develop economically. Nepal was a very poor country. We supported the monarchy, in other words the government. There was also a parliament and there was always some friction between the government and the members of Parliament. I already mentioned Nepal's sensitive relations with India. We tried not to get between the Indians and the Nepalese; but it was difficult--especially with trade issues. Like the Nepalis, the US Government had to bring all our things, including pouches, through India. Whenever the Indians blocked transit trade, our own goods were held up. Carol Laise had served in India and had good relationships with many Indian officials. She was able to use those close relationships at times. I recall her going down to New Delhi at least once; but it was awkward. But again, Nepal was so primitive. They had not yet opened up the road to Pokhara, which is out to the west of Kathmandu. If you wanted to move around Nepal, you flew to small airstrips located throughout the Kingdom and from them you walked. Those who could not afford to fly had to go down to India and then traverse east or west in India then turn north to reenter Nepal. The road to China was often closed, as I

mentioned. The main road to India was the only way out of Kathmandu and in those days. Kathmandu was truly the end of the road. You know in those days the hippies would start their travels in Europe, work their way through Iran, which was a monarchy in those days, of course, and then into Afghanistan. When they got tired of Afghanistan and Pakistan, they moved on to India and, ultimately, to Nepal. I served the first half of my tour as Carol Laise's staff assistant and the last half of my tour as a consular officer, which was when I got to deal with the American hippy community.

*Q: You know all of us were having to deal with the '60s generation, which has spilled over into Europe and was getting in all sorts of trouble. I understand that Nepal and our embassies are the only place that keeps two mortuary drawers. Did they have those then when you were there? I was talking to someone that was there recently because people die in climbing Mount Everest and other, you know, fiddled around the mountains.*

GNEHM: No, there were no mortuary drawers at the embassy and no mortuary in the country!

*Q: Oh.*

GNEHM: We didn't have anything like that. In fact, our great problem was what do you do with the body when someone died? We usually put it in somebody's walk-in cooler or refrigerator until we could figure out what to do. A couple of times families allowed us to cremate the remains; but that was an ugly thing to do. Nepalis cremate their dead on platforms using wood to burn the corpses.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: And that wasn't a pleasant experience at all.

*Q: Yes.*

*Well what happens- Okay, you're a young kid out of, say Davidson College or something, going on a weekend trip to- I mean a long trip around the world and you end up with a lot of hashish or something and you're caught in Nepal. What do the police do and what did you all do?*

GNEHM: Well most of these hippies arrived on the back of trucks from India. It was a cheap way to travel -- only costing a few rupees to ride the truck up to Kathmandu. The hippies arrived with very few possessions -- just whatever they had in their backpacks. There were sort of colonies around Kathmandu Valley. Some of their clusters were at Swayambhunath, which is a Buddhist temple up on a hill overlooking Kathmandu. Some were out at Boudhanath, which is another big stupa, Buddhist stupa, that's slightly east of the center of town. The Nepali government basically didn't interest themselves in these groups unless individuals in the groups caused problems, such as getting into fights or causing disorder. In these situations the Nepali Government tended simply to arrest them, throw them on the back of trucks, and deport them to India. Of course, the hippies get off

the trucks at the border and walk toward the Indian checkpoint; but before you get to the Indian checkpoint, there's a little path across the fields to the next road. The hippies would take that path over to the next road where the same truck that had just dropped them off was ready to take them back up to Kathmandu! So the only problem the hippies had was getting sick on the truck, on the curving mountain roads.

*Q: You must have had problems of kids running out of money or dying or something like that. And particularly in that society it must have been very difficult, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: It was difficult. In fact, I received many messages through the State Department, called welfare and whereabouts cables. Usually they were from families in the states. "My son or daughter, I've lost them. I don't know where they are, the last heard from them they were in some place in Goa in India. They said they were going to Kathmandu, I haven't heard from them in three months." Of course they wanted us to find them. We always tried. Our local staff was good at knowing where to look. Sometimes we were successful; but often the "missing" person did not want to be found! And there were the many that we never located.

I would just add an important point. Anyone reading or listening to me talk about Kathmandu today will think of it in a more modern context. But Kathmandu in 1969, '70 to '71 was a very different place from what it is today. It was very isolated. Back then the only planes that flew into Kathmandu were prop planes until Thai Air decided to use a jet on its two flights each week from Bangkok. People would go to the airport to watch this jet come in because they'd never seen a jet before. But the real breath holder was the jet taking off. It was a really hairy experience. The plane had to climb rapidly to clear a mountain peak that was straight off the end of the runway to the north. It had to bank immediately on its side to be able to gain sufficient altitude.

But my point is that communications were almost nonexistent. If you wanted to call the United States, you had to go to the central post and telegraph office. You had to book a time for the line to the US and then return at the time that they gave you for your call. You could have 10 minutes or maybe 15 minutes. You entered an old booth and they would put the call through. The call had to go through India then through Europe and onto the States. Most of the time you could not communicate with the person you were calling. The static was so bad and often one party could hear the other but not the reverse! It was basically worthless to try calling the States and it was very expensive -- and you had to pay even if you had not been able to talk with your party!!!. The pouch, which was the only way we got mail, took between two and three weeks one way; therefore a letter from our parents saying they needed to know about something quickly was a source of great frustration. By the time we answered it, it was about five weeks before they had the answer they were looking for.

*Q: How'd you arrange your marriage through all this?*

GNEHM: Well, it was done by slow mail and letting my wife do most of the work once we agreed on the date and things of that sort. And remember, use of the diplomatic pouch

in those days was limited to letters only. I remember when the Department made one grandiose exception to allow medicine and eyeglasses to go in the pouch. That was all. No other packages of any sort. So we couldn't do what people do today which is to send themselves all sorts of things that are not available locally. We had to survive on what was in the market. And, of course, there was no email. So you were really isolated.

*Q: Well did you get-*

GNEHM: Let me tell you about the embassy and I have one hippie story worth telling.

*Q: Alright.*

GNEHM: The embassy was located on a main street with lots of traffic. The door was right on the sidewalk. There was no more than five feet from the curb to the glass door. The Marine Guard sat behind an elevated wooden desk just inside the door. So much for security and set back! These weren't issues in those days. The Chancery was a three story building constructed of stone and plastered with a combination of mud and straw. As a consequence, we had more termites in the building than employees! Up on the third floor on the wall there were little termite tunnels. I don't know what you call them but they build up on the outside. The communicators used to place bets as to which of the termites would make it to the ceiling first. Then they would wipe them all out and start all over again.

The consular section was located in a villa across the street -- a former residence. I tell you this only because it was not constructed for an office. When you entered the front door, you were in the former living room across which had been built a wooden counter. My office was one of the former bedrooms and located behind the barrier. One day about 5:15 or 5:30 in the afternoon after the consular section had closed, I came out of my office and pushed through the swinging door in the barrier. I stepped past the counter into the waiting area and was shocked to see a baby wrapped in a blanket on the floor up against the counter.

*Q: Enjoy this.*

GNEHM: -a baby wrapped in a blanket and no one in the waiting room. Someone had abandoned the baby in my office!

*Q: Oh boy.*

GNEHM: Well, I wasn't sure what to do! I'm not even married at this point; it's before my wife was there so I couldn't call her and say 'hey Love, we've got a baby.' So I called around and finally found the wife of one of the embassy employees who would take the baby while I tried to find out who the mother was. I guessed it was a hippie from Swayambhunath; it had to be. And I thought, I'm going to do something absolutely dramatic. That's the only way I knew how to precipitate action.

I was in my suit, coat, and tie as usual. I waited for about an hour until it got dark. I thought it would be much more effective after dark. I went up the Swayambhunath where I knew a particular group of hippies met in what I would call a smokehouse. It was a long narrow building with a fire in the middle and seats around the two of its sides. The head honcho who sort of ruled the group sat at the far end. When I got there, I stood in front of the closed door then hit it as hard as I could, making it go ka-wham when it hit the wall. That got everybody's attention! I walked in and I stood just inside the door. I addressed the leader at the opposite end of the long room and I said to him: "Someone left a baby in my office. I want to know who the mother is and I want that mother to come pick up that baby. And if that baby isn't picked up by open of business in the morning, I'm going to have every one of your asses thrown out of this country and make sure you never get back. And I turned and I stalked out. The mother came and picked up the baby.

*Q: Oh boy.*

GNEHM: Yes. That's not in the textbooks. Sometimes you just have to do what you have to do!

*Q: Well this is the thing that, you know, as time has gone on consul officers become more and more constrained and really it hasn't been to the good of anyone.*

GNEHM: No and I'll give you another example of this. Forgive me for interrupting; you can always tell me to stop.

*Q: No.*

GNEHM: There was a particular American missionary family among the many missionaries working the country. They came to my office one day with a little girl baby, a Nepali baby, which they had had for some time. I don't really recall how long but a significant time. They had been given the baby by an orphanage with the intention of adopting the child. Now, they were being transferred back to the States and, of course, they wanted to take the child with them. Well, the regulations for issuing visas to adopted children being taken to the US are quite specific. I can only issue a visa or an entry permit to a child that's not an American citizen if I have proof that the perspective parents have met all the adoption requirements in the state in which they intend to reside. And most of those states require that the family comply with the adoption law in the country from which the child comes.

Problem! Nepal did not have an adoption law of any sorts.

They said that they had been to the government and the government had said it was fine with us for you to take the child to the US. Well, I said, "It's not fine for me. I can't act on a verbal permission from some government official." This is your point about what one can and can't do. I know that as a government official I'm constrained in what I can do in my official capacity and I am careful about that. I said to them, "Look, I can't issue a visa on the verbal word of an official, as I told you; but I'll tell you what I'll do. I will

go with you to see the Minister of the Interior and we'll see what happens." Now, I knew the Minister of the Interior well from the many times that we had been together. I explained to him exactly what the problem was -- that I can't issue a visa unless I can say that the perspective parents have complied with local adoption laws. He confirmed that Nepal did not have an adoption law "so really they are not out of compliance but they're not in compliance. There's simply no law." I said "Yes, I know, but that's the problem." He said, "Well, if I wrote something here on my stationery that said it was okay and there weren't any problems with the Nepalese government on this, will that be sufficient?" And I said, "Yes, I can accept that." So he wrote it out and gave it to them.

I tell this story because I really think I exceeded what I probably should have been able to do.

*Q: Well you know, there are a significant number of people, a Protection and Welfare officer in Germany who had mental problems and you've got to go through all series of things. I had a doctor who had given him a shot, put him out for awhile and we sent somebody with him. But they sort of arrived without any consent form or something back in New York and all and would be picked up by Social Services there, you know. You just do these things.*

GNEHM: Well the wonderful thing about it was that when I was posted back in Washington in the late '90s one day my phone at home rang. A man on the phone said, "Skip, you won't remember me. But my wife and I came to you for help in adopting our daughter many years ago in Nepal." Of course I remembered the incident. He said I'm just calling to tell you she is a terrific young girl. She just graduated with a doctorate degree and it would never have happened if you had not helped us. You know how wonderful that makes you feel when you get that kind of call.

*Q: Yes. Well this is the thing being a bureaucrat is sometimes avoiding the law.*

GNEHM: Yes, there are some things that just are the right thing to do, you know.

*Q: Well did the hippie community -- this -- I can think if somebody would be reading this in the 21st, 22nd, 23rd centuries; so a hippie is sort of a free willing, a free roaming young person probably smoking some marijuana or some sort of drugs a little bit and all but basically unemployed and living off of the kindness of strangers. But were there any particular problems of fights or medical problems?*

GNEHM: I don't remember fights as much as medical problems. Nepal is really prone to intestinal diseases, well quite a lot actually. It's not a healthy environment. There are no sewers; sewage runs in the street; and there is a lot of tuberculosis in the country. So yes, most of the hippies wanted nothing to do with US government until they really got sick and were out of money and destitute and sometimes even starving. Then they would come, of course, and want help; they wanted money or to go home. We had a process to deal with their requests. We would try to reach their families and facilitate the transfer of money. We also had authority to assist their return to the US but on a cost recoverable

basis. But there were many people in the embassy who chipped in on a completely voluntary basis to help someone really sick or to provide a place to stay for a while. That was the biggest issue.

I will tell you there was one other experience that I had there that I remember to this day. I think I was in a staff meeting when the Marine called and said, "I've got a call down here for the consular officer and you'd better come down but you're not going to like it." I went down and when I picked up the phone, there was this guy on the phone who said, "I want to talk to the f--king pig of a consular officer, you know, and right now." I said, "First of all, I am a consular officer but would you like..." He said, "I know you f--king pig don't have anything to do with people like me, whatever. I can't stand your f..king guts, buddy." And I said, "I beg your pardon? Why are you calling?" And he said, "I've been picked up and am down here at the jail and I want you come down here and help me get out of here." "OK," I said, "There are certain things..." He interrupted, "Yeah, that's what I thought you pig of a government agent would say." I had pretty much had it by this point and asked, "Are you calling for help or are you just calling to mouth off?" He repeated a few ugly phrases. I asked one more time, and I got another verbal blast. I just took the receiver and returned it to its base!

*Q: Did you have much contact with the Indian embassy there?*

GNEHM: Yes we did. We got along very well, again mainly because of Carol Laise's relationship with the Indians. They knew her well and they liked her a lot.

*Q: Yes, I mean she was open. That was her specialty.*

GNEHM: That's right.

That leads me to tell you a bit about my time as her staff assistant. It was a rather unusual situation- I almost used the word "peculiar"- that's probably more apt. It was a unique situation in that she was, for all intents and purposes, a single woman carrying out her ambassadorial responsibilities and hosting dinners and receptions, etc. I sort of rounded off the numbers at dinners by being male. So I often was either included in dinners or events so the numbers remained balanced. She basically was a possessive personality, not unusual for ambassadors in those days. They possessed the mission. I was her staff aide and clearly belonged to her. These were also the days when the ambassador's secretary sent out an embassy notice on official letterhead to all officers to inform their wives that the reception the ambassador was hosting Friday night for XYZ required 20 dozen cookies, for which each recipient of the notice was to provide a specified amount to be delivered to the residence no later than a set time. I'm not complaining about my time as Carol's staff assistant. In truth it was exciting and fun and I learned a lot. I was there and with her often at different times, many different times, and traveled with her around Nepal. All this was fine when I was single, right? But then I got married...

So I arrived in Nepal in December 1969. I went home in June 1970 to get married and I brought my wife back to Kathmandu. There was a distinct feeling that three didn't make

an easy number. The ambassador still assumed that I would do everything as I had before and that my wife would just take care of herself. This was a bit of a difficult situation. My wife still reminds me of those times even though it's been 40 years!

*Q: No, no, I can certainly understand that.*

*Well did you have any connection with Ambassador Bunker, the ambassador in Saigon?*

GNEHM: Yes. I'm glad you asked me that question because as I was telling you the story about going back to the US to get married. I remember vividly a special moment with Ambassador Bunker. It was in Nepal, either late May or early June just before I left for the States. I was always at the airport when he was arriving or leaving. This particular day he said good-bye to his wife and to all of us who were standing there on the tarmac. He walked a fair piece across the tarmac to get to his plane. He went up the steps, turned to wave at his wife, and saw me standing next to her. Now he had already said good-bye; but he came down the steps, walked all the way back to me and said, "Good-bye, Skip. I'm not going to see you before you get married, am I?" "No sir," I said. "I just wish you the very, very best" were his parting words.

*Q: How wonderful.*

GNEHM: And he went back across the tarmac to his plane. The man was a gentleman.

*Q: He really, really was.*

GNEHM: A very genuine person. I mean, he didn't have to do that. He could have sent me a cable back from Saigon after he got there. But that was very touching for me and that's how he was. He was always gracious. He was always calm.

*Q: Did you have problems, or not problems but experiences with the business, particularly maybe congressional, other types and officials in Kathmandu?*

GNEHM: I'm laughing because the answer to that is a whopping big 'yes' to visitors. You can imagine how many people wanted to visit Nepal. It was such an exotic place and the Himalayas simply spectacular. Not so many CODELs (Congressional delegations) but many friends of Carol Laise and Ellsworth Bunker dropped in. These were often very prominent people. One was Robin Duke Biddle, the wife of a former Chief of Protocol and several time Ambassador -- Angier Duke Biddle.

She was coming to Kathmandu and then flying out to Pokhara to visit Tibetan refugees and see the mountains close up. Carol Laise had planned a very large dinner in her honor on the day she was supposed to return to Kathmandu. It was one of those bad weather days in Kathmandu. Carol was determined to get her guest back to Kathmandu for the dinner. So she decided to charter a plane, one of these small single engine planes, to pick her up in Pokhara. Royal Nepal Airlines wasn't going to fly in that weather. So she put me in the plane to go get her. I had to go because the pilot would not be able to leave his

plane to go into Pokhara to find the guest. This was when I thought my life was over. The weather was horrendously bad. Since there are no navigation aids, you must fly by sight. So we were flying low across the valley to stay below the clouds. Now the valley is rimmed by mountains. We headed west toward where the road to India leaves the valley, that being the lowest point in the rim around the valley. As we went up over that ridge to the other side, we were totally enveloped in clouds, huge clouds. Well, as I said, there are no navigational aids; we were in a precarious situation.

*Q: Radar?*

GNEHM: No radar or anything; it's all visual. And the pilot, using a four letter word, said, "Boy, we've got to get down to below these clouds." So he starts circling, going down, down, down. We had no idea whether we were going to hit the side of a mountain or a tree as we made these circles, right? We finally got down underneath the clouds and he said, "I'm going back; I just want you to get back alive. We're not going on to Pokhara." All I could think was that this is the end of my career, second tour in less than two years and finished; but we got back safely. Carol was actually angry that we came back without her guest and all I could say was we're alive. And I don't know whether I should actually say this and you might want me to stop.

*Q: Oh, go ahead and we'll look at it.*

GNEHM: There was a little problem with our ambassador in New Delhi, a former senator.

*Q: Well then Keating?*

GNEHM: Yes, it was Kenneth Keating. Keating had a lot of visitors to New Delhi. These were often single women who stayed with him for a period of time. There was this one occasion when a second woman was going to arrive before the one in residence was leaving. So he called Carol and asked if he could send the woman in his residence up to Kathmandu as her guest -- at least until the arriving one left! Carol just about exploded over the idea that she was going to take care of his girlfriends. But she said 'yes' and then told me, "I don't even want to set eyes on her. You're going to take care of her; you're going to do whatever is necessary." So yes, we had quite a variety of experiences with visitors at different times.

*Q: How about mountain climbers? Were they a nuisance? Now it's turned into a huge industry but how was it then?*

GNEHM: In those days we had climbing expeditions each season but not that many. They were usually organized outside Nepal and already had a connection with the Nepalese government. Your question does call to mind one experience. This development occurred before I took the consular position. There had been an avalanche on Everest on the glacier many years before -- perhaps in the late 1950s. A couple of Americans were

killed but no bodies or effects ever retrieved because they were buried deep under the ice fall.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: We received a call from the Nepalese government that the bodies had come out the bottom of the glacier as a result of its melting and movement. We had to send the vice consul up to retrieve whatever was left of the bodies and the equipment. That was not a very nice experience.

*Q: How about the Peace Corps? I would think it would be a very difficult place for them to be working, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: It was for the reasons we were talking about earlier -- especially health issues. Of course when they were out in villages, they were really on their own. There was no communication. They didn't come into Kathmandu except for very specific reasons and at specific times. My house, incidentally, that I was given to live in was located directly across from the Peace Corps office. The funny story is that when I arrived from Vietnam and was walking home on the first or second day from the embassy to my house, I had to walk right by the PC office. 20 to 25 volunteers or friends of volunteers -- looking like birds on a telephone wire -- were just sitting on the top of the wall watching. I learned later from one of the volunteers who was in Kathmandu and became a very close friend (Regina Mellon) that they were all there deliberately to see the new vice consul and to find out what kind of a person he was. In their minds I might be a source of hot water and booze! They were staking me out! Anyway, I ended up making a lot of friends with the volunteers because we were my age. It was nice having such friends.

*Q: Yes. Well-*

GNEHM: By the way, I had a vegetable garden next to my house. I came home one day plodding my way down the little street. It was mostly mud. I turned into my street and noticed that there were huge turds in the street. At the time I didn't know enough to know what they belonged to or where they'd come from; but as I turned into my compound, I noticed the turds did too. When I got to my house, my cook was standing at the back door beating on a pan. There in my garden was an elephant devouring one cabbage after another. So I didn't get any cabbages that year. That elephant wasn't afraid of that gonging either; it must have sounded too much like a temple gong.

*Q: Alright. I was interviewing somebody who was in Central Africa who said you know, everybody thinks of how wonderful elephants are and all. But these, they'll go right through a village and destroy it. I mean these are not benign. I mean it's not that they particularly attack they just - anything in their way just-*

GNEHM: Got knocked over.

*Q: -got eaten or stepped on.*

GNEHM: That's right. That's something.

*Q: Well was there any Marxist movement going on at that time?*

GNEHM: There was. There was a group down on the Indian border; they're still there, a Maoist group.

*Q: Maoist, yes.*

GNEHM: And they were a problem but not significantly. Both the Indians and the Nepalese were trying to defeat them without much success.

*Q: Did you get any feel about the royal family and the prime minister's family and all? I mean ruling clique.*

GNEHM: I did because of my relationship with Carol. The royal family was pretty aloof from society. The king was considered a reincarnate god and there were rituals whenever a royal was present. The ambassador did host Crown Prince Birendra and his wife on a couple of occasions. (He later became king and was killed by his son, the then Crown Prince, in a family dispute, they say.) Once a year he and his wife came to the residence for dinner and I was there because Ambassador Bunker could not always get up to Kathmandu for those occasions. So I got to meet the Crown Prince -- a very, very nice person, very open and down to earth. As I said, they were considered gods; therefore there was considerable formality whenever they were around other Nepalese.

*Q: Prostration.*

GNEHM: Prostration and you know, not diverting your eyes. They were really very much separated from ordinary people. So on the Fourth of July the Crown Prince and his wife would come to the residence for the Fourth of July reception. The ambassador immediately took them from the front door up to the roof, where they were given food and service. They were kept separate from any of the common people or even foreigners. Anyway, one visit I remember very well. It seems like right out of some novel. There was always a great fireworks display on the Fourth of July. This particular year one of the fireworks went off sideways and set off all the fireworks. Everybody in the garden hit the ground to avoid being hit by the fireworks. Once the last firework fired, we all got up and dusted ourselves off. Clearly the fireworks got over a little bit quicker than normal. I went straight to the front door because I knew Carol was coming down with the Crown Prince to help get them in the car. She said, "Oh, Skip, that was the most spectacular fireworks we've ever had." And I just went "Hmm-hm, just put them in the car and get them out of here." Then she discovered what had happened. But it was classic!

*Q: Did you get any secretary of state or anything like that?*

GNEHM: Never. I don't think we even had an assistant secretary come in the year and a half I was there. We had the desk officer; that was about the highest.

*Q: Did you have much to do with our embassy in New Delhi at all?*

GNEHM: I did because of working for Carol Laise. I was in touch with them for a variety of things. I went down a couple of different times to New Delhi on business for the embassy. We shared among the people at the embassy the responsibility of taking the classified pouch down to New Delhi. That gave people a chance to get out of Kathmandu to the big city where you can buy things that you could not find in Kathmandu. And the New Delhi embassy always had people coming up our way. It was a pretty good relationship between the two embassies. We helped people coming up for tourism and they helped us with people who needed to transit the airport in New Delhi.

*Q: Well how did your marriage, I mean the ceremony and the rest, where'd you do this and how did your wife come back?*

GNEHM: I did return to Macon, Georgia, where Peggy and I were married in June 1970. Both our parents lived in Macon. Peggy had had to make many of the decisions that normally we would have made together. I already explained how it was virtually impossible to communicate from Kathmandu. So Peggy shouldered most of the burden planning for the wedding and all. There were many things to do to prepare for her traveling back with me to Kathmandu. One matter was her medical clearance and also getting her diplomatic passport.

She learned far too quickly that things don't always go smoothly. I have not mentioned my troubles getting off language probation. After A-100 and before leaving for Saigon, I was put into French language training at FSI. The Department chose French because I had studied it in the university. I had not done well in college and my time at FSI left me short of the required 3/3. I was taking lessons in Saigon; but then my tour was cut short. So the Department decided that before I returned to Kathmandu, I would go back into intensive French to get off language probation. It meant, of course, that Peggy and I were stuck in Washington longer than we expected. I did pass my French test; but she had to sit around waiting for me!

Now as for our arrival back in Kathmandu, Peggy would have her own story to tell; but I can tell it because I've heard it from her quite often. It begins with my being a really bad male chauvinist. In retrospect it's so very clear. I didn't think I was at the time.

I brought her back to a country that I had already been living in for six months. I had all these friends in Peace Corps -- who were all single, of course. And I knew everyone in the embassy. I already had my house with my things in it. I already had a cook, my cook. I even had a dog that I'd gotten after one of my treks. And then to bring my new wife to my house, my cook, my dog, and my ambassador and my embassy...! I'm a typical Foreign Service officer, really into my work. I love it; I'm there, working late. Carol Laise had her meetings and events in the evening all of which she expected me to attend -

- rarely with my wife. I didn't get off to a good start in my marriage and I deserve all the grief that I got!

*Q: No, I can certainly understand that. This is one of those sorts of untold stories of the Foreign Service that with marriage that the officer, usually a male, has his job, his secretary, everything that sort of, you know, office is all taken care of and then the wife is put into a place which isn't an office. She doesn't speak the language, has to go out and get the food, deal with servants if she's lucky and there's no real support system.*

GNEHM: None whatsoever.

*Q: And it's very difficult.*

GNEHM: Particularly in those days. But in the end we're still married.

*Q: I went through this too with mine but it's not easy.*

GNEHM: It's tough.

*Q: What was social life like there?*

GNEHM: Interesting. We actually had a good community. There was a nice pool in our recreation area. That was a hangout place during the warmer weather. Various groups organized things. The one that Peggy and I got involved in was a group of couples that liked to play bridge with potluck dinners in conjunction with cards. These were fun bridge games; they were not serious evenings.

*Q: Oh yes*

GNEHM: They were not high stress games. We rotated from one family to another hosting the evening and everybody brought something. This was a lot of fun. It bonded us together and everybody enjoyed themselves. Groups often organized day hikes and picnics in the hills around the city.

I was a trekker. I liked to hike. Peggy did one with me but she's not a trekker at heart. I went up to near base camp of Everest with the political officer (Stan Brooks) one time. And I went on a 16-day trek in western Nepal with the Bob Fleming. His father and mother were missionaries and had been in Nepal for decades. Bob Fleming was an ornithologist. He studied birds of the country and it was fascinating trekking with him.

*Q: Good. Birds, yes.*

GNEHM: We hiked for 16 days and this was my ultimate mountaineering effort. Over a two day period I hiked 52 miles round trip -- up to the Tibetan border and back. Bob was taking his time and I wanted to make it all the way to the Tibetan border.

*Q: Well tell me, during this period we must have been Tibetan observers, I mean China hadn't taken Tibet over or fairly recently, hadn't it?*

GNEHM: No. I believe the Chinese had taken over Tibet in the 1950s but in the 1960s and 70s, there was a large exodus of Tibetans into India and Nepal.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I don't recall exactly when the Dalai Lama fled Tibet.

Well, I do remember that there was still knowledge -- untalked about -- of a covert CIA program in Nepal to support Tibetan resistance to the Chinese. They were not a formal militia. They were located in the Mustang area, which is on the other or north side of the Himalayan range. Nobody talked about it in Kathmandu; it didn't exist! But it was known and still being whispered about, when I got there a decade and a half later.

*Q: Well were we reporting, were we picking up and interrogating refugees from Tibet and all of that sort of stuff?*

GNEHM: You know that was part of the mission's activities, though again many of them passed right on through to India.

*Q: So most of the support of the free Tibet movement or whatever you want to call the Tibetan exile was taken care of in India, I suppose.*

GNEHM: Yes, even the Tibetan refugees in Nepal looked to the Dalai Lama, who set himself up in Dharamsala, in India.

There were refugee camps in Nepal and the UN was deeply involved

*Q: Did you ever run across the Gurkhas and the military?*

GNEHM: Oh yes.

*Q: Were they much of a presence?*

GNEHM: The British embassy had them as guards. Because they hired lots of Gurkhas for several of their diplomatic missions, like Hong Kong, the British actually ran a training camp in Nepal for Gurkhas.

*Q: Yes.*

*Well then, you left in what, '71?*

GNEHM: I left Nepal in June of '71. The Department cut a number of positions worldwide and one was Carol Laise's staff assistant position. The position was, in fact,

re-established not long after it was abolished. Carol worked the system. I was posted to Washington.

*Q: What did you do in Washington?*

GNEHM: My assignment was to NEA/P, the office that handled public affairs for the Bureau of Near East and South Asian Affairs. There were three of us in the office: the office director, a number two and me. To be very honest, I was upset about this assignment. I thought it was a bad assignment.

*Q: Well wasn't it moving you toward what you wanted?*

GNEHM: Oh, I didn't think so then, but in retrospect it was one of the most valuable assignments that I had in the Foreign Service. What I learned from a very, very professional director stood me in good stead throughout my career. He taught me how to deal with the press, how to establish ground rules, what to do, what not to do, and how to deal with a reporter who broke the rules. These were and are valuable skills.

*Q: Well what sort of lesson did you learn?*

GNEHM: One of the first lessons that he taught me was you want to talk to the press. You want to be open. Reporters are not bad people.

*Q: Which is not the normal Foreign Service reflex at all.*

GNEHM: My boss had been a reporter himself before coming into the Foreign Service and he said, "They are important for our work and they're only going to be doing their job well when we work with them."

*Q: Who was this?*

GNEHM: Glenn Smith. The second thing he said to me was to always establish ground rules at the beginning. Is it on the record? Is it on background? Or as I recall deep background. And he explained that if your conversation was on the record, you could be quoted and everything you said is attributable. If you were talking on background, tell them how they have to attribute it, like a senior official, a spokesperson or unformed source. And for deep background the press can use it but cannot in any way quote it, attribute it or claim where he got it. The information was provided for the reporter's knowledge only. Glenn was adamant on one point. "Always be honest. Never lie. Be straight with them. If you can't say something say, I can't go into that. Period. A professional reporter understands that and accepts it. If you've talked with someone in the media or press and they screw you, they break the rules; never talk to them ever again. Make it very clear how they broke the rule, explain that you can't trust them, and they aren't going to have the access that they had before."

And said he added, “You tell me about it and I’ll fix the goose!” I never had many problems with the press in my Foreign Service career. I credit that to the excellent training and experience I got at this point in my career. I often went to the noon press briefings to listen to the spokesperson answer questions because I thought it was a good learning experience. I wanted to see how he handled difficult situations and how he fielded questions.

*Q: Were you there from when to when?*

GNEHM: I think it was about a year on this job, from ’71 to ’72.

*Q: Did you find-*

GNEHM: Oh. I should tell you the other thing that I learned out of that job, which was critically important. I’ve used it in terms of advising young officers or people throughout my career. One of my main responsibilities each day was to get Bureau clearances on talking points for the spokesman to use at his press conference. That meant that I got to know people in every single office in the bureau, and the bureau in those days covered all the countries from Bangladesh to Morocco. Networking is important in the Department, as it is in most places. My job made that effortless. So people around the Bureau got to know me. And this led to one of my assignments actually, little bit further down the road.

*Q: Did you have a problem- I mean this is the first time you’re within the State Department dealing with it. The Arab/Israeli conflict, which you may have heard of, dealing with particularly the very strong, pro-Israeli movement in the United States and lack of a strong feeling within the public relations culture of the time as far as Arabs are concerned. In other words I see very strong bridges for Israel and lack of any real interest in the Palestinian cause at that time.*

GNEHM: Yes. I was aware of it. I don’t recall it being a major issue that I had to spend a lot of time on. I was quite aware of the lobby groups and their influence but other people were dealing with those topics.

*Q: What sort of things were you grappling with?*

GNEHM: Again, one of my big chores every day came after Glenn’s return from the NEA staff meeting with the list of the questions that the Bureau thought might likely come up at the press briefing. My job was to have cleared language or guidance for the spokesperson before the noon press conference. Sometimes I drafted the proposed responses, sometimes he drafted, and sometimes we just had to get it from various offices. Your deadline was the noon press briefing.

*Q: Does this system work fairly well?*

GNEHM: It did. It was very time consuming, as you know, because the headlines of the morning newspapers, or the news on the radio or TV, tended to drive everybody in the

morning. You had to drop everything else to get the cleared responses to the spokesperson.

*Q: Did any incidents particularly involve you or not? Or at least, I mean, take your time during this particular time? Can you think of it or is it-?*

GNEHM: I don't recall any real difficulties. Again, I had such a great boss and the number two was equally helpful in terms of mentoring me and in terms of support.

*Q: Well, what about was there an Israeli press in the house, sitting press contingent or Arabic contingent coming in every day?*

GNEHM: Definitely Israeli, Jewish as well as representatives of Arab news agencies. The Jewish press media from the United States was there, of course. Not every day but almost every day, yes. I don't recall very much on the Palestinian side. They just were not that active or organized.

*Q: Well did you find the Israeli press abided by the rules? Did they understand the rules that background and so forth that you were-?*

GNEHM: They were probably the ones we were most wary about because they were the ones that often did break the rules. So in those cases you just have to be more careful in what you said.

*Q: How about the country desks? Did you find- was it hard to pry the questions out?*

GNEHM: No, I found we had really great people in the Bureau and hard workers. They all understood what had to be done.

*Q: Well the Near Eastern Bureau has always been a bureau dealing with the most contentious clients and there's always, always crazies all the time.*

GNEHM: That's right. There was always a sense that the people there knew how to deal with any sort of emergency or crisis situation. Even later on in my career I remember Secretary Schultz and Secretary Baker and others saying, "If you've got a crisis get an NEA person up here because it doesn't matter whether it's China or whatever else-- they know how to work a crisis under pressure. It's good to have them around."

The other thing I did that you probably wouldn't ask me out was that I became very active as a junior officer in the JFSOC, Junior Foreign Service Officers Club.

*Q: JFSOC.*

GNEHM: Yes, the Junior Foreign Service Officers Club. The "C" was for "club." We had to call it club because these were the days before the Foreign Service had a labor organization. I actually was president of the organization.

*Q: Well let's talk a bit about that. This is still the time when sort of the influence of the '60s was still around and I'm probably misstating this but there was a feeling among the young officers that anyone much over 30 years old was probably a bit beyond the age to learn anything original, truth, virtue and all rested in those who were in their 20s. Was this going on at that time?*

GNEHM: There was definitely a sense among the younger officers that no one was interested in hearing their opinions and voices and that some of the rules and regulations were a bit absurd and needed to be looked at and people weren't willing to do that. You know, it was all, "This is the way it's been done."

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: It was definitely a sense within JFSOC membership that we needed to confront some of the old approaches, mainly personnel matters.

*Q: Yes, well this part of the noble era.*

GNEHM: Yes, that's what it was.

*Q: Probably then along when things came out better because of it. I-*

GNEHM: We demanded to see Secretary Rogers at one point and I think he perceived initially that JFSOC was a disruptive group.

*Q: Well there was a time when junior officers were- signed a petition about getting out of Vietnam or something. Was that the issue?*

GNEHM: No. No, it was trying to find a way to get some of our views to the secretary on the system and how it was working and operating or not operating, in our opinions. It was time in our opinion to look at personnel issues. There were no cones in these days; there were no facts provided. But the Department had already begun to think it needed to do something along those lines. I remember getting a letter saying that the promotion boards had met and recommended me for promotion as a consular officer; but I had to sign a statement that I would be a consular officer for the bulk of my career. I remember being very upset. I didn't want to say 'no' to a promotion, but I also didn't want to be a consular officer for most of my career. So I began trafficking around with my letter to different people to seek advice. One of the people that I spoke with was Tom Boyatt, who was on the Greece/Cyprus desk at the time, and went on to serve as an ambassador and later President of AFSA (American Foreign Service Association).

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I showed Tom the letter and he said, "Where in the hell is this coming from?" I explained what I knew about it and he said, "Oh, just take the promotion because nobody

will remember in six months what you signed. And in a year they'll have a new system." This was generally the advice I was getting from most people -- don't worry about it, nothing's going to last. But I decided I wasn't going to sign my name on the paper I had been given and so I said no. Six months later I got offered a promotion as a political officer which I accepted. But Tom was right; the Department changed the system before I finished my next tour.

*Q: Well one of the things that one quickly learned was that any promise from Personnel was good for about oh, a month or two maybe. When the personnel officer would change, the system would change. So somebody says, sure now, if you go to St. Helena for, you know, two years, we'll certainly make sure you get a nice job afterwards.*

GNEHM: Right, Copenhagen or something.

*Q: Yes, something like that. Ho, ho, ho.*

GNEHM: Right. Well I didn't have a lot of confidence in the personnel system because of something that I didn't mention to you previously. It was a letter from the personnel officer that I'd spoken to in the States when I was transferred from Vietnam to Kathmandu. The letter said, "Skip, I know how excited you will be to get back into the Middle East, which is where you always wanted to serve." This was referring to my assignment to Kathmandu! I'm looking at this letter and saying, "What geography class did he attend?" But in all fairness Nepal was in the NEA bureau, so he wasn't all wrong. But it wasn't my definition of the Middle East.

*Q: Well the Middle Eastern Bureau was so wide back in '58. I wanted to go to Africa. So of course I went to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. But it was all in the same bureau so that- But anyway.*

*Well with this public affairs job did you have much of a dealing with the press? I mean-*

GNEHM: Yes I did.

*Q: What sort of dealing was it? More sitting down with them as opposed to standing up at a podium?*

GNEHM: Yes, it was phone calls from reporters that worked with NEA that were referred to me. They asked about background information and facts or asked for texts or things of that sort. Also people came in for interviews. I did a lot of press interviews in my office.

I also did a lot of public speaking. I traveled on behalf of the NEA Bureau. I did that whenever I was in Washington but I also began speaking at universities or clubs, Rotary Clubs, things of that sort.

*Q: Well were you still seeing a residue of the dislike or suspicion about the gentlemen from the '60s when you went to universities at all or could you pretty well have a solid dialogue rather than confrontations?*

GNEHM: I would say that in almost every engagement my first goal was to get a good sense of the audience. It might be by walking through the group to get to the podium or noting the expressions on faces in the audience. Occasionally I felt some animosity and some expected confrontation but that did not intimidate me. I found that the way I speak and the way I talk tended to disarm most people.

*Q: No, but I mean there are ways of dealing with this and if you're not saying, this is- the law has been handed down from ages past and you should except it, rather than to try to explain-*

GNEHM: How it works.

*Q: -how it works and all that. I mean that's very disarming.*

GNEHM: It was disarming to be able to say "wait a minute" and explain how certain decisions are made. I could say that I had a lot of ability and flexibility within the Bureau to give my opinions. This approach would catch people off-guard.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: At that time I got a response.

*Q: Well I'm looking at the time. This will probably be a good place to stop because I want to turn it over for a minute to our interns who are sitting here listening to this. But where did you go after you left NEA/P?*

GNEHM: I went to be the desk officer for Nepal working once again with Carol Laise.

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

*And do you have anything? I'll leave the mics on so-*

*INTERN #1 NAOMI KAUFMAN: Forever recorded.*

*I have a quick question. While you were in Nepal what sorts of relationships did you have with the Nepalese, if any? To what degree did you interact with them on a reasonably consistent basis?*

GNEHM: That's a very good question. In the staff aide position I was often dealing with officials, primarily on matters that the ambassador had been working on. When I was the consular officer I dealt with officials on a regular basis. At most small posts, the younger officers are often given a secondary position in the economic or political section. I was

working in the political section part time during some of my tour in Kathmandu. I was given the youth portfolio. That gave me the opportunity to call on the head of the Nepal Youth Organization. He was a leftist and not an obvious friend to the embassy. But in fact I actually ended up developing a really good relationship maybe because nobody had tried to see him before. I remember the first time I saw him the conversation was very straightforward -- even a bit stiff. At one point he said he didn't think we had anything in common. And then after again talking with him I think he kind of liked having someone like me to talk to about things and I enjoyed talking to him. So through him I got to meet other people who were in that organization and whom we had never met before.

The other group of Nepalese that I got to know well, I have to tell you, were our local hired employees and through them their families. With a couple of them I actually went trekking and hiking.

*INTERN #2 ANDREA CARLS: Stu said you all, being in a foreign services all days, is a passion of your neurons and it's all- let me just- I didn't go to work every day, especially in a cold sled, was maybe- was not your first choice .*

GNEHM: You mean Saigon?

*INTERN #2 ANDREA CARLS: Yes.*

GNEHM: That was harder but then I always felt Saigon was not a normal situation, operating situation for our troops. But in Nepal and in my subsequent ones I loved the kind of work we did. I loved the contact with local people. I loved it out in the countryside. I'm an activist in that regard of going out and all over the place and meeting people and being overseas in a different culture was full of different experiences. There were always things happening, unexpected, like the baby in my waiting room or the elephant in my garden.

I remember coming back to the US at one point and staying with friends of my wife from their days at Emory University. He had a good job at Xerox. We were sitting around their table one night and he was asking me questions about my life. He stopped me at one point and he said, "I envy you so much. I go to work every day, I do the same thing every day, sit with the same people every day. I'm going to get promoted and continue to do the same thing every day. You have all kinds of different things happening." I have remembered that throughout my career that, yes, our lives are indeed full of adventure.

*Q: It's true. I've had exactly the same reaction from people in my college. I mean afterwards, you know. Because we've had remarkable lives. Well that's why we have an oral history program.*

*INTERN #3 REBECCA SATERFIELD: I do, yes. So it's actually in regard to \_\_\_\_ and second tour \_\_\_\_\_ you couldn't find enough access to mentorship, people who were there to give you good advice on how to continue your career or was that something you wish they provided you a bit more of?*

GNEHM: Oh it was a mixed experience. Overall I felt I got good mentorship. I had really good people who liked me and who wanted me to do well and gave me good tips. I mentioned the head of NEA/P in particular; he really did take me under his wing and wanted me to be good at working with the press and media. Through my career there were situations where I had no guidance. I had to draw on my own instincts and the knowledge I had gained from those who had mentored me, like Carol Laise. The first boss that I had in Saigon, the commercial attaché, I didn't go into it, was an old codger. Maybe not as old as I thought he was at the time; but he dressed with a cowboy hat, boots, and a lanyard and he was very, very jealous of my popularity with the secretary and others. So he wasn't terribly helpful, actually. But Carol Laise in her own way, mentored me and she became a friend well after our serving together. So yes, and the political officer in the embassy... I can think of a whole group of officers in the embassy that were always there to sit down and talk, even the one who told me I was actually an atrocious drafter and that he wasn't sure I was going to survive in the Foreign Service.

*INTERN #4 KATHERINE TUSCANY: So you're kind of out in Nepal; what do you think was the most important relationship you built, whether it was someone in the consulate or someone in New Delhi, wherever you were working, what relationship was the most important One?*

GNEHM: It had to be with the ambassador, with her. Working so closely with her and it just developed into a relationship that comes back into play later on. Then there was the Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) who was Harry Barnes during my first year in Nepal. He went on to be Director General of the Foreign Service.

*Q: He was director general, yes.*

GNEHM: Well. He was a wonderfully nice person. Again, he had an open door. He was one I was able to go up to and say the ambassador's got me doing this, that and the other and I'm not sure what it is she really wants to come out of this; he could tell me. They were close. And he wouldn't go tell her. The next one, Carl Coon, was a completely different personality. He did not like how close I was to the ambassador. So when the ambassador was out of the country, he switched me to the consular section. When she came back and found that out, she was furious and reamed him out, which didn't help me at all in my relations with him.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: So I began to learn the intricacies of relationships and how to be very careful with all relationships.

*Q: Well embassies and all are offices, particularly in our business because we move around all the time, are a bit like families, you know, and you're a bunch of siblings and how come he got the peanuts and I didn't, you know, this type of thing.*

GNEHM: That's right.

*Q: I mean most of the time it works pretty well but sometimes you find yourself, it's like being in a family you wish you could be out of.*

GNEHM: Yes, that's very true. And what it also is, for a second, I learned how important the ambassador's leadership is; it's just incredibly important.

*Q: The ambassador sets the tone.*

GNEHM: Personality, discipline, whatever. You name it. Everything flows from that person on down.

*Q: Yes.*

*INTERN #5 CAROLINE WALLACE:* I know you talked about your wife's experience a little bit so I'm curious if she ever took any work in the countries you were posted.

GNEHM: This was a big problem in our marriage. My wife had an MBA. She was actually working in Washington, I told you, for the Securities and Exchange Commission when we met. So she had her own professional life and wanted to work. Going to Kathmandu was not a step for a professional. There was really not any kind of employment in Kathmandu worthwhile. Later when we get to Riyadh, my wife got a job at CitiBank; it made all the difference in the world for our marriage, for her self-esteem and I bless her for it. And then when we went to Yemen, CitiBank actually had a branch in Yemen and though there was no obligation they actually transferred her. Well, they actually hired her there. So for those years she actually made more money than I because I had to pay federal taxes and she didn't!

*Q: Okay, great. Skip, we'll pick this up, you're going to be working on the Nepal?*

GNEHM: Desk officer for Nepal.

*Q: Desk officer Nepal.*

GNEHM: Which was in the Office of India, Nepal and Ceylon (INC).

*Q: The India/Nepal and what period?*

GNEHM: This would have been 1971 to '73.

*Q: Okay.*

*Today is the 25th of June 2014, interview with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, would you explain where we were?*

GNEHM: I think we had finished discussing my tour in NEA/P, Public Affairs, after coming out of Nepal.

*Q: Okay. And then where'd you go?*

GNEHM: I went to the Nepal desk in what was then NEA/INC (India, Nepal, and Ceylon Country Office). There was an interesting anecdote right before my assignment to INC. Elizabeth Jones ("Beth"), who joined the Foreign Service about the same time that I did, and I became close as we were junior officers in the Bureau. She and I both discovered at roughly the same time that there was a vacancy in Cairo. You remember I wanted to go to the Middle East; that was where I was aiming to go. So I ran across the hall one day and told her that I just heard about this job in Cairo and talked to the people about it and they seemed interested. She had a strange look on her face and then said, "Skip; they have already asked me to take the job." Beth and I remained good friends for the rest of our career; but she got the job and I went to the Nepal desk.

*Q: So you were doing the Nepal desk from when to when?*

GNEHM: That was about 1972 to 1973. It was a year.

*Q: And at that time you were still in the Near East Bureau?*

GNEHM: Yes, South Asia was still part of the Middle East bureau, the NEA Bureau. There were two South Asian directorates, INC and PAB. PAB covered Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. As the Nepal Desk Officer, I was still working for Carol Laise, who was still the ambassador at Kathmandu. Because we had a very good relationship from my tour in Kathmandu, it was an extremely good job. When you are a desk officer for a small country, such as Nepal, you end up covering all the issues, whether they be political, economic, even administrative and consular. Having been at post, I had a good sense of what was going on in the country. I was able to do a lot of networking around Washington with other agencies, like the Peace Corps and AID. It gave me a great insight into how Washington worked. So while I mentioned earlier that I was really unhappy that I was assigned back to Washington after less than two years abroad, in retrospect, it was a great education and learning experience. When I then went abroad, I had a good sense of what I needed to do while serving abroad in terms of reporting, communications and personal calls. So it was a great experience and I would strongly advise young officers to have that Department experience early on in their careers.

*Q: You mentioned the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps was crafted so not to be considered part of the, you might say the intelligence operation of the United States. How did you find relations with the Peace Corps and the State Department?*

GNEHM: Well you're quite right. This would have been 1971, 1972, & 1973. That's about a decade after the creation of the Peace Corps and still in many countries around the world PC volunteers were accused of being CIA agents -- out in the field reporting to

the embassy or the CIA. So there was a big effort on the part of the Peace Corps not to be seen as part of the mission. In Kathmandu, Carol Laise and the then-Peace Corps director, Bruce Morgan, were very close personally. He did attend the country team meetings but that was it. Most of us at the embassy were told that we shouldn't be close to Peace Corps volunteers to avoid fueling this accusation. That wasn't true in my own personal case. I think I mentioned to you that my apartment was across the street from the Peace Corps office and the volunteers learned pretty fast that I had hot showers and scotch. So I ended up having lots of really close friends among the Peace Corps volunteers. In Washington I never had any problem working with Peace Corps as a desk officer.

*Q: Well then in the time you were on the desk were there any issues in particular that came up?*

GNEHM: As I remember the biggest issue, which was also an issue when I was in Nepal, was what is called the Trade and Transit Agreement between Nepal and India. This had to do with the movement of goods in route to Nepal or actually exported from Nepal, all of which went through the port of Calcutta, which is an Indian port, of course. This agreement was vital to the economy of Nepal, but it was also a means for the Indians to squeeze the Nepalese whenever they didn't like something in the relationship. One issue in particular that concerned the Indians was Nepal's relationship with China to the north. The Nepalese enjoyed using the Chinese as somewhat of a balance to India, which of course was not practical in reality. Nevertheless, they did and India often responded with actions that squeezed Nepal -- in this case closing or obstructing the movement of Nepalese goods through India. This was one of the issues that we constantly addressed -- trying to convince the Indians to be more understanding and less brazen in their squeezing the Nepalese on trade.

*Q: Did you feel Chinese influence when you were on the Nepalese desk?*

GNEHM: Only that in those days the Chinese were very opportunistic, I would say. In other words, they sent high level visitors on a fairly frequent basis to Kathmandu. There wasn't a great deal of substance; but it just sent the Indians up the tree. I think that that was, in fact, what they intended -- to aggravate the Indians. The Chinese also were funding a number of development projects; the one I most recall was construction of a road from Kathmandu to the Chinese border. This Chinese project upset the Indians immensely as they saw this road as another way China might be able to send its military toward India.

*Q: Well how did the Nepalese desk fit into the bureau, particularly vis-à-vis India and Pakistan? Well India I guess.*

GNEHM: I have two observations. One is that to be a desk officer of a small country gives you a lot more latitude and freedom than, say, desk officer for India or Pakistan. There is less interest in Washington and overall less attention. So you had far more opportunity to be directing the issues, to be involved on a personal basis.

My second observation made very clear to me from David Schneider, who was the country director at the time, was that India was the important country, not Nepal or for that matter Ceylon, and that ultimately U.S. interests lay in New Delhi. I just needed to keep that in mind as I did the Nepalese portfolio.

*Q: Well would you check with the India desk if any issues came up?- Did you find yourself at all a conduit from Indians about the situations in Nepal?*

GNEHM: Well it was a fairly tight knit office. We met most mornings. I was on the distribution for all the cables from India as well as Ceylon. In fact, I was the back-up desk officer for Ceylon. Most of the issues were discussed openly within the office. Carol Laise, who, as I mentioned earlier, had served in South Asia previously- and in India specifically, knew Indian politics well. She counted on me to keep her informed about Washington thinking on the subcontinent issues so that she could gauge how she needed to weigh in on issues that involved India. That is an important function of a desk officer - - to be the eyes and ears of the embassy in Washington and to give your embassy advice and guidance that they need to know to deal with issues.

*Q: Well with the area you were in particular, India, but more so with Nepal, did you find that our involvement in Vietnam, which was certainly waning at the time, was an important factor?*

GNEHM: Not really. I would say that it came into play most often when India was attending international forums and speaking as part of the non-aligned movement, which in those days was very vocally hostile to the U.S. military actions in Southeast Asia. India's voice would always be quite prominent in that criticism.

*Q: Well while you were doing the Nepal desk, were there any events in Nepal that got your attention or absorbed you?*

GNEHM: No, just the ones that I mentioned. I guess the only one I would add relates to AID. Our AID program was very important in Nepal. Yet the Nepal AID program was always competing for funding. My job in Washington was to fight for the level of assistance that the mission was seeking. Competition was always fierce and the fighting rarely pleasant!

*Q: Well did you find that Nepal, being where mountain climbers went, was both the playground of the hippies and the very well to do? Did you find that it attracted a lot more attention than the country itself probably deserved on an international interest scale?*

GNEHM: I think that's true. The other nice thing about being the ambassador's aide in Kathmandu and also the desk officer was that I got to meet people like Sir Edmund Hillary and other mountain climbers. They would call me in Washington to try to get messages to her or arrange to see her in Nepal. This added really interesting issues and

people to deal with. And you're right; Nepal in the eyes of lots of people was an exotic place, the high Himalayas, the tinkling bells, the temples and a Hindu monarchy, and things of that sort. So yes, there was a lot of interest in Nepal in that respect.

*Q: Are there two or three other little kingdoms up in that area?*

GNEHM: There are. I'm not sure about the dates, but I believe that when I was on the desk, India moved to take over Sikkim, which was a small semi-autonomous region of India still under its prince, going back to the days of the raj. The Indian government decided to depose the ruler because they didn't like his playing around with the Chinese while there was a perceived Chinese threat along the India-Chinese border. That was an unsettling development because Bhutan, which is another of those small countries, and Nepal were clearly independent but under a great deal of Indian pressure. There was a sense in Washington that the Indians were being overly aggressive. I can't remember the exact date but they certainly at one point during this period also seized Goa from the Portuguese.

*Q: Yes and they just moved in.*

GNEHM: Just marched in.

*Q: Did you get a feel when you were there that the- subcontinent area was a place a part as far as the Foreign Service people were concerned? Were there a lot of people who made their careers in that particular region, as you would find later in the Middle East?*

GNEHM: Definitely there was a coterie of people, officers, who served repetitively in these countries and in Washington. There was throughout the '70s and '80s into the '90s criticism in Washington, particularly from Congressman Solarz who claimed that the subcontinent did not get the attention in the State Department that it deserved. He became a strong proponent of separating South Asia from NEA, a division that did occur later. I never really sensed that when I was serving on the desk. I do know, of course, that there were particular issues and developments in the core NEA area, like the '67 war and '73 wars, that certainly took the attention of the NEA front office as well as other senior Department officials; but I never really felt like the South Asian offices were ignored.

*Q: Did Stephen Solarz run across your radar while you were there?*

GNEHM: Rather frequently in my career, yes.

*Q: How about during the Nepal time?*

GNEHM: I remember while on the desk he did visit Nepal at one point; I can't remember exactly when. We had many CODELs (congressional delegations) come to Nepal but largely for the reasons that we discussed before. Nepal is an exotic place so congressional

delegation visiting India, an important country, would spin off to Nepal to see the mountains and temples of Kathmandu.

*Q: For somebody reading this Stephen Solarz is a congressman from, was it Brooklyn or from New York?*

GNEHM: He was from New York.

*Q: And he was very much involved in Africa, later in South Asian affairs and was at one point nominated to be ambassador to India but he got shot down because his wife's- they hadn't paid income tax or something like that. Anyway, I've interview Solarz so one can know to look at that.*

*Well then you were only on the desk a relatively short time.*

GNEHM: Yes, about a year, and in the summer of '73 Carol Laise came back to Washington as Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs. She asked me to go to that bureau with her as her principle staff assistant. So I did, again because I'd worked with her so closely.

*Q: How long were you in public affairs?*

GNEHM: From the summer until February of 1974, so a relatively short time. And that was because of a phone call that I received on New Year's Eve of 1973, so December 31<sup>st</sup>. I remember it well. It was after 11:00 and just before midnight. I had a phone call at my house from Tom Scotes. I got to know Tom from our work together in the NEA bureau. Tom said he was calling me from Dulles Airport. He had permission from Secretary Kissinger to call me. I was the only other person in the bureau other than a very few at the top-who knew where he was headed. He said, "I'm on my way to Damascus to reopen our interest section with Americans and I'd like you to come as my deputy. The secretary said I could make that offer. Are you interested?" I looked at my wife who was sitting at the kitchen table and said, "I really need to talk to my wife about this." Tom said, "Well that's okay; but just tell me if you're interested." I said "Well, hold on half a second." I explained to my wife what I was being asked and she said, "sure." So I told him: "Yes, Tom, I'll go." So of course I had to tell Carol Laise. She didn't have any objections. She was a little disappointed; but she knew that's what I wanted to do all my life. And I was on the plane to Damascus by mid-February with Peggy and my then young daughter, Cheryl.

*Q: Okay. Well let's talk about what had been going on with the United States and Syria?*

GNEHM: Well in 1967, the so-called June war, Syria along with most of the Arab countries broke diplomatic relations with the United States. Syria, unlike Egypt, refused to allow any Americans to remain in the "U.S. interest section." We asked and the Italians agreed to be our protective power, which meant that they staffed our interest section with Italian diplomats. This is an interesting phenomenon; I think there were

some five to seven Italian diplomats who worked in the U.S. embassy building, the former embassy building, handling our affairs. There were, as I recollect, in the neighborhood of 15 to 18 Syrian local hire employees who remained employed as part of the interest section, again being managed by Italians at this point. What was happening in this January-February of '74 timeframe was that Kissinger had actually negotiated with Assad the re-staffing of the interest section with Americans.

Now, I mention Egypt only just as a footnote. The Egyptians allowed Americans to remain working in the embassy building as part of the U.S. interest section. They did restrict the numbers. I don't remember the number but it wasn't large. So although we had Americans in Egypt but between '67- and '74, there were no American diplomats under any guise at all in Syria. So this was a rather momentous development and it came at a time just a few months after the '73 war. Immediately after the war was a good opportunity for moving pieces on a chessboard, as people like to say. In the aftermath of a real crisis people are jockeying for new positions. A person like Kissinger could step in and work those positions to try to make progress and he did, on both the Egyptian and the Syrian front. It was during the months of March and April, that you had what became known as the shuttle diplomacy. Kissinger moved between the Syrians and the Israelis multiple times leading to a disengagement agreement on the Golan Heights. As a result of the agreement, Israel returned a slice of the Golan Heights to Syria including the region's capital, Kuneitra. I was fortunate to be there on the ground when all this happened. This was one of those times in my life where God put me in interesting places.

*Q: Well how was your Arabic at the time?*

GNEHM: My Arabic was not great. I had studied Arabic at the American University in Cairo in 1966-67; we are talking about several years later. My Arabic was very rusty. In fact, I could only handle greetings and minor phrases at the time. But I'm glad you asked the question because I really did intend and want to bring my Arabic up to a good spoken level. So one of the things I did do in the one year that I was in Damascus was find a tutor. The Department supported me by giving me funds to hire a tutor. My tutor was actually a Palestinian refugee living in Syria and a professor at Damascus University, as I recall. He came to the embassy at 6:00 AM, five days a week and for one hour taught me Arabic. After one year with the tutor my ability to use Arabic was much improved. The Department agreed that my level of proficiency was sufficient to permit me move to the Foreign Service Institute Arabic School in Beirut, which I did in March of '75.

*Q: You were in Damascus from when to when?*

GNEHM: From February of 1974 to March 1975. Interestingly I entered Syria with an Italian ministry of foreign affairs i.d. because I was posted to Damascus as an Italian diplomat in the U.S. Interest Section of the Italian Embassy. So while I still had an American passport, I was issued an i.d. that said I was an Italian diplomat.

*Q: What was Syria like when you arrived?*

GNEHM: It was an exciting time, to be very honest with you. I arrived with my wife and a daughter who was born in '71. So she was really quite young. The mood in Syria toward us was very welcoming, very open; there was a lot of excitement that we were back. Clearly among the Syrians that I met (and I found it wasn't difficult to meet Syrians) it was an "Oh, so glad the relationship is better, it's got to be better." While I was there, there was a high level visit and the Syrians put American flags all along the two main boulevards in Abu Rummaneh. We didn't even have diplomatic relations; but they had American flags on every pole going up and down the streets. It obviously was a decision by President Hafez al-Assad to highlight the decision to improve relations with the US. It wasn't something that was done due to popular pressure; but it had popular support.

I have to tell you one more story. When Tom Scotese, our new Head of the Interest Section, got to Damascus, he moved into the ambassador's residence, which was a nice mansion that we had bought years ago on a very nice piece of property located not very far from the embassy. In fact we still have this property. When I arrived a few weeks later, Peggy and my little daughter, Cheryl, and I also moved into the residence. At that time we had no other apartments and no other housing. I don't think there had been a three year old running around that residence for many years!

There were five Americans assigned to the interest section: Tom Scotese, Head of Section, myself as deputy, an administrative officer (Gary Lee), a secretary (Nancy Barber) and a communicator (Tom Bell). From our arrival Tom Scotese and I began hearing stories from our national employees about the Italians. Some were good and some funny and some were not so good. Our locally hired staff, all of whom had been our employees before the break in relations, was glad we were back. They did not like working for the Italians who they considered haughty and condescending. They also told us that the Italian ambassador just hated the Italian Head of the Interest Section because he lived in this huge mansion (formerly the US ambassador's residence) while the Italian ambassador was in an apartment on the second or third floor of some apartment house. Then, too, the Head of the Interest Section had this big (former) embassy building and all its employees working for him. Our Syrian employees said that there was a lot of friction between the Interest Section Head and the Italian Ambassador.

I have to tell you this. The dedication and loyalty of our locally hired employees is something that saw from early on in my career straight through to the last day that I was employed at State. We have terrifically dedicated and committed local hire employees around the world.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: In this particular case our Syrian employees were watching out for us very carefully. They kept logs and records of almost everything the Italians did to buildings, to money, to everything else. They came to us when we arrived to divulge that the last Italian head of the Interest Section had declared that most of the property in the residence was old, tattered, and to be disposed of. He held an auction for the carpets, the paintings

and the other artifacts that had been collected for the residence over the years by the American Government and by American ambassadors. Then he purchased most of them during the auction and ordered our employees to crate them up and send them to Rome. The items were valuable and this action by the Italian diplomat was inexcusable. We raised this matter through diplomatic channels. The Italian ambassador was extraordinarily helpful in this regard.

The Italian foreign affairs ministry investigated and found that it was totally true and retrieved all the items. Again, the inventory that the Syrian employees had done was specific, clear, with pictures; I mean everything. There was never any doubt. The documentation was pristine and all the items taken were shipped back to us.

*Q: Oh boy.*

GNEHM: That's one of those things that happen, I guess, in life. It could have gone much differently had it not been for the diligence of our own employees.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: I'll tell you this other story about these employees. They suffered greatly at the hands of the Syrian government after the break of relations in '67. One of the more senior employees

was arrested and tortured. What I remember about his story is that he was stretched so that it broke his arms and legs. He had severe back injury. He, of course, was not able physically to get the kind of treatment that he should have gotten. After we returned, we actually sent him out of Syria for medical treatment. There were other stories about the way the Syrian government had actually threatened their families in an effort to force them to be spies for the government. I remember being appalled -- being naïve and young when I heard these stories. At one point I saw intelligence that one of our employees was continuing to report to Syrian intelligence. I remember Tom telling me, "If you were in his shoes what would you do? They have control over your life, your family, and all your relatives. The employee has no access to classified information except what you or I might say in front him." So we accepted it; we all just lived with it. It was part of my learning experience in the Foreign Service. Again, I want to repeat that our locally hired employees were really devoted and dedicated. I don't want to disparage them. They were under intense pressure.

*Q: What was the feeling towards Hafez Assad from within the people you were talking to both in Washington and the Americans at the embassy?*

GNEHM: There was general excitement about the new opening to Assad. It was seen as an opportunity to move things forward with the Israeli-Arab dispute. So the general attitude around the Department was to go with it, to make it work and to try to improve the relationship. Hopefully, we could achieve some progress through diplomatic efforts some of the important issues in the region. I remember being so excited to be going to Syria and also being so cocky. That's a good word for it. I had had this one year

experience in Egypt and, therefore, I was sure I knew Arabs and I knew how to deal with them. I was excited about going back to the region. Yet, my arrival in Syria was like having someone slamming their fist in my face. Syrians are not like Egyptians!

*Q: I'm told they're really a people apart.*

GNEHM: I learned immediately that all that I thought I knew about the people in the region had to be reconsidered and that I had to take a step back. This gets to your question about attitudes toward Assad. The Egyptians are very open. They're much fun to be with. They go out on the Nile, strum their guitars, sing and cut up and laugh and dance; but you know something? In the year I was there only once was I invited out by an Egyptian family and that was to a public restaurant by someone in the Rotary Club. I take it back. There was one other visit to a Rotarian's house.

The situation was very different in Syria. I often went to the souk where it was easy to meet people. I also met people in government positions. For example, we were working with the head of the National Symphony to try to do some things in the cultural area. He was very open -- even excited about working with us. Yet he had strong ties with the Russians as he had received his musical training in the Soviet Union. In fact the Russians had trained most of the musicians in the Syrian national orchestra and most of the musicians had spent time at Soviet conservatories. I discovered that, in spite of their ties with the Soviet Union, they were very open to working with us. The Director invited Peggy and me and Tom as well as others in the mission into their home. I was really quite surprised by that and they were not the only Syrian family to do so.

Syrians often asked you questions like, "Skip, what do you think about Assad?" Man, you know, red flags went up because I figured it was the ear of the government trying to get me or trying to find out what I would say. I would be very wary and give a diplomatic response like, "Well you know, we don't have relations; but Assad agreed with the secretary that opening a relationship was a good thing." So I really did not even answer the question. Yet they responded saying, "Well we think he's a dictator; but I guess he's a good dictator if we can live like we are." Again, I wasn't going to say 'well I'm glad he's a good dictator!' What I discovered is that the Syrians weren't afraid to express their negative views about the way things were. It was such a contrast to the way Egyptians tiptoed around anything political.

*Q: What was your job there?*

GNEHM: I was specifically responsible for economic issues and the consular work while Tom Scotese did the political. We had an administrative officer for the admin work. I can tell you that handling the economic/commercial work gave me great access. All the Syrian businessmen wanted to open up business with the United States. That's one of the reasons why I got so many invitations.

*Q: And there's quite a Syrian community in the United States-*

GNEHM: There is indeed.

*Q: -Boston and other-places, but I know I ran across the Syrian community in Boston because I had a Syrian landlady when I was at Boston University.*

GNEHM: Both because I was doing commercial work, which ended up being very important during this year, but also because I handled the consular work, I was a fairly popular person with the Damascus community. We had a few Americans in the UN force on the Golan (UNDOF). I remember one day an American major came in to talk to me about a young Syrian that he met with whom he was quite impressed. The young Syrian (Ossama) wanted to go continue his studies in the States to become a dentist. The major inquired about visas and other information about a Syrian going to the US. Going right to the bottom line, he brought Ossama to meet me. The major also helped get his admission to dental school at Boston University and, ultimately, a scholarship. Ossama was an outstanding student and, after graduation, actually came back to Syria and opened a dental practice. I maintained a personal relationship with him up to the last time I saw him which was when I left Jordan in 2004. I also became friends with his older brother who sold carpets in the souk.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the Syrian community in the United States?*

GNEHM: Only in that many of them came to Damascus to visit, seeing that the opening gave them some political cover to return. I would run into them when I was invited to family houses or they dropped into the embassy for consular services; but that's all.

*Q: Yes. Was there much social life for you and your wife there?*

GNEHM: There was. Not so much in the diplomatic community. I was really active with the Syrian community and we were invited out quite often by business families. I also met many Syrians as I made my introductory calls around Damascus. For example, I called on the head of the Chamber of Commerce, the patriarch of an old Syrian family. He had with him that day his son, who was about my age. We actually became very close friends. They had a farm up at Zebdani, a town up in the mountains between Damascus and the border with Lebanon. We used to go up there several times during the good weather, summer, fall and spring. When I was later studying Arabic in Lebanon, we often would go back to see them. Frankly in the years when I was in Jordan we went up to Damascus several times and we would go up to the farm and spend time with them. It was very interesting to me that, when we made friendships in Syria, the Syrian friendships were lasting -- 20 to 30 years. I've been very careful in communicating with them in the current situation (2015) because I do not want to get them in trouble with their own government.

One of the other things that I did, that became a fun pastime, was learning about Persian carpets. My boss, Tom Scotese had served in the Middle East previously and he had a few carpets that he had purchased: Persian and tribal carpets. He took me down to the souk to introduce me to a merchant from whom he had bought a carpet. Needless to say, I got

hooked on a carpet that I saw. It was a little bit larger than a kitchen table, a beautiful Bokhara. The merchant wanted \$300 for the carpet. All I could think was that I had never spent \$300 in my life for something to put on the floor in! He said, "Take it home, put it in the room. If you like it after three or four days we'll talk about it..." Of course, he knew that if I took it home, I would like it and keep it. He was right!

I ended up buying lots of carpets during the year that I was there, but I also became friends with the young merchant. His father had died when he was young. So he had taken over the carpet business. When you go to Damascus, there are lots of Lahams and they're all rug merchants; but this particular young guy really loved his carpets. If you went to his store and sat on a pile of carpets, he would tell you the history of the carpet, where it came from, and what the symbols meant. He loved to do this. When there was no one else in the shop, he would pull out carpets one after another just to tell me about it. So I began to go down there on my off time, climb up on a pile of carpets and listen to him selling carpets to other people, learning about the weave and the colors and whatever else about it -- the cotton, the wool, and the other sorts of things. This is where my Arabic really began to improve because he spoke only Arabic. His English was very weak at that time; but now it is remarkable good. All the Damascene wanted to speak Arabic with you and they loved to do it. So they were very encouraging toward my efforts to speak Arabic.

*Q: In my two and a half years in Saudi Arabia, in Dhahran during the '50s, Israel got thrown in my face again and again and again. The Syrians, of course, had lost territory to the Israelis. How did things stand personally and then in international terms?*

GNEHM: There's no doubt about how the Syrians felt. All the Syrians would tell me how awful and biased American policy was and they hoped that now with a new relationship, we'd become smarter in their terms -- less biased, more just, more balanced, whatever. They actually responded well to Kissinger in what he said and what he was doing at the time to negotiate a disengagement agreement, which gave part of the Golan back to Syria. In that regard there are several things I want to make sure that I mention.

One is this whole experience with Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy between Syria and Israel, which was incredible. The second was the aftermath of the withdrawal of Israeli forces. Another one is the Israeli playing the U.S. card because they thought they could get away with. Another is the decision to participate in the Damascus International in August (1974). So there was a lot that happened; it was really an exciting year to be there.

*Q: Were there any incidents of Israeli-Syrian clashes while you were there?*

GNEHM: Yes. When I arrived in mid-February, at night you could hear artillery, the sound of artillery, up on Mount Hermon, and you could actually see the flashes. It was similar to my experience in Vietnam that we talked about on the rooftop of a hotel in Saigon. You could see the artillery barrage going on. They were still actually exchanging

mortar and artillery rounds up on Mount Hermon even as late as '74 but not along the Golan front, as I recollect.

*Q: Did many American tourists go to Syria while you were there this time?*

GNEHM: Tourism picked up. It began with lots of Americans living in Beirut coming over to Damascus. Syria was not a dangerous place for Americans; but most tourists wouldn't go there given the lack of diplomatic relations, the rhetoric of the Syrian regime, and unease in Israel, but tourism definitely did pick up.

*Q: You know in our business we see all kinds of relationships. How would you rate the Assad dictatorship as far as its control over the people and all?*

GNEHM: During the time I was there, I would say the government was quite dominating. The Assad regime was very much in control and in charge. They used their intelligence agents to arrest anybody that they thought were dissidents or threats. People disappeared into jails, maybe came out years later, maybe not.

*Q: Was Beirut the sort of a place where you went to get some fresh air or not?*

GNEHM: How about food.

*Q: So you went for food.*

GNEHM: Yes. There was a modest commissary in the embassy in Beirut. There was very little available in the markets in Syria.

*Q: I'm very surprised because you think of Damascus and the souk and, you know, it's a fertile country, isn't it?*

GNEHM: Yes. There was fruit and vegetables in season but not the kinds of things that most Americans would look for. So we would go to Beirut and Chtaura, a Lebanese town in the Bekaa Valley which was closer than Beirut, just across the Lebanese border. There were grocery stores there where you could buy American brand items such as diapers, things like that.

*Q: What was the role of the Soviets at the time you were there? Were they everywhere?*

GNEHM: The Russian presence was large. The embassy was big and they were very popular with the Syrians. I didn't hear any criticism of the Soviet Union. The Syrians saw the Soviet Union as a patron and supporter, a provider of military equipment and political backing. Again, I learned through the person that I previously mentioned in the cultural community that Syrians had great experiences with the Russians. They didn't speak negatively of that experience; it was a good one and they liked going back and visiting. There was no hostility toward the Russians.

*Q: What about dissident groups from other areas? In other words, we probably call them terrorists, gangs or something.*

GNEHM: Yes, you are referring to Palestinian groups? The Assad regime saw it as opportunistic to have dissident, more radical is the right word for it, Palestinian groups such as the PFLP, PFLP-GC and the PLO in Damascus. In fact, one of them was in an office right on the main Abu Rumani Street about two blocks from the embassy. The Syrians supported them politically in the region as a way of establishing their credentials as an important player on the Israeli issue. They were also in competition with Egypt and Jordan over support in the Palestinian community. The Syrian Government monitored and controlled their activities very closely to be certain these groups couldn't do and wouldn't do anything that might blow back badly on the Syrian regime. So we never felt threatened by them.

*Q: Well this is not a year of hyper attacks.*

GNEHM: Well that's true. But again the regime had significant control over all these groups and what they did.

*Q: Was Assad's son the apparent heir apparent?*

GNEHM: Yes, but I don't remember Rifaat being that prominent in this year. I don't remember him ever being a part of any of the Kissinger-Assad talks during shuttle diplomacy, for example.

*Q: Did you get involved in the Kissinger sound box?*

GNEHM: Yes. I was not in the room when the talks were taking place, but on the periphery. During a short period of time in April there were 30 or 40 different visits by the secretary going back and forth over a period of several weeks. It was very intense. Kissinger developed a very good relationship with Assad and a pretty strained one with Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir. But it was, for us, an incredible experience. Kissinger would come and go any time of the day or night. When he finished his talks in Damascus, he was back to the airport, which was 30-something miles out of town- and then was back on his plane to Tel Aviv. I remember one night we hadn't even gotten back to the embassy to finish our report before we had a message from Tel Aviv that he was in the plane coming back our way! We actually did not make it back out to the airport in time to meet him but saw him headed into town as we headed toward the airport! So, even at 2:00 in the morning he was on the move and Assad was always there.

Kissinger used the ambassador's residence as his work space and they had set it up for his secretaries and everyone that supported him. We walked from the residence the two blocks to the house where Assad was staying or where the meeting was taking place. I remember one really funny incident I would say two thirds the way through this time period. Kissinger sent a cable saying he was heading back, that he was going to be arriving at roughly prayer time in the evening but that he had to see Assad immediately.

He insisted that he didn't want dinner. He ordered us to make sure that dinner was not going to happen. So we walked up to the house with Kissinger muttering about no dinner. By now I had gotten to know the Syrians on his staff quite well. We had discussed with them during the day that Kissinger wanted no dinner. But, of course, it was dinnertime and the talks went on for an hour or hour and a half. It got later and later. The Syrian staff and I were sitting on the stoop outside the meeting house when we heard the tinkling of glasses. We looked at each other and said "dinner"? Yes, so Kissinger had dinner. He mumbled and complained; he loved to mumble and grumble and complain about, you know, 'you guys didn't do as I said.'

Initially, Kissinger tried to negotiate the entire Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. When Kissinger could not get an agreement for a total withdrawal from the Golan Heights, he proposed a disengagement compromise that would give back to the Syrians a fairly significant sliver of the Golan Heights from Mt. Hermon all the way down to the Jordanian border. It would include the capital of the Golan province, Quneitra. It was always clear in the negotiations that this would be the first of subsequent withdrawals. There was also a commitment on the part of Assad that the displaced population of Quneitra, which had been displaced seven years earlier, would go back. In other words, the city would be repopulated. Kissinger argued with Golda Meir that this was a commitment on the part of Assad to have a non-threatening relationship with Israel. Otherwise he would not have put his population under the guns of the Israelis who commanded the entire city from a fortified hill on the other side of the line.

The Syrians at one point complained to Kissinger that the Israelis had destroyed the city. Kissinger went to see Golda Meir about this. She denied that they had destroyed the city, saying that the damage was from the war in '73. Later, Kissinger produced satellite photography that showed buildings standing the week before and now flattened, to which she said, "Oh, actually that happened earlier. There was target practice: we used the buildings for target practice but that was not done this week." Kissinger said, "The date on this picture is just last week. Don't tell me this was over a period of years." Kissinger really confronted her over this.

When withdrawal took place and there was this charge by the Syrians of bad faith on the part of the Israelis, Kissinger actually sided with them. He asked for an on-location report to the situation in Quneitra. I was the one delegated to go to Quneitra, to verify for Kissinger and the U.S. Government the condition of the city.

I remember this day very well. The small convoy with Syrian officials and myself took the road out of Damascus toward the Jordanian border and then turned onto the road that angles straight across the Golan Heights to Quneitra. For maybe three or four kilometers along this road, there were cars after cars pulled off on the side of the road waiting to go back home. Syrians, their vehicles, mattresses on the roofs, furniture, in some cases trailers, some with animals in the back of trucks were just waiting for the government's order for them to proceed. I tell this story because I am absolutely convinced that Assad intended in total good faith to repopulate the city with its former civilian population. The people of Quneitra had been told they were going home and were there prepared to go.

We arrived in the city; “town” is more descriptive. The site was appalling, absolutely appalling. We drove through the part of the town where there had been villas of the more well to do people. These villas were constructed like most building are in the Middle East. They use concrete with reinforced steel in the piers, pylons if you want to call that - up to one, two or three floors. Clearly charges had been placed against the piers at the bottom and blown up so that the structures collapsed like a layer cake. There was no way could you rebuild them; you could only bulldoze away the debris.

The hospital, which was something the Syrians made a big issue of, was pockmarked from gunfire. It was, of course, completely plundered. The building physically was standing but totally unusable. But the more dramatic sight, and the Syrians had seen it the day before, was the cemetery. Bodies had been pulled out of graves; there were skeletons lying next to tombstones. Cloth artifacts from inside the tombs were scattered around; some tombs were just smashed. The Syrians, of course, claimed that the Israelis had desecrated the cemetery. Someone had, but who? It wasn't accessible to Syrians or tribes in Syria at all until the day before; these bones appeared to have been where I saw them for some time. Skeletons, where they were lying, were partly covered in dirt, dirt that had been not been disturbed in the last 24 hours. This was definitely something that occurred during the period the Israelis were controlling the territory.

Clearly there was no way that the civilian population could return. There was simply nothing there to go back to. Kissinger was livid, as I said, with the Israelis and Golda Meir. He refused to accept their explanations and, in my opinion, he shouldn't have. I think it was a significant missed opportunity on the part of the Israelis because it would have been telling if several thousand Syrians had moved back in their homes and repopulated a city that was under Israeli military observation. The population's vulnerability would have made it difficult for the Syrians to be belligerent.

*Q: Yes*

GNEHM: I think it was, in fact, an indication on the part of Assad to the Israelis that he was ready for peace, ready to negotiate the Golan. Certainly the negotiations intended to go on for further withdrawals and for an ultimate resolution. In these 1974 negotiations, the same issue came up that ended up being problematic in later negotiations and that was exactly where was the boundary between Syria and Israel along the shore of the Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee. This disputed territory was a little piece of flat land at the foot of the Golan Heights. The Israelis claimed the flat area as sis the Syrians. To affirm their claim of sovereignty, the Israelis attempted to farm this area with armored tractors, in the period before 1967. The Syrians would shell them from the ridge of the Golan Heights. Admittedly, it was not a very big piece of land but; the crucial issue was water rights to the Sea of Galilee. If the Syrian-Israeli boundary was at the water edge, then the Syrians had claims to a certain amount of water from the Sea of Galilee. If that land as part of Israel, then Syria had no claim to any water. This issue was never was resolved; it hasn't been to this day. Also after this disengagement agreement, the United Nations

Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was established. It was and created to insure there were no violations to the agreement. It is still there to this day (2015).

*Q: One almost feels that too much discretion has been lofted; brokerage really to commanders. And many of these are, you know, trying to create intolerable situations to fill so that they won't be responsible.*

GNEHM: It's hard to say obviously whether the actions in Quneitra were a result of lower commanders, though that's often been likely in certain cases. It was my impression at the time that there were certain elements of the Israeli government who wanted to make sure that the agreement didn't go forward.

*Q: Yes. And one, you know, Sharon blew up some Palestinian homes. I mean he was renowned for this, his basic nastiness.*

GNEHM: I have to step back and tell you another really important story because it happened before the shuttle diplomacy. It would have been within a couple to three weeks after my arrival, either late February or fairly early March. How to explain it? We received from Washington a NIACT - a designation on a State cable that called us in any time day or night. The cable passed on to us an Israeli intelligence report.

*Q: Let's stop here for a minute. A NIACT in State Department terms means a Night Action Cable.*

GNEHM: It's a night action which means that the communicator is called in to receive the cable and a requirement is that the cable must be seen by a responsible officer immediately. In this case, it was Tom Scotese. Since I was living at the residence, he said, "Come, let's go; let's see what it's about." So he and I and our communicator were sitting in the communications room. In those days by the way everything came in on tape.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: You had to punch in your messages and take that and feed the tape into the system to get it to work.

So this NIACT immediate cable informed us of an Israeli intelligence report that in the previous day or two, five Syrian Jewish girls who were attempting to flee Syria had been murdered in route to Lebanon by Syrians who were supposed to be assisting them with their flight. The Israelis were really upset, indeed incensed, and the Department was extraordinarily concerned. It was a delicate moment for us. Here we were reestablishing a relationship and talking in more positive terms about the Syrian regime and now there was this possible horrendous murder of five young girls from the small Jewish community in Damascus.

We realized we had a very serious problem on our hands. Tom said, "We've got to do something tonight." It was already 8:00 or 9:00 at night. He said, "I'm going to go see the

head of the Jewish community, the rabbi, and you need to try to find the three Jewish families of the five girls. See if you can find any of these named families, and then I'll meet you back here at 11:00 or 12:00." What we discovered was that nothing had happened at all! The rabbi told Tom that nothing of the sort had happened -- that the girls were with their families. And I found two of the families who said, "No, our daughters are here; they're in their rooms sleeping."

I mention this incident because of what Tom and I learned and the Department learned from this saga. Again, this is before we had re-established diplomatic relations. The Israelis, who knew we had no diplomatic relations and no presence in Syria for all the years since the 1967 war, had gotten used to feeding us "intelligence" information on Syria. That information tended to present the Assad government and the Syrian situation in the most adverse and hostile way. I think, and this is my opinion, that they fed us this information deliberately hoping to undercut any opening up of a relationship with Syria. I believe they feared that we might become more sympathetic to the Syrian point of view. In this particular case, they knew that this particular report would really incense and inflame Americans (and rightly so, if true). What Israeli intelligence forgot was that we were now physically present in Damascus. They did not count on the fact that we would be able to verify the situation for the Department. We learned from then on to be very careful of anything the Israelis passed us. You want to know something? We never got another intelligence report from the Israelis on the situation in Syria, at least not in the period of time that I was there, along these lines.

*Q: Yes.*

*You mentioned something, Stephen Solarz, who came out of Brooklyn- had- been involved in trying to get Jewish girls out of Syria.*

GNEHM: Possibly, yes.

*Q: Maybe in his earlier days. He was Jewish and came from a district that had a lot of Jewish voters in it and got very much involved in the U.S. and the Jewish cause, particularly girls. Jewish girls in Syria were limited in getting mates, getting married and so he was all the time working to get Jewish girls out. I mean, what was the situation with Jews in Syria?*

GNEHM: Well the community had, of course, atrophied over the decades, certainly following the establishment of the State of Israel; but they still remained a reasonably large community when we went there. I think probably by my time though the number was in the several hundred if maybe a thousand, but I don't really recollect exactly. It wasn't large; but it still had an active synagogue and there was a rabbi for the community. So it had not atrophied to the point where the Jewish community couldn't practice their faith in the ways that are required by the Jewish faith. I don't think they were considered a threat to the regime. The regime watched them carefully, of course. It always had a suspicion that they could be a 'fifth column' for the Israelis; but there was not discrimination in other ways -- at least no more than other Syrians.

*Q: Yes well the Assad regime, had they leveled Hama or whatever?*

GNEHM: No, that occurred in 1982.

The Assad regime was a Ba'athist regime. The Ba'ath Party was a political party founded on secularism. While Assad reinterpreted Ba'athi theology in a different direction from the founders' view of it, the Assad-run government was and remained a secular regime. It was very anti-Islamic and anti-religious fundamentalism.

*Q: Yes. Of course, because there's a civil war going on in Syria in which we are basically still indirectly supporting the side of the anti-Assad the son; but I think with sort of a lot of trepidation because there's a strong fundamentalist group involved. It's a very serious, probably the most complicated of all the Islamic states because of the mixture within-*

GNEHM: The mosaics, yes, of the Syrian society are complex. When I was there, I attended church. There were no problems with the presence of churches. The Christian community in Damascus was well established and, I don't think, felt particularly vulnerable. Last year (2014), however, Islamic fighters attacked Ma'loula, an Aramaic speaking Christian village not far from Damascus. Christians had felt very at ease and very safe in the milieu of the political situation under the Assads. I think they felt they were protected by a secular regime that opposed extremism. I think the Jewish community and other minorities felt similarly. That being said, I think the Jewish community was more vulnerable given Syrian concerns about Israel.

*Q: Did you watch what was happening in Iraq?*

GNEHM: In this period of time?

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Oh, yes. There was intense hostility between the Ba'athi regime in Damascus and the Ba'athi regime in Baghdad.

*Q: They're both Ba'athist.*

GNEHM: Both Ba'athist but the Ba'ath Party had split between its wings in Syria and Iraq. There was no love between the two during this period of time. It was very hostile.

*Q: Well then, your boss is Tom who?*

GNEHM: Thomas Scotes. He went from this job in Syria to be ambassador in Yemen.

*Q: What was his background and what was he like?*

GNEHM: Tom was a career Foreign Service Officer and proud of his Greek-American roots. He was tremendously effective in his interpersonal relationships -- no better seen than in his deep involvement with Greek communities in the region. He was a very competent professional diplomat and I enjoyed working under him. He served in the Middle East multiple times and spoke Arabic extremely well. The Secretary of State got to know him while he was serving in the NEA Bureau, his assignment just before Damascus. As I said, he was a great boss, the perfect officer to open the mission in Damascus.. These were really heady times. The decision in both Washington and Damascus following the disengagement agreement was too improve the relationship. The one thing that Assad asked of Kissinger during this period was for the United States to participate in the Damascus International Fair that summer (1974). Assad asked in late April; the fair is in August. I got the task, as the economic- commercial officer, to put together our participation. Alright! It was a big task to complete in a very short time; but this first US participation in the fair in many years was clearly going to be a showcase of our new relationship with Syria. In a coup we got NASA to agree to loan us, upon signature of death, their model of the Skylab. We planned to use it as the gateway to the U.S. pavilion.

*Q: That's a very big- I mean SkyLab is-*

GNEHM: A couple of stories high.

*Q: You've seen it in the museum, space museum.*

GNEHM: Yes, it's very impressive.

It was flown into Damascus by the US Government. My next big task was to recruit American companies to exhibit in the pavilion. Fortunately, many of them wanted to come because it was an entrée back into the Syrian market, hopeful for sales of course. We actually put it together. I was able to enlist many of the American companies located in Lebanon. It actually turned out to be very successful; but there are two stories I need to relate.

I was at dinner in the home of our primary contractor, a very prominent businessman in the construction sector. Not surprisingly he was very close to President Assad and, obviously, was working with us at the President's request. Around 9:30 or 10:00, we were into dinner when I heard kind of a thud, deeper sound than that. We all looked at each other very much aware that there was still artillery exchanges between Syrian and Israeli forces up on Mt. Hermon. The phone rang. It was Assad himself on the phone telling our host that a bomb had just gone off in front of the American pavilion at the fair. The fairground was closed as it was night and the official opening was still days away. Assad ordered our contractor to go immediately to the fairground and to fix everything so that, "when the sun rises," there is not one single trace of anything. Okay! So the businessman and I went to the fairgrounds. I was figuring that this might be the second time in my career that would have to leave a post early. All I could think of was NASA's reaction when they heard their Skylab had been damaged!

When we got there, I was relieved to see that there was only modest damage to the front of the Skylab. The bomb had been placed near its façade. Fortunately, it had not been inside the model because they couldn't get in. Workers swarmed over the site. When the sun rose, there was only one indication that there'd been any explosion at all and that was a small black smudge in the concrete in front of the model -- hardly noticeable. The official word, of course, was that nothing had happened. Of course, we had to report the bombing to Washington and, thankfully, to NASA did not demand my execution!

The other story that I want to tell is really kind of funny. Every participating country was assigned a special day which included a reception in the pavilion in the evening. One of the companies in Lebanon that I convinced to cater at the reception was a famous American franchise that specialized in fried chicken. They sent over truckloads of fried chicken and it was displayed beautifully. Well, the Syrians could have gotten fried chicken if they'd gone to Lebanon; but there was no franchise of this famous fried chicken in Syria. At the reception people headed straight for the fried chicken table -- eating and eating and eating. People were so into the chicken that some people had stuffed their suit pockets with the chicken. It was amazing. Well I was glad everyone was happy! The pavilion was very popular. People flocked to it and there was a constant line of people waiting to enter through the Skylab. Because it was the first time in years for the US to be back in Damascus, the U.S. Government decided that it wanted to make even a bigger splash. So the U.S. Government, under its cultural exchange program, which, unfortunately, we don't do anymore, flew the entire Florida State marching band to Damascus.

*Q: Oh boy.*

GNEHM: Yes, oh boy! This is like a hundred plus person band. I don't remember the specific number but 100 might as well stand as a ballpark figure. And, to dramatize the moment to its fullest, they marched -- with the majorettes in their short skirts in the lead -- from the old souk past the Hejaz railroad station, down and along the main road by the river, and all through the fair to the pavilion. Then they performed another night at the main soccer stadium -- again majorettes and all. The band was a tremendous success and no one seemed bothered by the short skirts!

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: Oh, yes, Majorettes marching in front of the band twirling their batons. I was shaking my head and thinking: "I don't know whether this cultural exchange is going to work or not;" but they loved it. It was very popular.

*Q: Oh I'm sure it was.*

*This is one of the premiere bands, college bands in the country. I mean, it's first rate.*

GNEHM: It was and they put on a great performance. The stadium was completely packed; there wasn't an empty seat in the stadium. So there you go.

*Q: Heady times.*

GNEHM: Heady times. It was in this period of time that the decision was made to restore full diplomatic relations and we raised the American flag on the embassy building.

I guess the last thing to mention was the visit of President Nixon to Damascus on the last trip that he made to the Middle East before he resigned. People speculated that he hoped that this foray into the Middle East would bring international affairs back into prominence and reduce pressure for his resignation. In the end his visit did not make much difference in the Washington political atmosphere; but it did in Damascus. The streets of the city were lined with Syrians as he cruised around Damascus. It was quite a moment in time in such contrast to our relationship during the previous seven years.

With the restoration of relations, obviously the next step was naming an ambassador. The President chose Richard Murphy, Dick Murphy, who I knew from my NEA days. He arrived in the fall. That changed the complexion of the embassy entirely, of course. We were no longer just five. I wasn't the deputy of the office anymore; I was way down the totem pole in staffing. The embassy was to be staffed with a political officer and an economic officer and so forth and so on. It was toward the end of the year when I asked Dick if he would agree to my curtailing to be able to go to our Arabic school located in our embassy in Beirut at that time. He agreed as did the Department.

*Q: Okay. So we'll pick this up the next time. This has been when, 1970-?*

GNEHM: This would have been 1975.

*Q: Seventy-five. And you're going to?*

GNEHM: To Beirut and I moved there in March of 1975.

*Q: And we'll pick it up then.*

*Now we have four interns here and I'll let have a go at you. Do you have anything that-?*

INTERN #1: No, thank you

INTERN #2: I'm curious with the human rights violations that were going on with the regime, if there was any open advocacy against that, either by local actors or by international organization in the area?

GNEHM: No, not really. The issue of the Jewish girls brought up the issue; but this was not a prominent subject in our discussions. The frustration of our relationship and trying to put them back on a positive note was our focus at that time. There certainly were

Syrian dissidents around the world, including in the United States who were red hot against the regime and who spoke up against anything that Assad did. But Kissinger was very, very dominant, very prominent and he saw his chance for... I mean I think he really did see this as an opportunity to resolve the Syrian-Israeli issue; and that was his focus.

INTERN #3: I don't have a good question.

INTERN #4: I'm just curious; you mentioned that, while you were originally in Nepal you really, really wanted to go back to the Middle East. Was the time you spent in the Middle East what you had expected or was it different?

GNEHM: Yes, it was what I expected. I had interesting experiences and I loved it. And this was the beginning. The Syrian friendships that I made were very important to me and I believe good relationships work to our national interests. This assignment came when there was a chance to improve our relationship with Syria. And through the years I was able to go back to Syria multiple both in the '80s when I was deputy chief of mission in Amman and later when I was ambassador in Jordan. I've seen Syrians come to the United States. My friend, the son of the man who was head of the Chamber of Commerce in Damascus, actually graduated from the University of Oklahoma. Both his sons went to the University of Oklahoma as well. So there were warm ties and we got to see these friends many times through the years.

The only other thing I could mention that underscores how one develops close ties relates to the Foreign Service itself. As I have described, the embassy in Damascus was very small. We were few in number. As we tried to cope with the many comings and goings of Secretary Kissinger and a host of other visitors, there were a lot of TDYs (temporary duty) from our embassy in Beirut. One of the TDYers was a young officer by the name of Jim Callahan who was in the public affairs section. He was sent over to help handle press and organize the press center at a downtown hotel. By this time I have an apartment. So I invited Jim to come and stay with us. So he took over a bedroom in our house. Of course it wasn't a week; it was like three to four weeks that he stayed with us. Some weeks after Jim left, we had friends visit and we put them into the same bedroom. One day our friend came out of the room with a note that he had found stuck to the back of the door. This note said: "don't come out undressed, I'm here." What does that mean, my friend asked? Well my wife had put a note on Jim's bedroom door and no one had taken it down! It has been a joke between my wife, me and Jim ever since. I just mention this is to illustrate the close friendships that we in the Foreign Service build with each other.

Our story with Jim doesn't end with his time in Damascus. Jim was living in Beirut. My wife was expecting our second child. Her gynecologist was in Beirut. So she was going back and forth to see her doctor. Once she went over and was told "you can't go back across those mountains, you need to stay here this time." So she moved in with Jim; my daughter was with her part of that time. At this time Jim had a girlfriend (soon to be his wife) living with him. Jim loved to joke that the neighbors in his apartment house thought it was fantastic! Here was an American with two wives! And then Jim's mother decided to visit during this period of time and Jim said he could just hear my daughter saying,

hello, you know, my mom is living with Jim and his girlfriend! Later I was best man for Jim and Susan when they got married in Beirut and they've been friends throughout the years. That is the real spirit of the Foreign Service.

*Q: So well, next session we're going to start in-*

GNEHM: Beirut.

*Q: In Beirut, when you go to Beirut to take language training.*

GNEHM: And it's another saga.

*Q: Okay.*

*Alright. Today is July 15, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you're off to Beirut for Arabic language training? When did you go?*

GNEHM: March 1975 was the year of my migration across two mountain chains from Damascus to Beirut. I had improved my Arabic sufficiently in my studies in Syria that the Department agreed that I did not have to come back to Washington for first year Arabic. They agreed that I could go directly into the second year program at our Arabic School in Beirut.

*Q: How did you find the Arabic training at that point?*

GNEHM: It was very good, actually, and one of the things that was obvious and became important later was the strength of the faculty. Our instructors had been with the Arabic school for a long time. In fact, several of them had actually authored much of the training material. Most of those people are now gone, of course; but I will always feel indebted to them. They were very dedicated and very committed to the students.

*Q: Were they wrestling with a problem that certainly appeared when a language, Arabic language school moved to, was it to Tunisia?*

GNEHM: I was in charge of moving the school from Beirut to Tunis -- at least at the Beirut end of the move -- and, yes, our locally hired professors were in a great quandary about leaving their homes and families given the serious security situation in the country.

*Q: What Arabic -- formal Arabic or Radio Cairo Arabic or souk Arabic -- was the school teaching?*

GNEHM: Which form of Arabic to teach was always an issue. At that point in time, the Department had decided that modern, standard Arabic, which is what you hear on the news on television, would be the Arabic that they would teach. That's essentially what I studied. Now, I had studied in Syria more the Levantine Arabic; but it wasn't difficult to switch.

I would just add that I found throughout my career that even though that particular form of Arabic -- modern standard Arabic -- is not generally spoken because everybody speaks their local dialects. Yet, I discovered that when I used it, immediately people fell into using it with me. It was easy for them as they knew that form from television and radio. I never had a problem communicating in Arabic.

*Q: Is Arabic situational? I ask this because I served in Korea and it depended what sort of class the person you were talking to. In other words, if you're talking to a woman or a man, somebody higher than you, somebody lower than you. Were there complications in Arabic this way?*

GNEHM: No, there were not. There are differences in the endings of some words whether masculine/feminine. Generally, you use the same Arabic with a man that you do with a woman excepting that there are gender endings. There are also honorific terms for kings or ministers; but those are just titles.

*Q: What about your class? Who was in it, what were they bound for?*

GNEHM: My recollection is that with the arrival in late summer of the new students, we were about 35 students in total at the school. Most students were from the State Department; but there were students from the Agency and Defense. It was a diverse group. Some came from the Arabic school in Washington; others had studied Arabic in the field, as I had.

*Q: Was there a comparable British school or French school for diplomats?*

GNEHM: Yes, there was a British school in Shemlan, up in the mountains, a very famous school. In fact most Arabs, when I said I was studying Arabic in Lebanon, immediately assumed I was at Shemlan. Shemlan was known by the general public in the region as the British spy school.

*Q: That's where Philbys went?*

GNEHM: Yes, indeed, that's where he studied. And because people always confused our school with the one in Shemlan, I had to correct them to note that our school was located in Ras Beirut in the Embassy.

*Q: Well you were there about a year?*

GNEHM: Actually, I was there only from March to October. In March of '75, the very same month I moved from Damascus, the first atrocity that was the forerunner of the terrible civil war that followed occurred that month. A bus was stopped by armed men. All the occupants were taken out of the bus and mowed down. The bus was set on fire. As I said this was the very first incident that led to civil war. The fighting became so severe by October that Washington made the decision to move the school from Beirut to

Tunis. The interesting thing about this period of March, April, May, June, even into July and August was that there tended to be a major incident like that one that I mentioned followed by a week of really intense fighting -- bombs going off, plate glass windows shattered. Then there would be some sort of cease fire, step back, negotiate, talk, talk, talk. For a couple of weeks everybody would put the glass back in the shop windows and things would begin to resume to normal. Then there would be another serious incident of some sort and the cycle would begin all over again. But each time, each month that that happened, the fighting became more severe. The opportunity for peace got smaller and smaller; by October it didn't exist anymore.

*Q: Were you used as adjunct officers by the embassy at all?*

GNEHM: The school was largely apart. It was located in the embassy building; but it was involved in most of the embassy's activities. We did serve on the duty officer roster, which expanded the pool of officers reducing the number of times each officer in the embassy had to serve as duty officer.

*Q: So what happened during this on again off again fighting as far as you were all concerned?*

GNEHM: When the fighting was severe, when there were attacks and counter attacks, i.e. retribution by one force against another, we just had to cancel classes. We didn't want people out on the streets. But interestingly enough, that March, April, May, June time frame, the Department of State didn't evaluate the situation in Lebanon as serious or headed in the direction it actually went. Otherwise they would never have permitted all the new students to come out to Beirut in August.

*Q: What year was this?*

GNEHM: Nineteen Seventy-five.

*Q: Seventy-five.*

GNEHM: So we got a large cadre of new students in the summer of '75.

*Q: Was there concern about kidnapping?*

GNEHM: There was always a concern about kidnapping given the incidents that had occurred in Beirut in the past. Many worse kidnappings occurred later.

*Q: Anderson and-*

GNEHM: Yes, they came later.

*Q: Did you have any connection with American University of Beirut, AUB?*

GNEHM: No, not really. We were very much focused on our Arabic studies in the Foreign Service Institute in the embassy.

*Q: How about getting out on the street, in the souk, you know, getting around? I mean was this encouraged?*

GNEHM: In the early months, March, April, May, even most of June, we were not restricted except when the serious incidents began to occur in a certain area. So we did some traveling around Lebanon as a family or in groups, picnics and just some sightseeing to historical sites. But that ended once we got into late summer and the fall. Your question reminds me of at least two incidents. My apartment was located just off the Corniche about half, maybe six-tenths of a mile from the embassy. I could walk the half block down to the Corniche and then all along the Corniche to the embassy. Along a large stretch of that walk the AUB grounds flowed down the hill to the Corniche. Along this stretch there is a wrought iron fence with iron posts embedded in a granite foundation that was about six, eight inches, certainly no more than 10 inches high. One morning I was walking to school, around 8:00 or 8:30. I was about halfway along that open stretch when I got shot at. Ping, ping, bang, wham. The next thing I knew, I was flat on the ground. I tell my students today -- even looking at my size and girth -- I think I got my entire body lower than that 10 inches of that granite stone. And I remember just how I felt at that moment -- strangely, not afraid but full of a sense that God had me where he wanted me. I say it that way because that's how I felt -- totally calm. Nevertheless, I crawled like a caterpillar, you know, front end, back end, for the rest of that distance until I got to where a building shielded me from where the shooter was. So Beirut was not as safe as it seemed even on the better days.

Then there was another incident -- pure stupidity on the part of three of students, me among them. But then young people take gambles. Three of us decided that since there was a lull in the fighting, we would go down to Martyr Square and just see what the damage had been down there. I remember one was Charlie Engelhart. I forgot the name of the other one; but Charlie had been a tackle on the Philadelphia Eagles before joining government. So he was a big guy and the other guy was bigger than me too. When we got down to the square and had just turned the corner, someone started shooting at us, ping, ping, ping, ping, ping. There was a sort of two foot step into a door of a building. Like lightning we all piled into it. Charlie was at the back. I was at the front, the littlest of all the guys! I said "What the hell is this? Charlie you should be up front." "Not on your life, he replied!" But truth be told, we should never have been out there in the in the first place; it was just too dangerous.

*Q: Well, did they know who you were?*

GNEHM: No, it was simply random.

*Q: Could you have been an American or anything? I mean do you think you stood out?*

GNEHM: I certainly did not think in either of those cases that I was being shot because I was an American. There were snipers and they were killing people randomly. It was just an awful situation in Lebanon. But even into September, we were not overly concerned about our safety, as strange as that may seem. My apartment was on the second floor of an apartment house and located over the garage. We had a small patio about 12 by 12 feet. We used to eat supper sitting out there at night. The weird thing about crisis situations, and I found this is true throughout my life, is that you do strange things. For example you are not as concerned, in retrospect, as you should have been. We would sit out there at night eating and watch tracers and rockets go across the sky and hear the bombs going off and the rat a tat, rat a tat tat of shooting, and look at each other saying, 'here they go again.' But by the time we got to the first of October or perhaps late September, it was clear that the situation in Lebanon was going downhill and badly. The embassy wanted all non-essential people out. The decision was made in Washington that the Arabic School had to be moved. The question was to where? Cairo was the most obvious place from the language point of view because of the Arabic spoken there; however, the ambassador in Cairo didn't want the school there. He was already concerned about the size and high profile of the official American community in Egypt and was loath to add another new element (with families).

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

GNEHM: Hermann Eilts was the Ambassador. Eilts was appropriately sensitive to the size of the American presence. Egypt had broken relations with the U.S. during the June 1967 war and relations had only been restored in 1974 -- a year before the events I am describing in Beirut. Nevertheless, the Department decided to send the director of the Arabic school, Harley Smith, to Cairo to investigate the possibilities -- was there a suitable place -- would there be instructors readily available. And of course, he had to talk to the embassy about their support for the school. Smith's departure left me the ranking officer, seniority-wise, and, thus, in charge then of the school in Beirut. Harley did not return as the fighting intensified considerably. Given both Eilts on-going opposition to moving the school to Cairo and the necessity to move the school urgently, Washington made the decision to move it to Tunisia. Ned Walker was the number two ranking officer. He and his wife had just arrived in Beirut in the summer. We decided that he would go advance the Tunis location -- to get things set up to receive all the students and their families. So the decision was made to move the families and students out of Beirut while there was still civil air transportation. People were taken to the airport in armored convoys. Everyone was tense as the route to the airport passed next to a Palestinian refugee camp where there was considerable fighting. My wife, young daughter and one-year old son were among those evacuated.

I was told to stay -- to be the last person out. That week between the family evacuations and my departure was chaotic. There were some significant issues that arose rather quickly that I think are worth noting. As part of the Department's decision to move the school, they decided to hire all new instructors in Tunis. This was an ill thought out decision from a number of perspectives. First and foremost, Tunisians speak a different dialect of Arabic, one not easily understood by Arabic speakers in the Levant. Secondly,

none of the new teachers would have had any training in teaching American diplomats using the course material that many of our existing teachers had actually written. So I sent in a cable protesting that decision and arguing that we take our faculty with us. After several negative responses, the decision came back, "Alright, we will take a core group, X number, but just them, no families." I replied that none of our teachers were going to walk off and leave their families in Lebanon which was being rapidly pulverized. I was told that the Department did not have the necessary authority to move families. I said this is ridiculous and asked what I needed to do. Clearly, I was very active, I think, more brazenly than my grade at the time warranted. But if the school was to exist and succeed, we had to have our faculty. So I went up the chain and sure enough a senior official in the Department backed me. Even as I worked the faculty issue, we were packing up books and materials in earnest.

When the embassy and the Department decided that the students were to be evacuated, they were told that they could pack airfreight. The Embassy distributed boxes to all apartments and employees self-packed and left the boxes in the apartments for pick up by the embassy at a later date -- hopefully within the week. Then I was told that I would be the one to supervise the pick-ups! I was given a truck, a driver and two workers. I was to go around to all of the apartments of students and collect the air freight and move it to the airport on a given date to be shipped out.

This episode was one of the more existential experiences in my life. In five days, this is what happened. On the first day, I had the truck, driver, and the two workers. On the second day, I didn't have the workers; but I had the truck and driver. On the third day, Beth Jones, who was one of the Arabic students who had gone to Cairo to see her husband, returned against Department orders, and she joined me in the truck. The third day, I had no driver. I was driving the truck! Beth and I were alone going around to the various apartments. We had to get huge air freight boxes from third and fourth and fifth floor apartments. Due to size and weight we were literally rolling the boxes end over end to get them out and then pushing them up into the truck. I don't remember getting any sleep for those days. Beth says when she got back to Beirut, she didn't think I could continue to walk. Her help was a godsend.

On the fourth day, she and I were driving the truck through Ras Beirut headed to the next apartment house. I made a left hand-turn at an intersection in the business district. Just as I was straightening the wheel, there was the sound of a horrendous explosion. I looked in front of me. I saw nothing unusual. I looked in the rear view mirror and every building in that intersection was falling down in the intersection where I'd just been.

*Q: Good God.*

GNEHM: I tell you, you do believe in God at these moments in time. Had I paused, just paused in that turn, we wouldn't be doing an oral history today.

Then there was the day we took all the air freight to the airport. I had a police escort, a security escort, two cars in front and me in this truck. The route from Ras Beirut to the

airport runs along the waterfront and then makes a left hand turn that goes up a hill then down to where you turn onto the airport road. The truck I am driving is packed. I have the accelerator floored, particularly after I made the turn to go up the hill. Even with my foot on the floorboard, we were barely going 15 miles per hour, maybe only 12 or 10 miles per hour. In any case we were creeping up that hill! My escort, meanwhile, was over the hill - - out of sight -- long gone. I said to Beth, "Well Beth, just pray this truck gets up and over the hill before we are noticed by any shooters." It did get up the hill and went down the other side gaining speed. In the end nothing happened; but it was a very, very scary few days and drive to the airport especially so.

The postscript is that the air freight did get to Tunis where it was much appreciated. We had no idea if or when we would see our personal effects that were still in war-torn Beirut.

*Q: Oh boy.*

GNEHM: And then I flew out to Tunis.

*Q: Just to get this straight, what was causing this insurrection or whatever you want to call it?*

GNEHM: In Lebanon?

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Well it was largely, I would say, sectarian. It was a power struggle between Christians, Muslim Sunnis, but also Shia and other sects. Those designations do not adequately describe the fractious nature of the religious factions in Lebanon as any one of them is in fact fragmented, i.e. Christians are Catholic, Greek Orthodox, etc. The Shia too are divided -- Hezbollah and others factions. In my own mind's eye, I felt that the arrogance of the Maronites, who dominated the political system that was delineated in the constitution that established Lebanon, was an central precipitating factor in the outbreak of civil war. And that is what it was. The constitution gave the Maronites the presidency and, thus dominance in authority and power. They were not willing to share or make concessions to reflect the demographic changes that had occurred between the 1940s and the 1970s. By the 1970s the Christians were no longer the majority. In fact the Moslems were. Even though the constitution gave the Sunni Moslems the Prime Minister position and the Shia the position of Speaker of the Parliament, the Maronite Christians acted as if Lebanon was theirs.

As the fighting intensified, there were attacks by one religious group on another. Muslims attacked Christian villages, murdering everybody in the town, burning down the churches. Then relatives of the dead in nearby villages would attack a nearby Muslim village -- often a village with which they had never had any previous trouble. These acts of retribution formed a never ending cycle of atrocities; but this is what happens when the fighting erupts into civil war pitting one group against another.

At one point I sensed a strange feeling. The word “tipping point” is often used to describe it. It’s that moment in time when the individual realizes that there is no longer anything out there to protect him, to work for him, no structure to provide protection. Everything is gone and you are on your own except perhaps for your brother or your family or your sect. And there was that moment in October that that happened in Lebanon. It is really hard to describe or predict because the day before it happened the banks weren’t open. The government wasn’t functioning; the military wasn’t there. Yet people still had a perception up in their brain that there was a structure -- that there was a government, and that things would somehow come back together. And then an instant later -- at that tipping moment -- there is no hope -- just fear and hopelessness. And you don’t go back across that tipping point. You take refuge in the most secure group that you can -- your family, your village, your tribe, your whatever.

*Q: Well you were married at this point?*

GNEHM: I was married. I had a four year old daughter, Cheryl, and an eleven month old son, Ted.

*Q: Well how did they fare?*

GNEHM: They were okay during this period. Of course, they didn’t go out except to the local supermarket or when I’d go with them. My daughter was not in pre-school at that time and my son was at home. They were evacuated in the first group that went out. Only later, I met them in Tunis. They were initially evacuated to Athens where they stayed for a few days while Ned arranged for the housing in Tunis. I only learned when I got to Tunis that in the chaos at the Beirut airport, when families were fighting their way through the hordes of people trying to get out of Lebanon, that my daughter got lost -- separated from my wife. You can imagine how distraught and anxious my wife was. Then she saw Charlie Engelhart, the big guy I told you about earlier standing behind me in the doorway at Martyrs Square, with Cheryl on his shoulders. He found her outside the airport. She somehow had gotten back outside the airport door. So again thankfully nothing serious happened; but it was traumatic for my wife.

*Q: Was there at all a feeling that your clerks, your servants or somebody might turn on you? I mean was it that type of situation?*

GNEHM: No. Most of the household support in Lebanon was ex-pats. Our maid was from the Seychelles thus not a part of any of the fighting factions.

*Q: Well how were they faring?*

GNEHM: Not well because they all got left behind or either had to flee. Some became victims in the fighting.

*Q: I assume there were big areas of sort of “no go” areas were there?*

GNEHM: Indeed there were. In fact, just beyond the embassy there was a so-called green line demarcating the Christian controlled area of north Beirut and remainder of the city to the south, which was largely Muslim. That skirmish line was more than a skirmish line; it was like a three football wide area of bombing and shooting and killing of anything that went into or through it. There were only brief periods when it was peaceful enough to be able to cross from one side to the other.

*Q: Well all teaching must have stopped then.*

GNEHM: Yes, it did.

*Q: What was our embassy doing? Were the embassy officers able to do much or try to carry on business?*

GNEHM: Well, in the initial period the embassy had contacts with almost all the factions and those continued to be maintained; but it became increasingly difficult for people to get out. It was very dangerous. In fact June 1976 our Ambassador and Economic Counselor, who I knew well, were assassinated.

*Q: Meloy, Frank Meloy and-*

GNEHM: Yes, Ambassador Frank Meloy and Robert Waring. Their driver was killed as well.

So yes, it became very, very difficult to move around and, of course, a few years later -- in 1983 -- the embassy itself was bombed with great loss of life both of Americans and our locally hired employees.

*Q: Well what was your impression of your initial contact in Tunisia? I mean, the embassy and elsewhere.*

GNEHM: The embassy in Tunisia was overwhelmingly supportive. They did what one expects of a Foreign Service family. Wives, officers, and local staff were at the airport picking up the arriving families that they had been assigned to assist. The embassy had negotiated a contract with the Amilcar Hotel near Carthage in Sidi Bou Said as the temporary site for the school as well as the lodging for all the students, their families, including our instructors. It was a tourist hotel on the beach at the foot of a large bluff. It sounds lovely only this was, of course, October! (I actually left Tunisia in May of the following year.) We were there in the winter and the hotel was not exactly a nice winter spot. It was built for summer and sunshine. If you know your geography, you know that winter storms in the Mediterranean come from the Atlantic through Gibraltar and go the length of the Mediterranean until they hit the Levantine coast. Well, when a storm came past the Amilcar Hotel, it blew rain in the windows and under the doors on the west side, across the hall, under the doors of the rooms on the east side and back out into the wind.

It was a little cold and a little damp. But again, you asked me about the embassy. It was absolutely extraordinary in the way they helped us.

The setting in the Amilcar is worth noting. The entire school -- all the students, all their families, all the teachers and their families, my dog, everybody else's pets -- all lived in the hotel together. We ate all of our meals in the one hotel dining room. All families have their complex relationships and good days and bad. As you can imagine, living so closely together we got to know everybody's complex relationships and personalities. There was the one family whose kids were really awful -- meaning unruly. They would scream and yell and the parents would shout them down. I am sure the parents were embarrassed; but so were all the rest of us. Over time you just you just got used to it and kept your mouth shut.

My son had his first birthday in Athens in route to Tunis. He was not yet sleeping through the night so he would scream at night for his mother. The Lebanese wife of one of the Arabic teachers, a lovely, lovely person, would come running down the hall, bang on the door, say "Give me the baby; you know you can't let a baby cry." Finally after about two weeks of this my wife said to her, "Don't come tonight. I'm going to let this kid cry until he goes to sleep. We've got to break this habit." They were, of course, appalled that we would treat children in such a way. In Arab culture you would never do that. In the end it worked -- both getting my son to sleep through the night and all of us at the Amilcar learning to live together. It was a very unique situation.

There is one other thing to mention. I've complained about a couple of Department decisions. Yet the government moved all of our cars, our private vehicles, from Beirut to Tunis. Now, they didn't get there for a couple of months; but by December, we actually had cars so we could drive around, visit sites and simply get out of the hotel.

There was the issue of per diems. Of course, under the regulations per diems taper off after 30 days, to half and then to nothing. We were going to be in this situation for at least a year, if not more. So the Department had to come up with a new per diem mechanism to support us. Remember, we were paying for our meals as well as laundry to the hotel; we had no kitchens. They finally came up with an absolutely atrocious formula to calculate what each of us and our families would get each day. I could not replicate it or explain it today except it was based somewhat on the number of people in a family, which was reasonable. They estimated what it was going to cost us in the hotel and then they estimated what would be our normal expenses if we had been living in houses. They then subtracted what they thought we would be paying in normal circumstances from what they believed we were paying in the hotel. It was crazy. The formula actually left a single officer owing the government money whereas those of us who had kids were drawing large per diems. We tried repeatedly to get them to correct their formula but to no avail.

*Q: How about the learning?*

GNEHM: The Arabic training, which of course was why we were there, actually went well. We had our instructors. They knew us since they had worked with us before. They knew the material, and they had their close knit family with them. It did go well.

Now, they were distracted, no question about that, watching the news and seeing their own country destroyed.

*Q: They had relatives back in Lebanon, like everybody else.*

GNEHM: Yes, they had relatives caught in the fighting and they were concerned about their property and the towns and villages that they came from. They were very distracted by this; but they were super, super committed and responsible, and there was a great bonding amongst all of us because of this experience.

*Q: How about the Tunisians language-wise?*

GNEHM: It was nonsensical. If you went out into the market or the souk or a village, you could not understand their Arabic dialect and they didn't understand you. "Parlez vous Francais?" Is what they would say; do you speak French? And if you did speak French you were quite alright. English was not that widely spoken.

Once I was on the train going into Tunis. There were two young guys -- probably not much younger than me -- but college kids. We got to talking and I said to them, "You know, I'm really looking for somebody to go around with and practice my Arabic." And they said, "Oh, we'd love to do that." So I spent the rest of the day with them; but you know what I discovered? While they were very nice people, they didn't know the Arabic words for many of the things that I asked about. They knew only the French words. So I gave up on that and I don't think any of the students really found it possible to use locally the Arabic that we were learning.

*Q: Were there forces that you were at least aware of that were trying to stir up nationalistic or whatever you want to call it turmoil in Tunisia?*

GNEHM: Not during that time, no. The U.S.-Tunisian relations were extremely good. The government was happy to have the school in Tunis.

*Q: Bourguiba was still President of Tunisia?-*

GNEHM: Yes, Bourguiba was still alive though not terribly coherent, as I recall.

*Q: Well he was - at a certain point - suffering from the dementia.*

GNEHM: There were crude jokes that went around during this period of time, yes. His wife and her relatives were known to be influential -- often interpreting what he meant. Their interpretations were the way, of course, that they intended things to be. None of that impacted on us.

Talcott Seelye was our Ambassador to Tunisia during this time. He left post in March 1976.

*Q: How were relations with the embassy once you got settled? I mean you kind of did your thing and they did theirs or-?*

GNEHM: Yes, after we got settled, the main issues centered on administrative support, such as clearing our personal effects and getting our cars registered. The embassy was very supportive and helpful about these things.

*Q: While all this was to a certain extent exciting, did you begin to have doubts about whether you wanted to be an Arabist or not?*

GNEHM: No, I didn't have doubts. I would admit to you, though, that our situation was difficult. It was hard living in the hotel in such close quarters. We had two rooms, one for Peggy and me and the other for the kids. Of course, the dog was in the room too. It was really close. It was hard to have any privacy.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: It was difficult. I remember walking the beaches some nights saying, "You know, God, you were with me in Beirut. You saved my life twice at least that I know of. Now we are in this awful situation here. I don't understand." It made a big difference when the car came and we were able to take trips and get away.

Then, of course, as the months passed those of us who were in our second year knew we were coming up for assignment. That began to loom as the big anxiety, concern, in our minds. Where were we going to go; what was our assignment going to be? As we got into March, most of us still had no assignments, which was unusual. In April we began to get word.

One day my best friend in my class—who had just come to Beirut in the summer—and his wife, who was also taking Arabic with us, came to tell me that he got his assignment. "Hey, I'm going to be Consul General in Port Said. They're opening up the consulate at the north end of the canal." And honestly, I was furious and angry because I thought I was the obvious candidate for that prime assignment. I was the one, after all, who had been in the Middle East before. This was my region. I know that that reaction was not right; but I am being honest

*Q: No but-*

GNEHM: But I'm admitting my feelings.

*Q -it's there.*

GNEHM: Yes. So another week or two went by and then I got a call from Washington asking if I was willing to go to Riyadh, the Saudi capital. Now recall that in 1976 there were no diplomats in Riyadh; the Saudi government refused to permit diplomats to live in Riyadh. All foreign diplomats were required to live in the western coastal town of Jeddah.

*Q: We were in Jeddah.*

GNEHM: I said, "What do you mean, Riyadh?" He said, "Secretary Kissinger negotiated with King Faisal before he died an agreement that the embassy could have one person in Riyadh and we'd like you to go there." Well, that was clearly going to be a fantastic assignment -- to be the only diplomat of any country living in Riyadh. Living might be hard; but it was a professional bonanza! So that is where I went, which is the start of the next chapter of my life. But let me jump ahead to about six months after I got to Riyadh. I got word from my friend in Port Said that the US had decided to close Port Said because there just simply wasn't enough business to do and his life there was very difficult. My friend was so angry about the conditions under which they had to live that he vowed he would never serve in the Middle East ever again and he never did. There was a lesson in this for me -- not to covet, not to jump to conclusions, life has a way of unfolding.

*Q: While you were studying Arabic, did they have activities or were things too chaotic? this idea of get a month to go out and travel around or not?*

GNEHM: No, given the conditions in Beirut and in Tunisia, we weren't even thinking about those kinds of activities.

*Q: Yes, I wouldn't imagine you were. Did you run across the Maghrebian dialect?*

GNEHM: Well Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia all do speak a Maghrebian Arabic though there are differences even between Morocco and Tunis. As I mentioned before, those of us studying Arabic were not bothered by the local dialect. Your question, however, reminds me of one very interesting episode. In the breakfast room at the Amilcar Hotel one morning the crew of MEA, Middle East Airlines, was trying to order breakfast. Tunisian workers were serving the meal. A great brouhaha erupted at the MEA table. The MEA workers were shouting and yelling at the Tunisians and the Tunisians were yelling and shouting back at them because neither could understand what the other was saying. Because we understood the Levantine Arabic and we had been in Tunisia long enough to know a little bit of the local dialect, we ended up going over and translating between the two about what it was that was the problem. We laughed about that for a long time.

*Q: I'm sure you did.*

*How did the Lebanese, teachers and families, settle in?*

GNEHM: They weren't happy. They didn't really like Tunisians or Tunis. They didn't feel the Tunisians treated them very nicely; but I think that had a lot to do with their anxiety over what was happening in their own country.

*Q: Well of course.*

GNEHM: I don't remember any encounters that were necessarily bad; but for them it wasn't home. They were displaced.

*Q: How about French tourists? Were you inundated with them or not or-?*

GNEHM: Not in the winter. But there were lots of nice French restaurants along the coast, going up past Sidi Bou Said. Eating out at these nice restaurants with their good food was a consolation to our otherwise bleak life.

*Q: Alright well then, let's pick it up when you went to Riyadh. What was the situation in Saudi Arabia? This is still '76, isn't it?*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: What was it like then?*

GNEHM: Well I arrived in July and it was hot, hot, hot, hot. Quadrupled hot, right.

The first thing that I recall was a communication from the Economic Counselor, Gordon Daniels, who wanted to make it clear that I worked for him. He was technically correct. The embassy moved an economic slot up to Riyadh. So I was actually assigned to Riyadh as an economic officer. Gordon made it very, very clear that I was to come first to Jeddah when I arrived in country and then he would be taking me up to Riyadh. This was an indication of what probably was the most significant problem that I faced in those two years, certainly during the first year but less so in the second year. There was considerable frustration among embassy officers in Jeddah who could not get to Riyadh easily to do their work with the Saudi government. Meanwhile, I was up there free, easy and able to see most anyone I wanted to. I think given my personality I was not seen as a threat to the Saudis. I went everywhere. I went to the king's palace. I was there any day of the week I wanted to go there. I saw Minister of Finance; I saw the Minister of Oil, Zaki Yamani at the time, and many other high-ranking officials.

In contrast the embassy people still had to get permission from the Foreign Ministry to travel to Riyadh and, once they had permission, they had to get a ticket on an airplane which in those days on Saudia Airlines was chaotic. Saudia was the only airline that flew domestically. Royal family members and others with 'wasta' (connections) were given priority seating even if one had confirmed reservations. The embassy people would get to the airport with a confirmed ticket only to discover that a prince or friend of an airline employee needed a seat! Inevitably, many, many times I ended up getting messages from Jeddah, saying that they just got kicked off the plane, would you please go see the

minister and deliver this communication or discuss with him this issue. So for me, it was a great assignment and I have lots of stories to tell about it.

But when I arrived, Chet Pauley was the Admin Counselor in Jeddah. I received a message from him during my home leave telling me that he was sad to report but thought I ought to know in advance that my personal effects from Beirut had arrived; but they were not in very good condition. The embassy had collected it from the airport and placed it in one of the wooden sea crates on the embassy compound. He said they would show it to me when I got to Jeddah.

Well, when I got to Jeddah with my wife and two kids, the number two in the economic section invited us to stay at his house. I went to the embassy and over near the warehouse was this wooden crate and it was open in the front. When I looked inside, it appeared as if someone had shoveled debris, cardboard, some wood splinter pieces, and some cloth into the crate. Peggy and I started sorting through the debris taking things out piece by piece to see what had actually survived. There were disappointments and some surprises. For example, the china box was turned on its side up in the back corner and crushed at an angle at one end. When we opened it, we found that not one piece of the china was broken. Three salad plates were missing.

So I was telling my friend with whom I was staying that this had happened. We were fixing lunch. I opened the cabinet and saw that they had the same china. When I told him that we had the same china, he said that they had only a few pieces left. Fortunately, he had three salad plates which he gave us! Incredible!

So what was the journey that our personal effects had taken since we last saw them in Beirut? The Department had used Pakistani International Airlines (PIA) to move our things from Beirut as they were determined to be the cheapest carrier. Our effects, therefore, went from Beirut to Karachi and were then flown back to Athens, the designated destination where effects from Beirut were to be collected until officers got their onward assignments. Unfortunately, the aircraft ran off the runway when landing in Athens scattering its contents (our effects) across the airfield. It was raining! All the items that had been packed by our dedicated locally hired employees in Beirut under dangerous conditions were soaked. The embassy in Athens did not do its job. When the items were finally collected, they were put directly into storage. None of us in Tunis were informed until much later about the crash and the condition of our effects. As a consequence, many of us lost valuable items that simply rotted in the warehouse.

So here I am back in Jeddah. I was super happy to discover a bundle of my Persian carpets; but when I opened it, the carpets had turned to powder. The wool had, of course, rotted. Since our effects were being air shipped from Beirut (as opposed to the normal surface shipping), my shipment was packed in 68 pieces. They were delivered to a Jeddah airport that was, in those days, overwhelmed by imports. My effects had been stashed on the tarmac along with thousands of other crates and boxes. The embassy had only been able to find something like 48 or 50 of the pieces. Chet suggested that I could go with our senior employee to the customs area in the port to see if I could find any more of my

things. Chet said that they had had to go up and down this humongous freight area looking for individual boxes and was able to collect one here, one there, two there, another one here. He thought there might be more stuff out there. So I went to the port. As I walked around looking down, I began to find a few pieces. In one pile I noticed the stuffed toy that belonged to my son and, when I went over it, there was a box of our stuff. I guess with some exasperation, I climbed up on a pile of debris to just to get a broader view. I don't know what I thought I'd see from up there. In disgust I kicked a piece of metal with my foot. It flipped over. To my astonishment it was a metal tray that I had bought in Syria just laying upside down on top of the pile. If I hadn't gone up there, I would have never noticed it.

And there was more! I was waiting for a customs person to process the pieces that I'd found. It was extremely hot -- being July. I'm at the checkpoint going out of the customs area and decided to squeeze between a fence and a building where there was a little shade. My shirt caught on a piece of wood. When I disengaged, I discovered it was a crate of our pictures. Why it was stuffed between the fence and this building and not out in the custom's yard I have no idea. So there you go.

We moved all of this stuff ultimately to Riyadh and, for all that had happened, we got an amazing amount of our stuff. It was rather incredible. That's how we started our Saudi experience.

*Q: This is one of the things that people forget. The Foreign Service, I mean we're diplomats and we're supposed to put on a nice display of chinaware and silver and all this. I mean this is the era, I think; times have probably changed. But certainly nice china and nice silver were part of the name of the game we were all playing and they were all subject to the problems that Skip here has described, terrible transportation and all that.*

GNEHM: I always said after this particular incident that we had one of the major collections of dented, bruised, torn, and shambled artifacts. So everything we owned looked beautiful; but, if you looked at the lamp, it was broken a little bit or there was a dent!

*Q: Well another thing that I can remember is going to a dinner party in Belgrade hosted by people we didn't know. I said, "Oh look, they've got the same pattern of china that we have. My wife said shh.*

GNEHM: Yes, exactly.

*Q: It was of course- it was our china. People were spreading these things around. But anyway.*

GNEHM: Gordon Daniels was the economic counselor and he insisted that I had to stay in Jeddah until he was able to take me up to Riyadh. He wanted to be the one to take me there and introduce me around. That was fair; that was nice; and it was okay. We finally flew to Riyadh. I was told that I would have two local hired employees, a Pakistani

(Farouki) in the Commercial Section and a driver. That's all -- two locals and me. Farouki picked us up at the airport and the first thing Gordon says is, "Farouki, what time does the PX close?" The big US military PX was in Riyadh -- not in Jeddah -- as the US military generals were located in Riyadh. Since the PX closed at 4:00, Gordon said we needed to go directly to the PX so he could register us to use the PX and get food for us to have at the house for the evening meal.

So we went to the PX located a small way out of Riyadh and then came back to the two villas that were assigned to me, one of which was my house. The other was to be the US Embassy Liaison Office. Gordon says, "Here's your house. It is completely furnished. We have it on loan from the US Army Corps of Engineers. They agreed we could use these villas." With that explanation he literally dropped us off and had Farouki take him back to the airport. So much for being introduced around town!!! I walked in with Peggy and our two children into a house covered with thick dust. No one had been living in the house for some time. It's late in the afternoon. I discovered there was no water. I didn't know that you had to pump water into the water tank on the top of the house in order to have water in the house. I didn't even know where to find the main switch was for the lights. This was really a start from scratch. Fortunately, the our wonderful driver, Omar, knew where all of this was. And we did okay. Omar, a Sudanese, was a terrific employee -- extremely dependable, kind and generous, and, in the end, was like a member of our family.

The next morning I went over to villa that was to be the office. I walked up three steps, across a little porch to the door with Farouki by my side. The door handle and its accessories were scattered on the porch in front of the door. I said, "Farouki, what happened?" He said, "Oh, it fell off." I said, "I can see that; but why did it fall off?" He just shrugged. That was when I learned that in addition to any other responsibilities that I had, I was also the chief administrative officer. I would have to fix it. There was no one else to do it!

There is one story worth noting. We had phone lines in each house. At this particular time, Riyadh was really a huge construction site, building and digging everywhere. It was quite common that your phone line went dead because somebody somewhere cut the line when they were digging for other purposes. After the second or third time of calling and finally getting a telephone tech to come and fix my line, I watched him. I learned how to do fix it myself! I told people that the mark of my excellence at this point in time was that I could be on the second floor of our office villa on the phone and have it go dead, and then be down the stairs, out the front door and down to the corner and catch the guy who cut my line before he could cover it up and run away. Then I fixed it and went back up to my office and recalled my party. I did that dozens of times. Well, okay, I exaggerate -- maybe 10 or 12 times in the course of a year.

*Q: Alright, well what was your job? I mean basically what was your job?*

GNEHM: Let me give you some background. The U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia when I arrived was William J. Porter. Porter has served as Undersecretary of State for

Political Affairs and the U.S. Ambassador to Canada before his appointment to Saudi Arabia in 1975. He was not particularly happy with his assignment and, in my recollection, was not active around the Kingdom. Let me quickly add that he was a professional -- a very good diplomat. He just did not think his appointment to Saudi Arabia was where he should be.

When I arrived in Jeddah to take up my post in Riyadh, Ambassador Porter explained the origin of the position in Riyadh. He told me that Kissinger asked the late King Faisal to permit the stationing of one embassy officer in Riyadh. The King had replied that under no circumstances were they going to agree to allow foreign diplomats in Riyadh. There was, I should add, a significant U.S. military presence in Riyadh; but they were not diplomats. Kissinger pointed out to the King that his government had agreed to the establishment in Riyadh of the Joint Economic Commission (JECOR) led by the U.S. Treasury Department. Kissinger told the King that if he could not have an officer in Riyadh, he would block JECOR. He did not trust Treasury and had to have someone from the embassy in Riyadh to watch the Treasury Department. Porter said Faisal had agreed but made it clear that the one officer was in Riyadh only to watch JECOR for Kissinger. He was not to do anything else.

Then Porter said to me, "Now that you know the truth, let me tell you what you are really up there to do. You are my man in Riyadh. You are the embassy man in Riyadh. You do my business, our business with the government, all of it. And you better watch JECOR and make sure they don't do anything that I don't know about." He added, "Now let me make one final point. You're moving to Riyadh. You will be the senior American diplomat in the capital and you will be resident co-located with three United States generals -- the general who heads the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) that is building bases throughout the Kingdom, the general who heads the U.S. Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia (USMTM) headquartered Riyadh, and the general who heads the SANGMP, Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program. You, as a civilian diplomat, outrank all three; but I never ever want to hear that you made that an issue. Do you understand me? You never ever will make that an issue. I don't want trouble with the three generals." I said, "Yes sir, I understand." I never had a problem with the generals.

My relationship with the military was actually very close. For example, I had no communication unit in the Riyadh office. It was USMTM that provided my communication support. I had to go over to their compound to pick them up my cable traffic. And as I mentioned before, the Corps of Engineers furnished my housing and provided major maintenance.

In actuality I worked for the embassy exactly as Ambassador Porter had described. I actively made my rounds in the capital -- getting to know officials, delivering material sent up to Riyadh from Jeddah, and supporting both visiting embassy officers and other delegations -- especially trade groups and members of Congress. No Saudi ever made an issue of my activities. There was one moment in time, probably a year into my life in Riyadh, where the fact of my presence came up with some drama. I was at the palace of

King Khalid, sitting in office director's large reception room. The room resembled more a majlis than an office with the seating around three sides of the room and a humongous desk on the fourth wall where the director sat. On this particular day there were only three of us in the room -- the director, myself and one other Saudi, none other than the Chief of Protocol from the Foreign Ministry in Jeddah. (Now take note that this person had held his position for many years and was the keeper of "protocol" -- and he was known to be particularly upset that there was an American diplomat in Riyadh.) I am in one corner trying to be as inconspicuous as I can; he is in another corner directly opposite me with the office director sitting at his desk between us. The director looks over at the Chief of Protocol and says, "Salem (his name), have you met the American ambassador in Riyadh?" He was just being mischievous; that's the right word. In Arabic I would say he was 'miskeen.' But he did not stop there. "He's really very good. He does everything. He's very effective. He's all over the place. He sees everybody." Of course this was everything that the Chief of Protocol hated. I was mortified and fearful there might be ramifications. In fact there were none -- probably due to the status of the director in the King's entourage such that the chief of protocol could really do nothing. Later when I was there again, I asked the director what this exchange was all about? He said that he was just having a little fun!

*Q: Well how were your relations with the generals to begin with?*

GNEHM: As I mentioned before, my relations with them were extraordinarily good. I had no problems. I think it very much goes back to my earlier growing up in a town with the military -- an Air Force base, the Marine Supply Center and, of course, my Scout master being a Marine. I always got along with the military throughout my career and I had no issues with them. There were never issues from their side either. In fact, because I got to know them all really well, they occasionally invited me to accompany them to their meeting with senior Saudi officials. General Richard Lawrence, head of the SANGMP, took me several times on his calls with Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, then head of the Saudi National Guard and later King.

*Q: What were we doing? The National Guard, was that what used to be called the White Army? There was a sort of the non-army when I was in Saudi Arabia in the '50s, called the White Army.*

GNEHM: The tribes?

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Clearly the Saudi royal family understood that it was useful, valuable, even prudent to have a balance when it came to security forces. In the Saudi case there was the mainline military in the Ministry of Defense and then the Saudi National Guard.

*Q: Yes because every year some country learns what troops can do.*

GNEHM: The Saudis had a senior member of the ruling family heading up the National Guard, which recruited largely from the tribes. Another senior prince headed the Ministry of Defense and Aviation (MODA). They developed separately, different units, different equipment, training all kept separate. The U.S. had agreed to train the National Guard and a separate group of US military from USMTM trained the forces under the Ministry of Defense. Our relationship with the Saudi military was a very good relationship, very close. Prince Abdullah and the SANGMP general were very close. General Lawrence, for example, could get in to see Prince Abdullah whenever he needed to for any reason and Abdullah often invited him out to his desert camp.

*Q: What was your impression of Saudi Rule?*

GNEHM: The ruling family -- the Sauds -- was very much in charge, very much in control. The population accepted that as valid. I don't pretend, by the way, to know the inner workings of the family though I had certain insights at different times. There were some moments when I had a sense of family views when I was working an issue that they were involved in. There was a small group of senior princes who got together and reached consensus on how to handle something. Once that consensus was reached, it was done. I mean that it was carried out. That group at the time included Prince Salman, the governor of Riyadh. I got to know him well because of my position in Riyadh. There was Prince Sultan, the Minister of Defense, Prince Nayef the Minister of Interior, Prince Abdullah of the National Guard, Prince Fahad who later became king, and, of course, King Khaled the king at the time. It was this inner group of senior family members who tended to make the consensual decisions about major things.

*Q: Did you get close to the families? In other words were you entertained at their homes? Because one of the things I'm told today is that there isn't much socializing.*

GNEHM: No, there was little socializing with the royal family. I did get to know several of the ministers and many senior officials well enough to be invited to events. There was one minister who was married to an American. They invited Peggy and me to their house for dinner. Usually it was a small group and close to the family and not the bigger dinners that you find in other Arab countries. Zaki Yamani, the Minister of Oil, and other senior officials entertained when there were visitors from Washington.

*Q: He was the oil minister?*

GNEHM: He was the oil minister. And yes, the other ministers would host a lunch or a dinner in honor of a visitor or a congressional delegation or a trade delegation. Then they would invite Saudi businessmen and others; but those were usually the only times there would be social events with Saudis. When I hosted an event, my approach was to keep it small and only invite the particular individual I want and whoever he might suggest to come with him. The main issue was always concern by the Saudi about bringing his wife to an American home and how that would be interpreted in the society. Saudis are very sensitive to social criticism.

*Q: What did this mean for your wife?*

GNEHM: When we first arrived, it was difficult for my wife. I was working and she had the two kids. She couldn't drive, though the driver could take her to the PX or wherever she needed to go. She ended up being offered a job with CitiBank. CitiBank was a consultant working with a Saudi entity. Once she got the job, she was going to work in the morning and returning home at 1:00 or 2:00. That was the normal work day. She was quite happy working -- something productive to do. Then, too, she was earning money. In fact she was earning more money than I was because she didn't have to pay taxes up to a certain amount and she wasn't making that threshold amount. The important thing, though, was that it gave her something to do. And through the bank she and I met people that we could do things with.

There was a large ex-pat community in Riyadh; much larger now, of course. There was the military, some with families, and some businessmen with families as well. There were several organizations like SRI, Stanford Research International. They were doing economic planning for the Ministry of Planning. So there were families with whom we could do things. There were not too many kids but our kids were younger then. So we began building relationships with people we could do things with. I think it's worth mentioning that there was a very active Protestant church in Riyadh. Congregation might be the better word for it. One of the American companies had brought in a pastor, sponsored a pastor. He wasn't as a pastor officially, of course; he was there as a counselor. Of course churches and Christian preaching was and, to this day, not permitted in Saudi Arabia. Yet the church was so well attended that it was having three, it later went to four, different services on Friday mornings. We used Friday as the Sabbath day because Sunday was a work day in Saudi Arabia. The services were mobbed. We met in the auditorium of the SANG compound where the U.S. military advisors lived. It began to become a problem when the neighborhood began complaining about the cars parking and the congestion on Friday mornings, not unlike, by the way, my church in Bethesda, Maryland, where the neighborhood complains about parking around the church on Sunday. But this brought the congregation to the attention of the Saudi Government and they were going to close it down.

My ambassador during my second year in Riyadh was a man by the name of John West, former governor of South Carolina and a very close friend of President Carter. He was a committed Christian and he was determined to contest the new order. He talked to me about the problem and we worked out a strategy. We decided to see the Minister of Interior Prince Nayef bin Abd al-Aziz. We reached an agreement with Prince Nayef that the services could continue as long as there was not a public profile, nothing outside the compound wall. At my suggestion, I drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) of our conversation with the Prince and we gave him a copy for the record.

I mention this because we're talking about '77 or '78. In 2002 when I was ambassador in Jordan, I received a call from an officer in the embassy in Jeddah. He said he just wanted to call and tell me that the embassy had some trouble with the church services in the Kingdom. They found this memorandum of understanding that I had negotiated with

Prince Nayef. The ambassador had taken it over to Nayef to show it to him. When he looked at it, he said, "Oh I remember those guys. Yes, I agreed; you're right. I can't change my position." I was amazed that the memorandum was still on file and, further, that it had been found. I was equally astonished that it remained valid almost 25 years later!

*Q: What were your essential duties? I mean you were an economic officer keeping an eye on Treasury. First, was Treasury up to anything?*

GNEHM: Always. Always they were up to something. Treasury Department loved having this independent relationship with the Saudis. Of course the objective of JECOR was to build the US-Saudi relationship in a variety of economic areas all of which was in US interests. In particular JECOR was to develop initiatives that would lead to Saudi investment in the U.S.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: There were times when they used their presence (access) for other purposes, which is exactly what Kissinger had been worried about. But as fate would have it, the first head of JECOR was Bruce Morgan who had been Peace Corps director in Nepal when I served there and a close friend of Carol Laise. So he and I were very close friends. I didn't have any problems at all with JECOR in the first six months. Bruce had a falling out with Treasury. Treasury wanted to manage him far more closely than Bruce was willing to accept. They let him go after six months; but by then I knew all of the deputies and most of the other Americans. Also, these were people that Peggy and I got to know socially at the church and around town. So I didn't have any problems. In fact, there were many times that I was able to help them.

You asked what I did in Riyadh. Yes, I was labeled an economic officer, but I did everything. I did work for every section of the embassy from fixing the front door, faucets, and telephones to delivering diplomatic notes to the Palace. When we had congressional delegations, I was the control officer in Riyadh. Sometimes the embassy would send people up to escort the delegation; but I was the one who arranged the visits and the appointments. I met them at the airport; I escorted them around town; and I put them back on the plane.

*Q: Did you have a secretary?*

GNEHM: I was allowed to hire a secretary locally. I found an American woman living in Riyadh. I got her clearances and she worked for me. I got to hire a couple more national employees. They weren't Saudis; they were all ex-pats. By the time I left at the end of two years, the Liaison Office, as it was called, had grown significantly. I had seven Americans working for me.

In terms of consular work, I took passports applications and sent them to Jeddah for processing. I did the paperwork for death certificates, birth certificates and other similar

things. They gave me a seal, finally, and I actually was doing the consular work to the extent that I could. The embassy also sent a consular officer up to Riyadh from time to time to handle the workload. I didn't do a lot of consular work. I did political reporting. I reported conversations that I had with almost every ministry that I worked with.

I mentioned that Ambassador Porter left post in the summer of '76. I learned that the former governor of South Carolina, John West, was coming to be ambassador. I got a letter from my uncle, David Garrett, my mother's brother-in-law, who had been president of Delta Airlines telling me that he was a very close friend of John West. In fact, my uncle was from Aiken, South Carolina. He had told John West that I was in Riyadh. When the new ambassador and his wife arrived, I was invited to come down to Jeddah to go to the airport to greet the new ambassador.

It is customary for the senior staff of the embassy to receive new ambassadors at the airport. Ambassador West was due to arrive in the evening. I was invited to be there. I was excited but it turned out to be a moment of some embarrassment! There is, of course, a pecking order. First in line is the Chargé, followed by the ranking counselors and then first secretaries, second secretaries, and third secretaries. I am still relatively junior at this point. So I am probably number 22 or 23 in this line in the reception hall. John West and his wife entered the room. I recall how jovial he was, a wonderfully nice guy. He greeted the Chargé; the Chargé introduced him to the next one or two in the line. I think John West got to the third or fourth person when he spotted me down the line. He left the line and came all the way down to me and he said, "Hey Skip, they told me you were going to be here and I'm so glad to see you." And I thought, "Oh no, you don't know what you just did to me. Everybody he skipped is to be angry and I will pay the price!" I said, "Thank you, Mr. Ambassador" to which he replied "No, call me John." Well, I said I couldn't as he was the Ambassador. "No," he said, "I've got to go by John; that's me." I said we could talk later and I kind of nodded back in the direction of the receiving line. So he went back and came down the line. Truth be said, I was very touched by his approach. John and I became extremely close -- very close as a matter of fact. He turned to me for advice on almost every issue to some extent because he didn't have a Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) that he trusted.

*Q: Who was the DCM?*

GNEHM: Marshall Wiley, who later became ambassador of Oman. But Marshall Wiley did not think a political appointee, and specifically John, knew how to do the job properly while he did. So he often undercut him.

*Q: Is this sort of the typical thing that political ambassadors complain about, that some DCMs have contempt for political ambassadors?*

GNEHM: Yes. Those situations are, in fact, far rarer than the stories that abound; but in this particular case it was stereotype. Marshall Wiley felt he understood Saudis and the Foreign Service and this guy, who was a politician, knew nothing. Marshall would countermand what the Ambassador had ordered; he would counter-instruct; he would

issue orders and not tell the ambassador that what he had done. I would tend to find out about it because I would hear from an officer what he had been ordered to do. And I would say, "Well, I know the Ambassador talked to somebody about this last week. Are you sure about this?" Then I would realize that the ambassador didn't know anything about it.

Marshall didn't like me very much because I was so close to the Ambassador. John West was as decent a person as there could be. People often credit political appointees with having a close relationship with the sitting President. In this case John West had that relationship with President Carter.

*Q: Often it's not-*

GNEHM: It's rare, that's true.

*Q: It's very rare but when it works it really works.*

GNEHM: It's one in a blue moon; but John West was the first governor in the United States to endorse Carter for president and, of course, they were governors in adjoining states. John West wrote a letter to the President, a handwritten letter, every Sunday night. Most of them he showed me. And about every other week he got a letter back from Carter, handwritten.

*Q: Were you able to figure out why West wanted that particular job?*

GNEHM: Yes, I think in many ways John was thinking of business and commercial interest and the future. He actually turned down the President's offer to be Secretary of Commerce to take the job in Saudi Arabia. He viewed Saudi Arabia as a very important country for the United States. I also think he was excited about coming to the Middle East. He had a real interest; but he didn't have much knowledge about the region. But here again stereotyping didn't work. John asked people like me about how to handle matters, how officials were likely to react to this or that. He was very open and was always trying to learn.

*Q: Well this is one of the things, yes there's a certain amount of stereotyping but in the South they're very interested in family relationships-*

GNEHM: You got it.

*Q: - and of course family, I mean, the Saudis are a huge family.*

GNEHM: The personality of a Southerner fit the Saudi culture almost perfectly. Now I realize that's a stereotype. But family, hospitality, saying 'good morning,' there was always a greeting, is exactly what Arabs do. They'll never pass anyone by that they don't say, in Arabic, 'good morning' whether they know you or not, like a Southerner does.

And you're quite right; this gregarious, warm personality that was John -- and his wife Lois as well -- just took with the Saudis. They loved it and loved him.

There was one example that really highlights John's personality. I get a telephone call late in the day from John. "Skip, I got to come to Riyadh tonight. I've got an important message to deliver. I've got to see Prince Saud (the Saudi Foreign Minister)." I said okay. And John added, "I am bringing with me the chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party. He's visiting me and he's never met a live prince before. I told him he had to come with me meet a real live prince."

The embassy transmitted to me the very sensitive instructions that John was to use so he didn't have to carry it on the airplane. So I know what they're going to talk about. Frankly, it was not a subject that you would expect to talk about in front of someone without a security clearance.

The plane arrives and we head to Prince Saud's home. We arrive and knock on the front door. Prince Saud, himself, opens the door. John greeted him with 'howdy, prince.' Prince Saud then noticed another man. "Oh," John says, "Prince Saud, I want you to meet so-and-so. He's the chairman of the Democratic Party of South Carolina. He's never met a live prince before and I said you've got to go meet Prince Saud. He's a live prince." Well, at first Prince Saud is kind of taken aback; but then he just cracks up laughing. We had a very pleasant meeting and John and his guest got back in the plane and flew away.

Now I'm going to jump way ahead because this is going to be funny. I'm professor at George Washington University. It's around 2005 or 2006. I get a call from the declassification office at the Department of State. The caller says he has been asked to declassify a cable out of Riyadh that I drafted reporting on a conversation between Ambassador West and Prince Saud. I immediately guessed which one it was before he went any further. He said, "I'm very perplexed. We're asked to declassify this cable on a rather sensitive matter but there seems to have been another person in the meeting. Let me ask you straightforward. Did this person have a security clearance?" I said, "Not to my knowledge. He was the chairman of the Democratic Party of South Carolina." The caller then said that since the subject matter was discussed in an unclassified situation, he guessed the message was really already declassified. I said, "Look, I'm not getting into this. You do whatever you need to do. I reported it the way it was. What's in that cable is what happened. John took him into the meeting and that was that." So some things from the past just come back.

*Q: Well did you find that you were in a position to pick up family gossip of who was running things and who was doing what, who was influential, who wasn't? Were you able to get that or was it a pretty tight system?*

GNEHM: Saudis do not readily talk about their family and personal matters. The princes, members of the al-Saud family in particular, would not speak much about their family issues. About the only way I could pick up some sense of family relationships was when I was in a group with two or three of them. I could watch their interactions and see that one

was really differential to another. That would indicate their relative position in the family hierarchy. That was about it.

*Q: Did your wife or you pick up anything about the role of the wives? Particularly the mothers in Saudi society. They may be behind the veil but boy oh boy they're very powerful.*

GNEHM: You are right about the influence of women especially in the family setting. Peggy did pick up things when she was with the Saudi women. They would talk about among themselves. One time she said to me, "Oh, you won't believe what I heard today. There was one woman who said her husband kept going out at night, coming back drunk. So she said she just locked the gate, locked the house, put a guard outside and ordered him not to let her husband back in the yard. She said that when he came home, he beat on the door and screamed and yelled; but he finally had to go to a relative's house to spend the night." What Peggy was describing was that within the walls of the house women have enormous authority, influence.

The other thing that you become quite conscious of, though at a distance, is the fact that many Saudi men still have more than one wife; but the Koran is very clear that you must treat each wife equally. So how do you do that? I am not sure what that means in personal terms but in physical terms it can be amazing. When you drove around town or out into the country, you would, for example, see three identical houses sitting side by side -- down to the same color paint, same number of TV antennas and everything. Those would be the houses for the three wives.

*Q: Did you pick up any feel for the effects of American or western influence, for example TV, education abroad and all? Did you have a feeling this was breaking down the upper class societies of Saudi Arabia?*

GNEHM: Yes, to some extent. The '70s was a period in which the government was in fact sending Saudis abroad in fairly large numbers for university level education. There were quite a few in the United States. This was then reversed in the '80s when Fahd became king. Then the Saudis started building universities around the country and the King gave the ulema (the religious leaders) enormous influence over the education system. That was a concession Fahd made to the religious authorities. King Fahd had come under attack, surreptitiously of course, for his loose living style, specifically gambling, women, etc. But in this time I was in Riyadh, a large number of Saudis had gone abroad to study and were now in reasonably prominent positions, such as the Minister of Planning--American educated -- and the Minister of Commerce -- also American educated. Many in the petroleum sector were mostly Western educated. The University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran was set up by ARAMCO. It was largely staffed by foreign faculty using a western curriculum. Yes, there was definitely television and media influence also. I don't remember satellite television being as dominant then as it is now; but Saudis had access to outside media.

That reminds me of another interesting storey. We were invited by the minister with an American wife to their house for dinner and he told this story. He said his father lived up country in Buraidah, an oasis north of Riyadh maybe six or eight hours by car. He said that was where he grew up. He said his father comes to town to visit them. He brings his tent and pitches it in the front yard. Now the minister's home is a gorgeous villa with a meticulous front lawn with flowers and the father's tent is pitched out there on the lawn. He said his father told him that he had never slept under a roof in his life and I never would! Just imagine? This was '77. You have a western educated minister married to an American one generation away from the father who has never slept under a roof. He brings his tent to downtown Riyadh. That really underscores how far the country had moved in one generation! Sure, there are going to be problems when that happens. It is a real challenge for the country.

*Q: Well what about the religious authority, the ulema? Was their influence very overt or was this sort of under everything?*

GNEHM: For most Westerners and for most of my work it was not apparent. What was apparent was the mutawwa'in, the religious police, that ran around town with their switches whacking people, mostly women, who they thought were not properly dressed or properly behaving. They would move through the market to insure that shops closed during prayer times.

*Q: These are called the religious police?*

GNEHM: That is how we westerners describe them. I think the Arabic stresses their role protecting virtue and correctness. They were out and about and they would whack even Westerners that they felt were violating religious tenets.

*Q: Was there much in the way of ex-pat workers, Pakistan, Korean, Filipino?*

GNEHM: Large numbers, large number of ex-pats even then working in everything from business to construction.

*Q: Well something that strikes me today just looking at it from a great distance, here you've got a growing Saudi population and outside of oil extraction they don't do anything. And what do you do with, particularly the young people and all? I mean they're absolutely dependent on the largesse of oil and that won't be there forever.*

GNEHM: That is a big problem for the Kingdom.

*Q: Were we looking at this and trying to figure out what's going to happen?*

GNEHM: Yes, we were and part of the Joint Economic Commission's work was to try to develop alternative areas of employment. It was not very successful. You had Saudis who would go into banking because there were even then sound Saudi financial institutions, banks, investment authorities; but you didn't find them going into other occupations.

They certainly would not do most of the jobs that ex-pats were brought in to do. It has gotten much worse since then, of course; the population has grown and the youth population is larger.

*Q: When you were there at that time computers weren't a big deal, were they?*

GNEHM: No. But I your question about youth reminds me of things I saw and heard. Young Saudis were mad drivers. There was a lot of hot rodding and racing at outlandish speeds. The number of people, young people, killed in accidents was quite significant. It was a constant news story every day. They had nothing else to do.

*Q: You were there for how long?*

GNEHM: Two years.

*Q: Were there any major developments, incidents during those two years?*

GNEHM: Lebanon was an issue that we discussed often with the Saudis. The Saudis were very close to certain of the Lebanese factions. We hoped that they might be able to use their connections to bring about a solution to the civil war that was ongoing in Lebanon. Military sales and training were other bilateral issues. This had to do a lot with the pro-Israeli lobby groups in the States which opposed most military sales to the Saudis. It was during that first year of John West's tenure that the possibility of the sale to the Saudis of some AWACS, the early warning, intelligence gathering platform, arose. There was huge opposition from members of Congress and Jewish lobby groups. Later the sale went through, but that was after I left Riyadh. The anti-Saudi rhetoric and the public attacks on the Kingdom caused lots of problems for us in the field. It was very difficult to explain why such things were being said about them -- by their close ally and friend.

*Q: Did you find that in your dealings with the Saudis that our relationship with Israel would come up all the time?*

GNEHM: Yes, it tended to be a common topic and usually with the most obvious point. 'We understand the friendship you have with Israel but why can't it be balanced? Why can't you just see what they're doing? Why don't you argue for the same things for the Palestinians that you all for the Israelis? Why can't you be fair, just?'

*Q: Well how would you answer?*

GNEHM: My answer was always, "Look. We have concerns that we share, views like you do about the Palestinian situation. We think Palestinian issue needs to be resolved peacefully. We have a political system in which lobby groups play an important role. That's the way our system is built, whether it be labor unions or education groups or medical groups or Jewish based groups. There's nothing to stop the Arabs from having the same kind of lobby groups. That's the way our system works." I always felt that one

had to fall back on the fact that we have a political system that works and they need to understand better how it works..

*Q: Yes.*

*Well this is probably a good place to stop. Where did you go after?*

GNEHM: I went to Yemen. I'll talk a little bit more about Saudi Arabia and go into Yemen. I want to mention President Carter's visit to Riyadh and, oh yes, the visit of the congressman from Texas of Afghanistan fame.

*Q: Oh yes. Charlie Wilson.*

GNEHM: Charlie Wilson's visit with his girlfriend. These are worth recording.

*Q: Okay, we'll pick those up for next time.*

*We have four interns with us and I will let them- If you have a question- Do you have anything?*

*INTERN #1: I have one quick question.*

*Q: You want to put in your name.*

*INTERN NAOMI KAUFMAN: My name is Naomi Kaufman. I'm a research intern from Davidson College.*

*And I think at this point you said that your wife was developing contacts, filling up her time with her job at the bank. Your daughter at this point would have been five or six. Did the children stay home?*

GNEHM: Yes. We had a wonderfully nice maid/housekeeper from Eritrea. In fact I first met her on one of my trips down to Jeddah. I was told that there was a woman out in the lobby from Eritrea, a refugee, looking for a position with a diplomat that would give her work and a residence permit. I interviewed her and brought her to Riyadh. She stayed with us the whole time we were in Riyadh and continued to work for the head of the office for the next 12 to 15 years. So she kept the children and she was wonderful.

*KAUFMAN: They hadn't gone to school yet? I guess there were no schooling opportunities then.*

GNEHM: No. My daughter was born in '71.

*KAUFMAN: Born in '71, '78 so she would have been seven?*

GNEHM: Our daughter, Cheryl, attended the Riyadh International Community School (RICS) two years -- her K-1 and first grade. The school only went to the eighth grade. The Saudis didn't want any teenagers in the country so they refused to approve a permit for high school.

*INTERN REBECCA SATTERFIELD: Sure. Rebecca Satterfield from Rice University. You talked a little bit about the status of women in Saudi Arabia. What was the U.S. policy towards women's issues at that time or was there one at all?*

GNEHM: Not seriously vocalized. I mean when it did come up it was always very clear that we did not feel that women were being treated appropriately. The response was they have rights under the Koran that they never had before Mohammad came along. I stayed away from the driving issue. At that time it was not being challenged; it was challenged at the time of Desert Storm when a number of Saudi women got behind the wheel demanding the right to drive. The Saudi Government came down pretty hard on them -- and their families.

*Q: My wife had a Saudi driver's license but that was back in the '50s.*

GNEHM: Oh wow. But did she drive?

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: Oh wow.

*Q: But again it was in the '50s. Our consul general, Walter Schwinn, was very persuasive.*

GNEHM: Very interesting. I didn't know that ever happened.

*INTERN CAROLYN WALLACE: Carolyn Wallace from University of Pennsylvania. You talked about how you were able to form relationships with some of the members of the government, families like that or ex-pats. Was it more difficult to talk to people below that level?*

GNEHM: In the government?

*INTERN WALLACE: No, people outside of government, like were you able to talk to people in the market or something like that?*

GNEHM: Yes. You could do that. I didn't get to the souk in Riyadh as often as I did in Syria and later did in Jordan. I guess I was just so busy. But yes, you could. The community easiest to meet was the business community. They have interests in making contracts and doing business with the U.S. Government and American companies. The business group was willing come to the house for events and they would also invite you to things -- in a business context always and only males, not mixed.

*INTERN KATE TUSCANY: Kate Tuscany from Alleghany College. I'm curious with your being the only American sent to Riyadh at first, you know, really kind of pioneering this city. How did your wife and children like it outside of, you know, the personal relationships; were they with other civilians there? You know how did they spend their two years.*

GNEHM: There were a lot of activities within the American and expat community. While I was the only American diplomat, there were, as I said, lots of Americans with the military and also with some of the consulting groups. Peggy got involved in the church with the ex-pats and others who had more difficulty surviving and living. She ended up being very busy. That wasn't true in the first few months until she got a job. That made a huge difference. I can understand that as it enabled her to get outside a walled compound.

*Q: Okay. Well we'll stop at this point. I'll put once again we'll pick this up and you're off to Yemen?*

GNEHM: I went to Yemen.

*Q: But before we get there you want to talk about the Carter visit, the Charlie Wilson plus accompaniment and maybe there's some other things you want to mention.*

GNEHM: Yes, and I have to tell you about one of my other Consular challenges when I had to take care of embalming the body of an American pilot killed in a plane crash.

*Q: Today is the 23rd of July, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you had mentioned several things before we move on to the Yemen.*

GNEHM: Yes, I just wanted to mention a few things about my Riyadh assignment that came to mind since our last session.

The first thing I want to mention is Ambassador John West, who was Governor of South Carolina. He was a Carter political appointee and very close friend. He was a terrifically engaged ambassador, a political appointee, yes, but someone who came with Southern hospitality and charm -- a very outgoing and personable individual.

*Q: Also I think something we in the Foreign Service sometimes forget about their political instincts.*

GNEHM: Very definitely.

*Q: -Foreign Service people don't have that that political instinct that a politician has.*

GNEHM: And he did. I just want to mention a couple of things. And one I want to mention is Lois West, his wife. She was a terrific partner in their relationship. When I would go to Jeddah, they always either put me up at their place or found me another

place. But one thing was remarkable. The Wests had a table in the residence that sat 24 or maybe even 36. It was a huge long table and Lois used to tell me that she set the table every day for lunch for all seats and the same for dinner because John West invited everybody that he met in the morning to come to lunch and everybody he met in the afternoon to come to dinner. She had no idea whether she would be alone at one end of the table and with him at the other end or if they would have 20 to 30 people in between. John was a remarkable.

And you're quite correct about his connections. I mentioned that he wrote the president virtually every Sunday night and about every other Sunday he got a handwritten letter back from Carter.

I have a second John West story from one of my trips when I went down to Jeddah. The then B and F (Budget and Finance) officer, Howard Smith, was a really good friend. I got to know him quite well. He helped me a lot with the financial problems up in Riyadh. He called me in one day all disconcerted. He shut the door said, "Don't tell the ambassador I brought this up, but the ambassador has spent all of his representation money and it's only two months into the fiscal year. He is overspending." I said, "Wait a minute Howard. You've told him that he's spent all of his representation money?" He said, "Yes, but he doesn't seem to pay any attention." I said, "And he knows that from now on he's going to be paying out of his pocket?" "Yes, yes," said Howard. "So," I said, "it's not your problem; he will have to pay out of his pocket. So you shouldn't be worried about it." He said, "Yes but you know, he didn't ask. That's his problem, you know."

Last scene, several months later, Riyadh -- John West is in Riyadh. We pick up a close friend of his by the name of Fritz Hollings, then senator from South Carolina. I'm sitting in the front seat, shotgun, and the two of them are in the back seat and the conversation goes something like this. Fritz: Well John, I'm really glad I got to come out here and visit you while you're ambassador. West: Well I am you did, Fritz. You know I wanted to show you around while I was out here. Fritz: Yes, everything going alright? West: Oh yes, everything's going just hunky dory. Fritz: So, no promises? West: Ohoo! Yes, I've got one problem. Fritz: What's that? West: I don't get enough money for representation out here. Do you know I had more money as governor of South Carolina than I have here in Saudi Arabia and this is a big country. Fritz: well how much do you need? West: Well I think I could use three to \$5,000 more for this year. Fritz: Done. I will take care of it.

I'm down in Jeddah several weeks later at the B and F office. Howard tells me: "Skip, Skip, come here. Somebody gave the ambassador \$3000 more in our representation account." I said, "I told you not to worry."

*Q: Oh man.*

GNEHM: Anyway, that was interesting.

Another incident was when Charlie Wilson came to Riyadh on a visit and Charlie Wilson let me know in the cables-

*Q: Why don't you explain who Charlie Wilson was?*

GNEHM: Right. He was a congressman from Texas, and well known for his involvement with Afghanistan but also known always to travel with a very beautiful, charming woman.

*Q: There was a very famous movie called "Charlie Wilson's War," based on a book about him.*

GNEHM: I can attest to at least one aspect from that book. Cable traffic came out from the Department asking the embassy to support his visit and that he would be traveling with a female friend. I was told to reserve one room at the specified hotel as they would be staying together.

Well, when I went to the Saudis to arrange this, of course they said to me, "Well she's not married to him, right?" I said "No, but..." Their immediate response was: "Well then we don't book rooms like this; they will have separate rooms." I said, "No, it's not going to work." The Saudis then said he can't come. I said that he is coming anyway whether you like it or not. And so he arrives and they put her in a second car, not with him. He gets out of the car with his chaperone from the government from the ministry and gets in the car with his female friend; he refuses to get out of the car. When they get to the hotel, guess where she stayed? In his room. And the Saudis were obviously very upset.

*Q: I'm surprised they didn't just chalk this up to the peculiarities of Americans.*

GNEHM: Probably at some level they did so; but those who were working the scene were not of that bent.

Another thing I want to mention was the official visit of President Carter to Riyadh while I was there. Carter came from India to Saudi Arabia. Because I was close to the Ambassador and he trusted me, he made me the control officer for the president's visit. Now that's a pretty big job for also a middle grade officer, compared to the norm. The control officer for such a high level visit would normally have been the DCM or a senior counselor but they were down in Jeddah. It was an extraordinary experience for me. The cable that came out to post with very detailed instructions talked about the hundreds of thousands of people that needed to be set aside to do different jobs! I'm exaggerating.

*Q: And the president does not travel alone.*

GNEHM: No. And there are also many requirements that come out in long cables. I remember one in particular that was both funny and not funny! One cable informed me that a certain number of aviation fuel tanker trucks were to be set aside at an isolated location at the Riyadh International Airport for a certain number of days before the arrival of the President's plane. I think it was something like 10 days. They were to be under American military guard around the clock once isolated and samples of the jet fuel

in the tankers were to be sent back to U.S. military labs to make sure that it was not contaminated. The tanker trucks were then be sealed and kept there under American guard until the President's plane had been refueled and he had departed.

Well, I responded to Washington that "this was not going to be possible. You asked for five tanker trucks and there are only three total at Riyadh International Airport. If you take all of them for 10 days, the entire airport will have to close. This is obviously impossible." I got back a response that in view of my message the president would probably cancel his visit. This was the first of several threats that the visit would be canceled, to which I simply replied, "I can only give you the facts; maybe you should ask the President of the United States whether he wants to cancel his trip before you plan to cancel it." Of course the president had no intention of canceling his visit, not only because of Saudi Arabia's importance to the U.S. but also because of his personal relationship with John West.

Then there was the advance team for the visit -- a large group even in and of itself! Managing them and their demands on the Saudis was a real test of survival. At one point the advance team was meeting with the chief of protocol at the palace. I was at the opposite end of the table from the chief of protocol; Saudis on one side, the Americans on the other. The two sides were haggling and hassling over any number of details but one that was very contentious was the motorcade. Who was going to be in which car and in what order the cars would line up in the motorcade. It went on and on -- an absurd exchange. The Saudi chief of protocol refused to accept the American requests. There were strict protocol requirements as to the order of royal princes in the motorcade and who road with which foreign dignitary. At one point, I saw the chief of protocol make a note on his notepad which he folded in half and sent down the table to me. The note said, "Skip, don't act surprised. I'm getting ready to concede everything but the motorcade is going to happen my way." Sure enough after the next intervention by the Americans saying the motorcade had to be as they demanded, the chief of protocol said "Alright, okay, fine. Let's don't waste any more time. If that's the way you want it, that's the way it will be." And sure enough at the airport when the President arrived, and all boarded the motorcade, it was organized exactly as the Saudis had wanted! So there you go!

Knowing what I did about the motorcade from the chief of protocol's note, that evening I watched with considerable amusement (and some disdain) the advance guy who was responsible for the motorcade. He sat on the floor for five or six hours with cutouts of cars, motorcycles and trucks, redesigning the motorcade. At least he was busy. It was an interesting experience.

The visit went well. The Saudis loved the President. He had a great visit and flew off happy as can be. But you know, these are the kind of things you have to deal with when you have high level visitors.

*Q: Well you also had to deal with the very sharp elbows and personalities of people in protocol on your side and their side. I mean this is a bunch of Munchkins or something all trying to prove that they're important.*

GNEHM: That's very, very true. It happened again when then Vice President George H. W. Bush came to Jordan during my tour there as DCM and other visits that I have done as well. Many of the people they send out on advances are selected as a reward for their success in organizing a motorcade in Missouri or they were on the campaign staff somewhere. They often had never been abroad or never done a visit overseas. It's awkward.

Before I get to my time in Yemen, I'd like to tell one story about an incident that happened during my time in Riyadh.

I'm in Riyadh at the beginning of my second year. I get a phone call from Carol Laise, (remember my ambassador in Nepal) who is now Director General of the Foreign Service. She said, "Skip, we have a really serious staffing problem at U.S. UN in New York. We're looking for a chief of staff for Ambassador Andrew Young, Andy Young, the former congressman from Georgia, very close to Carter, a prominent civil rights leader. And actually we all thought of you and we'd like to bring you back to pair you up for an interview for this position." It sounded like a really good opportunity. I said yes and they flew me back. I come to Washington. I go to see Carol Laise and she says, "Look, Skip, we have a big problem. Andy Young is kind of a wild card; he's up there doing his thing without communicating with anyone. Upstairs the secretary's office, the seventh floor principals, and those on the sixth floor can't figure out what's going on up there. The White House is absolutely apoplectic and you are the perfect person for the position with your roots in Georgia. I didn't know that you knew Hamilton Jordan." Hamilton Jordan was Carter's chief of staff. I said "Yes, we graduated from high school together, went to the same church and got thrown out of the same Sunday school class. That is more than you wanted to know about me and my relationship with Ham?" She said "Yes, but that means they know you and they trust you and when the executive secretary and the secretary heard that you had that connection and the lights went on. Go upstairs and see the executive secretary."

The executive secretary says to me, "Look, you know we have a problem in New York. There have actually been days when there was not a single person in the chair over in the General Assembly -- maybe because they're so disorganized. We need a chief of staff up there just at least to make sure there's someone in the chair over at the UN whenever there are meetings. We think you would be really great in this position, Skip, because you have this good connection with the White House and you are Foreign Service. You understand how the system works." The phone rings and it is Hamilton Jordan. He wants me to come over and see him.

So I go over to the White House and Ham says to me, "Skip, I swear I forgot that you were over there in Saudi Arabia; but we can really use you in New York. You can at least tell us when Andy's going to do things. Do you know that he announced that Khomeini

was a saint and then he called for recognizing Arafat? This is outrageous; he's blowing us out of the water." He concluded that the White House had to have somebody up there to tell them what's going on

I go up to New York on a day that Andy Young's close personal aide says I can see the Ambassador. He asked me to be there very early because in the morning as he often had time then for interviews. So I arrived at USUN around 7:45. I sit and I sit. I met with the Ambassador's aide. I sit some more. I see the Ambassador come and go. I go get lunch. I sit some more. I go around USUN introducing myself and talking with staff. I return to the floor with the Ambassador's office and sit. At seven thirty in the evening the Ambassador's secretary says, "Andy's got time to see you; you can go in." I go in and take the seat that was offered and say, "Mr. Ambassador, it's nice to meet you. I've heard so much about you in my life coming from Georgia." (I was trying to establish rapport -- some connection.) After a few pleasantries, I said, "The Department told me that you were willing to have me come to New York for this interview for the chief of staff position at USUN." Young responded, "Look Skip, it's a waste of time to beat around the bush. If you want to come up here and be a spy for the State Department and the White House, it's okay with me. I don't care; that's fine." Well the Ambassador was starkly clear! But I replied that I should tell him something about me -- who I was -- before we went any further. "I'm a Foreign Service officer; I work for the United States Government and for my country. I'm very loyal to the people I work for. If I come up here, it's to work for you. If I can do something that makes your life easier, if things would work better, I'm happy to do that. That's the only reason why I will accept the assignment. So, I would like just to know if you think I can be of help." He said, "Skip, if you want the job it's yours. And when you get here, I'll have you up to the apartment at the Waldorf. We'll have a couple of drinks and work this out and we'll have a good time together."

So I got the train back out to Massapequa where I was staying with my aunt and uncle. I walked the three miles from the station to their house trying to decide what I should do. I certainly did not want to take a position where my boss thought I was a spy -- and for that matter friends and colleagues in Washington thought of my role in the same way. That was not where I want to be in life. I got on a plane the next day and flew back to Riyadh. I called Carol Laise, who said, "Where in the hell are you?" I said, "I'm back in Riyadh." She said, "You're what?" I said, "Yes. And Carol, I don't want that job. I'm not going to be everyone's spy, I'm not going to go up there." Her reply astonished me, "That's a great decision." I said, "But you sent me up there." She said, "I had to. Ham Jordan knows you; all these people know you. I can count on you. You are right; it is an impossible situation to be in. We had to go through this process but you made the right decision." I said to her, "Look, John West needs me. I feel like I'm doing something important -- something that is necessary." So ended my saga with USUN -- at least in 1977.

*Q: Well you might explain what the basic problem was with Andy Young.*

GNEHM: Andrew Young was from outside the system. He was a political appointee who had never served in a diplomatic position.

*Q: H was a very powerful political person.*

GNEHM: A very powerful political person who had his own power base nationally and in the Democratic Party. While he was certainly loyal to the President based on their friendship in Georgia, he had his own mind about politics and about issues. I would say, too, that being an African-American confronting a white dominated system, he had some sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians. He did not think the Palestinians were being treated fairly in the way that Africans had not been treated justly. In both cases he felt there was a need for change. The bigger issue was that he felt no need to work through the "system." He didn't feel like he had to clear things; so he didn't. So he would say things that were not policy or contradicted policy.

*Q: And of course our Arab-Israeli policy is quite nuanced. I'd say the only other one that's comparable certainly for a long time was over Berlin. Everything that was said had repercussions.*

GNEHM: Yes. You remember how we argue over the article in front of one of the words in UNSC Resolution 242!

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Because it makes a huge difference in the way people decided to define the sentence.

If it is "the occupied territories" or just "occupied territories," it made a difference.

Back to Andy Young, I think he comes out of a world -- experiences -- that are not disciplined or structured. That's the Congress and that's the civil rights movement. So to go into an embassy type structure, U.S. UN, where you have hierarchies and committees and you have to be present. Remember what happened when the Russians walked out of the Security Council in the 1950s. They ended up with a UNSC resolution that established a UN forces in Korea. You don't leave your chair empty for fear of what might happen in your absence. There were details that were just not important to him. There was a pragmatic reason why the Department needed someone up there who understood the system and the requirements. It went beyond just the spying part; but I they thought I would keep Andy Young from making those outrageous remarks. That's impossible. You know, impossible.

The last thing I want to mention is my ultimate transfer to Yemen in the summer of 1978. One bids on your onward assignment about nine months before you are due for transfer. The Department asked if I would consider going back to Beirut as political counselor. By the winter of 1978, the political situation in Beirut had actually improved from what it had been since 1976. Remember we were evacuated in 1975. I told them that I would take the assignment; but I wanted them know that my wife and I had been through some

difficult times. The one thing I didn't want was to be separated at that moment in our relationship. I was assured that families were now being allowed to accompany officers.

Peggy, my wife, and I flew to Beirut to talk to the embassy and to search for an apartment. In those days in Beirut you were given a housing allowance and then you found your own apartment. One of the persons I met was the deputy chief of mission, George Lane. Everything looked set for my assignment to Beirut. I think this trip to Beirut was in the spring. I had not been back in Riyadh long when the security situation in Beirut just went to pot again. To the credit of the Department I had a call from personnel recalling my condition when I accepted the assignment that I go to Beirut with family. I was told that with the deteriorating security situation in Beirut families were not going to be allowed to go. I was asked if my desire not to be separated remained. If it did, they were willing to break my assignment. I said, "I just could not go without my wife." The assignment was broken; but it meant that in May I didn't have an onward assignment, which is unusual.

Two weeks later I had a call from George Lane. George told me that he was not supposed to talk to anyone but he had been chosen by the president to be the next U.S. ambassador to Yemen. He was looking desperately for a deputy chief of mission who spoke Arabic. He had looked at the list of officers at grade and there were none available. He asked if I was willing to consider the job. That would have been a stretch assignment for me -- meaning that the grade of the position in Sana'a was a grade above my personal rank.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: And it was a fantastic assignment for me as well. But I was a little concerned. Again my focus was on my wife and my family. We'd been talking about going to Beirut, which is a modern city that Peggy knew, or to a number of other places, like Europe, where it would be an easier assignment for us as a family. Going to Yemen certainly didn't fit that kind of onward assignment. At the suggestion of a friend, I proposed to Peggy that she go down to Yemen to see how she felt about living there. The ambassador was a friend, Tom Scotese from our Damascus days, and she could stay with him. I told her that this move was going to be her decision. If she wanted to go to Yemen, we would go to Yemen. If not, we would find another assignment. She went to Sana'a, the capital of Yemen, and came back saying "Yes, she thought it would be a great assignment." To be completely honest, I was stunned but pleased knowing that she was fully on board for this move. It was then that I called George back and accepted his offer.

I mentioned that Peggy had been working for Citibank in Riyadh in an administrative position. Citibank actually had a branch in Yemen and, while they were under no obligation toward her, they were very happy to have someone who had worked in the regional headquarters to now work in their Sana'a branch. So they offered her a hire there. So Peggy worked in Sana'a for Citibank during our first year there. So that leads me to my next assignment as DCM in Sana'a, Yemen.

*Q: Would you put this down to the fact that NEA wanted to get a lot of rough pogo posies? I mean a lot of people were shooting at each other in the region, as they're doing right now. But the decision in your case took into account family concerns? I mean you were part of the NEA family and that there's a little more care than say they would be taking in ARA or some other bureau where people have a lot of rather nice assignments and they don't really think about family matters.*

GNEHM: The bureau in those days was exactly as you describe. You really felt like you were part of a family, part of a close knit group. I mentioned to you earlier that as a result of my job in NEA/P, I got to know people in every single office in the bureau just walking around to get press clearances. People knew me. I knew them. In those days people in the bureau looked out after one another. I include the leadership in NEA. It was officers like Tom Boyatt, who was a couple of grades ahead of me, that I turned to with questions about the career. He mentored me and others. There were many in NEA like Tom. And yes, I think that's why I got that phone call that said, "Look Skip, you expressed this strong opinion about being separated from your family and we're willing to break your assignment." There were no negatives even though the Bureau was now stuck without a political counselor for Beirut.

*Q: Well you went to Yemen from when to when?*

GNEHM: I arrived in Sana'a in August of '78 and I left there in the summer of 1981.

*Q: Who was the ambassador?*

GNEHM: The ambassador was George Lane, an NEA veteran who spoke excellent Arabic, an extraordinarily nice person. His wife, Betsy, was daughter of a missionary family and had grown up in Lebanon and Syria. So she spoke fluent Levantine Arabic. She used to laugh and say "I'm an illiterate Arab speaker. I can't read it; but I can speak it." She was a delightful person and a wonderful partner to George.

*Q: Okay, when you went out there at that time what was the situation like?*

GNEHM: Good question because it's important in the modern day context when we're doing the oral history that we recall that in those days there were two Yemens. There was North Yemen, which I'll probably keep calling Yemen in the course of this oral history, and then there was the PDRY, the Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen, a communist dominated state. Its capital was Aden. That region had been a former British colony. The British had tried to set up a confederation using the old sheiks from the various parts of South Yemen to be the collective leadership of the independent state. Within a year, however, the communist party overthrew the government and established a communist dictatorship, with very close ties to the Soviet Union. By the time I arrived in Yemen there was an observation that was illustrative about the situation in the south. South Yemen was probably the only country in the entire world that in 1978 had a smaller population than it did when it became independent (in 1967). The communist regime was so dictatorial that many Yemenis fled the country -- often to North Yemen but also to

Egypt and Saudi Arabia. It was also very poor. The economy had collapsed and there were almost no employment opportunities. The government nationalized most all private property intensifying the exodus. So in any case, it was not a very stable country. It was politically fractured. There were factions within the communist party that kept overthrowing each other. Defeated leaders would flee the country then return from exile when their faction came back into power. This background is important to understand because only a few months after I arrived in Sana'a the South invaded the North, which I'll get to in a minute.

*Q: Okay. You were in a country; did we have relations with the South Yemen?*

GNEHM: We did not have relations with the South and never did throughout its entire history.

I arrived in late August. As with the situation in the south, it is important to understand the politics in North Yemen at the time. Several months before I arrived (actually on October 11, 1977), President Ibrahim al-Hamdi was assassinated in his bordello which sat on a hill overlooking Sana'a. He had been president for a three years and I would say a popular president. Under his leadership Yemen had been as stable as Yemen ever is in terms of domestic tribal affairs. But he was not well liked by the Saudis. He was far too strong a figure in a country the Saudis wanted to dominate. A strong leader, like Hamdi, undermined Saudi ability to influence events in Yemen. He was assassinated and most persons believe it was instigated by the Saudis.

He was replaced by a man by the name of Ahmad Ghashmi. Ghashmi departed the world rather suddenly when a ministerial envoy from South Yemen came to his office in June of '78 and opened his briefcase in front of the president's desk blowing himself and the president off the face of the earth. In other words, it was a South Yemen assassination of the new president of Yemen.

Who comes to power but Ali Abdullah Saleh, a colonel in the Yemen military, who had spent time serving in Taiz, a city in the southern part of North Yemen. At least in those days, Saleh was considered to be close to the Saudis and the rumors were that the Saudis had been behind getting him into the presidency. I say this because I met Ali Abdullah Saleh very early on under not terribly pleasant circumstances. But given that encounter, which I'll explain, and then the South Yemeni invasion in December, I actually developed a good relationship with him -- a relationship that was still good when I last saw him in Sana'a a few years ago. (This was while he was still president.) When I arrived in country as DCM, the ambassador, George Lane, had not yet arrived. The previous DCM, David Ransom, had left the morning before I arrived in the afternoon. I expected him to be at post when I arrived as diplomatic protocol is quite precise that exchange of authority in a diplomatic mission is either at the level of Ambassador to his deputy (as Chargé d'Affaires) or one Chargé to another -- in this case from David to me. But never mind. Life goes on.

The very day I arrived, a very funny thing happened. I was told that there was an important gathering of the diplomatic community that very evening and I had to attend. I went and during the reception I received a huge bear hug from the North Korean Ambassador! I remember seeing him and his entourage making their way across the room in my direction but thought nothing of it until I got this rousing welcome and hug. To this day I wonder if anything happened to him for giving the American Charge such a stunning welcome! It turned out that he had thought I was the new Soviet DCM who arrived the same day as I did!

On my third day I got summoned to the Presidential palace. I was told that the President was very angry, in fact furious. There had been a "Washington Post" story, front page lower left; with a headline something like "CIA predicts Saleh won't last." The article was about the politics that I just mentioned and predicted that he wasn't likely to survive. Well, you can imagine that he was absolutely livid. When I arrived, he started screaming and yelling. The one thing I noticed right away was that he seemed ill at ease -- somewhat uncertain -- as he kept shifting in his seat as if he did not know exactly how to position himself. He also kept shifting his eyes away from me. I took it to be the lack of experience being president of the country; he'd been a colonel in the military. But he was angry about the article and it certainly came at a delicate time as he was trying to consolidate his power. It was an unsettled time for him.

Anyway, Saleh kept yelling at me and all I could think was that this tour in Yemen was likely to be the shortest tour of my career. I imagined Saleh sending me in a car directly from this meeting to the airport, declaring me persona non grata (PNG). When the President seemed to stop to catch his breath, I said, "Mr. President, Mr. President, Mr. President..." He seemed startled at my interruption and asked "What?" I told him that no one in the embassy in Sana'a had anything to do with that article. We had no input in it. We were as surprised when we saw it as he was. I said, "I'm going to make this prediction. I bet you are around a lot longer than the analysts who wrote that article." Well, this was 1978 and he didn't resign until 2013! In the years that followed he and I have often laughed about encounter. Obviously I was not PNGed!

*Q: Did you ever find out what instigated that?*

GNEHM: I think it was an analyst, who saw the two assassinations, an unknown colonel becoming President, and the Saudis playing their games, that simply concluded that Ali Abdullah Saleh could not survive. Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, the Saudi Minister of Defense and Aviation, was the designated prince of the Saud family to deal with Yemen affairs. It was well known that the Saudis paid a lot of money to various Yemeni tribes, playing one against the other, paying different factions within the military, simply doing anything they thought would advance their interests in Yemen.

There was a legend that I heard often in those days. It related the words of old King Abdullah Aziz al-Saud, the founder of the current state of Saudi Arabia, on his deathbed in 1953 to all of his sons around him. He purportedly made them swear to three things. The first was that the monarchical succession in Saudi Arabia would be from his oldest

son to the next son to the next son to the next son so that there would be no infighting in the family. This harbored back to what is called the second Saudi Kingdom, which was in the mid-1800s when the Saudis had established themselves for a second time in the center of Saudi Arabia. The family fought with each other including assassinations and exiles. They so weakened their own grip on power that they were defeated by rival tribal family.

The second point was to never permit Yemen to unite. In other words, keep the two Yemens separated. The Saudis always perceived Yemen as a threat to the Kingdom's survival, given its huge population, their constant tribal in-fighting, their independent spirit, and the volume of arms. I think there were over a million Yemenis living in Saudi Arabia at the time I was in Riyadh. When Ali Abdullah sided with Saddam Hussein when he occupied Kuwait in 1990, the Saudis were both angered and alarmed. They forced large numbers of Yemenis to leave the Kingdom. The Saudis were feared what the Yemenis might do inside Saudi Arabia.

*Q: What did we see vis-à-vis tribal politics and all in the Yemen- And what was in it for us? What did we want out of them?*

GNEHM: The United States' interest was very much to try to maintain stability in the peninsula. There was recognition that the situation inside North Yemen, with tribal factions and infighting created the potential of destabilizing Saudi Arabia. It was and is very clear that the United States' interests on the Arabian Peninsula were linked primarily to Saudi Arabia. Yemen was and is secondary. In fact, I remember a conversation that I had with Jim Placke who was DCM in Jeddah when I was going to Yemen. This conversation was before I left Riyadh. He and I met and talked through the whole gamut of issues of US relations with Saudi Arabia and Yemen. He and I made a pact. We agreed that we were never going to let the Saudi/Yemeni issue become a personal problem between each of us or between the two embassies. I mention this because historically, in the region on occasion embassies have taken on the issues of their country and found themselves in conflict with our embassy in a neighboring country, Jordan and Israel for example or Damascus and Tel Aviv. There had been times when the US ambassadors in Jeddah and Sana'a were at odds over US policy, especially when our ambassador in Yemen believed that bowing to Saudi pressures was not in overall US interests. Whenever that happened it usually resulted in Washington (and Jeddah) reminding Sana'a that our interest with Saudi Arabia were paramount. I knew that. But again, the US did have interests in Yemen including maintaining stability and containing communism and Soviet influence in South Yemen.

*Q: What made the Yemenis so susceptible? Because you know you had various regimes in the Arab world, most of which were rather violently anti-communist.*

GNEHM: Right.

*Q: I mean they might be nationalistic and not nice towards us but anti-communism just didn't seem to fit with the Arab psyche or something.*

GNEHM: You say it did or did not?

*Q: Did not. But maybe it-*

GNEHM: Well the Saudis were vehemently anti-communist because they saw communism as atheism and that is what led the Saudis in many cases throughout the decades to support anti-communist efforts in parts of the world quite far geographically from the Kingdom, such as Nicaragua and Vietnam. For example, an ARAMCO official has documented the fact that, when King Feisal imposed the oil embargo on the US in '73 because of our support for Israel, he got King Feisal to modify the boycott only when he pointed out that the embargo was undermining the U.S. efforts in South Vietnam fighting the communists. The US army and navy, and air force were getting most of their fuel from Saudi Arabia. Faisal told him, again this is documented by the then ARAMCO president, that ARAMCO could resume oil sales to the US military but he wanted no public reference to this change in the boycott.

But I thought you were going to a question on Yemen. You have to understand Yemen and Yemenis, which is difficult to do, I admit. They're very tribal-focused to this day. Loyalties are to themselves and their tribe and the local sheik. Then there is the geography. The coastal areas are at sea level and the capital Sana'a is at 7,500 feet. Other elevations go up to 10,000; there are huge valleys and mountain chains that separate one tribe from another. They love to fight each other. This is their pastime. While soccer is the main sport of other countries, in Yemen it's squabbling! It's fighting; it's stealing sheep and. And then there is retribution. The victim has to get even -- to save face. They fight all the time; but throw a foreigner into the mix and they all turn on foreigners. It's absolutely incredible. In Yemen in '78, you had to remind yourself because we don't have a good sense of history. The Egyptians sent hundreds of thousands of Egyptian troops into Yemen in 1962, '63, in support of the Republican coup against the monarchy, the imam. They were there until after the '67 war when Nasser had to bring them home. He needed troops; he was impoverished and he was trying to survive. So they were there for five years, virtually.

When I arrived in Sana'a in 1978, Yemenis were still telling tales about the civil war between the Republicans (who won) and the Royalists. I remember being told by the Yemeni who was Treasurer of the Republican Government how he fled one night with the entire treasury in a foot locker because they thought the Royalists were going to attack the capital the following day! He went on to tell me a story that underscores how Yemenis feel about foreigners -- even other Arabs in the country to help the Republican Government. He described how the Republicans were on one ridge with the Egyptians with the Royalists deployed on the far ridge. When the royalists began shelling the Republicans, they took out mirrors and flashed that the Egyptians were down at the other end of the ridge. What did the royalists do? They redirected their artillery and started shelling the Egyptians and not the Yemenis!

Let me jump ahead to the present (2016) to say that my advice to the administration in the last three years on how to deal with the troubles in Yemen was don't put U.S. troops

on the ground. It would be the end of us because all the various fighting forces would turn their focus on fighting the foreigner. The USG did actually decide on their own not to deploy forces to Yemen. I don't think it was my advice that convinced them of this, but there you go.

And so, back to understanding Yemen... Traditionally the central government controlled the capital, Sana'a, most (but not all) of the major towns, and most (but not all) of the major highways. In 1978 the central government's authority in outlying areas was tentative at best; and until this day don't have a lot of authority out there in those hills. I used to describe Yemen in this period of time as like Denver, Colorado, in 1870. There were sidewalks, picket fences, beautiful houses, gardens, and everybody well-dressed; but you didn't go out on a picnic in 'them thar hills. There were Indians out there and they weren't always friendly! Well, that's the way it was in Yemen when I posted there.

Now I have to tell you that in the three years that I was there with my family, we loved Yemen. I could go out into the countryside even though we knew there could be some problems. My family and I went all over. We went camping down at the Red Sea. We went climbing the hills and mountains. We traveled in our 4x4 to all kinds of back places including the historic ruins out in Ma'rib, the famous dam. Yes, there were problems. If you took the road to Saada in the north, which is where there's trouble to this day, you would certainly pass through two or three government checkpoints and probably two or three tribal checkpoints. The tribal checkpoints on any given day were collecting something. Today it might be watches. Tomorrow it might be wallets. There were days when they were collecting tires. Tires are a particularly serious problem to lose because you can't keep going. Watches, you can keep driving, right? But if they take your tires you're stuck. But they weren't killing people. They weren't shooting. I know of only one incident in those years of anybody getting wounded. An AID employee was stopped on the Saada road at a tribal checkpoint. One of the tribesmen, who came to demand some item, accidentally shot off his Kalashnikov and a bullet hit the steel rim of the tire and ricocheted up and grazed the AID person's leg.

I remember another incident when Peace Corps volunteers were going on an excursion out to Ma'rib to see the ruins. They were going up this one valley and they stopped around 12:00 one day in a village to buy supplies for the rest of their trip. The village sheik saw that they were there, came over and greeted them, said "Oh, this is wonderful and we want you to know how much we love the Peace Corps and love America. Please come to my house for lunch." They agreed.

So they all went up the hillside to his house for lunch. When lunch was over, they said they had got to get going and the sheik said, "No, you can't go." The Peace Corp volunteers said, "Yes, we have to go soon." The sheik said, "No, you can't go; you're going to be our guests for a while until AID agrees to come and dig a well and build a water reservoir for our village." Word came to the embassy that Peace Corps volunteers were being held hostage by this sheik out in the hinterland and was demanding a well and water reservoir for their release. I called the President and described the problem. He said, "I'll take care of it." I said, "Listen. We've got to get them freed without hurting

them; but we're not going to concede to this demand. We are not going to get in that situation." "Okay, I understand," he said.

Well, two days later the volunteers end up coming into the embassy. I said, "Oh, you got loose." The president didn't call and tell me they were loose. They said, "Yes, yes, yes." I said, "Well how'd you get out?" "Oh," he said, "somebody told the sheik that AID had agreed to do the well and reservoir. So he let us go." We had to put that whole valley off limits for any Americans because when the sheik realized that there had never been such a promise, he threatened to take hostage any American that ever came through his village. But again, my story being that they weren't hurt, we weren't into a situation as of today.

*Q: Well were Egyptians, Soviets, Saudis mucking around there? I mean-*

GNEHM: All the above and more; the North Koreans too.

*Q: Oh yes, the North- obviously. North Korean-*

GNEHM: Oh yes. The Yemenis are wonderfully good at playing everybody against everybody and they do it with aces and spades, part of which you'll hear later. But this does allow me to tell you a funny, funny anecdote.

The day I arrived, I was told by the embassy that there was a very big diplomatic reception that night and that I had to go because if the U.S. embassy was not represented it would be a big, big issue in town. So I went.

I'm in this big ballroom at a hotel with a huge numbers of people, and I'm talking to some colleagues. They pointed out a cluster of diplomats dressed in blue uniforms with little blue hats telling me that they were North Koreans.

And as I was talking, I noticed that one large fellow with two others behind were pushing their way through the crowd headed in my direction. I didn't pay any attention until suddenly the big one comes up to me and gives me a huge bear hug. He starts speaking in Russian and kissing me on both cheeks! I'm thinking what in the hell is going on. And then he turns and goes away. I turned to my own group for an explanation. They didn't have a clue. Then there was pandemonium over among the North Koreans and they all fled the room. It turns out that a new Russian chargé had arrived within a day or two and they hadn't met him yet. They thought I was the Russian chargé. We got a big laugh out of that as well as did several other diplomats. We wondered if they all got called back to North Korea to the gulag or something.

I think that I'm probably the only American diplomat in that period of time that got bear hugs and kisses from the North Koreans.

*Q: Well while you were there was the Iranian revolution going on?*

GNEHM: Yes, indeed it was and that's in 1979. Before I respond to that question, I need first to speak about the war that erupted between the two Yemens.

*Q: Yes, let's take the time, yes.*

GNEHM: The war erupted in December, as I recall. There was panic in Sana'a. I got a call from the president telling me that there had been an invasion by the South. The Southerners were making great progress up a valley, headed towards Sana'a, and would I please come over immediately with my defense attaché so that we could talk about strategy and actions.

So I went over to the Presidency with my military attaché where we met with the President and his chief of staff. The first thing we asked was to show us where the invasion occurred. They unfolded a huge map of Yemen on the coffee table. The president and chief of staff are looking at the map and they turn it halfway around and then they turn it back another way and then they turn it completely around. I realized immediately that neither of them knew how to orient or read a map. So I pretended to be puzzled and I turned the map the right way saying, "So here's Sana'a and Taiz and the border's here. So where did they invade?" Once I'd done that, they showed me the valley and the direction the southern army was taking.

We reported all this to Washington. Of course, Washington was quite aware. The Saudis went berserk that the South was invading. They had a sense that the government in Sana'a was going to collapse. I remember a minister in the Yemeni government that I got to know quite well calling me late one night asking me to come to his house urgently. When I got there, I found him shaking and trembling out of fear. He said, "Skip, the whole North Yemen military has collapsed; they've gone back to their tribes. The road to Sana'a is wide open to them. There is nothing to stop them from reaching Sana'a and I know what's going to happen. Skip, I know if you all don't do something to save us, we are going to all be hung, as we did the royalists, in the square downtown." Well, the government in Sana'a also disappeared. I spoke with George Lane the next morning after I drove to the embassy. "Did anything seem unusual today?" He said, "the traffic wasn't as bad." I said, "Yes, that's because there's no government here anymore; but that's not what I was asking about." He asked what I meant. I said, "Well, the electricity's still running and the water is still running. It just proves that the government is really not very important in this country in keeping things going!"

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia called the President Carter. He was almost in a panic. He told the President that we had to do something and urged the US to provide military assistance to Sana'a to keep North Yemen from falling to the communist south. He said Saudi Arabia would cover the cost. And so we got a telegram the next day not knowing anything about the phone call, that President Carter had made a decision to provide North Yemen with F-5 fighter planes and M-60 tanks within 60 days. The Saudis were going to transfer the tanks to Yemen from their inventory and we would replace them in due course with new ones. Ambassador George Lane and I were incredulous! We thought "are you kidding? This is ridiculous." First of all the South is headed into town like

within a day or two. The F-5 won't arrive for months and even then the Yemenis don't know how to fly them! The only fighter planes they had flown previously were Russian.

*Q: The what?*

GNEHM: The Russian fighter planes.

*Q: Migs?*

GNEHM: Migs and Sukhois. Again, the North Yemenis had never flown an American plane before. We met President Saleh and told him about Carter's decision. He was quite pleased, of course. As I recall, the Saudis did fly in a few tanks several days later. Three or four days later I was over to see the president and we were talking about how things were going. The military attaché who'd been with me when we had met the President and his Chief of Staff was Paul Ruskowitz. He did not believe that there was any invasion that began a controversy that ultimately ended up before a Congressional committee. Ruskowitz went down the highway to the south and parked himself where this the road in the valley identified as the attack point met the main highway. When he returned to Sana'a, he reported that he had seen no military traffic whatsoever. He contended, therefore, that there was no invasion. I said to him, "Well, that's because first of all the southerners haven't gotten that far yet. Secondly, I did not think one could conclude from one day observation at one point on the highway that there had been no invasion.

Well, it turns out that the South Yemeni army never made it to the road. You know what happened? They filled up their vehicles with so much loot as they moved through villages that they had to go home to empty the trucks so they could come back for more loot. Only when they got home, they were having so much fun with the loot and they had done so well that they just never came back. So the South was having the same problems that the North did in terms of discipline and military muscle. As a result the North Yemen government survived.

Then what happens? The Saudis sent a message that they no longer wanted the F-5s to go to the Yemenis and they did not think that they needed to supply anymore tanks as there was no more threat from South Yemen. The White House through the State Department reacted quite negatively pointing out that the President had made a public commitment and we could not just reverse that decision. What we were facing was classic with the Saudis. They were afraid (at the moment of the invasion) that the North was collapsing and the communist South would unify all Yemen. Once there was no longer a threat, their fears turned to a 'too strong' North Yemen. They didn't want the North Yemen military to gain this new military capability. Again, back to my point that the Saudis were always concerned about a threat from Yemen. Now there was no serious threat from the South and, therefore, no need to bolster North Yemen militarily. Well, the President said he was going ahead with the military assistance that we had promised. But for me, one of the problems that I had to face in Sana'a was dealing with the Saudi military mission. The M-60 tanks (at least some of them) had been delivered and it was to have been the Saudi responsibility to provide maintenance support and spare parts -- at least initially. Of

course, what did they do? Since they did not want the Yemenis to get the tanks now that there was no threat from the South, they stopped sending spare parts.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Since we intended to proceed with the military assistance that we had promised, we needed the Saudis to come through with what they had promised. It took a lot of argument in Sana'a and a lot of pressure by our embassy in Saudi Arabia to convince the Saudis to follow through with their commitments.

The F-5s do arrive at some point -- a year later or so. The Saudis had agreed to support the F-5 program as they had with the tanks. Part of the agreement was that the Saudis were going to pay for the training and the spare parts and provide maintenance support as well.

Now, we watched a weird situation develop that could only occur in Yemen! The Russians, who had supplied Migs and Sukhois of course, signed a contract with the communist Chinese to provide the maintenance and support for the Yemen air force's Soviet planes, right. Who provided the maintenance and support for the Saudi F-5 fleet in Saudi Arabia? The nationalist Chinese (ROC). So who did the Saudis send to Sana'a? The Taiwanese Chinese. So you had the Saudi-funded Taiwanese Chinese on one side of the airport with the F-5 program, and the Peking (PRC) Chinese supported Soviet Mig fighters on the other side. I don't think there was any other place on earth where the two Chinas were training the same military at the same time. And over time there were two different groups of pilots in competition with each other -- one trained on Soviet aircraft and another flying US made fighter planes! This was a good example of how the Yemenis could handle both Chinese -- play both sides. The PRC did not withdraw because the Taiwanese were there because they had a lot of influence and presence in Yemen which they did not want to lose. In addition to the military training, they had huge road construction projects and lots of other aid programs. The PRC obviously calculated that their relationship with North Yemen was more important than contesting the ROC presence. I remember that the Sana'a government claimed in public that they're not really Taiwanese but Saudis! My response was "Give me a break." But, you know, it survived, absolutely survived. Incredible.

Now you asked me earlier about '79 and the Iranian revolution. Yes, it impacted us but not due to any trouble in Yemen itself or in the region, but because of heightened anxiety in Washington. The Carter Administration decided, given the hostage situation in Tehran, that there should be a drawdown of U.S. presence throughout the region to avoid more hostage taking. Yemen was a particular focus on Yemen because some official discovered that there was a "Shia" population in Yemen. It was obvious, therefore, that they would be sympathetic to the Iranian revolution and thus a direct threat to the American mission in Sana'a. Now what were they referring to? They were referring to a sect called the Zaydis, which we hear a lot about today because they're called Houthis. They're located in the Saada region in the northern part of North Yemen. They were the royalists back in the civil war in Yemen, supported the imam, and to that extent were fairly close to the Saudis even though they were Zaydis and the Saudis are Sunni

Wahhabis. We kept telling Washington these Zaydis have no relationship to Iran at all. In fact, their religious practices have migrated so much in the direction of Sunni Islam in particular the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam that it is almost unrecognizable as a Shiite group. We stressed that they don't have any interest in the revolution in Iran. Washington ultimately conceded the point; but they still ordered us to downsize by a certain percent. The Ambassador asked me to work out the numbers. I had to go to AID, to Peace Corps, and other agencies that operated under the ambassador's authority to get their approval for a reduction in force. And from this experience I learned a very important lesson for the rest of my career.

It turned out that the other agencies were more willing to cut dependents, in particular, and there were dependents who were more willing to go voluntarily while the Foreign Service core from the State Department were less willing to go. The State dependents winged it through trouble and said that this is our region and we're not going to leave. We did succeed in reducing the size of the mission but, as everyone knows from the Department's history, once you evacuate you don't have any authority to bring people back. That's a Washington decision. And while the trouble in Iran went on, Washington refused to allow people to return even though we had no problems or incidents in Yemen at all. As a result the anger and frustration of the AID and Peace Corps directors and other agency heads grew. There was rising animosity toward State that their dependents were out and ours were in -- a sense that they were suffering and we weren't -- that we had somehow plotted with Washington to avoid our drawdown. They felt that we knew dependents would be out a long time and we took care of ourselves and not them. In honesty I felt for them; they had a legitimate complaint, primarily because I didn't think dependents should still be out of the country. But I learned from this experience and, when I faced orders for evacuation later in my career, I made sure that all agencies, including State, shared in the reductions.

*Q: Was there an Ayatollah Khomeini strain going through the sermons and things like this?*

GNEHM: In Yemen not at all. Not at all. He had no following. The Iranian revolution was some distance away, something happening in Persia. The Yemenis were still very much focused on themselves, their internal problems, etc. Economic issues were of dominating concern. We haven't talked much about it; but Yemen is an extremely poor country. Add economic concerns to other internal troubles, the troubles with the South, and the interference of Saudi Arabia, you can understand that Yemenis were not too focused on a revolution so far away. That at least was the case in 1979.

*Q: Well there's a significant Yemeni community in the U.S.*

GNEHM: Yes, particularly in Michigan.

*Q: In Michigan?*

GNEHM: And why? Because they came to the United States taking jobs in the automotive industry, in very large numbers. I'm glad you brought this up because, when I was there in those years, we were issuing about 3,600 Social Security checks to Yemenis. These are Yemenis who came and worked 20 and 30 years in the United States and when they retired where did they go? Back home. They never lost their identity, they never lost their ties with Yemen.

*Q: And they lived fairly well.*

GNEHM: Oh yes, they lived very well on a Social Security check in the hills. Housing and the cost of living, in general, was much, much lower. There were some issues, a variety of different ones that are common even today. For example, we had Yemenis who came to the States, stayed here and married American wives but who also, when they came back to visit Yemen for the summers, married Yemeni wives. So they had two families. Sometimes the American wife knew about it; but often she didn't. And then there was the child custody issue.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: If there were children in the States and the Yemeni father decided to return to Yemen on a permanent basis, he would take the children and not tell the wife.

*Q: Well did you have the problems that many consular officers do of trying to help the American wives smuggle their children back to the States?*

GNEHM: There was at least one of those incidents while I was in Yemen, where an American wife hired a group to come into the country and take out a couple of children, as I recall. It's an ugly and nasty situation.

*Q: Back in Washington with all this turmoil going on in Iran and difficulties elsewhere, how did Yemen fit in? I mean what did we want from Yemen from a Washington perspective?*

GNEHM: Well again, in these years Washington was much focused on developments in Iran and the hostage situation. The US relationship with Saudi Arabia was hugely important, particularly after the fall of the Shah and the end of the Twin Pillar Policy -- a policy that looked to Saudi Arabia and Iran to be responsible for the security of the Persian Gulf. Saudi Arabia was the important key country for the US at this point in time and Yemen policy was always measured against Saudi interests. Our policy objective was to keep things calm and stable -- don't have any more problems. Yet at the same time, we in the embassy in Sana'a were trying to nurture our new relationship with the Yemeni government, which now had a military assistance component as well as an AID program. The AID program wasn't that large -- about \$8 million a year. The AID program, by the way, was not entirely a positive experience with the Yemenis. The president often complained that he and Yemen didn't get very much of the money. He noted the amount of money that was spent on salaries, cars and home leave. He wasn't wrong about that.

There was also a long lead time to get projects going, even longer when implemented in a country in constant turmoil. There wasn't a lot to show for what we were doing since our focus was in agriculture, education, and health. We were not into major infrastructure projects like the Chinese -- road building and airports -- things that looked big and shiny. On the other hand, the Yemenis weren't telling us to close down the AID program; they just wanted us to double it.

*Q: What was happening in South Yemen where we had no diplomatic relations? Yet they are adjacent to Oman. Did you get involved in any of that? Or is that too far away?*

GNEHM: Only in a marginal way. . South Yemen had been supporting an insurgency in western Oman; but that had been largely suppressed by the time I reached Sana'a. The Sultan of Oman with support from the Shah (with Iranian troops) and Jordan had defeated the insurgency. What we did watch carefully was the constant political turmoil in the PDRY as that had a way of impacting on North Yemen.

*Q: What about the schooling? Did many Yemenis go to schools in the United States?*

GNEHM: Very, very few. Yemen had remained a very closed country until the imam was overthrown in 1962. At one point in the late 1950s, the imam decided to send a number of students to the US. I believe it was 50. They did well and returned to Yemen and played an important role in subsequent years. After the 1962 coup the Republican government was very socialist minded and very much tied to the Egyptians. So there was little inclination send large numbers to the United States.

*Q: Well now the Egyptians in this period, where stood we with the Egyptians?*

GNEHM: In the '78-'81 period?

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Well much better off than in preceding years. Sadat was president following Nasser's death in 1970. This was also the period of the Camp David Accords. The Egyptian presence in Yemen was diplomatic and there were some advisors but not a large presence.

*Q: Did we try to use our influence on developing relations between Yemen and the Israelis or was that beyond the pale?*

GNEHM: No, but your question sparks a memory that I haven't thought about in a long time. When I was in Yemen, there still was a small minority of Jews, Yemeni Jews, a remnant of a community that went back centuries. In fact, at one point Yemen was a Jewish monarchy, was a Jewish state; but in the late '40s, after the establishment of Israel, there was a major effort on the part of Israel to move large numbers of Yemeni Jews to Israel. So the numbers of Jews in Yemen dropped dramatically. Nevertheless,

there was a residual community. While I was in Sana'a, a Jewish faction based in Brooklyn called the Neturei Karta, a religiously ultra conservative group that opposed the establishment of the state of Israel as a violation of the scriptures, decided they would take on the Jewish community in Yemen as wards. So the rabbi, whose name I've forgotten, out of New York City, and a couple of colleagues decided to come to Yemen. We were asked by the Department to facilitate their entry so I did have to go to the government to get visas to permit them come. The government agreed but was wary about it and thought it strange that there was a Jewish group that didn't like Israel. The delegation went out into the hinterland with a government escort to visit Jews near Saada in the north. They came back to the embassy absolutely appalled at the condition of the Jewish community certainly in economic terms but importantly in religious terms. There were, of course, no rabbis; there were no instruments for circumcision and others religious items that are very important to have. They said these are Jews who can't be Jewish because they don't have the means to. So they wanted to bring in these things to give to the community so they would have them. Then, they then raise the possibility of bringing someone to Yemen to be permanent to help them. The Israeli government came to the U.S. Government and protested our support for this group because of their anti-Zionism. The Israeli Government made clear that they were the right authority to be dealing with the Yemeni Jewish question, not this group. Yet, the Neturei Karta people were American citizens and we had to be helpful to them as we would with any American citizens. The group visited Yemen several times before the end of my tour. In fact, even after I returned to the U.S., I was still their contact man as far as they were concerned in terms of problems in Yemen. They did do some good things for the community; but it didn't really change that community's situation very much. I did visit them once with the Neturei Karta and then later alone. These Jewish families lived in villages far off the main highway. The numbers were small, maybe two Jewish families out of 20 or 30 families in a village. They still were the artisans or the carpenters in the communities.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: They told me that they felt was no hostility from the local tribe, and noted that in fact they lived among them with no difficulty. In Israel the Israeli government said, "Well that's what they'll tell Americans because they won't get in trouble with the Yemenis." Yet my own assessment was that they were poor, absolutely very, very poor but so were the villages in which they lived. It is true that they were not able to practice their religion the way the Jewish communities in Israel or the States would want them to. No, they couldn't because they were so small number; they had no synagogue; they had no rabbi.

*Q: How about your relations with tribes? Did you spend a lot of time visiting tribal chiefs?*

GNEHM: I did. I did go out quite often and it was fun. These were excursions sometimes overnights in villages.

*Q: Go sit on a rug and-*

GNEHM: Yes. And climb up to the top floor in Yemeni houses. You know the Yemeni houses are quite interesting. They're multiple storied with a room on the top which is a sitting room where they chew their qat and gossip and waste away half a day. There is often a great view looking out over the mountains and valleys. I knew government officials in Sana'a who were from the tribes and, when they were going to go out for visits, they would be willing --even happy -- to take me with them. I went to weddings and for special occasions and holidays. Yemen was a fun place. The people were very hospitable and friendly. Local politics was interesting and Yemen's role in the peninsula was intriguing.

One observation from my time in Yemen is worth mentioning. I served many years in various ME countries. Yet I was a bit taken aback when I got to Sana'a to see how important Africa was in their world perspective. Once you see it, it is obvious. While as Arab and Moslem they certainly have one eye looking at the Arab world, they are right across from Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sudan. There is significant movement of people across the red Sea. The Yemenis were interested in what was going on across the water -- even more so today. You have refugees from Somalia and Eritrea, some of whom are affiliated with terrorist groups. Anyway it was just a reminder that an Arab Muslim country in the region has other interests that go beyond the more traditional Arab concerns.

*Q: Were the Saudi princes messing around with tribal politics in Yemen?*

GNEHM: All the time, constantly. Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, who was the Minister of Defense and Aviation, was the senior prince in the family designated to deal with Yemen. He implemented Saudi policy aimed at keeping Yemen disunited. Essential in carrying out the policy was to play tribes off against each other. Money was the chosen instrument of influence. So there was a constant flow of Yemenis to his ministry dealing with his underlings. The Yemenis were often there collecting bags of money.

There was one particularly unfortunate incident that I remember well. The Foreign Minister of Yemen, when I arrived, was Abdullah Asnaj. Asnaj was a very competent, experienced international affairs professional in the region. He traveled extensively in the region and globally. He attended foreign ministers' conferences and Arab League meetings. His deputy foreign minister, Ibrahim al-Kibsi, was coming back from Riyadh when he was arrested at Sana'a Airport. The diplomatic pouch he was carrying was opened by the security people and in it were letters from Prince Sultan to Asnaj that implicated Asnaj in a plot to overthrow President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Both Asnaj and his deputy were thrown into prison. Ibrahim was my primary contact at the Foreign Ministry during my first year and a half in Sana'a. He was a real professional and very open, very pleasant, and very facilitative when there were issues. For example there were two Americans who came into the country and were arrested for being CIA spies, allegedly. They were asking too many questions; they were seeing too many people that the government didn't like. Ibrahim actually went to the General Intelligence Directorate and ultimately spoke to the President convincing him that they were not CIA. Working with

Ibrahim we actually got them released and deported.

I believed Ibrahim when he said he was unaware of the contents of the pouch that he was carrying. To this day he swears to me he did not know what was in that pouch. I found myself as a diplomat torn and caught in a dilemma. I think this is a good story that illustrates the dilemma of a foreign diplomat working in a foreign country. I had extraordinarily good relations with the president and others but I also felt close to Ibrahim. I knew that if I said or spoke to the government in any way on his behalf, it would probably be interpreted as me working for the Saudis to try to get out of jail somebody that they wanted out of jail. And in fact it might hurt him. But I didn't want Ibrahim and his family, because I'd gotten to know his wife also, to think I had no concern for Ibrahim.

You know what I did? I talked to my wife, Peggy. I said, "Peggy, in this culture I can't do anything but I want you to go to Ibrahim's house and see his wife and tell her point blank how upset I am about his arrest. Tell her that I fear doing something right away that might hurt him but that I would never cease thinking about how I might be able to help him at some point." She did it. She went and saw Ibrahim's wife. The women get away with things in the local culture. I mean the government is not going to see my wife's visit as any sort of sinister thing because who would use a woman in that way.

*Q: Besides, the woman's control is very powerful underneath the surface and if they mess with that they're in trouble.*

GNEHM: Yes, so true. Ibrahim was ultimately released and, in fact, given a sinecure in an economic position. He was later assigned as an Attaché in the Yemeni Embassy in Washington where he still resides. To this day Ibrahim and I remain friends. Asnaj was also ultimately released and went into exile in Cairo. This incident illustrates how deeply involved the Saudis were and are in Yemeni politics.

*Q: Did you have a problem interpreting the relationship between Riyadh and Sana'a to the BEA Bureau in Washington?*

GNEHM: Actually no. I attribute it to the interpersonal networking that you asked me about earlier in NEA. Also important was that understanding with Jim Placke, the DCM in Jeddah. The fact that I had served in our Embassy in Saudi Arabia and John West was still the ambassador. George Lane was very prominent and well known in NEA and the Department. Jim Placke and I kept our word. Whenever it looked like Saudi-American issues and Yemen-American issues might somehow conflict and cause trouble, we were on the phone with each other or coordinating cables -- working on how we would fix it and how we would deal with it. And we avoided most of the issues that might and could have queered things.

*Q: How did you deal with the qat situation? Because this is really a major part of the culture there.*

GNEHM: It is very much a part of the culture of the culture. Qat is a tree. They chew the new tender leaves. They gather together in the late afternoon and sit together until late in the evening. As they sit and talk, they chew holding great wads in their cheek. They look deformed, actually. What is not well understood about qat is that it is a stimulant, not a suppressant as most drugs are. The result is more intense senses. They are wide awake, to say the least. They also drink lots of scotch afterwards to bring themselves back down. And you're right; they get together and I guess the word "pontificate" comes to mind. They just go off into all kinds of theories and discussions and poetry and recitations. They love doing this sort of a thing but they waste hours and hours of life doing this. Even worse due to the high demand for qat, most of the agricultural land is now used to qat, a cash crop. Coffee production, for which they were famous, mocha coffee, has almost disappeared. Further complicating Yemen's economic stress, qat takes large quantities of water which Yemen doesn't have. Yemen is already one of the poorest water resource countries in the world. In the days I was there, qat was not on a list of prohibited items for the United States; it has since been added as a narcotic and you can't bring it into the U.S. But there you go; part of culture.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Can I just add one fact about the American presence in Yemen. There was a group of Baptist missionary doctors in a town about halfway toward the southern city of Taiz. They ran a hospital for decades. I mention it because in subsequent years a radical Islamic group attacked the hospital and killed a number of doctors and nurses. It was tragic and the truth was that they were greatly respected by the local population. They were a very important American presence in the country those days.

*Q: Well this is probably a good place to stop. And where'd you go next?*

GNEHM: I came back to the United States. I can probably handle a couple of things really quickly.

*Q: Sure.*

GNEHM: For the next one, I had to leave Yemen about two months before I intended in late June because I received word that my father was terminally ill. In my opinion the Department of State does take care of its personnel. They brought me back to the US on early departure so that I could be with my father before he died.

My next assignment was to the office of Senator Edward Kennedy under the Pearson Program, an initiative of both the Department and Congress to have Foreign Service Officers work in Congressional offices.

*Q: To what?*

GNEHM: To Senator Kennedy's office where I worked in his foreign policy section for a one year detail. I mention this because I often, tongue in cheek but not entirely, thought this was some sort of manipulative plot by someone unknown to me! Here is am, a Georgia boy from 30 miles south of Plains, Georgia. I told you about my relationship with the Carter Administration. And I am now being assigned to the one man who challenged Carter in the Democratic primary the summer before and many people say Kennedy's challenge weakened Carter severely in his effort to run. And they stick me there!

In truth I had a very interesting assignment.

*Q: And so, was your experience with Senator Kennedy a good one?*

GNEHM: Yes. It was very interesting and I learned a lot. I learned how a Congressional office works. Here you come out of a system where there are clearances and you're very careful about words and into an office that is very decentralized. I was assigned to work with Jan Kalicki, the Senator's foreign policy advisor. Once he asked me in Massachusetts, where there is a large Portuguese community very pro-Kennedy. After I had written the article, I went to see the chief of staff to see who needed to clear its contents. He said Jan's clearance was all that was needed. When I observed that the Senator had not seen it and could well be asked about it at some point, he said that the Senator did not need to see it. If he was asked about the article, he would know what to say. I went back to my office thinking that I would never be able to do this at the State Department -- just write something and send it out. But that's the way it was in the Senator's office.

I observed firsthand something that people have written about -- the Kennedy machine. The Kennedy machine started with JFK and RFK and now Teddy. It was a group of people who shared the 'Kennedy' ideology and who were loyal to the individual, worked for him and had his welfare in constant focus. It was their politics as well. It was a machine. It wasn't just a man. It was a big machine.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: And so it operated. If the chief of staff said it was good to go or if Jan Kalicki said it was good to go, then that was it.

*Q: Well I recall some of the earlier oral histories I did 24 years ago. People talked about what control officers experienced when they supported Kennedy during visits when he was a very junior senator traveling around Latin America. He was pretty wild and wooly as far as young ladies and young senators were concerned.*

GNEHM: Well I would say again that I learned a lot working in Senator Kennedy's office. Of course, Senator Kennedy is dead and I grew to respect him; but there was this one time that I saw the Senator at his petulant best! There was a vote called on the Senate

floor. It was a vote on an issue that the Jewish lobby groups felt strongly about and desired to see passed. I can't remember the specifics but, when I went into office to brief him on the topic, he threw the briefing paper on the floor and said he wasn't going to vote for this bill. I remember him calling it outrageous. He said he didn't believe in it and the Jewish groups needed to learn some lessons (unspecified). His chief of staff said, "You don't have any choice, Senator; you've got to vote for this because it's the way it is. You've got to vote for it; there's no other way out of it." The Senator said, "I'm not going to. I'm not going to and that's that." He pitched a little bit of a temper tantrum and the chief of staff repeated, "Well you're going to have to and you need to go to the Senate floor right now. Skip, take him out to vote." The chief of staff leaves the office. Kennedy goes out another door from his private office and he goes into the gym for senators marked clearly "senators only." I go back to tell the chief of staff that Kennedy refused to go to the floor and had gone to the senators' gym. He went to the gym and was hollering at the door for the Senator to come out. Finally he enters the gym and virtually drags the Senator out. He said again, "You've got to go over to vote." Kennedy went back to his office and locked his door. Eventually he does go and he votes for the bill.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: The other thing that I learned was how the Jewish community can have the influence it has on members of Congress. I have often used this insight to try to explain American policy on the Arab-Israeli dispute and the influence of the Jewish community in American politics.

Kennedy is making a trip; it's a fundraising trip. I go to see the chief of staff who is writing some notes on possible questions the Senator might be asked on his trip. I asked some question about the audiences at various stops that led the chief of staff to stop what he was doing and say "I'll give you a lesson in politics."

Now, I don't have all the facts exactly right but the point is there. Kennedy was going to fly to Chicago for lunch, to Los Angeles for dinner, up either that night or the next morning to San Francisco for breakfast and back to St. Louis for a luncheon. I'm not sure whether it was lunch or dinner; but you get the point. He said "Skip, we've got a \$1000 a plate dinner in Chicago for 500 people. I called the Jewish groups in Chicago and sold 400 tickets. I made about more than 40 phone calls to try to sell the last 100. You got my point, Skip?" And it was true at every single stop because when he traveled, the Zionist Organization of America or AIPAC or the synagogue community of a particular city, whatever the groups were, the answer was quickly "Hey yes, I'll take 30 tickets or 50 or 100." They then sell them to the synagogues or either they pay for them themselves and hand them out to the leadership. But to get the other hundred \$1000 tickets sold, it was frustrating. "I'll buy one, my wife can't come, you know." It's fundraising. It's the way that community supports candidates financially that ultimately is important in how the senator goes and votes on the floor. Members are wary at jeopardizing such an important source of funding needed for their reelection. So I teach this as a lesson in American politics.

*Q: Well, okay. So what are we picking up the next time?*

GNEHM: We pick up the next time when I go back to the Department. I go back as head of the junior officer division in personnel often referred to in those days as “JO.”

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

*Alright, now we have- you got a minute or two?*

*Q: I'll start with Monique. Do you have anything-?*

*INTERN MONIQUE: I don't have any questions so thank you for coming to speak with us again.*

*INTERN #2: I don't have any either.*

*INTERN #3: I have one. You mentioned when you started the Yemen job that you were deputy chief of mission but it was kind of like a jump in your career. So was that a hard transition or were there any challenges in taking that position the first time?*

GNEHM: That's a good question. I would say the rank itself is not an issue. I mean I didn't have anybody in my staff saying oh, he's only an FSO-1.

*Q: Rank was not overly important. Most of the time when you get to a place what your job is is important.*

GNEHM: But your underlying question is a really good one. The fact is that this is the first time I would have been a deputy chief of mission and that's an extraordinarily important position in any mission. Not nearly important as the ambassador. The personality and leadership of the ambassador marks everything. Everything. You can't have a DCM who corrects an ambassador or who makes up for the shortcomings of the ambassador. No, you can't. But a good deputy chief of mission is the manager of the post for the ambassador, takes the day to day issues, and is sometimes the buffer. This would have been the first time I was in that kind of a role. I think the fact that I had been in the job in Riyadh where I was in fact in charge of an office, even a very small one, was important in preparing me for the job in Sana'a. I didn't have the interagency cluster that I found in Sana'a but I had to deal with the military what was like an office outside the embassy. I like to think, too, that I understand, like, and work well with people and that people skill is really, really important when you're in a leadership position like the deputy chief of mission. The ambassador himself was a seasoned ambassador from the system who knew how it worked and who was good with people as well. So we were a good team. I've spoken a lot about what I personally did and it would be totally misleading or wrong if I have left the perception that I was doing the Ambassador's work. We were a team and George Lane a true professional. We each did what was required at the time. Many of the stories that I told you were incidents that came up when he wasn't in country or when it seemed more appropriate for me to be doing something

than him. So I'm telling you that, if he were doing his version of the story, he would be telling you about how he called Washington about the decision to provide Yemen sophisticated military equipment, etc.

In summation you learn in these jobs. The real point is to try to do things in a way that, if you do make a mistake you can recover or you can put it right. Then you need to be honest enough to admit it. The evacuation issue that I discussed was one that we didn't handle well.

*Q: What was the evacuation issue?*

GNEHM: This was the drawdown that Washington insisted on after the Iranian seizure of our embassy in Teheran. As I explained, I worked to get the numbers down and ultimately the drawdown was preponderantly in non-State offices. A huge percentage of our staff at the time was in AID and other agencies. SO in any case most of those designated to leave post were going to be from other agencies. The issue was that no State employees or dependents opted to leave.

*INTERN #3: You mentioned on the Peace Corps incident while you were in Yemen; how did you decide whether it was too dangerous a situation for them to operate safely? How much of that program closed down?*

GNEHM: It had to be a guess -- meaning the assessment of the threat was not based on absolute calculations. When we felt that the hostility between tribes or against the central government had grown to such an extent that it was no longer possible to have volunteers safely out in the hinterland, then we had to pull them back to the city. When we first posted them in a village, we understood that they were under the protection of the sheik. When we began to have doubts as to whether tribes would protect the volunteers, then we had to decide to close down the program. It was a good program and I will tell you that the volunteers loved it. It was not an easy decision.

*Q: You know, I mean it's one thing, you know, to be teaching English in Brasilia but to be up in the hills of Yemen, I mean you're really in a different world.*

GNEHM: I have a very close friend in my church whose son had a Fulbright in Yemen. This would have been five or six years ago, before the current trouble. He found Yemen the same fascination that we're talking about even as recently as that. He talks about how he and several other foreigners who liked to rock climb went outside of Sana'a with their ropes and gear to where the cliffs were. The villagers came out to watch. My friend is a very outgoing person. So he asked them if they would like to try. At first the answer was no. And then two of the young guys tried and they liked it. The Americans ended up creating a club in the village to rock climb. So yes, Yemen can be entrancing.

*Q: Okay well, thank you; I guess we'll pick this up next time when you're back to Washington, dealing with junior officers.*

*Today is the 14<sup>th</sup> of August, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you're in Washington. What period were you in Washington?*

GNEHM: I came back to Washington in the summer of 1981 and I departed for my assignment in Amman in 1984 as deputy chief of mission. I was there for almost three years.

*Q: Okay, we may be retracing ourselves a bit but what were you up to then?*

GNEHM: The first year I was in Washington I was in the Pearson Program that assigns about 40 Foreign Service officers each year to various members of Congress. I was assigned to Senator Kennedy's office.

*Q: To the Pearson Program.*

GNEHM: Yes, It's a very good program.

*Q: Well from all accounts from many people it exposes people in the Foreign Service and in the military, too, to the workings of the government.*

GNEHM: It's a different approach to often the same issues and it's useful when you're in the Executive Branch to know how the Legislative Branch approaches things. It's very important. It helped me over a longer career to deal with congressional delegations, staffers and others because I could relate a bit to the environment in which they were operating.

I came back to the Department into a personnel job, heading what was called the JO (junior officer) division in personnel. Junior Officer was the term that we used in those days to refer to entry level officers. I headed that division for not quite a year during which about 350 new officers entered the Foreign Service.

*Q: What was your impression of them and attitude and all?*

GNEHM: I felt we were getting top notch people into the Foreign Service. And, as you know, I later became director general and I maintained my interest in this group of new officers. I felt the same about the quality of our new officers when I was the DG. The Foreign Service Institute through the A-100 course basically trains the new officers, but the Junior Officer Division in personnel worked very closely with FSI. During that A-100 course new officers are asked to submit preferences for their first assignments. It was my office that made the assignments. We were responsible for officers during the period in which they are untenured which is usually four to five years. Some JOs get tenured in three years, but for most new officers they remain under the JO Division for their initial and second assignment and advising for them during that time.

*Q: Looking back on my time I spent quite a bit of time as a supervisory officer in consular affairs and I may have mentored but not- I didn't even know what the word*

*meant back then. It wasn't used in my time but I think it's- for a long time, at least during my career, I didn't have people leaning on me or sending either instructions on how best to mentor a young officer. Was this an issue at all when you were working with the junior officers?*

GNEHM: It very definitely was an issue. Many of our new officers go into consular positions. It's required. During the first two tours they have to serve at least one tour (at least one year) in consular work. One reason is the statutory requirement that we provide consular services worldwide; but it is also good for all officers to have a working knowledge of consular issues. We had and still have large numbers of junior officers serving in consular sections. That was probably the most significant problem that I had to deal with during the time that I was in this job. I had to try to deal with morale problems and issues at certain posts. For example, I had actually went to Mexico City to deal with morale problems and issues the post was having with their junior officers. We had a similar problems in the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and in London as well, a big post. Do you know what the problem is? In my opinion, the issue was (and it's not a very good commentary on the Foreign Service) that you have very, very intense, excited, and committed young officers. You had, in most posts that I mentioned senior consular officers heading the section who were very good; but the middle management of those sections was terrible. I realize I'm making gross generalizations.

*Q: I agree absolutely but-*

GNEHM: In my personal view it was people who were not doing that well and who ended up being stuck or stay in the middle management positions, such as head of the American interest section or head of the visa section or non-immigrant visa section. And they tended, in many instances, to resent the new officers' enthusiasm and excitement. They wanted to put the young officers in their place rather than encouraging the young officers to broaden out or to at least listen to them. It was often lecturing and hectoring and I had to deal with this problem on more than one occasion.

*Q: How'd you deal with it?*

GNEHM: In the first instance, I went to post because I think you deal with people best on a face to face basis. I began by having reviewed the issue with the head of the section before I went; I always met with him first to let everybody know who's in charge and so you're not undercutting them. I then held a meeting privately with the group of new officers or at least all who wanted to come. I then met individually when there were individual issues just to let them talk, just let them work through with me what their concerns were. I would then go back to the supervisor in hopes of working out ways of them dealing with any issues that I had found. What I found in almost every case was that openness of communication made a big, big difference. I would explain to new officers that they had to think of the bigger career; they needed to place their current situation in the context of a career. You need to do your work well. People who come to see you are expecting good service, good treatment. I told them to think about those kinds of things and not always be depressed or held back by the attitude of others. And I did not hesitate

to say that this is life. You're going to run into people who are going to resent you for your ambitions or who are not as good as you perhaps, even though they're over you, and they have their own problems that they're dealing with that you have to learn to deal with yourself. You won't have this problem throughout your career but, it does happen in life - - whether in the Foreign Service or the private sector.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: And it helped. I had established myself with most of them during their time in A100, not all of them because some of them would have come in before I was in this job. But when they were in the A-100 I was often out at FSI (Foreign Service Institute), I went to all the off-sites because there you're in a very informal situation, maybe playing games in the evening and interacting in a more casual atmosphere than back in Washington. I at least established myself as someone that they trusted. I had a solid base from which to work. Those officers who knew me would tell those who didn't know me, "Oh, Skip is good. Yes, you want to tell Skip exactly how you feel." Having that kind of reputation was very important.

*Q: One of the things I've noticed with young Foreign Service officers in consular posts where I've been, particularly where there's a desire to get the hell out of the country and move to the United States and they'd use any means possible, visitors' visas, what have you to get to the US. Many of the young people had never had somebody look them in the eye and lie. You know, they just weren't used to- I mean, they'd gone through a system where, you know, lying was not, particularly blatant lying, was not an accepted thing. And all- and all of a sudden- And you know, I used to find I had to give sort of talks, don't take this personally, these are people, they want to get out and we've got some crazy regulations, not crazy but I mean we have these regulations. In their eyes all they have to do is get past this guy or gal and get a visa; my whole life is going to change. And I told them, you know; don't get too upset about the fact that they're trying to get around you. But it did bother them because I think people coming out of our system are inured to, you know, dealing with people who were lying. I mean, it's-*

GNEHM: Oh, I think you're quite right about that. In fact, as you mention that, I think of my visit to Beijing. I went there specifically because of problems with new officers in the consular section. In the course of trying to communicate and deal with their concerns what I learned, which was a lesson that I then used elsewhere and when I was the Director General. One of the big problems that the consular officers were facing in Beijing had to do with Chinese-Americans who were at the window. Up would come the Chinese applicant, who would demand to see an American, refusing to talk to "that Chinese" on the other side of the window. I did not matter that the officer explained that he/she was an American of Chinese descent. Applicants refused to believe that, claiming that to the person was probably working for the Chinese government. They were insulting, also. And so the Chinese-Americans, I'm talking about now the American officers of Chinese descent, were really demoralized. What was missing was the failure on the part of the senior consular officers in the section to actually recognize this, listen to their problems and help them work through it -- just the thing you were talking about.

How do you deal with people who insult you or come up and lie to you? In this case it was a morale issue, too. And the mid-levels were just not understanding or sympathetic.

*Q: This is a day in the consular ranks. This is always a problem. There's a general shifting; junior officers come and go in the consular section. We have the bright ones and the ones that aren't too bright and all but I mean basically it was bright ones but there's a falling off and also there's always been a certain movement from staff ranks, secretarial ranks or administrative ranks to become consular officers. And these often are, I mean, they're alright but I mean they're up against people who are probably literally the best and the brightest. And they resent it and the resentment shows through.*

GNEHM: Yes, this is an issue that I had to deal with.

I would like to share with you something you wouldn't have thought to ask me about. There is an agreement, which still exists, between the CIA-State agreement that permits the Agency to place certain officers in our A-100 class for the purpose of providing those officers with better cover. Participating in the A100 course gives them an understanding of the State Department that they would not normally have when they go straight out of Langley on assignment without having had any common experience with the State Department. I was approached by my boss, who had been called in by the then Director General. The DG told my boss that the Deputy Secretary had ordered that we accept a CIA employee requiring deep cover into the next A100 class. Specifically, we would not be disclosing to other officers in the A100 class that the individual was from the CIA. This was a violation of the terms of our agreement with the CIA. The agreement that they could put people in the A-100 course also included their agreeing that we would identify these CIA people to the other members of the class. That was fair and reasonable. In this particular case I was told this officer would not be identified. I was furious and angry about it. After my objections had been heard over more than one occasion, I was told that I was not being asked but ordered to carry out the Deputy Secretary's decision. I was told that I had an option, which was to resign from my position, which I was not intending to do. I had made my argument and lost my case. The reason behind this exception was that the CIA was trying to place an officer in the embassy in Moscow under very deep cover.

No one could imagine what then happened. Now, this matter is all in the public domain so what I am going to discuss is no longer secret. So this officer joined the Foreign Service and assigned to the A-100 course. He was an extraordinarily popular figure who was well liked within the class. The Agency gave me a position at the embassy in Moscow in the Budget and Fiscal (B&F) Section, which I was to use to assign him there. And this is when the problems start. The first problem was assignments. We actually had another position in the embassy in Moscow for a junior officer in the same class. In the class there happened to be a tandem couple and one was going to be assigned to the State position. Collectively, the class decided that none of them would bid on the B&F position to enable both tandem officers to be able to serve in Moscow. What a mess! The CIA officer's name was Howard. He came to me to say he could not bid on CIA's B&F position since the entire class had reached the agreement that I have mentioned. And

since no one in the class knew anything about the arrangement, I could say nothing to the class. I had to go back to the CIA to explain the situation and they had to give me a second position to add to the list of vacancies that I was using to assign the class!

That turned out to be the least of my problems. Howard comes to me just after the end of A-100. He was in a panic and very nervous. He said to me, "Skip, you've got to help me; the Agency is after me. They're claiming I'm a spy and they are going to do something to me." I was taken aback. I had grown to like Howard as others had and this seemed so out of character -- not to mention bizarre. I said, "But, Howard, you know you are not my employee. I don't understand what's going on. And, you know, I can't intervene with the Agency." The next thing I know he disappears. It actually turns out that he was a spy and he next appears in Moscow requesting political asylum.

Now, it didn't end there because there was a fairly long gap between when he came to see me and when he disappeared. All of his classmates hear from him that he's being persecuted by the government. They have no idea about the Agency. They blame me for forcing him out for some reason and then not disclosing why and telling them. So they are all into this conspiracy theory. 'It could happen to me, you know, they won't even tell us anything. Where is the openness they are always talking about? You know, you knew all along, you were my friend and you talked to us and now you won't talk to us.' I was in a very difficult situation because I could not be honest with them. It was some time before the situation with Howard became public. Between that moment and when it actually came out in the press was about eight or nine months. I get a call-

*Q: We had the A100 classes and then some training courses before officers left for posts?*

GNEHM: That's right. And a group of new officers in this same class were assigned to Bogota. Tom Boyatt was the ambassador. Tom Boyatt called me to say, "Skip, you and I have a huge problem. I have a group of young vice consuls here, junior officers, who are livid with you because of the way you've treated one of their classmates. You've got to come down here because while they're not striking, they might as well be because they've got the whole embassy in a turmoil over this. You've got to come down here." I confided in Tom when I got down there in his office what the issue was. I couldn't tell them during that visit what I knew because it was not yet public. It was still highly classified. All I knew at the time was that he fled to somewhere in Arizona and disappeared and then he appeared in Moscow.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Since I could not tell them he was an agent, I had to just simply let them yell at me, scream at me, and tell them "Look, there were things in this particular case that they didn't know and that I was not in a position to tell them." I had to appeal to their understanding of me and how I was -- that if I could let them know, I would; but I couldn't then. It was, again, like eight months later or seven months later when it comes out that I was able then to communicate with those who'd been in the room. And I said "Now, if you read "The Washington Post" today you would know what was actually

going on and I opposed very much this assignment into the A100 class without informing them as they had been told would happen. I explained honestly that I was overruled.

Now, if I might, with your permission, I want to jump to when I'm Director General of the Foreign Service and it's 1997, late summer or fall. I get a memo from the Agency, through the liaison at State, asking for my approval to put into an A-100 class an officer without telling anyone in the class. I said not on your life. I've been through this. You don't remember?

*Q: Of course in the government, you know, maybe there's a two-year historical memory and then it's gone.*

GNEHM: Well, I did remember! The Agency asked State seniors for a meeting to present in private their reasons why they needed to do this. I was ready for that battle like I've never been ready for one before. I had my file with the previous e-mails to the classmates and other material as well. When I went into that room I just sat there with my file and I let them make the appeal. And I said, "Not on my watch, ever," and I opened the file. I said, "Here were my instructions and here was where I signed and, by the way, here's the page of 'The Washington Post!'" And, if you are interested, here are the troubles I had with others." The person with the Agency who had come to the meeting actually did know about the Howard case. Well, Howard's a turncoat so it was a name well known within the Agency as a mole. The CIA official just closed his file and the subject never came up again.

*Q: Well, I've talked to at least one person who was in the class who talked about this but why was the Agency working so- what was there about this guy that made the Agency want to put him in a special slot? And what had motivated him to turn to the other side? I mean, what do you know about him?*

GNEHM: I can't answer most of those questions because they didn't come, you know, to my attention in any way. What I was told at the time was that there was a very important mission that had to be done, very sensitive, and it needed to be done by someone who would not be, in any way, tainted or compromised or vulnerable to being known to be or suspected to be in any way from the CIA. And therefore they wanted him planted in a way that they didn't really-

*Q: So of course of all people they pick for this was the most vulnerable that they could have or-*

GNEHM: I do not know whether he was already working for the Russians, Soviets at that time, before he came in or whether it happened afterward. I do not know the sequencing of events at all. I have no idea what that is except that between the time they came to me, which would have been a few weeks before the A-100 course, to the end of the seven weeks and into this eighth week or ninth week in consular training or whatever, and that, what, two to three months period? It went from here's our guy that we picked that's going to be put in deep, deep cover to- we're chasing him because he's a spy. I don't

know what happened in that time that made them suspicious. All I can tell you is that in the class and with me he was the most likeable, open young guy, as nice a person. That's why he was enormously popular with the class. He fit in perfectly. There was no indication to me of anything that would have been off. So the Agency refused to talk about this for a long time until I think he surfaced in Moscow and it was then impossible not to address it. That was like eight months later or something.

*Q: Well how did you feel about the A-100's training of foreign, young Foreign Service officers? Were you looking into make suggestions or hearing of weaknesses in it or strengths or what?*

GNEHM: I think the A-100 training is excellent. I liked very much what they were doing in those days and I thought that, in terms of introducing new officers to the Department, the bonding of the class together through the different exercises and the off-sites was good. It instilled the esprit de corps and I think pumped them up for an exciting career.

*Q: Which in a way was shown by their indignation over what they thought was a mishandling of one of their own.*

GNEHM: Right, right. Exactly right.

Now, in looking back, again with my experiences that I've mentioned to you and then again when I was director general, they may not have spent enough time prepping these enthusiasts with what they might actually face in the office; routine work, drudgery, supervisors who could be antagonistic, not just bad administratively, but aggressively. And probably could have done more to sensitize them to what they might face. Again, another thing too, which I think only comes later on, is the drafting style of the State Department. It is simply unique.

*Q: The what?*

GNEHM: The drafting style. We write cables using certain words--things we don't say and the things we do say a certain way. Most of us learn those things over a period of time and we do so because the boss or the ambassador reads our writing, calls it to our attention, but that probably would be something that could have been taught a little bit better during A-100 training.

*Q: We were talking about within the consular ranks the mid-level first supervisor level mediocrity of this group. Was this ever addressed about what can we do about it or was it sort of nothing we can do about it or what?*

GNEHM: When I was in personnel in JO, I would say that I didn't see any way of dealing with this. I mean, it was a little bit above my position. As the Director General later, it was still an issue. I tried very hard to try to address it, working with the Consular Affairs Bureau and others; but the problem was really hard to get at because what people write in efficiency reports tends to be very glossy, never a critical remark of any sort for

different reasons. And that's what promotion boards and assignment panels have to use in making their decisions. They can't use the corridor reputation though you and I know that in terms of actually getting an assignment that corridor reputation is often determinant. The very nature of the personnel system requires you to place people; you're required to put them in jobs. The problem is just not just with consular officers. There are poor performers in other cones as well.

*Q: No, I mean there are other ones but consular officers tend- consular sections tend to get people who are not doing terribly well somewhere else.*

GNEHM: Yes, it's unfortunately been true. It is just very obvious at that middle management level when you combine it with the large number of new officers that that group supervises.

*Q: And the mid-level has seen this so many-*

GNEHM: The middle management in the Consular area was just too often bad.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: That's a big burden then on the section chief, who's usually very good, and the younger officers who are just whippersnappers and enthusiasts.

*Q: Well, did-*

GNEHM: And let me just add one more observation since we've talking a lot about consular sections. When I was in the Junior Officer division and speaking to classes, and when I was later Director General, I was always mentoring Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). I do it now in my job at the university with people going into the Foreign Service. I've always told FSOs that I totally am behind the requirement that everybody entering the Foreign Service must do consular work. I tell them that you will never, ever advance no matter how you go up in rank and position to a point where you're not asked a consular question. I remember going to a meeting with the king of Jordan. Before we got to any serious issues, he said, "My sister went to the embassy to get her visa. They told her no, she couldn't get a visa. What in the world is going on; she's my sister! Are you kidding?" Here I was, the ambassador, talking to the king of a country and he is asking me about his sister's visa. You've got to know something about visa regulations to be able to respond, whether it's the prime minister, a minister, a member of parliament, or whomever else. It will always be a part of your conversations. You need to know what you can say and what you can't say.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: And you only get the knowledge you need by having been through it. Once you've been through it, you know it. Got to love that. I have always said, suck it up if you

don't like it. Remember you are learning. You are learning something you're going to use the rest of your career.

*Q: How did you feel, I mean we had tremendous pressure on us in the Foreign Service during this period and still do today, to get more representatives from particularly the African-American community? It's called "diversity" but the Hispanic and African-American are the two areas where we don't have much. There appears to be no problem recruiting Orientals. How did you feel the Department of State efforts were working at the junior officer level during this time?*

GNEHM: It was weak; but there was definitely a focus on it. There were the court cases brought by women. I forgot her name.

*Q: Alison Palmer.*

GNEHM: Alison Palmer and some others at that time that had the Department under court orders to do certain things. We were making every attempt at recruiting women and minorities. It was very difficult at that point in time. We were bringing in some African-Americans as well as Asian-Americans but not at the numbers that we wanted. We are talking about the early 1980s. Yet this was still an important issue when I became director general 15 years later. Interestingly, by the time we reached '97 some of those court ordered restrictions had either been eased or passed because the numbers recruited and our processes had, over a period of 10 or 15 years, proven to the courts that we were in fact were dealing with it. So it was a much better environment dealing with those issues then than there was in the '80s.

*Q: Well I have the impression that at a certain point, really at a time we're talking about and even before then the Department was trying so hard to get the numbers up that we were-*

GNEHM: Ah, the mid-level-

*Q: making exceptions. In other words, lowering the standards sort of to give people advantages to get in- And then once they came in not much attention was paid to them.*

GNEHM: Ah, you may be talking about what was called the Mid-Level Entry Program which was, as I recollect, in existence at that time. This was an attempt to bring women and minorities in at the mid-level as opposed to the junior officer level. Because of our recruiting failures in previous years, we didn't have many at the mid-levels. The whole idea was that even if we succeeded in bringing in large numbers or reasonable numbers at the junior level, it was going to take five to 10 years, if not 15, to get them into middle management ranks and ultimately into senior management. And you are absolutely right; we had a program, an orientation program, a training program specifically related to mid-level entry.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Mid-level recruits were then assigned, not by me; I was not in that assignment process. I was on the assignment panel. We would stick them in the Dominican Republic as the section head for something or at another place and there was virtually no mentoring and no follow-up. It was, you know, you're on your own. We just taught you everything you need to know, go. And it didn't do well. We had mid-level entries, who had never worked in an embassy before or perhaps never worked abroad, supervising officers in their third tours. Not only were they individually unhappy; but posts were unhappy. It was a grueling process, so much so that a few years later the Department just abolished it. It did away with it entirely. I resurrected an idea of doing something like that when I was the Director General but specifically relating it to people in the U.S. Government and military who had actual experience -- some comprehension of international affairs. But the taste, the recollection of that little program from the '80s was so bad that the idea wasn't worth the fight.

*Q: Well how did you, your office relate to the director general at the time who was in the personnel system? Did you find the personnel system flexible enough to deal with various problems? How did you find it?*

GNEHM: During the time that I was head of the junior officer division, I found it pretty reasonable and that's partly because in the personnel system the junior officer division had enormous authority over the officers who were under its jurisdiction. We made all the first assignment. The only thing the central system did was give us the 30 or 100 positions for the class. We decided who would go where. You didn't have the intervention by the bureaus as you do in the so-called meat market mentality that exists today at the middle and seniors levels. Second assignments: we pretty much could make the assignments as we wanted. I could argue the pattern of assignments and how we needed to give them assignments that proved they were successful worldwide and versatile.

*Q: Language, of course.*

GNEHM: Language of course, where they served geographically. If they were serving in Latin America one time and the bureau wanted to keep them, I could easily say "no, we're not going to do it and there was nothing much the bureau could do to interfere with that decision. So there was far more discipline, I would say, in entering, assigning and training officers in that untenured period than there was subsequent to their being tenured. I mentioned earlier the one intervention from the director general's office that impacted on the JO assignment process. While I was in JO, the DG's office was very supportive.

*Q: You know, I must, I have experience sitting on a panel and, you know, we were assigning people to, I think War College or something like that, and there was the one man who everybody respected and all, usually very quiet, and one name came up. And they said oh yes, fine record and all this and all of a sudden this deep growl, that son of a*

*bitch, you know, and of course the things which apparently were supported but it gets very personal.*

GNEHM: Yes, the discussions in the assignment panels can be very direct. I must say, the panels are organized with representatives of both your seniors and your juniors as well as representatives of each of the cones and the regional bureaus. I found that there was a good give and take about things and I think it was fairly open. But the tendency of that kind of panel is to become rule enforcers and that leads, as I learned then, sometimes to decisions that just make you shake your head and say, “what?” What did you do? They would say “Well we couldn’t make an exception because if we make an exception here on this assignment, then everybody else will want the same exception.”

So when I became director general, I called met with the head of the FCA (the assignments division) and asked to have all the panel representatives to come as well. I actually said to them, “I want to make one thing clear. You are managers of the assignment process. There are rules and regulations that guide you in making those assignments, which I support, and you are to a certain extent the enforcers of those rules. But I’m asking you now, I’m telling you now, that you have to use some logic in applying these rules in individual cases. So let me put it this way. If you go home at night and you’re sitting at the dinner table with your wife and you say ‘Ah, what an awful day I had today. You wouldn’t believe the panel. There was this one case of so and so and whatever it was. Well we just put him there.’ If she looks at you and says ‘You did what?’ Then you need to go back and think about what you just did.” Maybe there’s a more logical option.

Now, again, I’m jumping out of sequence, but I will tell you one case that arose which is exactly what I’m talking about. I was the director general (so we’re talking about 1999, 2000 timeframe). A woman, who is locally hired into an OMS position (Office Management Specialist) at an embassy abroad, gets accepted to join the Foreign Service as an OMSer. So she’s got to come back to Washington for her orientation. She asks to be assigned back into the job that she’s been locally hired for because her husband is assigned in that post and has two more years on his assignment. The OMS section of personnel tells her, “You signed a statement that you were world-wide available; you can’t tell us where you’ll go and we’re not putting you there because we’ve got other priorities.” I got an appeal from her and her husband about this decision. I called up the people from the OMS section and I said “I’ve received this appeal. I said it does sound like an awfully reasonable appeal, since she’s filling a position at post. And they said, “She knew when she accepted the offer to join the Foreign Service that she had to be worldwide available. If we make an exception here, this will change everything. Once this rule is broken, we’ll never be able to enforce it again.” I said, “Wait a minute. Worldwide available is a principle for all people entering the Foreign Service and I strongly support it. But that’s for an entire career. Now, we do make it clear to new hires that they’re not going to tell us where they go. But just because you assign her back where she’s already living, working, and is with her husband doesn’t mean she’s not worldwide available the next time around. We also have a tandem policy by the way that we’re also trying to enforce. I want you to reconsider it.” Well they came back to me to

say they were not prepared to change their decision. I said “Fine; send me up the assignment order. I am going to reverse your decision and assign her to this post.” And I did.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Did it set a precedent? Did it? Am I aware of any lawsuits against the Department because I treated one person this way? No. It was the logical thing to do.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: It made sense. It did maintain the important rule, a very strict rule of worldwide available and that new hires don't tell us where they want to go.

*Q: Yes. Tell me, did you get much, when you were with the junior officers, were you able to get much feedback from them once, so they went out to a post and their early experiences which of course are particularly important because they're seeing things with bright new eyes, which you don't get later on when we all get sort of jaded and this is the way we do it; we go along but make changes of our own. But these young people come in; I mean, were you able to use this source of really very good observation to pass on to your colleagues?*

GNEHM: Absolutely. I was indeed able to glean good observations. The answer is 'yes' because again I am a very open person so lots of people visited when they came back to Washington but they also sent emails about things going on at post that I was able to use as examples or ways of approaching things. The officers who came in while I was head of junior officers stayed in touch with me throughout my entire Foreign Service career. Not every one of them, of course, but huge numbers of them. And I stayed in touch with them. When I saw them promoted, I sent a congratulatory message or when I saw they were going to a post, brand new people, I sent the post a message saying, “You know, so and so is being assigned to you and he's really good.” I think that kind of the networking in the Foreign Service is very positive.

*Q: In a way the fact we're doing these oral histories, it's remarkable. I mean all the experiences and the talent we get. We're very fortunate.*

*Did you find that there were any particular areas that were particularly good in providing new officers? Were they the Ivy League colleges or the West Coast colleges or any other sources or was it pretty across the board?*

GNEHM: It was pretty much across the board. I don't think there were any obvious places, such as the Ivy League schools that you're talking about. People were, even then, beginning to come from all over the US. And we had all age coming into the Service even in those years. Some had been in the military. There is a lot more of them coming into the Service now.

*Q: Well then after this junior officer stint what did you do?*

GNEHM: I was supposed, of course, to stay there for a full two year tour but I was curtailed because I got a call from the executive secretary, asking me to take the position of Director of the Line, S/SS as it was called in those days. So I moved up to the seventh floor. George Shultz was the Secretary of State and these were very interesting times to be there. Once again, I was working with a dedicated group of line. There were two elements about the job that come to mind rather immediately. Each line officer had responsibility for a geographic region and/or functional bureaus. That officer would receive all papers going to the Secretary. His task was to be certain the memo or paper was cleared appropriately around the Department and was in a format ready for the Secretary's action. Further when the principals came forward with requests, we were the office that tasked the bureaus for responses. Secondly, we supported the secretary during his travels. I would assign a line officer team, which is usually included an officer and a staff person to go to the country in advance to prepare for the secretary's arrival and . And that's a very important job because the line officer is the liaison between the secretary's office and the embassy.

I had good people working for me, very dedicated, hard workers, and long hours. It was an important experience for me. It allowed me to be part of the staff meetings on the seventh floor so that I could then direct my line in ways that the executive secretary and others wanted. I did assign myself as a line officer advance person on one of the Secretary's trips to Morocco simply because I wanted to go through the experience that I was sending my team to do. I had enough knowledge from them to have a general impression and I'd served in an embassy during a visit of the Secretary. So I knew about such visits from that angle. My advance for the Secretary in Morocco was an experience! The ambassador there was a political appointee.

*Q: Reed or something?*

GNEHM: Yes, Joseph Reed.

*Q: He stands out because his telegrams, I think the only thing he talked about, "our king."*

GNEHM: He was a very unique personality. He had flown his customized Cadillac out to post and he very much wanted to show me and anyone else about this special car. He would take rides in it and he took me in a ride around town to be able to show me the bar in the car and everything else in it. For the most part, we worked very well together -- though it was like walking on eggshells. He was determined to have things his way regardless of what the secretary wanted or what anyone else wanted. He was going to have it the way he wanted it. At one point, he really got angry with me. By the way, I later ran into him at the UN when I was US deputy permanent representative. Reed was the Secretary General's special ambassadorial envoy for international goodwill or something like that.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Referring back to the time he was angry with me, it was just a passing moment, but he was so angry that he stood in front of me in his office, fists clenched and shaking all over, jaw as tight as can be and he said, "I want you to know I'm taking you off my Christmas card list." And he dismissed me. We have had a good relationship since as it turned out. I don't even know whether he remembers being angry with me at that point. But yes, he was a very particular kind of personality.

*Q: How did, what was your impression of Shultz?*

GNEHM: He was a very serious person, very focused. When I dealt with him and when my team dealt with him, he had clear direction, things he wanted done, how he wanted them done. I don't mean to the point of every dot and T, but there was no doubt in anyone's mind about what he wanted to have happen and so that's what we did. He was extremely well read and he always read the memoranda and papers that were sent to him. He would have questions about them sometimes, which we would then correct or get supplemental information, but he knew his topics. When you were in a meeting with him, you knew that he knew what he was talking about. He was very clear and operational; if he knew something had to be done because he meant to achieve a certain end, he'd go after that. He had a clear strategy and approach to things. So he was very good to work for. I don't remember an instance of humor or of lightheartedness. As I said, he was a fairly serious person. I recall one moment on the plane flying from Morocco to Portugal. I was with my staff and a group of people in the staff section of the plane and I was acting out Ambassador Reed for a little bit of humor with the staff. In the middle of my play acting I realized that the Secretary had come up behind me. I saw the look on his face. He was not happy. I assumed it was because I was belittling an ambassador and he didn't think that was appropriate. He didn't say that; but that was my impression. I apologized. He turned and went back into his suite.

There is one other thing I would like to tell you about. Now, I don't think this is documented anywhere. The Executive Secretary told me that the Secretary was really angry, upset, peeved at some of his colleagues in the cabinet. He was tired of getting calls from various secretaries who would say, "George, you know I brought this up in the cabinet meeting and the President didn't object." The Secretary would reply saying "Yes, and you know the President wasn't listening when you made your point." We are talking about President Reagan. Now I always sent one of my staff with the secretary to cabinet meetings. That person sat against the wall and took notes for the secretary.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: The Executive Secretary told me to instruct the staffer to annotate in the margins of the notes when the president was awake and when he's not. The Secretary can see the point in the meeting when the President was not attentive and when he was. He could then use that knowledge in responding to other who argued that "the President didn't object!" So, that's what we did.

*Q: Did you see any of the warm, friendly relationship between George Shultz and Casper Weinberger, secretary of defense?*

GNEHM: I didn't see it but I certainly heard about it. There was one luncheon of just the two of them where one of them stood up and heaved a biscuit at the other one. The relationship was very touchy, hostile, and they often sparked when they were together.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: It was like putting the two battery cords together that aren't supposed to touch and when they do, sparks fly. Yes, it was a difficult relationship. I heard it told that one time a plate of food went flying, but I don't know whether that was true. That was the lore anyway.

*Q: Did you find being at the center of power that your colleagues would come to you to see if you could push something for them? I mean, you know, policy or what have you?*

GNEHM: Oh sure, yes. In particular, the bureau that knew me the best but others did as well. They would ask things like, can't you move this one forward or can you put it on top of the stack. I never felt under the kind of pressure that if I didn't do it I was not going to get my next assignment or something like that. But yes, there were always special requests.

I was often asked if I was in the room when a particular issue came up. "Did you sense a positive or negative reaction?" They were looking for the kind of feedback that might not ever come back in writing but would be important in gauging reaction of the principal to something that had gone forward for action.

*Q: Did you come away from this experience with almost a ranking of the various geographic bureaus?*

GNEHM: Oh, definitely. Absolutely definitely. And that's where I learned that each of the geographic bureaus had a very unique persona. Not so different, I might add, from the persona of the people who lived in their region. I say that, realizing that I'm making very prejudicial remarks.

*Q: Oh no, no, it's, but-*

GNEHM: But the one bureau that stood out in those days apart from all others was the NEA bureau. Basically NEA's reputation was if you have a crisis, you want an NEA person involved because they were so often going through crises. They knew how to deal with fast moving events. They were cool under fire. They were levelheaded, solid, worked as a good team in a crisis. That's what you wanted.

The then-ARE bureau, Latin America bureau, was always considered the bureau that was hard to get them to respond in a timely way. It was as if time was on their hands and they didn't need to worry about things. I guess I am saying that they were often very laidback. And then a crisis came, ah, okay, no, we'll do it. No need to push.

And the African bureau, as I recollect, was always trying to kind of catch-up, always trying to get principals to look at their issues. And more often than not, they were so far down the stack that even if you got a piece of paper into the stack it didn't get the attention that it deserved.

*Q: How about the Asian bureau?*

GNEHM: My impression was that they were very methodical and dealt well with matters in a very sophisticated way. They didn't let a crisis throw them off a step. It was kind of the long view of history.

*Q: Yes, 5,000 years of-*

GNEHM: Yes, of course, what's new sort of a thing.

*Q: As Confucius said.*

GNEHM: Sort of.

*Q: What about the European bureau?*

GNEHM: The European bureau just always thought of itself and it came across in trying to deal with them as the only bureau that really mattered.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: They would say, "You mean to tell me that this meeting with the secretary is essential? You know, he ought to be in London, Paris, or Prague." And yes, you would often sense their disdain that they didn't need to be told how to do it. "We know how to do these sorts of things." "I'm sorry but the secretary wants them in this format." "Well, we've always been using the other format." That's the way my conversations would go with the EUR Bureau.

*Q: Oral histories, this goes way back but one of, I think one of the funniest things was when they moved Cyprus, Turkey and Greece into the European bureau. And, you know, at one point they were very close to war and you could just feel sort of the people were talking about it, saying you know what, I had to go up and explain this to the head of the European bureau at the time and it was just sort of looking down their nose and what, what is this? I mean, NATO countries or European countries don't fight each anymore. I mean, we have crises but we deal with them diplomatically and here are these squabbling-*

GNEHM: One invading another.

*Q: Oh, God.*

GNEHM: Oh, that's right, that's right. Whereas in NEA it was just another one of the many wars.

*Q: Oh, absolutely.*

*Well okay then, you left the line and what-?*

GNEHM: Yes, I wasn't there that long actually. NEA called to say that they were in desperate need for an Arabic speaking officer to go as deputy chief of mission in Amman, Jordan. The ambassador-designate was Paul Boeker, an economist, economic officer, a very good economist, I would add. In fact, when we were working with the Israeli government to try and strengthen their economic basis at a time when they were having some currency issues and deficits in funding, Paul worked that issue for the U.S. Government. He was very good and well known; but he had never served in the Arab world and didn't speak Arabic. NEA wanted to have a DCM who knew the region to support him. They had mentioned my name to him and he wanted to call and talk to me to see if I was at all interested. Well, given my Middle East background, I was definitely interested in being deputy chief of mission in Amman. And that's what developed.

*Q: Boeker. What was his background and what was he like?*

GNEHM: Paul was an economist, as I said. He was an expert on trade matters, budget issues and currency intricacies. His regional focus was Latin American, as I recall. He was a quiet person but a very serious. I do not want to sound negative because I liked him a great deal; but the Jordanians did not take to him easily. I think this was due to non-professional reasons -- basically personality. Arabs react wonderfully well to the individual who is very hospitable, warm, friendly, and personal. That's their culture. Whereas Paul tended to be a little aloof and sort of quiet. He just wasn't a warm, outgoing extrovert. And yet when they had to deal with him on certain issues as when they were having budget issues and financial issues, he was fantastic. He and the Jordanians worked very well together. I am simply saying that he often was criticized for his personality but never for his professional qualities.

*Q: You were in Jordan from when to when?*

GNEHM: Almost three years, from 1984 until 1987.

*Q: When you arrived there in '84, what was the situation in Jordan and in the Middle East in general?*

GNEHM: It was a period of some stability, relative of course to the Middle East. King Hussein was the monarch during the entire period that I was there. The big issue on the Arab-Palestinian question had to do with expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Another big issue, as I recollect, was our relationship with the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) at that point in time. We would not speak to the PLO and considered it a terrorist organization.

The Jordanians and Palestinians, and to some extent the Israelis, wanted to have elections for mayors in the West Bank cities, which are Arab cities, such as Hebron, Nablus, and others. Yet a number of the candidates were PLO-affiliated, which meant we couldn't talk to them. That made it very awkward to conduct any kind of business. The Jordanian government was pushing us on that matter; that was one of the issues that was on our plate. The king's relationship with Arafat was mixed. We are talking about '84. It had only been 10 years since the Black September with the PLO attempted to overthrow King Hussein and take over the country. People still talked about it as if it happened yesterday. And there was at one point where King Hussein actually put his reputation at stake by trying to convince Arafat to do the one thing we demanded, which was to recognize Israel's right to exist. I can tell you about that.

Then there was the Israeli lobby's opposition to our military relationship with Jordan. The military area was a constant aggravation if not outright embarrassment to us. Jordan was a moderate country in a turbulent region. We certainly wanted to provide for its security; but when we proposed to sell military hardware to Jordan, we often faced strong opposition from Israel and its lobbyists in Washington.

GNEHM: There was one particular event that I use it to this day in talking to my class about how decisions can have ramifications beyond what you expect. This had to do with the sale of F16 fighter planes to Jordan, F-16s. We had sold fighter planes to Jordan in the past -- F5s -- and now the US military and State, as well, agreed to provide a more sophisticated plane, the F16. There wasn't a large number. I can't remember whether it was 24 or 36 but we're not talking hundreds. There was enormous opposition by Jewish groups in the States, using their influence with Congress to sow congressional oppositions. There were lots of stories in newspapers, and the king saw the assurances from Washington that the sale was going to go ahead. Our instructions, which the ambassador delivered, were that we were serious and that we'd moved ahead in spite of the opposition in Congress.

I was taken aback when I learned that President Reagan, on a Sunday or a weekend for sure, had called the king himself. I was Charge at the time and only learned about the call from the Department. According to the Department's debrief, Reagan said to the King, "Your Majesty, I know you are hearing about all the trouble that we're having with the opposition to the fighter plane sale. I want you to know that I am solidly behind this sale. It will happen. Don't believe what you're reading in the newspapers." The king profusely thanked him for the call and his support for the sale.

The following Tuesday, I got instructions from the Department to go see the king to explain that given the politics and trouble in Washington, there was going to be a delay in moving the sale forward. I was told to assure the King that we remain committed to the sale; it just wouldn't occur right now. Okay? So I called the palace, the king said, "Yes, have him come over at 5:00 or 6:00," which was after dark. I went and met with him at his home, in his living room, just the two of us, two chairs, and a table in the middle. After pleasantries, I said to him, "Your majesty, I do have some instructions and that's why I did ask to see you today." I tried to present my instructions in the very best possible manner, stressing the continued commitment of the President for the sale. About halfway into my explanation he put his hand over on my knee, he said, "Skip, you're doing a great job. I know what this means. You don't have to keep going through this. I understand." And that was the end of that conversation.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: The reason why I remember this conversation so vividly was not only because I had to do it. I felt embarrassed because the President had called the King directly only two days before and there had been no reason for him to have done so, particularly if there was to be a delay in moving the sale forward. I think there would have been less fallout had my news not come starkly after the President's assurances.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: I will tell you that to this moment, I believe that that was the night when the king decided he really couldn't count on the United States if there was trouble with Israel. Now you can harken back to other things but what that meant was he had to go elsewhere for his security. Because again, there were always troubles and threats around Jordan in the region. I believe that he concluded that, if the Israeli lobby was so strong that it could block the sale of critically needed fighter planes, the need of which had been validated by US-Jordanian security assessments that the air force modernization was needed for his national defense against threats from Syria and Iraq, then he could never count on the US for the military equipment necessary to protect his country. I think that's when he decided that he had to cozy up to Saddam Hussein. He had not done so before. Relations had been reasonable good, especially in economic matters and there, of course, had been innumerable visits by Iraqi officials and commercial agreements. I don't really believe King Hussein thought that Saddam would assist him militarily with any success if the Israelis invaded Jordan; but perhaps he thought that Israeli concern over possible Iraqi support would act as some deterrence.

So then when we get to 1990 and King Hussein comes out in support of Saddam Hussein or it appeared that way, I think it was back to this moment, our failure to follow through on a security commitment that we had made and validated.

*Q: How did you feel about the Israeli influence in the United States? I mean, did you feel this was, I won't say abnormal but that's maybe the right term. I mean, here with a very small country, very much at odds with its neighbors, and we were finding ourselves supporting it to the hilt even when we probably shouldn't have.*

GNEHM: Well, I guess I would respond to that by saying it was certainly a constant consideration on the part of the embassy. Whatever we were doing with Jordan to some extent was always going to be circumscribed or monitored by the Israelis and through their lobby group in Washington. We just accepted that as a given. The best way to move ahead for us was to try to come up with ideas that would support our interest in Jordan but would also be interpreted by Israel as in their interest or that there were reasons for wanting to do that.

Tom Pickering was ambassador in Israel at the time and there was one moment where he called me and he said, "Look, Skip, I think we have a great opportunity here to do something. If you can come in with a supporting cable, I'll send in one and we'll maybe get some energy going here between the two of them (meaning Israel and Jordan)." And we did that. Tom was a very active ambassador.

The issue of mayoral elections in the West Bank is illustrative of both US initiatives to advance peace between Israel and Jordan and the frustrations that come with such initiatives. We believed that having Arabs able to elect their mayors in West Bank towns would provide a certain governance situation that would be positive for the Israelis as well as for Palestinians. The US played an active role in moving all parties toward elections. Those elections were quite successful. There were multiple candidates and campaigning was vigorous. Voting was robust and prominent Palestinians were elected.

We at Embassy in Jordan looked forward to working with these mayors, all of whom visited Amman rather frequently. They had business with the Jordanian Government from which they often received financial support. Then came the wrench in machine! Most, if not all, the mayors declared their support for the PLO and the USG declared that, as a result, we could not talk to the mayors. That decision seemed a strange repudiation of all the support that we had given in getting the mayors elected. Nevertheless, we had our instructions. The only way I could interact with them was to find myself at the same social event, often a dinner. The Department's guidance on interacting at social events with representatives of countries or organizations like the PLO was to be polite but not initiate conversation. That guidance gave me some limited flexibility to talk, or at least to listen, to the visiting mayors. But again, it was really, really quite difficult if not most awkward.

There was an effort, and this is one on which Paul Boeker worked very hard. There was an interest on the part of Palestinians in the West Bank, to try to reopen the branches of Jordanian banks that had operated there before '67. Since the 1967 war there were no Arab banks in the West Bank. I give Paul credit for eventual success. He took the initiative with the Israelis, who because of their earlier experience with him, trusted him. He convinced them that opening banks in the West Bank would stabilize the economy with positive consequences for economic development and, hopefully, political moderation. Soon, however, we got into wrangling over details. For example, what kind of supervision would the Israeli banking system have in its federal reserve-type organization over Arab banks operating in the West Bank? Could they look into bank

records of an Arab bank that was registered in Jordan under Jordanian law which has privacy rules that were different from those in Israel? In the end Paul brokered an agreement in which actually allowed some of the bank branches to reopen so that banking could take place. This was a breakthrough. But again, that's a good example of where we had to convince the Israelis that the action that we were proposing and that the Arabs wanted to do was, in fact, advantageous to them as well.

*Q: Well did you find that AIPAC was just American-*

GNEHM: American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee.

*Q: Yes. It was, you might say, was extreme and was going beyond what the Israelis really were pushing or was it pretty much a tool of the Israelis?*

GNEHM: My impression in those days and the subsequent job I had at the Pentagon, which was in '87, '88, '89, was that AIPAC was pretty in tune to what the government in Israel wanted. I think in current terms, and this has been true now for a number of years, that they are more aligned with a political party in Israel than with the government. Now, that political party is in power so AIPAC is once again in step with the government. Again, I think in the 1980s it was pretty much in tune to what the government of Israel wanted.

I remember one negotiation when we were able to convince the Israeli government that a particular arms sale was not going to be threatening to Israeli security given other things that would be done for Israel. Subsequently AIPAC opposition on the Hill just evaporated. So it would indicate to me that AIPAC was very in sync, sensitive to what the Israeli government wanted.

*Q: Well did you find yourself with the Jordanian government, were they throwing Israel in your face or did they sort of accept the fact it was there and our relationship to Israel and were willing to work around it and avoid this raised specter of Israeli influence all the time?*

GNEHM: I think one has to make a distinction between the government and the population when you ask that question. The government understood the situation and was willing to work to try to find ways of doing what they and we wanted in a manner that didn't antagonize or create political problems in Washington for either of us. The popular view was pretty angry at the American policy for being very pro-Israeli and biased. I think the word "just" always comes up and it did in those days. You know, that we were not being fair, not being just. Additionally, I learned during this tour and again when I went back as ambassador some years later was that the Jordanians are very sophisticated. They are very attentive to what goes on in Israel. I learned quickly to keep my mouth shut when they started talking about Israeli politics because they knew so much more about it than I did. I would blunder into things; but they can mention every political party, who was the political mover, how they fought with each other, and their political views in ways I couldn't possibly do. And for good reasons.

They live up close. They watch Israeli television all the time. They have access, you know, to Israeli newspapers. They come across the bridge and they have all these Palestinians coming over all the time who were obviously living under Israeli occupation. They understand the politics even though they don't like it. I learned something else about Arab feelings. They can be angry and furious at US policy. I have had individuals grab me with both arms on my shoulders with gritted teeth and much emotion. You would think the next thing he is going to do is to slug you. When he does take his hands off, he looks at you and asks if you are able to come to his house tomorrow for lunch with friends. Or perhaps he tells you that he has to leave for the US in two days to take his sick mother to the Mayo Clinic or is taking his child to university in America. In other words, what I learned, and most Americans don't understand, is that people have conflicting emotions. At one point you're really angry but at another point you're actually in agreement. You oppose them on this but are with them on that. People are people after all. They can be totally angry with us over our policy but still recognize that we have good medical facilities and schools. In fact, Jordanians over and over would tell me, you know, if only Jordan were a bit more like America with the freedoms that you have.

*Q: Well how did you view the Jordanian government at that time?*

GNEHM: It's very interesting because the king had been on the throne since the early '50s. He'd served 30 years by then; so he wasn't new to the job or the issues around him. His governing technique was clear. He was king and ultimately he made decisions; but once he picked the prime minister and put him in place with his ministerial cabinet, the king tended to step back from it all. The prime minister ran the government. Foreign policy was usually the King's preserve as were important defense matters. On the other hand day-to-day affairs were left to the prime minister. When in his opinion the public anger or frustration with the Prime Minister reached a boiling point, the king stepped in, removed him and put somebody else in place. He was attentive; but by staying away from daily political issues and decisions, he let his prime minister and government take public heat for actions they did not like..

The king's technique was known to everyone. He would dismiss the prime minister or minister and then two years later, that person was back as the special advisor to the king or a special envoy to some UN conference and maybe even back as prime minister. One Prime Minister served five different times. There was a revolving door. You were never, ever out entirely. There was always an opportunity to come back. That's the way the king managed people.

I should mention that we had a modest AID program. It was ongoing but it was never as much as the king wanted. We did, in fact, sell a lot of military equipment to the Jordanians and we were still very much involved in training.

The one issue on the military side that I didn't mention before was the Jordanians need for an air defense system. In particular they wanted the Hawk missile system, which was the best we had at that point in time. The Israelis went berserk. The last thing they wanted

was Jordan to have an effective air defense system. The presumption by most of us who were watching this issue was that the Israelis didn't want the Jordanians to have any capability to limit Israeli overflights of Jordan either in wartime or peace. In the end, the Jordanians had to agree to accept significant restrictions on the deployment of the Hawk system. The batteries would be implanted in concrete. This decision, of course, undermined one of the system's important features -- the ability to move batteries around the country as needed.

It also meant that the Israelis knew exactly where batteries were at all times and they knew exactly their range and coverage so it was easy to know where or where not to fly. So did Jordan's other potential enemies such as Syria. Talk about humiliation! In the end, they decided they needed the defense system more than death so they swallowed it and accepted the conditions. I was there when issues came up over whether the Jordanians could move some of the batteries out of concrete or perhaps sell them some. At the time, we had some problems with Syria and Iraq and we felt that the Jordanians had a justification for a mobile air defense system. It never went through. It never succeeded because of Israeli objections.

One other incident that also occurred when I was the Chargé was over security. We had a really big security problem during the time I was in Amman. This was largely a threat from Syria. The Syrian government didn't always like what the king was doing and always threatened him. In fact, there was enough intelligence about agents being sent in from Syria to undertake terrorist attacks or spur civil unrest. Our embassy was, in those days, located right across from the Intercontinental Hotel, right on the main road going through town. The street in front of the embassy was a two lane road. Traffic was constant bumper to bumper if not completely stopped. The front door of our embassy was only three feet from the sidewalk, which was another three feet to the curb and so we had virtually no setback. The Department decided to re-enforce the embassy and it was just one humongous effort. They poured concrete into the walls of my office. The ambassador's office was re-enforced with steel, making the walls two feet thick instead of one foot thick. They hung steel mesh from the roof of the building to the ground that made it look like medieval armor. They piled sandbags up an eight or 10 feet wall between the front of the building and the sidewalk. It was awful. Necessary, but awful. Then winter came and so did the rain and the sandbags collapsed, blocking the entrance and the sidewalk.

There was yet another security story, this one involving the AID office. AID was located in one of the residential areas not far from the embassy. The USG brought in a variety of security items to place around the building, including drop barriers, concrete blocking barriers, etc. The AID director, Lou Reed, called me one day quite excited. "Skip, you won't believe what just happened." I said, "Calm down. What's wrong? Are you alright?" He said, "No, no, no, no. The city came and carted away all of our security material. Everything, the barriers, the concrete barriers and they carted them away." I said, "You've got to be kidding. Did you know it?" "No, they didn't even call us to tell us; they just came and carted it all away." Well, to be perfectly honest, that really made me angry too because of the high security threat we were facing. I asked Lou if I

remembered correctly that he had a meeting that afternoon with the Minister of Planning on our \$200 million AID program. “Yes,” he replied. I said, “Well, I’m ordering you not to go to that meeting. Cancel the meeting right now.” “Are you sure you want...,” he asked. I said, “Cancel the meeting right now.”

The Minister of Planning obviously called the prime minister, Zaid Rifai, immediately and told him that I had terminated, canceled this meeting on the AID program. Zaid Rifai called me. “Skip, what in the hell do you think you’re doing? You think you have this kind of authority to just cancel a meeting?” I said, “Zaid, calm down. Yes, I did cancel the meeting; I did it and I’m not reversing it.” “You better do it or you’re going to pay for it!” he said. “I’m going to call the President; I’m going to call the Secretary of State and I’m going to tell them what you’ve done and I don’t think you’re going to still be able to stay on in your position. I’m going to do that.” “Zaid,” I said, “fine. Just be sure that you tell the President that the reason why I did it was because your mayor came and removed all the security material around the building of the very organization that you’re asking to get \$200 million from. Make sure you’re clear about that.”

The next call I got within minutes was from the mayor himself, who by the way later became prime minister. He said, “You have just destroyed me. You have just destroyed me. I’m going to tell you right now. I’m going to kill you. I’m going to kill you for this. Do you hear me? You are a dead man, you are a dead man.” And he hung up.

Before the afternoon was over, all the security material had been returned to the AID offices and the meeting with the Minister of Planning took place the next day. The Ambassador, when he got back in country, came into my office. (I must say Paul was a wonderful person to work for. When he had first had gone out of country and left me as chargé, he said “Skip, let’s talk this through so that we’re on the same wave length. I want you to know how I feel about things. When I’m not here you’re in charge. You have to make the decisions if you think they’re the right decisions. I’m not going to come back and question what you did. We might have different views but you are the man on the spot. And you know how I feel about things and I’m trusting you to guide things in an appropriate way.”

So when he returned, this time, he said, “Skip, this business with AID and the mayor.” I said, “Yes, sir?” He said, “Well I’ve told you all along you have to make your own decisions. I’ll tell you right now, I probably would have handled it a little differently but what you did was okay.” And we laughed about it.

Well, in subsequent years, as I said the mayor became prime minister and we actually laughed about this up to and including when I saw him in the last two or three years. He said, “Well, I didn’t kill you, did I?” I said “no.” He added, “You know, I was really mad at you that day.” And I said, “I was really mad at you too that day.” The matter is long since over; but on reflection, there are just moments when you just have to do things in kind of a dramatic way.

*Q: Well certainly. During the time you were there was Syria any threat?*

GNEHM: Yes, absolutely. When I talked about our security situation, it was Syria that was the problem.

*Q: Yes, they often are.*

GNEHM: They were sending in people into Jordan. We had good intelligence that the US diplomatic mission was one of Syria's targets in Jordan. In fact, there were even threats against the king during this time.

*Q: Well wasn't the king always under threats, really?*

GNEHM: I would say, as a general comment, that's true. I remember seeing the king once, again at his house. This was when there were actually some threats and some concerns from intelligence that threats were real. They were actually going operational. He said, "You know, Abdullah is sleeping outside my bedroom door." This is the current king, his oldest son. He was in the military at the time. And I said, "Really?" And he said, "Yes, he's really worried, you know, that they're going to actually somehow get through the security I've got around me. I told Abdullah, you don't have to sleep outside my bedroom; but he won't go home. He won't go. He sleeps there."

In fact, it was in those years that I actually met Abdullah. Again, he was the eldest son of King Hussein. He wasn't a teenager then. He was an adult, but he was the young son who was often at the house when I went there. He never spoke or came in to tell his father something while I was there. He was always pleasant when we talked. Clearly there was a close bond between the two.

*Q: We'll get to that.*

GNEHM: Yes, but to just jump ahead for one point... I arrived in Jordan to take up my position as Ambassador at 6:30 on 9/10/2001. King Abdullah was in a plane off Nova Scotia headed for Houston when terrorists hit the Twin Trade Towers in New York. He called me from the plane to ask what he should do. It was because he knew me and I'd served there and he knew I knew his father well, that enabled us to talk candidly in the middle of a crisis without any hesitation.

*Q: Well this is the good thing about coming back to areas where you have served previously.*

GNEHM: That's right. One of the other things that I would tell you about King Hussein was that the king was a very short person and sensitive about his height. Things were done to compensate for his height; the chair at the dining room table had an extension on the legs so that if you looked at everyone sitting at the table he was just slightly taller than others. When he married Queen Noor, who was so much taller than he was, they stood on steps for the wedding pictures so that he was above her.

When there were CODELs or visits from the Pentagon or others the king always included the Ambassador and me in his small lunches; I'm talking about 12 to 16 people around a rectangular table. One of the people that he always liked to include at these events was Zaid bin Shakur, who was a cousin and then his chief of staff. He was a very close confidante. Bin Shakur was a frequent diner at the palace and the staff knew what he liked and what he didn't like. He and I were sitting together one day; I noticed that he didn't get the same dessert that everybody else did. They staff brought him a hot fudge sundae. So I said, "Hot fudge sundae! How much does it cost to get a hot fudge sundae?" He turned to the staff, "Ah, give me another hot fudge sundae." So out of the kitchen comes another hot fudge sundae which they placed in front of me. The king saw it out of the corner of his eye and he says, "Shakur, you're corrupting this young guy!"

So see, the king did have a sense of humor. The king did enjoy people and he was very, very hospitable and even when he was upset. I'm sure he was during the meeting that I described about the delay in providing F16s. He was probably hurt more than anything with Reagan's renege on his promise. But he was always a statesperson. He was always gentle. And Jordanian people knew that about him and that's why he was as beloved as he was even though he might have been criticized for some of the things he did or didn't do. He was very popular as a figure.

*Q: What was your impression of the Jordanian military that you saw at this time?*

GNEHM: Very professional and noticeably so in the region. Not large in number but disciplined. The training was good; the comradery was good. The military was based entirely on East Bank tribal recruitment, not Palestinian. The military is one of the main supports of the monarchy, that and the General Intelligence Directorate, GID. The military, in fact, was diligent in training on its equipment, a big contrast to most other militaries in the region. Most importantly, the Jordanian military bonded very, very well with U.S. military advisors. Many of them came to the States to train under the IMET program, International Military Educational Training.

*Q: Were the Palestinians in Jordan an issue or a problem?*

GNEHM: The entire Palestinian question in Jordan is a problem and it's always just below the surface. It impacts on almost every issue in some way. It is important to understand that there is a cleavage of sorts between the so-called East Bankers, Jordanians who trace their ancestry to the land east of the Jordan River, and Palestinians, Jordanians who come from territory that was the Palestine mandate under the British. East Bankers traditionally have perceived the Palestinian population as a threat to their supremacy, their dominance, in Jordan. That's partly because the number of Jordanians with roots in Palestine is larger than that of the East Bankers.

Perhaps a bit of background is worth mentioning. In 1948 with the establishment of the State of Israel, Jordanian forces were in occupation of what became known as the West Bank and East Jerusalem, The king of Jordan extended citizenship to all the Palestinians living under his authority. That's not what the Egyptians did in Gaza. In fact no other

Arab state (Lebanon or Syria for example) gave citizenship to the Palestinian refugees in their countries. Jordan was the only country that gave citizenship to Palestinians, which meant they had a passports and could they vote in elections. From '48 to '67, the West Bank was represented in the Jordanian parliament. In 1967 Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem and in the 1980s Jordan renounced its legal authority over those territories. But Palestinians who remained in Jordan retained their citizenship and continue to participate in the political system as full citizens.

The second reason underlying East Banker concern is that the Palestinians were far more educated, historically, than the more tribal oriented East Bankers. Jordanian Palestinians were dominant in banking and business. East Bankers used to say they were the Jews of the Arab world. And they meant business, accounting, banking; it wasn't intended as a derogatory slur.

*Q: Were the Palestinians in control/influential in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia?*

GNEHM: They certainly were in Kuwait until 1991. When Saddam invaded Kuwait, Arafat endorsed the Iraqi claim to Kuwait. That led to a total reversal in Kuwaiti policy toward the PLO (and Palestinians). After liberation the Kuwaitis refused to allow Palestinians, many of whom had resided in Kuwait for decades, to return. Palestinians have never recovered their influential position in Kuwait. While there were large populations of Palestinians in other Arab countries, like Saudi Arabia and the UAE, they never had the dominance or influence that they had in Kuwait.

It is worth recalling that the Palestinians had created considerable animosity in Jordan, another factor that underlies East Banker distrust of Jordan's Palestinian citizens. It was the PLO attempt under Arafat to overthrow the Jordanian Government (the monarchy) in 1970, Black September. The PLO almost succeeded in taking over the country. It was the East Bank military that put them down, fought in the streets, and kicked them out of their country. Bin Shakur used to tell me about the terrible nights when they thought all was lost. At different times I have been in the car with both King Hussein and bin Shakur and, as we would pass certain places, they would point out, "That's where the PLO was that night when such and such occurred." That month of Black September remained and remains vivid in the minds of most Jordanians even as the years pass. It reminded me of southerners who recall the Civil War as though it had been occurred yesterday. People don't forget those kinds of things.

*Q: No, no.*

GNEHM: But back to the current situation in Jordan... The political system is gerrymandered. For example, even to this day, the voting districts are drawn in such a way as to minimize Palestinian representation in parliament and maximize the strength of non-Palestinians.

The Palestinians have tended to accept this. There has been something of acquiescence by both Palestinians and East Bankers that Palestinians dominate the economic realm and

the East Bankers the political system. Palestinian dominance in the economy was OK as long as they were not in the military, intelligence or controlling the parliament. By the time I returned to Jordan as Ambassador in 2001, this unspoken division of influence was shifting as East Bankers were becoming more prominent in the economic sector, in short more often competing with Palestinians than before. While there has been little outright violence between the two segments of the population, there have been flare-ups that underscore the cleavage.

*Q: Was this one of your sort of, your top five alert things? I mean, in other words were you looking for indications that perhaps the Palestinians were getting out of hand or something like that?*

GNEHM: Well, no. Not to the extent of getting out of hand. They were defeated militarily, as I said, in the '70s and most of the Palestinians were businessmen and educators, editors, or worked in ministries. We were, however, always were monitoring the frictions that could erupt and did erupt around the country from time to time between the two groups.

*Q: How did you and your wife find the social life there?*

GNEHM: Wonderful. It was a great country for us as a family. Not only were our kids in elementary and junior high. They were in the American Community School, which was about 40 percent Jordanian. We had many excellent relationships with parents of kids. Jordanians were very hospitable, very open, welcoming. They'd invite us into their homes and they'd come to our place unlike in some of the other Arab countries.

*Q: Which unlike so many Arab places where there really isn't an awful lot of mixing.*

GNEHM: There is a lot of social interaction in Jordan. It was my custom then and when I was ambassador, that if there was a death in a family, I went to the funeral. If the family was Christian, I would go to the church or if they were Muslim, I'd call on the family in the condolence tent. My wife and I were often included in weddings and other family events. We developed some very close relationships in Jordan. We also noticed that Jordanians do not forget their friendships. For example, we left Jordan in '87 and had been back in the States for a while, yet when Jordanians came to the States, they'd pick up the phone and call. One time I ran into a Jordanian friend by coincidence in a mall and we ended up going out together. Jordanians never lost the connection; and they continued to maintain it, up to this day.

*Q: Well you left Jordan when?*

GNEHM: I left Jordan in April of '87 and that was a little ahead of my end of tour date which was in the summer. Richard Armitage, who was then Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Affairs, wanted me to serve as his deputy for the Middle East - - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Near East and South Asia (NESA). There are several deputies that cover each of the major geographic regions in the world. Rich

asked that I curtail my tour so I could come immediately to fill an existing vacancy. Rich had met me during visits to Jordan and asked State if they would second me to be his deputy and State agreed. So I was curtailed by three months. My wife stayed on so the kids could finish their academic year.

*Q: Yes, this is good. Okay, we'll pick it up next time in '87 when you were at the Defense Department.*

GNEHM: For two years.

*Q: We'll pick it up then. Great.*

*Q: Today is the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 2014, with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you've just moved, it's '87, to the, is it the Pentagon? Could you explain what the job was?*

GNEHM: The position I went to at the Pentagon was in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, underneath the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Rich Armitage. He had under him regional Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense, DASDs, as we were called in short, for each geographic region. I was the DASD for the Near East and South Asia (NESAs). The office was responsible for U.S. military relations with countries from Morocco to Bangladesh. So my office covered North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.

As an introduction, I'd like to say that this assignment was a tremendous opportunity to broaden my understanding of government and policy. This exposure to the military became critically important later. My year on the Hill gave me knowledge and insight on how Congress worked international affairs issues. The job in personnel really gave me an insider view of how the system operates for us as a profession. The job on the seventh floor with the Secretary of State gave me insight into how the leadership of the Department operates. Then I had this one, with the military.

These were the four building blocks in my career that were enormously important. Because of my experience at the Defense Department, I became a vocal advocate of more Foreign Service officers doing tours and assignments with the U.S. Military. I would be self-serving if I actually told you that I foresaw the enormous role the military would play in international affairs over the next two and a half decades. I didn't. I did understand, however, the importance of the Foreign Service understanding the military and being able to work with them and vice versa in order to bridge differences.

I often tell this story humorously but it has a solid basis in fact. When I went over to the Pentagon the first day to take up my new position, I was cautioned by my friends at State that people at the Pentagon were going to be suspicious of me since I was State. When I got there, everybody in the office was polite and nice. They took me around and they introduced me. We talked about the issues that were on each person's desk. I did sense a certain holding back -- keeping the discussion very broad and general without any details.

The funny thing was that I had trouble with my paycheck because this was a reimbursable detail. State was going to continue to pay me but there was some processing problem. So I went back over to State the following day to try to get my payroll fixed. I stopped by NEA and I felt like my NEA friends were being a little hesitant in the way they were speaking to me. So in the end I confronted both of them, both at State and at Defense. I said, "You know, this is ridiculous. Shall I move and occupy that concrete bench in the middle of Memorial Bridge and then just stay on the river, halfway here and halfway there? Is this the way?"

*Q: Well were you able to sort of raise the issue and, I mean, on both sides?*

GNEHM: Yes that's exactly what I did. I confronted my own people at State. I said, "Look, I'm no different today than I was yesterday and you should know me well." My staff at Defense was a combination of Civil Service and military officers. During my tour at Defense, there was always a sense that State somehow was always trying to block what the Pentagon wanted to do or there was this adversarial sort of relationship. On the other side of the coin, there was a perception at State that somehow Defense was a maverick, was uncontrollable, and had their own agenda that was undermining America's interests and policies. I worked with both sides to stress that we were all on the same team.

Once they had confidence in me that I wasn't taking everything that I heard at Defense and running over to State or rating on State at Defense, things worked smoothly.

*Q: Did you find that the military had a different view of what the situation was in the ME and how to deal with it -- different from your view as a State Department?*

GNEHM: Actually, I would say overall they had the same view; but there was a perception that it was different. They each had this sort of perception about the other. Now, it is true and it would be logical that my Defense Department team looked at the tools that we managed such as the Joint Military Commission meetings with 10 countries in the region (which I attended as a senior Defense Department person representing America if Rich Armitage did not go), military sales, relationships with other militaries, training, building comradery as instruments, all of these as key support for American interests in the region. State would see our military assistance programs and military-to-military relationships as only part of the picture. So, to some extent, there was a more narrow view. Yet when you talked about America's policy in Morocco, you would not find a great deal of difference between the office of the Secretary of Defense and the State Department.

Now, mentioning Morocco does lead me to the issue of US policy on the Western Sahara. That issue involved the Moroccan Government and the Polisario Front.

*Q: The Polisario (Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro).*

GNEHM: When Spain decided to withdraw from its colony in Western Sahara, Morocco claimed it as Moroccan territory. They argued that Spain had forcefully taken the territory

from Morocco. At the same time the indigenous population of the Western Sahara desired independence. Morocco occupied the territory when the Spanish withdrew and that precipitated an armed confrontation with the Polisario Front, the group that represents the local population. The fighting has left Morocco in control of most of the territory and created a large refugee population in neighboring Algeria. In fact the Algerian Government has supported the Polisario Front leading to a hostile relationship with Morocco.

Anyway, the point here is that you could find State with a position on how the U.S. Government ought to deal with Morocco on the Sahara question and people at the Pentagon who might be concerned that State's approach would undercut what Defense viewed as an important military relationship. So you could have within the U.S. Government different perspectives on how one would approach a problem with a particular country.

*Q: What about the key issue in this whole area? How did you find the military looked at Israel and Israel's policy?*

GNEHM: That's a very good question because of course the US relationship with Israel was a big part of the office's portfolio. NESAs were responsible for military relationship and that included arms sales in particular.

I want to step back to talk about Rich Armitage for a moment because that helps me answer your question in a very specific way. Rich Armitage is without question a dynamic personality, a fantastic bureaucrat. He knows how to work the system. He would get into the office very, very early in the morning and by the time I got there at 7 or 7:15, he had already been there an hour or an hour and a half. He probably would have made anywhere from five to 12 phone calls to other people around the government to chat with them about what was going on that day or to find out what they thought about a "Washington Post" story or what we were going to do in Morocco. Whatever the topic, he was already way ahead of the rest of the world by the time the rest of the world came to work. He was a professional networker! He built relationships that he was able to use in multiple different ways. I admired him enormously for the way he managed his job and his position. He had much more influence within the government and in the Pentagon because of the way he operated and how he filled that job.

This leads me back to answer your question. I, of course, participated in virtually every meeting he had with anybody from the region that I covered. He routinely included his subordinates, his deputies, in those meetings. From the beginning I was struck by the directness and the honesty with which he dealt with visitors. He would say things that, and if not said in a certain way or was not with someone with whom he had established a good relationship, could have been offensive and led to misunderstandings and troubles. He could get away with it the way he did it. I watched him and I learned that you could be direct with people and that you should be direct with people. You come out better off in the long run. This was in some way a modification from the way I was at State. He was a person that influenced me a great deal for the rest of my career.

Going back to the Israelis, we know how they operate in Washington. They have multiple relationships at the highest level in the USG. Usually it is the prime minister with the president, vice president or secretary of state. They deal directly with members of. In the time that I was at the Pentagon, the Israelis recognized very clearly that Rich Armitage's views on things and his influence in the Washington circuit made him a very important player for them.

For example, they approached him early on for financial and technical support for what eventually became the Israeli Iron Dome and the Arrow air defense system. One sees reference to this system quite often now in newspapers; it is operative and effective. The Israelis now have the ability to shoot down incoming rockets. It's cutting edge technology and its development was very much due to US cooperation and support.

At that time, in 1987, there were questions as to whether one could ever really develop an effective system. It was going to cost lots of money and on that particular subject, as on others, Rich was very candid with them. He said, "You know, you're coming to me and asking me for hundreds of millions of dollars and do you believe that I think this is the last time you're going to come see me? No, of course not, you're going to be back. And I know why you're going to be back, because you have to have the money to carry this through to completion." In other words, you see how Rich could actually setup the next meeting and let them know he understood this was not just a one-time thing. He made it clear that we supported their developing an anti-missile defense capability; but also pointed out that they had to convince the technical people that this is really going to be workable. So we support the concept but let them understand the various issues that were going to have to be addressed. He laid that out for them.

*Q: Was there a concern about giving sensitive technology to the Israelis? I've seen accounts, that this knowledge was sometimes used as bargaining chips with the Russians and with the Chinese?*

GNEHM: Yes. This was always a concern within the Pentagon. You had offices in the Pentagon who had interest in that topic, either the intelligence people or those who were there to protect sensitive technology. The decision to transfer specific technology was always vetted carefully -- and often with some disagreement as to the final decision. Rich never shied away from bringing that up if he felt that it was necessary to remind them that they were asking us to give them technology that we give to no other country. He did not hesitate to stress that that technology has to be protected. "We do not want to see that technology appear in weapons systems in other countries," he would tell them. He didn't shy away from saying that to them but again, always in a way of a friend, an ally.

*Q: Well did you trust the Israelis in dealing with this?*

GNEHM: Well, I don't know that I like answering the question with the word "trust" in it. The officials with whom I worked at the Defense Department were all pragmatic about this and understood the complexities of our relationship with Israel. I think you can

conclude from my mentioning how this matter was raised repeatedly with the Israelis that technology transfer had been an issue in the past.

With every country we work with there are issues that have to be assessed, certain parameters that have to be imposed. Decisions are made based on everything from the sensitivity of a particular technology to our experiences with a given country. Much goes into the final decision.

*Q: Did we have any essential relationship with the Indians?*

GNEHM: Improvement of relations with India was one of the things Rich hoped to achieve. We did visit India. I'm trying to remember whether we actually went with the Secretary of Defense. I just can't remember whether we did or not. Rich was cognizant and conscious of the fact that our close relationship with Pakistan and, specifically, our military assistance programs, aggravated India and inhibited efforts to improve relations. Rich did look for ways that we could find cooperate to mutual advantage.

I remember one of the friction points with India was with U.S. Navy and the Indian Navy. The Indian government was quite hostile to the presence of the U.S. Navy in the Indian Ocean. They actually protested its presence several times. They liked to remind us that the body of water is called the Indian Ocean and that it was 'our' ocean and that they did not need world powers playing out their Cold War in their ocean.

*Q: And Diego Garcia is right in the middle of 'their' ocean!.*

GNEHM: That's right.

*Q: And it is a major base, correct?*

GNEHM: That's right. We were never sympathetic to the Indians on this issue. We never altered what the U.S. Navy did in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Navy kept making an issue of it and the Indian government tried making an issue of it, as I said. This was just an example of the frictions that we had with India.

*Q: Did we have any sort of informal or any kind of arrangements with Iran at that time?*

GNEHM: No, absolutely not. In fact, the '87 to '88 period was the last year of the Iraq-Iran war and that was also a period in which our military and the navy was actually engaged in military confrontations with the Iranians. In 1988 after an attack on one of our naval ships, the Administration ordered a retaliatory attack on Iranian assets. The ensuing naval battle was the largest since WWII.

*Q: The Iranian airbus full of civilians.*

GNEHM: In August 1988, several months after the naval battle I just mentioned, an Iranian Airbus, a civilian airliner, was shot down. I was my Pentagon position when this happened.

*Q: The U.S.S. Vincennes.*

GNEHM: Yes, the USS Vincennes. The plane took off from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: The investigation into the incident determined that the radar man, who was tracking the plane which was headed directly toward the ship, tried to identify the plane using 'friend and foe' messaging. The plane did not respond as would normally be the case with a civilian airliner. Given what had happened, the attacks on several other ships some with significant loss of life, people were really being extremely cautious about such threats. There was a point when the tracker had to make the decision as to whether you take the plane out or you don't, running the risk of being hit. Obviously, he made the decision to hit the plane. Then, of course, it was clear in the aftermath that it was a civilian aircraft and there was a huge loss of life. In my own opinion, the investigation provided an accurate description of events. This was not a deliberate shoot down of a civilian aircraft, it just wasn't.

*Q: No. Well I mean there's no point in that.*

GNEHM: Yes. It wasn't long after this incident that the then Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, actually reversed something he had said earlier, that he would never, ever agree to any sort of an agreement or compromise with Iraq until Saddam and his regime were gone. Yet now he called for an end to the war and said Iran was going to accept the UN resolution that called for a ceasefire. Many of us feel that the loss of life with the Airbus shoot down and, admittedly, some other factors were important in his deciding to reverse his position. Again, that is not in any way to say that we shot down that plane to accomplish that. Later, in negotiations with the Iranians, we agreed to provide payment to the families of the victims but we made clear it was not compensation or an acceptance of responsibility. That was the way it was phrased.

You ask what kind of relationship we had with Iran. It was characterized by intense hostility and suspicion. For example, the big obstacle to paying the money was that we refused to give it to the Iranian government to have them pay the families. We wanted to either do it directly or through a middleman because we didn't trust the Iranian government to do it properly. We also did not want them to get credit. No, we didn't have a very good relationship with them at this particular point in time. We had also, as you know, been tilting toward Iraq during its war with Iran.

*Q: What was the feeling towards Iraq at the time you were there?*

GNEHM: Well that's a very important question because when I returned to State as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Gulf region, I had to deal with the same issue just in a different time period.

When I arrived in 1987, a lot had already happened with the Iraqi relationship. There was a sense in the Pentagon (and elsewhere in the executive branch) that there were real opportunities to work with Baghdad. State shared the view that maybe we could moderate the Iraqi behavior. It was hoped that by working with the Iraqis Iraq might become a legitimate and respectable part of the family of nations. Saddam Hussein was the key figure and he had an ambition to be a leader, if not THE leader, of the region.

The Pentagon saw a chance to build a relationship with the Iraqi military, which they thought could help them have a backdoor influence on Saddam and the regime. In retrospect, that was not a good appreciation of how the Saddam regime operated. It was the other way around. Nevertheless, there was certainly an initiative on the part of some at the Pentagon to find programs that we could do with the Iraqi military. That idea went all the way to the NSC (National Security Council). The presidential determination is actually declassified now, in which the decision was made to do some things; but in the end they were very minor and non-lethal. What was agreed to was small compared to what some in the Pentagon had hope for. There was no military assistance, arms sales, or anything of that sort. We could open up a dialogue between our military medical people and Iraqi military medical people on the treatment of war wounds and things like that. So it was de minimis, if you will. There was some dissent, unhappiness, at the Pentagon in certain areas, particularly in DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) where there was a particularly strong advocacy for a more substantial approach.

Another issue that was going on as I took up my new position at Defense was consequences of the Iraqi attack on the U.S.S. Stark. On May 17, 1987, the pilot of an Iraqi F1 fired two Exocet missiles hitting the US naval vessel that was patrolling waters in the north of the Persian Gulf. Thirty-seven naval personnel were killed and 21 others wounded. The ship almost sunk. The Iraqi Government claimed it was a mistake -- that the pilot thought the ship was an Iranian oil tanker. At the time the missiles were launched the pilot had no visible view of the ship, according to the Iraqis. There were differing views in Washington. Some thought it was a signal from Saddam for US naval ships to stay away from the northern Gulf. Others were willing to accept that it was pilot error. Regardless the incident prompted a significant discussion with Saddam Hussein's government over their liabilities and responsibilities. While initially refusing to accept any responsibility, in the end they established a fund to cover the cost of the repair of the ship and some money to compensate families for loss of life and injury. They still refused to accept responsibility. The resolution of this incident was not unlike the solution we reached with Iran some months later for the shoot down of the Iranian civilian aircraft.

The incident also led to a U.S. Government decision to approach the Iraqis to try to establish an arrangement to 'deconflict' our forces. Our Navy ships were operating throughout the Gulf. Iraqi planes likewise were operating up and down the Gulf. Negotiations did lead to a deconfliction agreement.

In accordance with the agreement United States Government would notify the Iraqis the positions of our ships and our planes. Thus the Iraqis would be aware of which of the blips on their radars were ours. What that also told the Iraqis was that all the blips that weren't on our list were probably Iranian.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: So in fact we were providing target intelligence to them. This agreement is sometimes cited as proof of the US 'tilt' to Iraq; but the agreement was necessary to protect our ships and planes from attacks similar to what happened to the USS Stark.

*Q: Well we also, weren't we also giving some overhead pictures or the equivalent to the Iraqis?*

*I mean, we really were giving them pretty good stuff.*

GNEHM: We were. This was driven in part by US concern at one point in the Iraq-Iran war the possibility of an Iranian victory seemed real. The US policy, even if never stated so bluntly, was determined to thwart an Iranian victory. The precipitating event was the Iranian seizure of the al-Faw peninsula, the land located between the Shatt al-Arab and the Khor Abdullah. It meant that Iran now controlled all of Iraq's coastal area and threatened the fall of Basra, a key Iraqi city in southern Iraq. This gain also brought Iranian forces to the Kuwaiti border. Washington decided that it needed to do something to support the Iraqis. We began providing the Iraqis with intelligence information about where Iranian forces were located to enable them to be either prepared for the next attack or to respond to it. The Iraqis used the information that we provided -- not only to prepare for their defense but to plan offensive operations. Ultimately, the Iraqis retook the al-Faw peninsula and did so using gas which they had also been using elsewhere along the frontlines. Large number of Iranians were killed in the gas attacks.

There was one particularly contortion that I should mention in the decision to provide intelligence information to the Iraqis. Some officials wanted to provide the Iraqis with overhead photography but others in the USG concluded that for security reasons that could not be done. The work around was obtuse. Intelligence officers laid tissue paper over the photography and traced the Iranian deployments thus giving the Iraqis the next best thing to the original photos!

If you look at our relationship with Iraq from an Iranian point of view, you can understand why they would be angry with the United States and see us as a partisan on the Iraqi side during the war. I have mentioned Iraqi use of gas. The US (and other countries) failure to hold Iraq responsible for their use of gas. This failure on our part (and the international community) is still mentioned by Iranians when they cite hostile US policy toward Iran.

*Q: How did Saddam view our support?*

GNEHM: In hindsight we know that Saddam challenged his own military over use of the US intelligence. He thought we were providing information deliberately to place Iraqi forces in jeopardy. We failed to understand that, while we were trying to build a better relationship, he was actually extremely suspicious of the US. As I said, he wasn't sure the intelligence we were giving him was accurate. His military knew it was correct, but he didn't believe it. Let's be honest. He had reasons to be skeptical. Remember the so-called Irangate controversy. Around 1986, it came out publicly that we had approached the Iranians and had provided some military equipment. We did so in spite of the fact that we were aiding Iraq and were applying strong pressure on other countries not to provide any arms to Iran. The Israelis had brokered an arrangement in Lebanon through an Iranian intermediary, Manucher Ghorbanifar.

*Q: Oh he had a very complex relationship with both of them which usually ends up by screwing things up.*

GNEHM: The public revelation US arms to Iran was a disaster and greatly complicated a host of relationships. For two years the Reagan Administration had an initiative called publicly espoused an initiative called "Operation Staunch" led by Ambassador Richard Fairbanks. Under the initiative we put extreme and sometimes most undiplomatic pressure on all of our allies not to sell any equipment or provide any assistance to Iran. For example, we convinced the Italians not to sell helicopters. We convinced the Japanese to curtail economic aid because we were trying to cut off Iran from any external support. We were also telling our allies, the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and others, that we were in their camp -- totally opposed to the Islamic Revolutionary Government in Iran. And suddenly this all came out. So where is your credibility? What have you just said to everyone? The message was clear. You can't believe what we say.

And for Saddam, he had this experience with us as a duplicitous actor. So, one can understand a bit why he was skeptical of US military intelligence.

*Q: Well were you sitting in this, as a subordinate but still, in the critical period aware that we were sending out all sorts of mixed signals to everybody in the whole area over this war?*

GNEHM: Some of this that I just talked about came in a period just before I began my assignment at Defense. I was keenly aware of the Irangate fallout from having to deal with it in Jordan. When I got to the Pentagon, I was very much aware that we were working against a pretty severe credibility problem in the region. This came particularly from our allies, the Saudis, and the others with whom I met. It was an issue that came up in military commission meetings over the course of the next year or two. The Israeli role in Irangate convinced lots of people, including the Iraqis, that we were manipulated by the Israelis and that ultimately our relationship with Israel was stronger than other relationships. These were all things that you experience and learn to deal with.

I would say that in the end, the impact of our involvement in the Iraq-Iran war, especially the success of our naval presence, restored our credibility with the Saudis and the other Gulf states.

*Q: This is essentially escorting tankers in the Persian Gulf, protecting them from Iranian or brash Iraqi missiles.*

GNEHM: Right. In late '86 we learned from the US Maritime Commission that the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC), the agency of the Kuwaiti Government that owns and operates Kuwait's supertankers, had approached the Commission to ask what were the regulations for flagging vessels under the United States flag. The Commission notified State and others agencies that they had received this really peculiar inquiry. We ferreted it out. The then-Minister of Oil in Kuwait was Sheikh Ali Khalifa and he was concerned about Iranian threats to Kuwaiti tankers and thus to Kuwait's ability to export oil. In fact the Iranians had fired a missile into a Kuwaiti port and targeted Kuwaiti ships. It was clear to us from our intelligence and from our assessment that Kuwait was a focus of Iranian attacks. Why? As the Iraq-Iran war unfolded and all Iraqi Gulf ports were attacked by Iran, Kuwaiti and Saudi ports in the Gulf had become major transit points for material -- military and civilian -- going to Iraq. Technically one could argue that these states were co-belligerents as they were permitting material to Iraq to pass through their ports but not permitting the same for Iran. For the United States, Iran was a belligerent and a hostile power that might interrupt the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf. Any such disruption was an absolute *sine qua non* of American policy since World War II in the Gulf. US policy for decades was clear that the US would not allow any hostile power to interfere with the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf.

In the fall of '86 into early '87, the United States procrastinated in giving an answer to the Kuwaitis. Ali Khalifa kept pushing. We learned that the Kuwaiti government had also approached the Soviet Union with the same request -- to reflag their tankers. In early 1987 Ali Khalifa called my predecessor in Kuwait, Ambassador Nat Howell, to inform him that he had just received a positive answer from Moscow. They would reflag all Kuwaiti tankers. Sh. Ali said he had not yet informed the foreign minister but he would be seeing him at 9:00 in the morning. "That's about how much time you have to give me the US answer yea or nay about our reflagging request." The answer came back to the Kuwaitis before the night was over. We would reflag the Kuwaiti tankers.

The foreign minister in the meeting the next morning said to Ali Khalifa, "This is great. We'll do half the tankers with the Russians and half the tankers with the U.S. and that gives us protection from both great super powers." When Ali Khalifa brought that back to Nat Howell and through Nat to Washington, the U.S. Government's response was that it was all or nothing. We would not tolerate the Russians reflagging half the tankers.

Now, the truth is that the Russians didn't have the naval capability to defend Kuwaiti shipping or to undertake any of the operations that we could do. The Russians saw this as a great opportunity to enhance their influence in the Persian Gulf -- exactly what the US opposed. The foreign minister's reaction, who by the way is now the emir, Sheikh Sabah,

had been foreign minister of Kuwait since independence in 1962. He looked upon the world more or less from a non-aligned point of view. The policy that he championed in the years after Kuwait's independence was basically to play both sides in the Cold War against the other to the advantage of Kuwait. His reaction that morning would have been quite obvious and quite understood by anyone who knew him then.

By the way, after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the U.S. liberation, Sheikh Sabah's view of things have changed entirely. So I don't want to leave anybody with the impression that today, as the emir, he feels as he did before 1990. The decision in Kuwait was ultimately reflag five supertankers with the US. The reflagging itself was very complicated. We had to get all sorts of waivers because we have very strict labor and safety laws and regulations. These ships were going to require enormous retrofitting to comply with U.S. regulations; but that would come with time.

*Q: I know double hulling and . . .*

GNEHM: Yes. And fire controls and alarm systems and all kinds of things that were required.

*Q: Oil is such, after the Valdez incident, Exxon Valdez, we had very, very nervous-*

GNEHM: There was a requirement that the captain had to be an American citizen. We waived them temporarily to permit the reflagging to go ahead. This became a problem. The Maritime Workers union went to the committee on the Hill that is responsible for their affairs to protest. They wanted to have the right to crew all the ships immediately. This was a great job opportunity for them professionally. The number of ships under US registry was rapidly in part because of all of these regulations. Most companies were flagging their ships in Liberia and Panama and other countries where they didn't face such strict requirements, including the use of very expensive American labor.

The significant point is that the United States had now taken on a far more serious commitment in the Gulf than it had ever had before. Obviously, when you reflag a ship with the American flag, under international law, which goes back hundreds of years, the country with the flag has the right as a sovereign state to protect that territory from hostile action. Once the Kuwaiti owned tankers were American ships, the United States Navy had a legitimate responsibility to protect them and could respond under international law to legally hostile threats. That is, of course, the precise reason why the Kuwaitis wanted them under a US flag. In the first action, the U.S. decided that we would escort the supertankers from the Strait of Hormuz--which is that narrow neck of water where the Persian Gulf enters the Arabian Sea--all the way up the Persian Gulf to the port in Kuwait. Unfortunately, during the very first escort operation one of the super tankers hit a mine. The pictures that surfaced after the incident showed the US navy escort vessel cruising in the wake of the hit tanker. The Kuwaitis were upset believing that the naval escort ship should have been in the lead. The Navy explained that a super tanker doesn't sink when it hits a mine but a destroyer does.

A few months later, another one of the five tankers was actually loading crude in the port in Kuwait when it was hit by an incoming, Iranian-fired Scud missile. These are missiles have no guidance system. They are simply shot into the air on a trajectory that may or may not hit something. This hit was a fluke; but being the second of five tankers to be hit had the Kuwaitis questioning US protection of their tankers.

As the war continued and the Iranians became more and more frustrated, the Iran began attacking vessels of other nationalities. Then we began to see mines in the Gulf. Initially we thought that the mines were left from the Iraq-Iran war and had broken loose from the Euphrates/Tigris and the Shatt al-Arab area. But we later caught Iranians in small boats throwing mines over the side. There was no doubt at this point where the mines were coming from and who was deploying them.

Secondly, the Iranians in fast motorboats began to board ships and actually rough up crews and threaten them. It began to occur in the sight of American naval vessels. In other words, the American vessels that were there could see it happening but couldn't intervene because the ship was not an American flagged vessel. The outrage from a humanitarian point of view rose soon intensified, both within the U.S. Navy and the American public. This led to the decision that, if the U.S. naval vessel was privy, meaning present and saw human rights violations, it could intervene. You see the beginning of an expanding policy.

The next step followed quickly. The U.S. was willing to convoy all the ships in and out of the Gulf. The initial consequence was a huge backlog of shipping waiting for escort. The Navy's view of convoying was the World War II operation in the North Atlantic. You gathered ships at one safe location. Once you had a sufficient number of ships, the convoy would proceed. So the Navy decided that all ships were to gather in the Gulf of Oman just outside of the Persian Gulf and wait until there were enough ships to be convoyed up the coast. As the convoy moved north, it would drop off ships at ports it passed starting in the Emirates, then on to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. The delay resulted in significant increases in demurrage charges. With some experience the Navy made adjustments and got it right. They learned that it was much better to post ships at intervals up the Gulf. Ships then entered the Gulf as they arrived. The US Navy noted their arrival and passed them off from one ship to another up the Gulf. The U.S. Navy didn't have to convoy them. It worked and was fantastic. It was only when there were some attacks on these ships that the U.S. decided, as I mentioned earlier, to take out some of the oil platforms that Iranian motorboats were using as bases. So the escort operation was a great success.

It was impressive and the Saudis, the Kuwaitis, the Emiratis and others saw that when we said we would do something and when we committed to their security, we actually deployed the assets needed and carried it out well. It restored a great deal of credibility.

*Q: Well did the Kuwaitis, the Bahrainis, the United Emirates, have their own naval vessels? I assume patrol vessels with enough to at least cooperate with our navy?*

GNEHM: The answer is yes, but in a limited way. They have more capability now, but the Saudis did have some naval vessels based on the coast of Saudi Arabia in the Gulf. The Kuwaitis navy was small. They did cooperate and we did handoff ships going into Saudi ports to the Saudi navy at a certain point. I should add that we attracted considerable support from other navies in the world. We weren't the only ones but were the principal force.

*Q: Japan I would think. Maybe not.*

GNEHM: Did Japan send naval vessels? I'm not sure that they did. Their constitution prohibits involvement in military action. We did twist their arms to finance a huge radar communications system in the Persian Gulf that enabled ships to communicate with each other in the Gulf. I know that the Dutch had a ship. The Danes I think did as did and certainly the British and the French. It's curious again, the way things happen. We proposed immediately that all naval ships in the Gulf be placed under the command of the senior US admiral or at least under his authority to co-ordinate activities. Governments refused on grounds that their naval vessels were sovereign territory. In the Gulf, however, the naval captains told our admiral that as far as they were concerned they were happy to coordinate their actions. And so the commanders in the Gulf worked it out!

*Q: Did you get involved in these agreements or semi-agreements?*

GNEHM: We were involved in the initial conversations with the governments over our first proposal; but it was the navy that worked it out with the ship captains in the Gulf and solved the practical problems.

*Q: What was the Iranian response to all this?*

GNEHM: Well the Iranians continued to accuse the United States and others of supporting Iraq and as being one-sided in the war. There were continued efforts to lay mines and they still tried some attacks, but the Iranians didn't have a capability to stop our efforts. When they did try, we sunk them. The Iranians had been faced with a dilemma in the war with Iraq. They knew that Iraq was continuing to get support that was actually helping them win. Iran's options to prevent Iraq from getting help weren't good. They could hit the pipeline that goes from Iraq through Turkey to the Mediterranean to stop oil exports and therefore, reduce revenue. This was problematic, however, because the Iranians had a reasonably good relationship with Turkey. They needed Turkey as an access point for the goods, military supplies, food, and everything else that they were importing. So that wasn't a viable option. There were other things they could have done that would have hurt their relationship with Russia. They didn't want to do that because again, the northern border with Russia was critically important for lots of different reasons. So that's why they ended up making the decision that they had to hit the ships that were going into the Saudi and Kuwaiti ports, which we had warned them against repeatedly.

*Q: Were there any other areas that caused, from your perspective and your responsibility, I mean you had, in the first place you had a major war going on and anywhere else where there were troubles?*

GNEHM: Well there were lots of other things going on which I would love to mention.

*Q: Do.*

GNEHM: The first that comes to mind is our military assistance with Pakistan. Zia al-Haq was then president, a military man who had seized power. There was a huge debate in Washington among members of Congress. There were those who didn't think we should be building a closer relationship with a military government and then those who believed Pakistan was important, particularly when looking at Iran and even at Afghanistan. They advocated building a relationship. The Pentagon and the Secretary of Defense, both Weinberger and Carlucci as well as my boss, Armitage, were strongly in support of building up and forming ties with the Pakistani military. Almost within weeks of my arrival in the job, there was a hearing on the Hill over the sale of AWACs or the Navy E3C to Pakistan. I did a lot of testifying on the Hill in my Defense position. Virtually every single U.S. arms sale was questioned. Any particular sale might involve four different hearings, two in each house before both foreign affairs and defense committees.

So I had to go almost immediately after my arrival at Defense to argue in favor of selling an intelligence surveillance aircraft to Pakistan, either the AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) or the E3C, which was the Navy version of the AWACS. I knew nothing beyond the most basic facts about these two platforms, but I knew I had to be ready to talk about their capabilities in detail and explain the differences between the two. Then, of course, I had to be prepared to explain why we were going to sell it, which was a policy decision. I worked my tail off those few days trying to learn all the technical data about these two platforms. I went up there and, frankly, I did a lousy job. I didn't lose the case; but I didn't come across as really knowing what I was talking about that well.

Rich, who, as I mentioned, is a great networker, had already spoken to several committee members by the time I returned from the ill. He, of course, how I did and what was their reaction. They said, "Well, you know, we're not going to oppose this sale but your person today didn't do a great job." And so he called me up and really gave me the, you know, the shit hit the fan, sort of stuff about this. And he was right. That never happened again, at least in my opinion. I never ever had that problem again and I know I became a very good witness. Members often complimented me, but that was a bad start.

Rich and I ended up going to Pakistan for the joint military commission meeting. The problem we faced with Pakistan was our history with them. We had had a military sales program with Pakistan earlier which we had cut off in a political move.

*Q: That was because of nuclear activity.*

GNEHM: Yes and it was also linked to problems with their relationship with India. Our credibility convinced Zia al-Haq and the military that this time around was going to be different. Yet you could see doubts on faces during our conversations. They would look at you and they'd shake their heads and say, "Hey, please, please, you know." And Rich again, because he's the kind of guy he is, would speak right up, "I know exactly what you're thinking and know why you said what you said. It's because back then we cut off our aid. We're making a commitment to you."

*Q: Did you have concerns about the fact that a Pakistani developing nuclear weapons and passing information to other countries?*

GNEHM: Yes, this was an issue. This was a topic of concern to the U.S. Government. I don't remember myself ever participating in meetings in which that subject was addressed directly.

*Q: The head of it, Khan was it? I think his name was A. Q. Khan.*

GNEHM: Yes, the nuclear expert who led the program, I believe.

You asked about other things. The one other big thing that happened while I was in my position as DASD was a status of forces (SOFA) agreement with Israel. We didn't have an agreement. We had this relationship which is very close. We furnished them military assistance at various times as the result of wars. We had investments in technology and programs, not only in the Arrow and Iron Dome, but also naval programs, naval ships. There was, for example, a decision to permit the Israelis to purchase some fairly sophisticated naval vessels that would be built in Gulf of Mexico ports. This was an important sale to certain members of Congress. Yet with all these military programs, we did not have a status of forces agreement with them. The negotiations had been going on for some time. My predecessor had negotiated at some length but the talks had just not advanced. Rich Armitage said to me, "We're going to finish this, Skip. I want you to get this done." I was the lead negotiator on the U.S. side, with a team of some extraordinarily competent people including representatives of State and the military, the Navy and other parties involved. Over a period of time, I succeeded in negotiating a draft SOFA agreement. It was an amazing experience. It was a unique experience because while it is largely true that the Foreign Service and State Department are the main negotiators of agreements with countries, not very many Foreign Service officers actually end up negotiating. We often talk about policies, treaties, negotiating text, and sub-points and try to convince countries to vote at the UN as we would like. But actually negotiating an entire treaty, for that is what it was, was absolutely a fantastic experience for me because I had to know all the various aspects of a status of forces agreement, what mattered to the various military services, State's view, Defense's view, other equities within the U.S. Government. And then, I had to deal with a negotiating team of a foreign government and one that I knew, as we talked earlier, had access into the political system in Washington at all kinds of levels.

The Israeli negotiating team was headed by a lawyer, Elyakim Rubenstein, who went on to become minister in the government and a Justice on the Israeli Supreme Court. He had with him a counterpart team representing the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Defense, Foreign Ministry and other ministries. We rotated our meetings, holding negotiations both in Israel and in Washington. We sat at long table. Eli Rubenstein sat in the middle on one side; I sat in the middle on the other side with our teams next to us. I learned early on, and it was true to the very end, that the Israeli side was comprised of an extraordinarily competent, but litigious, group of people who could ask questions infinitum, posing the most extraordinary hypothetical question to try to find out what was meant under the terms which we were arguing. For example, one woman lawyer asked, "I just want to make it clear about this indemnity question, about when you cause damages and your responsibility. So, does this mean if you have an airplane that's flying over Israel from, let's say Greece, on its way to Kuwait and as it's flying over Israel one of the engines falls off, lands on a house and kills someone, does this agreement cover indemnity for this even though they didn't land in Israel?" I shook my head and said to her, "If an engine falls off the plane, the plane is probably going to fall down in Israeli territory. We're going to have both the house that the engine hit and plus the place where the plane crashed to deal with. It'll be on Israeli territory."

After a while this became so absurd that even Eli said to the woman who asked the question "Look, it doesn't matter. I think we understand that this is a pretty comprehensive indemnity section that involves American responsibility pretty much across the board and they're not trying to evade or be evasive about it."

It wasn't always easy to keep negotiations moving forward. We would work through Article I tortuously and, once we reached an informal agreement, we assumed that we would discuss the next article the following day, only to arrive at the next session to have someone raise an issue and ask for clarification about something in Article I. In the end, we stalled and Eli got a little upset. At one point one of the people raised an issue that had already been resolved. Eli looked across the table at me and mouthed "Forget it. Don't worry about this. Don't respond, I'll take care of this question." When the woman who was asking the question finished, Eli said, "Well thank you, but we've already agreed on that. We're going to move on." We eventually did reach an agreement.

*Q: Well tell me, a status of forces agreements, deals with the American presence in a foreign country usually because we've got troops stationed there. What did we have in Israel that we wouldn't have in, Egypt or some other place? There are always soldiers coming in and out and all. What was so special about Israel and needing a SOFA?*

GNEHM: The status of forces agreement is an agreement between us and another country that defines a military relationship and the way the host government will deal with our military presence in that country. We have them with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) countries. The reason why they're so sensitive to most countries is that we insist that we maintain judicial jurisdiction over all active duty military personnel or personnel who are there under the auspices of the Defense Department. This is one of the reasons why we didn't keep troops in Iraq just a few years ago. The important reason for

this policy is the necessity of maintaining operational readiness. For example, you don't want your radar man in a unit being picked up and put in jail for an automobile accident or maybe even an allegation of wrongful death or corruption and become unavailable in the event of a crisis that requires his presence. There's always the concern that in certain countries, political situations have an impact on the operational capability of the unit that's based in the country. I'm in support of SOFAs. I think they are necessary when you have military abroad. But they are sensitive, especially in the Middle East. People remember the 'capitulation' agreements that western powers forced on the Ottoman Empire -- agreements that truly denigrated the country's sovereignty.

Why Israel? We have a constant ongoing U.S. military presence in Israel for different reasons. It could be that they're stationed there as part of the cooperative program of the Navy or for an exercise program. We hold fairly extensive exercise programs so we have units deployed in Israel, usually for a defined period of time. During that period of time, this status of forces agreement governs their status.

Also, the SOFA define a number of ways that make it easier for American military personnel entering a country. In Israel, they can enter on their military I.Ds. The military does not need a passport or visas because when the military deploys large numbers of troops to a country not all members will have passports. They travel abroad on their military I.D. Certainly the judicial jurisdiction is there but what Israel will provide in the way of support for the troops in a country as opposed to what the Americans would provide this is also defined.

I mentioned the indemnity question earlier. For example, if there is an automobile accident when a Humvee goes down a road, it is going to do a lot more damage to the automobile than to the Humvee. Under the status of forces agreement, if there are any injuries it's very clear that the U.S. Government is responsible if it's determined that it was a U.S. Military person or military equipment that caused the problem. We tried to set up the system so that there are no questions when things arise as to how it's going to be handled and it's worked beautifully.

An agreement like the SOFA requires approval of the Knesset. That occurred after I left the job and moved on. In fact, it didn't occur until the fall of 1990.

I made very close friends with the people who were on the negotiating team and with whom I worked. I learned how you negotiate. One of the really important things I learned is that there are moments in time when you sense hostility or even blockage to progress. At that point in time, a little bit of humor can sometimes relieve tension. I did that a few times and saw the expressions on people's faces. They were kind of shocked that I had taken this very serious issue and made a joke out of it, but then they broke into laughter and we moved on. You need be able to gauge the situation and establish confidence from the other side that you're being honest and that you're listening and attentive.

*Q: Didn't we have the equivalent of about three or four SOFA agreements that we negotiated long and hard with other countries that we could pull off the shelf and present and say, take your pick to the Israelis?*

GNEHM: This was part of the negotiating. As they wanted to eliminate or take out certain things, I had to say several different times to them that what they wanted removed was an integral part of the SOFA for U.S. national interest, policy and if it was not there, there is no agreement. I said, "If you look, it's in the German SOFA, it's in Italy's, etc." Yes, they did their research; these are all public documents. They would often pull out a document and say, "Well you use this language here but you didn't use this language there, why?" There is an office in the Pentagon that's responsible for status of forces agreements and they had a representative on my negotiating team. If anything, he was the policeman to make sure we didn't do anything that crossed over lines. He was invaluable in responding to questions about other SOFAs.

*Q: Well this brings up a question. As I do these oral histories things are changing. It used to be that a team would go out somewhere and they'd operate pretty much on their own because communications are so lousy. Had you reached the point where people, somebody in the back row would have a cell phone and would be talking to the Pentagon?*

GNEHM: No, not during these negotiations. I was fortunate in having almost every office with some interest in the topic on my team there at the table. I might ask for a recess, say that I need to have a caucus with my side on these issues before we go on any further, and we'd go off into another room or some other place. If we didn't have the knowledge we needed from someone there on the team, we would call back to Washington to find out the history of a certain phrase. Again, usually my person knew all about these things. So we rarely had to touch base with Washington.

My experience negotiating this agreement with Israel was very important in subsequent negotiations that I undertook specifically a number of agreements with Kuwait after its liberation in 1991.

*Q: Was there a congressional input into your negotiating?*

GNEHM: No. I always was aware, as was my party, that any agreement like this would be scrutinized by the Hill. As long as it was replicating other agreements and treaties that we had done before, even the pro-Israel members of Congress couldn't object to us requiring the same thing of Israel as we would require of other allies.

*Q: Sure.*

GNEHM: It was at least a good talking point and they usually backed off. They just said okay, okay, okay.

*Q: Turning to another part of your area of responsibility -- Africa?*

GNEHM: I covered North Africa. There were joint military commissions or similar type structures that we set up with almost every one of these countries where we had any sort of military relationship. They would meet either once or twice a year and we would alternate the meetings between the capital abroad and Washington. For the Moroccan joint military commission meeting, I'd go to Morocco and then the following session would be in Washington. We would have different representatives of the U.S. Government on the team. We would have someone from military sales from the Pentagon to deal with military sales. If there was a status of forces agreement, someone from that office in the Pentagon would attend in case there were SOFA issues. I would represent OSD, but we'd always have State represented, either political or military affairs bureau or both, depending on the issues. The agendas were set based on the issues with which we were dealing. There was invariably parts of the meeting where we would give an intelligence assessment and that they would then give an assessment from their perspective. There were always social events to reinforce personal relationships. These meetings with our counterparts went on over several years, so there was a comradery.

*Q: How stood relations with Egypt at that time?*

GNEHM: Egypt was a critically important relationship. It was an extremely good relationship during the period Mubarak was president. We had a joint military commission with Egypt that met twice a year. We had a large military supply and arms sale relationship. We also had an extensive exercised program. A large issue that I had to deal with was the initial sale of M1A1 tanks to Egypt. This was the first sale of an M1A1 tank, our most advanced tank, to a non-NATO country. I had to testify several times before Congress finally permitted this sale to go forward. Actually the Egyptians wanted to manufacture the M1A1 in Egypt. The transfer of sensitive technology to Egypt was one issue; but Israeli opposition to manufacturing the tank in Egypt was another. In the end we agreed that we would support them having an assembly plant for the M1A1s. We would furnish the kits and they would assemble them. They ultimately agreed to do that. There was a lot of skepticism on the Hill about selling this very sophisticated tank to Egypt. The Israeli concern about technology and capability and whether this was a threat to them all that had to be dealt with. In the end it was approved and we sold the first batch of kits to them and the plant ultimately began assembly. Further we also had a huge F-16 sale, an addition to their F-16 fleet.

The military's presence in the security area was huge in Egypt.

*Q: Well what-*

GNEHM: There were also exercises with Egypt that are worth mentioning.

*Q: Well Egypt, okay with a tank, I mean, it would seem the logical use of the tank would be if things went bad with Israel. I mean, in other words Israel and Egypt are right on the front lines of each other and it's straight tank country. I would think that Congress would*

*be dead against giving the Egyptians anything that maybe gave them an equality with the Israelis.*

GNEHM: The question of whether a particular sale jeopardized Israeli security was a given on every single sale of military equipment to countries in the ME. One had to convince Congress and Israel that the sale was not going to jeopardize their security. Often, as was the case in this tank sale, we had to assess what capabilities the Israelis have to defend themselves or what the Israelis needed to make sure that they had the weapons systems or the technology to counter the M1A1. That was the way you normally placated either Israel or the Washington lobby. I would add that the Libyan border was of concern to the Egyptians. And remember as well that Egypt and Israel had signed a peace treaty.

*Q: Libya no contact or what?*

GNEHM: In those days, Libya was a threatening state. Between Gaddafi's wacky ideas and his attempts to buy off different governments and even fund some opposition groups, Libya was a source of instability of the region.

I have mentioned several times the joint military commissions that we had with several of the countries in the NESAs region. We had a good relationship with Morocco and Tunisia and had joint military commissions with both. We had a fledgling relationship with Algeria in those days. I think I was the first person at my level at the Pentagon to go to Algeria and I did to indicate an interest in strengthening the military relationship with Algeria. I visited their military academy and spoke there. I was the first American to ever do that.

We have talked a lot about our relationship with Israel but I did not specifically mention the Joint Political Military Group (JPMG). It was the primary forum for our military to military talks. It met twice a year was very important in the bilateral relationship. We also had a joint military commission with Jordan. I already mentioned our commission with Pakistan.

*Q: In Tunisia?*

GNEHM: We had a joint commission. We met once or twice a year, I can't recall which it was; but we had good relations. All of these interactions -- the visits, the meetings and the personal relationships that I established -- really gave me a meaningful insight into the U.S. relationship with these countries and the importance of the Pentagon in those relationships. I think the only other item worth mentioning is the Israeli sale of these naval ships. We had been reluctant to get involved in these ships that were sort of destroyer frigate size vessels that would give the Israeli navy a much better naval capability with some important technology. It was also one that they said we'd pay for, I guess as part of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. Again there was some concern within the U.S. Government about this financial detail that would later lead to further sales. In the end we did raise, there was one point where Rich Armitage and I simply went to bat

because someone should be doing something that gave them an important capability that they felt they needed for their security.

*Q: Did Sudan, was that an issue at all when you were there?*

GNEHM: Sudan was under the responsibility of the DASD for Africa. I don't remember when the attack on the so-called candy factory happened. Sudan was not a country with which the Pentagon had any relationship, I can assure you. We didn't go there and we didn't do anything there. I don't remember thinking very favorably about what the Sudanese were doing. That's my recollection.

*Q: How about with India? Did you get involved- Was Diego Garcia an issue or, I mean, was it just a fait accompli?*

GNEHM: It was a fait accompli and used extensively during those years of the Iraq-Iran war and later.

*Q: Yes.*

GNEHM: Again, the Indians didn't like the fact that we were militarizing anything in the Indian Ocean; but I don't remember that they made a big issue of Diego Garcia at this point in time.

I want to comment further on the first point that I made regarding suspicions and hence the relationship between Defense and State. You asked me about relationship between Schultz and Weinberger, and we've seen a similar situation with Rumsfeld and Powell in more recent times. I was the ongoing liaison with Central Command (CENTCOM), the command responsible for the ME then located in MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. It was the regional military command that was running the naval operations in the Persian Gulf, the reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers, and the escorting operation. CENTCOM always had a seat at the table at joint military commission meetings. I knew General Schwarzkopf personally and worked with him. Because of my position at the Pentagon, I often attended the deputy committee meetings at the NSC. Rich would be in the chair and I would sit behind him on Middle East issues. The person who chaired those meetings was the then deputy National Security advisor, Colin Powell, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time of the invasion of Kuwait. So he knew me and I knew him. The fact that I had those relationships from a Defense seat made all the difference in the world when I was named Ambassador-designate to Kuwait and Iraq occupied that country in 1990. They knew me personally and knew how I supported the military. They were confident of my views on the military's role in international relationships. These associations from my days as DASD at the Pentagon meant that their doors were wide open to me when we later get to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the military's role. I had access and was able to do things that no one else at State was able to do.

*Q: Yes. Well that's one of the things that comes out of all these interviews. The personal connections usually through jobs that are often at a somewhat lower level really come back to pay off. And the more one gets into these joint operations the better it, you know, the better prepared you are to work on these really very complex issues.*

*What was your impression of your staff at the Pentagon, your relationship with them?*

GNEHM: I had extraordinarily capable people working in the section. I felt I was blessed. I felt that those who were Civil Service who tended to stay in that office for a fairly long period of time knew their portfolios front to back. The military officers assigned to the office on two year tours brought genuine field knowledge to our considerations.

*Q: Did you find the military rotation system, people were always trying to learn their job or not?*

GNEHM: Yes. One of the things that I was able to do the longer I was in the job was to identify officers in our security assistance offices in embassies in the region who would be good candidates for assignment in NESAs. For example, I was able to ask the military to consider assigning Lt. Col. Mickey Baity, who worked with me in Jordan, to NESAs. He came in to be our Jordan desk officer. This was fantastic. The Jordanians were ecstatic; the guy they loved in Amman was now their person in the Pentagon in Washington. The military officers in the section maintained telephone and personal contacts with their counterparts, which I strongly supported and encouraged. It strengthened the desk's relationship in the region and in the Pentagon as well, making it easy to deal with problems when they arose.

*Q: Well then you left this job when, in '89 was it?*

GNEHM: I returned to State in '89.

*Q: What job did you get?*

GNEHM: I returned to the State Department as a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East and South Asia (NEA). John Kelly was the just named new Assistant Secretary for NEA. He decided to change all the deputies in what came to be known as the midnight massacre in NEA. He called and asked if I would come back to State to be his deputy for the Persian Gulf region. Armitage agreed to release me to go back over to State.

*Q: Well I'd like to, this is a good place to stop and I just want to put in, I'd like you to talk particularly about John Kelly because he was very controversial then.*

GNEHM: Yes. My experience with him was not that good.

*Q: Most people didn't have, I mean, I'd like to get behind some of your feelings about why this was.*

GNEHM: I had lots of encounters.

*Q: But we'll pick this up the next time.*

GNEHM: It's an interesting period, too, because when I went back to State in '89 the policy toward Iraq and Saddam was still what we talked about earlier -- trying to reach out to him, bridge difference and build a better relationship. We had programs to do that. By the time I left the job, which is the following year when I was asked to be ambassador to Kuwait, that policy changed completely. This was the period in which I watched politics change in Washington. I watched these developments and John and I didn't always have the same opinions on certain things.

*Q: Okay, well we'll pick all this up the next time.*

*Today is the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you've got some notes in front of you, which show some preparation. You went from Pentagon back to State. What was your job and when?*

GNEHM: It was in early summer of '89. I went back to the Department of State as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Near East Affairs, working for John Kelly. I was responsible for the Persian Gulf region, the Arabian Peninsula.

*Q: John Kelly was a controversial character in the Middle Eastern Affairs, particularly in the time you're talking about. What was his background and what was your initial impression of him?*

GNEHM: I knew something of John previously because he'd served in NEA. He was our ambassador in Lebanon earlier. He had gained some notoriety at that point in time when it was later divulged that he had been aware of Ollie North and Admiral Pointdexter's negotiations with the Iranians and the Israeli go-between, but he had not informed the Secretary of State. This is the so-called "Irangate" affair.

*Q: He was a career Foreign Service officer.*

GNEHM: Yes, he was a career Foreign Service officer.

*Q: But had almost political Machiavellian qualities to him, didn't he?*

GNEHM: He did. He was, in my opinion, not very knowledgeable about the Middle East. He certainly didn't have any in-depth understanding of people and what drove the issues in the region.

*Q: Could you talk a little bit about what you think you expected from a Middle Eastern hand?*

GNEHM: Yes, given that we were just coming out of the Iraq-Iran War. That was an eight-year war that ended in '88.

*Q: We weren't in it, but we were observers.*

GNEHM: Yes. It was between Iran and Iraq, but the consequences in the Persian Gulf were such that we were entwined in the issue, particularly as it impacted on the free flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf to world markets. Keeping the Strait of Hormuz open for international shipping was critically important to the US. In '89 to '90, we had a huge naval presence in the Persian Gulf region; the United States was settling into a new level of presence in the region. We expected that the Iraqis and the Iranians would demobilize and that there would be some return to a relative sense of normalcy and stability in the region without hostile warfare, bombing of ships, etc. Therefore, I would have expected an Assistant Secretary in NEA to grasp that this was a unique transition point where we should try to create policies that lead the states in the region, as well as our own government, toward a new understanding and appreciation of the Gulf. It's important to remember that there were also other things going on in the ME at the time. There was still a serious situation in the occupied territories -- the Palestinian. Intifada was a word given to the Palestinian reaction to continued Israeli occupation and depravation. It led to really open hostilities, attacks, rock throwing and, in some cases, terrorist actions by our definitions. These actions were followed by Israeli retributions. It was an extremely delicate situation. During my time with John, I found that he did not comprehend the import of all of the developments in the region and that he didn't possess the necessary empathy. In fact, he had some very hard attitudes that drove him and made him intolerant of any views that were different from his own.

*Q: Well, first place, how did he view Israel?*

GNEHM: He was very, very pro-Israeli. He really felt that our relationship and alliance was important, which was US policy and a given. He didn't have any thoughts or thoughtful approaches to how to deal with the Intifada, which is a bit remarkable as someone who came out of Lebanon. I think examples of what I'm talking about will come out as I talk about my experiences during the next 12 months.

*Q: Well, your job as a DAS was what?*

GNEHM: The NEA front office is organized with the Assistant Secretary as its head. Jock Covey was the principal Deputy Assistant Secretary. There were several other Deputy Assistant Secretaries each with responsibility for geographic sections of the NEA Bureau. So mine, again, was the Persian Gulf, Iraq, Iran, the Arabian Peninsula, and Yemen. These were all parts of the region with which I had some relationship given my job at the Pentagon and my tour in Yemen.

*Q: How good was our knowledge of Iran at the time?*

GNEHM Our knowledge of Iran was not good because we had no diplomatic representation in the country therefore no on-the-scene reporting. In fact, we had no presence in Iran whatsoever. The one thing that you learn in diplomatic life is that often, when you don't have relations with a country, you don't have the daily reporting coming out of that post -- reporting that becomes part of your morning take (cable traffic). Without that daily input, the country tends to fall off your radar. Absent our own reporting we had to rely on other countries to provide us perceptions and intelligence -- of course it would be their perceptions. We had a protecting power, the Swiss; but they only handled routine business and did not provide intelligence and analysis. Our intelligence and analysis often came from the British or Europeans, and, to be honest, from the Israelis. Having had an inexcusable experience with Israeli intelligence in Syria which I mentioned earlier, I was always a bit skeptical, somewhat jaundiced by intelligence that came through Israeli channels. I admit that this is true of all reporting by various countries but the Israelis seem to be much more intentional in what they provide. They had their motives and their own agendas intending to influence US policy. They did, however, have some access and they did have sources inside Iran. So I didn't dismiss it entirely, but I did look at it with a certain skepticism.

*Q: Did you find the CIA very helpful?*

GNEHM: Not particularly. They collected from as many sources as they could. Again, these were largely secondary sources. I'm not sure how to answer your question about whether we appreciated what was going on in Iran. In my opinion, we didn't. I remember the NSDD that was issued during this period of time, in the George H.W. Bush administration. The perception as it appears in the NSDD, which would have reflected the analysis of the time, was that the situation inside of Iran was very delicate and the Islamic regime potentially could collapse. There was an assessment that there could be significant internal disorder and that the Soviet Union was in a position, geographically and diplomatically, to take advantage of that situation, to our detriment. While it wasn't stated specifically in the NSDD, the concern was that there might be a very strongly Soviet influenced government in Iran, which would not be in our interest either in Afghanistan or in the Gulf.

*Q: What were we picking up about Iraq? We had a presence there.*

GNEHM: Yes, we did. We had reestablished diplomatic relations in 1984. We had a resident ambassador, David Newton. As I mentioned when discussing my time at the Pentagon, the United States during the Iraq-Iran War did tilt toward Iraq out of concern about an Iranian victory and domination of the Gulf. There were pressures in a number of different circles for us to expand our cooperation with the government of Iraq in the hopes of establishing a relationship that would encourage Saddam and the Ba'athi government to be more attentive to international law and to become an active and positive member of the family of nations. We entered the post Iran-Iraq War period essentially with an approach to try to do what we could to moderate the political views in

Iraq in order to bring them into a relationship with us, the Europeans, and with the globe that would not be a threat to the region. When I say that, we certainly had an appreciation of an Iraq that wasn't of that mode -- its use of chemical weapons, human rights abuses inside Iraq, particularly their treatment of Kurds and Shia and its nuclear program. We were quite aware of what this regime was; we just hoped that in the aftermath of the war, we might be able to bring about change. Regarding the Kurds, we were aware of the massive displacement and movement of large numbers of Kurds to the south and the mass execution. We were also aware of the Sunni Ba'athi regime's treatment of Shia in the south and the regime's fear of Iranian influence with its Shia population. We certainly had knowledge of Iranian efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, and this included not just chemical but biological weapons but nuclear capabilities as well. You recall that the Israelis had bombed the Osiraq nuclear site in '83.

These were areas of US concern. Our policy objective was to influence Saddam -- moderate his policies -- by expanding our bilateral relationship in areas that could be considered positive. The period from the summer of '89 to the summer of '90 represents a very dramatic transition in our policy toward Iraq. There was a great deal of halting, faltering and even missteps as we debated within the government whether our actions were working or not. We were moving from a view in the summer of '89 that we were on the right track to the starkly different view by the summer of '90 that we were not on the right track and that things had to change. That's what I was deeply engaged in during this entire period.

*Q: Well, let's say this change in attitude, what was their original attitude when you got there -- ?*

GNEHM: The general assessment in Washington was that we had succeeded diplomatically with Iraq. Iraq had accepted UN Security Council resolution for a peaceful resolution of the Iran-Iraq War. In fact Iraq had been willing to accept a settlement with Iran even in '88. We had some successful programs with Iraq such, as the Commodity Import Program, the CIP. Under that program we were selling agricultural commodities, especially wheat, at concessional rates. We were also having reasonably satisfactory discussions with Iraq on some general issues in the region. *But* we had some serious issues with Iraq that we had to deal with, such as the nuclear programs, weapons of mass destruction programs, their human rights record, and also their general attitudes towards peace in the region, Arab-Israel issue in particular. So that's where we started.

Where we end was a realization that none of that worked. We didn't change Saddam's attitude whatsoever. It's very interesting to watch what happens in the time between the end of the Iraq-Iran War and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Two things came to my, to the administration's, and to the State Department's attention very quickly. The first was that Saddam did not demobilize his military. He had a huge standing army at the end of the war; a large percentage of the population was mobilized. We did not see units disbanded. We did not see a reversion to the size of the military as it was a decade earlier. Secondly, it was very, very clear from indicators and from our knowledge that the financial and economic situation in Iraq was desperate and deteriorating. Saddam during the Iraq-Iran

War had decided to shield his population from the impact of war to the maximum extent possible. He continued subsidy programs for food, electricity, water, gas, etc. He ran up huge bills. There was a tremendous drop in Iraq's foreign reserves. The reserves were somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 to 32 billion dollars at the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War and were single digits by the end of the war. In fact, the Iraqis began defaulting on payments to a variety of different donors, institutions, and companies, because they didn't have the wherewithal to pay their bills.

Getting Iraqi oil back on the market was of course a top priority for the Iraqis and for us. It was slow in coming, however, due to the damage to the oil fields, particularly to the offshore buoys in the upper end of the Gulf. It would take time to repair. Then the Iraqis began to raise concerns about the price of oil. They argued that the price of oil was too low and needed to be raised. Their complaints were often addressed toward the policies of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and the other OPEC countries. Iraqi public comments migrated into much more serious accusations by 1990, insinuating that these countries were keeping the price of oil low to some extent to control Iraq. The economists, as I recollect, assessed that every dollar on a barrel of oil, represented about a billion dollars in annual revenue to Iraq. So you could see the importance of this issue to Iraq. The price of oil was nowhere near what it is today; but it was quite low at this point in time, relative of course.

I am talking about the progression of events and the change in US policy toward Iraq during the period 1988 to 1990. We were operating under National Security Directive 26 issued on October 2, 1989. It was an important document that defined our military presence in the Persian Gulf. It iterated a policy of engagement with Iraq (as I have mentioned), and directed that we be prepared for a normal relationship with Iran under certain stated conditions.

Now, let me jump to February of 1990. It was in December of '89 after Christmas and before New Years that I received word that I had been selected to be the next ambassador to Kuwait. I accepted and that started a process that we all go through, which includes background checks, moving ultimately toward a formal nomination to the Senate. That didn't occur until May. So I remained in my job in NEA at this point in time. In February of 1990, John Kelly noted that he really didn't know the Gulf. That was true; he'd never been there. He wanted to make a trip to the Persian Gulf and he wanted me to travel with him since I did know it and was his deputy for that region. We organized that trip for February. We began in Oman in the south and progressed geographically northward to the UAE, to Doha, Qatar, to Bahrain, to Kuwait, and then ultimately to Baghdad. Several things happened on that trip that I have remembered in quite vivid terms, because they seemed to presage developments that later unfolded. When we got to Doha, we met with the Emir of Qatar. At one point in the conversation the Emir of Qatar raised a rhetorical question with John. He said, "I assume you all are very concerned with Iraq and Iraq's behavior."

John was very diplomatic and very careful at the beginning. He said, "Well, we are trying to develop our relationship. We have relations that we certainly hope will improve -- will

continue to improve.” “Yes,” said the Amir, “but, but you must be alarmed at ... (mentioning a number of recent Iraqi actions)” John replied that we have discussions with Iraq about a variety of different subjects where we have some slightly different views. But overall he stressed that we were working for a much better relationship.

And the third time the Emir said, “Well, I can’t imagine that you’re not really quite worried about their projection of power, you know, their continued mobilization and the size of their armed forces. You must think they’re a threat to the stability in the region.” At that point John let his caution down. “Well, to be honest with you. Yes, we are concerned about their military, the size of their military and the potential for threatening moves. But we are working with them.”

I mention this because when we get to Baghdad, it came up in conversations that we had been badmouthing them in the Gulf. We know from intelligence sources that before we had even left Doha, the Emir of Qatar had called Saddam Hussein and told him that John Kelly had told him in the conversation how upset we were about Iraq and saw them as a threat in the region.

Now, why would he have done that? Why would he set up John? Well, this goes back to one’s assessment of Qatar and its approach and role in the Gulf, which we’re frankly seeing even now in 2015. Qatar is always trying to play above its size, above its status, often in great competition with other countries in the Gulf. It is almost an inferiority complex in some ways. In this case, the Emir clearly wanted to be on the good side of Saddam -- to cultivate a relationship with Saddam in case Iraq did develop in a bad way, vis-à-vis countries in the Gulf. And of course, the Emir was trying to make himself look important. All to our detriment, OK?

*Q: At this time, the time of this trip, what was our evaluation of Saddam?*

GNEHM: Well, by February we were still focused on bringing him around. There was rising concern that it wasn't working. That was part of what Kelly was to discuss in Baghdad. He was to reassure Saddam that we were working with him and desired a good relationship. I realize at this point with your question, I should drop back chronologically and describe a meeting between then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Iraq Tariq Aziz and Secretary Baker in Washington in the previous October. It is important background to Kelly’s visit to Baghdad.

*Q: Tariq Aziz is a major figure during this time, spoke English, he was a Christian, wasn't he?*

GNEHM: He was a Christian. He spoke superb English. He was an extraordinarily personable individual. He was clearly one that we enjoyed engaging with because you could have a logical, rational conversation -- which is not true with a lot of Iraqis. He was not an ideologue, at least in his interface with us. I say, ideologue, because if you talked to others, you would only get Ba’athi rhetoric. He didn’t tend to do that. This meeting with Baker was a dramatic moment that relates importantly to your question what we

were thinking about Saddam. This meeting was definitely one of the percipient moments in our beginning to worry and be anxious about him.

Tariq Aziz entered the office and was greeted warmly. John Kelly was there. I was there as the note taker. Tariq Aziz had barely seated himself when he began, "Mr. Secretary, I need to get right to a basic point. My president has asked me to ask you why are you trying to assassinate him?" Baker said, "*What?*"

He repeated, "My president wants to know why you're trying to kill him."

Baker astonished looked at John, then at me. He said, "I don't understand. We are not trying to kill Saddam. We, in fact, are trying to build up a relationship."

"Well, the president believes that you are actually trying to remove him from power. Maybe there are things going on in your government that you don't know about," said Aziz.

Baker was really angered by that last remark. "I assure you. I am in all the meetings with the President. I'm in the meetings with the National Security Council. These gentlemen in the room here will bear witness. I've never had a conversation like that with *anybody* in my government. That's simply not true."

"Well, the president wanted me to make sure that I asked you that question."

Then we went on to talk about other matters, concerns and issues, but that opening really blew the meeting out of the water, if you will. When Tariq Aziz left, the Secretary turned to us and said, "What in the hell was that all about?" (*laughs*). John and I said, "I have no idea where that came from, *none whatsoever!*" Baker said, "Well, that's absolutely outrageous. You know, good grief, what we're dealing with out there with these people is just incredible."

But it did lead to instructions or guidance to John that when he gets to Baghdad on his trip, he is to reassure the Iraqis of our intent to build good relations with Iraq and to try, without saying it explicitly, to convince Saddam (if such a meeting occurs) that we are not trying to kill him. So let me go back to the trip.

*Q: I was just wondering though, did you sit and think about who in Saddam's entourage might be coming up with this idea?*

GNEHM: My own view? This is Saddam Hussein's paranoia -- nothing more. This is an indication of his way of interpreting and understanding what is going on in the region.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: It's also a technique that he often used -- to put you on the defensive. Then he thinks he is in control of the situation making it more difficult for the visitor to raise other troubling issues.

Well, we get to Kuwait. We see the Emir of Kuwait. The Emir of Kuwait had actually been to Baghdad the previous fall. He was given a magnificent reception by Saddam Hussein. He awarded the very highest decoration that the Iraqis can give anyone in a great ceremony covered on national television. It is hard to imagine a better visit. So when we ask the Amir about any concerns he might have or any issues that we should raise in Baghdad, he tells us that everything is just fine, not to worry. There's no need to be concerned. I just was there and have a good relationship with Saddam Hussein. The Amir refused to acknowledge that there were any concerns on his part.

*Q: Any talk about oil fields? Claims to oil fields?*

GNEHM: I don't remember specifically whether that came up in the meeting with the emir. It did come up in our meeting with Minister of Oil, Ali Khalifa. He's the same person with whom we had worked so closely on the reflagging of Kuwaiti oil tankers. He is western oriented, Western educated speaks impeccable English. John Kelly, Nat Howell, the US Ambassador, and I called on him. He was more than a little concerned about the rhetoric coming out of Iraq. He mentioned the ongoing controversy over the Rumaila oil field, an oil field shared by both countries on the northern border. He said there was no reason why these things couldn't be reconciled, but he was concerned that the Iraqis kept talking about the price of oil and the need to raise it, which the Kuwaitis were not interested in doing. He basically acknowledged that there were some big issues that they had to face with the Iraqis, many in the oil sector.

Now Ali can be mischievous. Ali was sitting in one chair and John and the ambassador were on a couch to his right. I was on a chair facing him. At one point during the conversation, Ali looks straight at me and he says, "You know, I understand that you're changing ambassadors this year. I sure hope the next ambassador is a really good person and knows this region." He's looking straight at me and not at John or Nat.

GNEHM: There still had been no announcement, but he clearly knew that I was entraining to come. I just sat there and looked him straight without batting an eye. And John didn't say anything at all. So I finally said, "You know, I think he's going to be really terrific."

He never acknowledged that it was me nor did I; but he knew I ended up working with Ali Khalifa very closely over the next several years given the invasion and massive destruction of the oil fields and oil fires.

The Kuwaitis offered to fly us in one of their planes to Basra in Iraq, where the Iraqis picked us up and took us on to Baghdad. We made a side stop in Babylon, by the way, which was very nice. April Glaspie was our ambassador in Baghdad at the time. We stayed at her house. The Iraqi government told us that we were to be received by Saddam Hussein, so there would in fact be a meeting. Another event on the same evening was a

dinner hosted by the Legal Advisor of the Foreign Ministry, Riad al-Qaisi. John, April and I attended the meeting with Saddam Hussein. I was number three in rank on the American side. Others may have their recollection of this meeting; but I am going to be describing it as I interpreted it.

First let me just read one thing out of Secretary Baker's book, The Politics of Diplomacy. It's very interesting. On page 268 he says, "Saddam's increasingly outrageous public behavior," -- now this is written after, well after the fact, right? "Saddam's increasingly outrageous public behavior, however, contrasted with his private diplomacy, which was considerably more conciliatory. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, Kelly and April Glaspie met for 90 minutes with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. (This is the meeting I'm talking about.) By all accounts, it was a friendly meeting." Now I am going to tell you that it wasn't entirely friendly and tell you why. "Saddam said that with the Soviet Union a declining world power, the United States had an opportunity to help stabilize the Middle East. The thrust of his message was that he preferred peace to war in the Middle East, but doubted the United States would exert sufficient pressure on Israel to move the peace process forward. For his part, Kelly reiterated that the president was committed to what he paraphrased as, 'warm and true friendship' for our mutual benefit, and that was his instructions. However, Kelly also informed Saddam that the State Department's annual report on human rights to be issued in a fortnight would be sharply critical of the Baghdad regime."

The reason why I read that section from Baker's book is because my recollection of the meeting goes a little bit beyond that description. As I said, it wasn't an entirely friendly meeting. It wasn't *unfriendly*, but Saddam did lay out a marker that I considered ominous, and I'll tell you about it. So first of all, Kelly did in fact begin the meeting by reaffirming the words that are in quotes here of our desire for warm and friendly relations and assuring Saddam that, even if he heard things to the contrary, they were not true. (That's a reference specifically to what came up in the Tariq Aziz-Baker meeting.) And that we would continue to look for ways of cooperating together. But we have these problems and he mentioned the human rights report coming out as a way of touching that issue without emphasizing it. But in response to Kelly's emphasis on our desire to have better warm and friendly relations, Saddam said well, he hoped that was true, he wanted peace, not war, in the region as Baker mentions in his book. But then he did a very curious thing. He said, "But you know, I do have my doubts or my concerns." At that point he looks above us to a window which I will say faces south, because this is the implication. And he starts a very interesting monologue with himself in which he poses rhetorical questions which he then answers them. I have no doubt that this was deliberate and planned and had an important motive. He said, "You know, I do have my concerns. The Iran-Iraq War has been over now for almost a year; but, when I look south, when I look to the Gulf, what, what do I see? Well, I see lots of ships. I ask myself what kinds of ships are these? Well, my goodness, they're military ships. Well, I ask myself, whose ships are these that are there in the Gulf? They're American ships! They're American Navy ships. Well, I ask myself, *why* when there's no war does the United States keep so many ships in the Gulf? Could it be me? Could it be they think I'm a threat? No! They

tell me that they don't consider me a threat. But if so, then there's no reason to have so many ships there. They should go home."

I interrupted at that point -- it's not documented -- to say, "Your Excellency, with all due respect to you, I have to tell you that the United States Navy has been in the Persian Gulf since the end of World War II. And my prediction, sir, is that they are going to be in the Gulf long after you and I are gone." There was a sort of silence and pause and the subject shifted.

Well, after the meeting, Kelly *reamed* me out. "What in the hell did you say that for? What were you doing? Who do you think you are going saying that kind of thing in front of me? You know, it's...."

April spoke up, "But John, do you know what he's saying? He was actually demanding that, if we really were trying to have better relations, we would demonstrate it by removing the US Navy from the Gulf. I mean that would significantly reduce our ability to act if we had to!"

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

GNEHM: And I said, "Yeah, that's why I said something. I was not being impolite. I said 'with all due respect'." John was not placated. "You had -- you know, you had no -- you should *never* have spoken up like that and kind of confronted him. We're trying to convince him that we want better relations." April said to me later, "Where in the hell is John coming from on this? This is pretty serious remark."

Anyway, so that's one thing, right? And again, I interpreted Saddam's remarks then as an indication that he was planning something. It would have been better for Saddam if our fleet was much smaller, for what he intended to do -- and I think that he actually already was considering his military action that occurs in August of 1990, six months later. And it was affirmed, in my opinion, by what happened at dinner that tonight. The dinner was hosted by the Foreign Ministry, but not by the foreign minister, I don't know why, I don't know whether he was even in country, but by the legal advisor to the ministry, Riad al Qaisi. He was a very formidable individual, a tremendous scholar in international law. As with Tariq Aziz, he was a good English speaker, a good interlocutor, not a bellicose person by any stretch of the imagination. At one point during the meal, however, he posed a very interesting question raising a delicate issue with Kuwait. Now the setting had the Iraqi guests or Iraqi participants were on one side of the table and John, April and me on the other side of the table. He looks across at John and says, "Tell me John, I don't understand why the Kuwaitis are so obstreperous and so stubborn. That's what they are; they're just stubborn and so lacking in any kind of appreciation about the importance to us of these two islands, Warba and Bubiyan." Warba and Bubiyan are two small islands that sit just south of the Iraqi estuary, the Khor Abdullah, which is the little waterway on which there is a small port. He continues, "You know, we have this very, very narrow neck of, of land, access to the Gulf, and we need these islands and the Kuwaitis just get

upset and refuse to even discuss it. I mean this is outrageous. Can you explain to me why they are so stubborn?"

John said, "Well, you have to ask the Kuwaitis that question."

And I said – not having learned my lesson from earlier in the day -- I said, "Well, Riad," (I knew him from visits to New York and Washington.) I said, "Riad, I'll take a stab at answering your question. I think it's just simply a matter of nationalism. I don't think any country wants to part with any of its territory and there's always possessiveness about territory. Kuwait's not a very large country. Those two islands are not really economically important to them, but it is a matter of nationalism and I think that's the whole cause."

April Glaspie chimed in and said, "I agree with Skip entirely, you know, it's just not a big political issue, it's just..." Riad interrupted, "Well, they need to learn their lesson. They need to know how important this is to us. And it would behoove them to deal with us on this question."

Well, when we got out of the meeting, the first thing that happened was that John Kelly reamed me out again. He said, "I'm not ever taking you into another meeting. This is the second time today that you intervened. You should not have spoken like that. You had no right to do that, and you just spoiled the entire dinner." Once again April took issue with him and supported me, said, "John, Riad was outrageous. Do you know what they were saying? That was a threatening remark and we could not let it go unchallenged."

Even more importantly, I said to John, "John, Arabs don't raise their issues with other Arab countries with Westerners or outsiders. In fact, they deny to us -- like the Emir of Kuwait did -- that there are any problems. Like the, the Emir of Kuwait, they don't admit to anything because they don't want us involved; but tonight he actually raised a major issue between them. And he raise it in a way that said they better do it or else." John was dismissive and furious. He left the room and slammed the door of his bedroom -- out for the night.

April and I sat there pondering and concluded that they were using us to convey a message, both to Washington and to the Kuwaitis. April did a reporting cable to Nat Howell in Kuwait reporting this conversation. Nat was alarmed and immediately briefed the Kuwaitis. The response he got from some of the Kuwaitis was deep concern that the Iraqis were making the islands such an issue. So once again, I found John's responses completely inappropriate and frankly unprofessional. He was unwilling to at least address what he was hearing from the Iraqis; but secondly attacking both April and me belittling our concerns totally was simply an emotional response. These were some of the issues that we had had to face later.

Baker's next paragraph after the one I read, again on page 268, is relevant. "As Saddam's mischief intensified we expressed our concerns more aggressively. On February 27<sup>th</sup>" (that would have been two weeks after we met with Saddam in Baghdad.) "Brent

Scowcroft, who was National Security Advisor, made clear to the Iraqi ambassador the President's unhappiness with Saddam's recent criticisms of the United States. Three days later the State Department sent a strong demarche to our embassies in Arab capitals instructing our ambassadors to make clear our," quote, "fundamental differences," unquote, "with Iraq on nuclear proliferation, chemical weapons, scud deployments, and human rights. On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, Kelly's deputy, Skip Gnehm, told the Iraqi ambassador that Saddam's statements were," quote, "atrocious," unquote.

The reference to my meeting with the Iraqi ambassador on March 3<sup>rd</sup> is interesting. I did indeed take the initiative to call the Iraqi ambassador, who I knew extremely well, to ask him to come in to see me. I told him that we needed to talk. What I called him in for was not exactly what Baker emphasizes here, "atrocious remarks," but it was in fact my concern in broad terms that things happening in Baghdad like use of chemical weapons against their own people and human rights issues, and, yes, also charged statements against the US, were undercutting the president's ability to continue a policy of trying to engage with Iraq positively. I cautioned him saying, "This is a very friendly conversation. I'm just telling you that when harsh statements are made or when you use chemical weapons, it creates political problems for the administration. Members of Congress will begin to attack the president for his policies that you know we're trying to pursue. You need to tell Baghdad to be aware that what they say and what they do make it more and more difficult for the president to continue to do what we want to do." Following my conversation, I write up a short mem-com, memorandum of conversation, documenting what I said to him.

I sent it to John Kelly to make sure John is aware of what I've done. I sent it through Jock Covey, as is customary. I know when John got it -- saw it for the first time. My office was in an adjacent suite but connected by a small corridor; but even given the distance from John's office, I heard him yell: "*What in the hell is this? Skip Gnehm, get your ass in here right away!*" When I arrived, he *threw* the mem-con at me and he said, "Who in the world instructed you to call in the Ambassador? What in the hell are you doing? Do you realize that you're destroying our ability to pursue the policies that we have toward Iraq? If the Secretary sees this mem-con and understands that you undercut the President, you may be out of your job. Do you understand that? You'll be out of your job. And I'm not going to defend you."

I said, "John, read what I said. A) I didn't threaten. B) I wasn't accusative. I just tried to explain how things that they do undercut the *President's* efforts to do what you say is our policy."

"Well, you had no basis for doing that. And I'm warning you right now, if the secretary ever, ever hears about this, it may be the end of your career. Well, truth is the secretary later uses my meeting as, as one of the defense, if you will, about the way he and the administration were approaching Iraq at the time. So again, it's just an indication of John just not getting it. I can't explain his logic.

*Q: Was this personality trait coming out in staff meetings or at other times?*

GNEHM: You mean towards me or the kinds of the comments he made?

*Q: Well, I mean addressing you?*

GNEHM: No, it never came --

*Q: -- toward others?*

GNEHM: He had a way in staff meetings of exploding on people or shouting when he thought they had done things that he didn't think was right.

*Q: Well, how'd you react? I mean did you sort of hunker down or --*

GNEHM: I had been through so many of these experiences with him. I wasn't overly bothered. I felt I had done the right thing the right way. I wouldn't hesitate to stand up in front of a television camera or The Washington Post, and explain myself. In government we always talked about The Washington Post test. "Will this be The Washington Post?" Meaning, how would this come across if this were in the public domain. I had no problem with that. I figured I could defend myself if ever it went to the Secretary. I hasten to add, however, that I did not confront John in front of others, except with his PDAS, Jock Covey.

*Q: Well, did you feel implicitly or otherwise that Secretary Baker was on the Kelly's side?*

GNEHM: No. And your question leads me to make a point. Except for the Tariq Aziz meeting, which then resulted in instructions which NEA drafted for John Kelly to use with Saddam in Baghdad, the Secretary was not deeply engaged in what was going on in the Gulf for a very good reason. We are talking about the spring of 1990. Think what was happening in Europe -- the end of the Soviet Union, the complete dis-assembling of the Soviet Bloc in Eastern Europe, and the newly independent states. That's where the Secretary and the President were focused during this period of time. In fact, after the invasion of Kuwait in August of '90 and all that we went through, when people wanted to get at Baker to criticize him, they accused him of not paying attention to what was going on. I believe that Secretary Baker's inclusion of the paragraphs in his book that I quoted was really defensive. He wanted to make clear that, while he was looking at Europe, his department had not lost sight of events in the Persian Gulf. I mention this because it does tell you that Kelly was not where he should have been on several issues.

*Q: Well, were you the only one, or was he sort of picking or criticizing others on his staff at various times?*

GNEHM: It wasn't just me. He would often blow up or spout off at other people for other things.

*Q: There seemed to be a consistency in what you're describing at blowing off at you. I mean this wasn't just bad temper.*

GNEHM: Impulsive is a word that comes to mind. He had a bad temper, and that is not a great attribute in terms of interpersonal skills or leadership.

*Q: No.*

GNEHM: It isn't. That's why I think he lost the respect of almost everyone that worked around him. I must add that, while I have described some altercations with John, as there were others later, we actually did many things together. It wasn't as if we never talked or ever agreed. That would not have been true of our relationship.

But back to the issues in the Gulf... Things really did begin to deteriorate during the spring of 1990. I pick up where Baker mentions in his book that Brent Scowcroft called in the Iraqi Ambassador to talk. It was only at the end of the month when we had met with him in Baghdad (February) that Saddam made some really outrageous remarks about the United States and about Israel. There was an Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) meeting in Amman in late February. Saddam put together the ACC as counter group to the Gulf Cooperation Council, which was the six Arab states of the Persian Gulf, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The ACC included Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen. Saddam convinced Mubarak of Egypt to join and to attend the Amman meeting. At that meeting Saddam delivered a very savage attack on the United States. He noted the collapse of the Soviet Union. He said that meant that the only super power left in the world was the United States and it was trying to dominate the region. He called on the U.S. to withdraw its naval forces from the Gulf. Remember his monologue to Kelly two weeks before? He called on all Arab states to withdraw investment funds from all U.S. banks and corporations. Mubarak was outraged at this statement. He had gotten a commitment from Saddam that, if he came, this meeting would not be a forum to politically attack the United States. The meeting was supposed to focus on Arab issues. Mubarak walked out of the meeting, returned to Cairo, and called us. He disassociated himself with everything Saddam had said about the US. He said Egypt was not a part of the Arab Cooperation Council. He said Saddam had violated their understanding when he accepted Saddam's invitation to attend and he was outraged by what Saddam had said. It was Saddam's remarks in Amman that Baker was referring to that led Scowcroft to call in the Iraqi Ambassador.

In April of, of that spring, '90, Saddam Hussein announced he had binary chemical weapons and he warned that, if Israel attacked Iraq, he'd burn half of Israel in retaliation. Well, you can imagine what alarm that set off in Washington in terms of politics and in terms of the pro-Israeli members of Congress. Given Israeli concern for their security, they activated their lobby groups to press the administration on its policy toward Saddam. It had been only a few weeks before, in March, that British and U.S. customs had confiscated sophisticated electronic devices and steel tubes destined to Iraq through Jordan. It seemed to confirm reports that a long-range super gun was under design and

also that he was working once again on a nuclear capability. So, you see how things were beginning to deteriorate.

*Q: Were you getting anything from Iraqi sources saying our boss is running out of control?*

GNEHM: No. Not at all. The kind of control that Saddam had over the system, his history of executing anyone he ever thought was ever likely to be in the opposition, even if they weren't, was, as you know, correctly called the reign of terror. You might remember, too, that at various times, including during the Iraq-Iran War, Saddam would have some commanders or political figures actually execute Iranian POWs (prisoner of war) or other Iraqis that he had labeled traitors. Saddam would video them, including not just the execution itself, but the people who were watching it, because he knew that implicated them in the execution, which was a war crime. Saddam calculated that they would be so fearful of what might happen to them that they would not join any opposition.

So the relationship was deteriorating throughout the spring; but there were several mixed signals from Washington that fed Saddam's paranoia about US intentions. As I have noted previously, US policy at the beginning of the year was to try to convince Saddam that he would be an influential leader in the region if he could be made to moderate his views and actions.

There was a consensus in the Department (and the Administration) that any move to isolate Iraq diplomatically – which was an alternative policy to the one we were following - would be counterproductive.

*Q: Why?*

GNEHM: Saddam had succeeded in establishing himself as an important Arab leader. He had fought the hated Persian. He had taken on the mantle of the Palestinian cause. He was popular with the Arab public. Those in Washington supporting our approach to Saddam pointed out that he had accepted the UN Security Council resolutions on ending the Iraq-Iran War. Some even argued that he was not quite as bad on human rights as some were saying (sic). Again, this is in the January period; this is early on. Even then there were differences both within the administration and in Washington political circles over our efforts to 'cozy up' to Saddam. At the time opponents to this policy accused the Bush administration of appeasing Saddam. In fact, we now know that Saddam saw our actions as part of a conspiracy to encircle and destroy Iraq and him. That goes back again to that December conversation, paranoia on the part of Saddam.

But I mentioned some mixed signals from Washington that need to be known. In February of '90, this is after John Kelly's trip but before the Amman statements. There was a VOA (Voice of America) editorial. It was broadcast in Arabic to Iraq. It reminded Arab listeners that the tide of history was running against dictators. It already swept aside several such as Ceausescu in Romania. Saddam interpreted the editorial as a deliberate threat to him personally, accusing him of being a dictator and that he would go the way of

Ceausescu. In Romania, as you remember, crowds ran in the street and overthrew him and Saddam saw the editorial as a call for that kind of action inside Iraq.

The truth of the matter is that it shocked us all at the State Department. We had no knowledge of this until after the broadcast. We went to VOA demanding an explanation. There is an understanding between the Voice of America and the Department of State. We recognized VOA was an independent broadcasting company even though it is government funded and operated. They did their own programming. But editorials are different. All editorials by the Voice of America had to be approved in an inner-government, inner-agency process because they would be representing American policy. This one was never discussed with anyone. It was written by a Palestinian who worked for the VOA, and broadcast without any approval. So that's one thing.

We had several members of Congress calling openly for a reduction in American ties and for reducing our support for Saddam Hussein and his government. At the same time, the administration was under criticism by that group, we had several members of Congress who were pushing the United States to intensify the relationship. And who were they? They were primarily senators representing agricultural states, especially wheat producers. And why? An important initiative in our new relationship was the Commodity Import Program, which I mentioned previously. The CIP led to large sales of agricultural products, wheat being one of the largest in quantity. The senators wanted to support their constituents and they could argue that there was a humanitarian aspect to the program. Now the interesting thing about this goes back to the financial issue that I mentioned to you earlier. The interesting thing here is that we knew from intelligence and from other governments that slowly but steadily the Iraqi government was in fact reneging on payment of debts for their aid and assistance. United States law is clear that if a country (and this is my recollection) goes in arrears in payment beyond a certain number of months (I think it's three or something), then the program must be terminated. There was no option; it is terminated. Saddam knew that. We had told him. What we saw was that by April, we were the only country in the world that the Iraqi government was actually meeting its payments schedule. So what happens? Senator Dole leads a delegation of senators to Baghdad that includes Senator Metzenbaum, as well as other senators from wheat producing states. They try to reassure Saddam that in fact the United States government is working for better relations. They assure him that nothing is going to happen to the CIP program. The pressure they later apply on the administration makes it almost impossible to use termination of that program as reassurance to influence Saddam's behavior.

When Saddam in that meeting points to all of the hostile press coverage that he's getting, Metzenbaum steps in to try to explain to him how the U.S. media works. They're not government run; they're not government planted stories. Saddam is clearly skeptical and he responds, "I just don't believe that. I just don't accept that." And why would he say that? Because in his country, nothing like that would appear in the media that wouldn't have had his approval. And he doesn't understand how things work in more open societies. See; this is one of the problems that becomes more and more apparent as we get further into '90 -- the occupation of Kuwait and trying to convince him to leave Kuwait.

Saddam was a superb expert on Iraqi domestic affairs and how you control the state of Iraq and its people. He had absolutely no understanding or experience with dealing with the outside world. And so he made some critical miscalculations and made some very significant errors of judgment in this period of time and going on forward, which I will get to.

I think it was the same month that the senators were in Baghdad that the State Department issued its human rights report on Iraq. It was devastating. Then Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights was Pat Darien, an ideologue when it came to human rights. Her report was not an incorrect description of Saddam's human rights abuses; but it was another 'indicator' to Saddam that he was being lied to when officials said they wanted good relations with him.

The next thing that happens is on June 4<sup>th</sup>. U.S. News and World Report runs Saddam's picture on the cover of his magazine, and they call him, "the most dangerous man in the world". Of course, again, Saddam interprets this as placed by the administration, a clear signal. The report discusses concerns about nuclear and chemical capabilities, as well as development of ballistic missile systems, and a super gun. There are reports once again reaching Baghdad that the U.S. military is telling Arab Gulf state that Iraq is a major threat to regional security. So you just see events and the relationship just deteriorates. So that by the time we reach June the policy's no longer to try and deal with Saddam and bring him around. The general view is that that policy failed and now we have a big problem on our hands. We are still going to try to work the relationship diplomatically, but we recognized Saddam was a big problem -- and, yes, a threat to our interests in the region.

*Q: Did talk ever get around to what do we do after Saddam, the idea that maybe his people would get rid of him?*

GNEHM: No, at this point in time we're still talking about how you manage him and how you; but now we're also thinking seriously about how we protect our interest if he does something extreme? We don't have a lot of success in conversations with regional states. They're still operating on traditional views -- of us as a great power, foreign involvement in the region, and nationalism in the street -- all views that led states in the region not to want to be seen as too close to the US. And so, when we tried to talk to them about what we might do together to counter Saddam, they were just hesitant, if not actually negative, about going down that road with us. It is when we get into the summer that things really begin to deteriorate quite rapidly.

On July 16<sup>th</sup> Tariq Aziz sent a letter to the Arab League and in this letter he accused the Gulf States of holding down oil prices to undermine the Iraqi economy. He denounced Kuwait for stealing oil from the Rumaila field and demanded \$2.4 billion in compensation. He demanded that the Arab states forgive Iraq's \$30 billion debt. Now, remember that goes back to the Iran-Iraq War when certainly Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE loaned Iraq enormous sums of money to enable Iraq to continue the war. The letter called for a Marshall plan to reconstruct Iraq and demanded OPEC support a rise in

the price of oil to \$25 a barrel. The following day, 17<sup>th</sup> of July - Iraq national day, Saddam himself in his speech attacked both Kuwait and the UAE. He accused them of conspiring with Americans and Zionists, and here is an important quote from those remarks. "If words fail to afford us protection, then we will have no choice but to resort to effective action to put things right and ensure the restitution of our rights." That was in his public remarks on Iraq national day.

*Q: How did we interpret it at the time?*

GNEHM: Well, as alarming. But the argument within the government was whether he was really serious or bluffing -- perhaps using this threat to get the Arab governments to forgive the debts or to raise the price of oil. In other words, he had legitimate concerns about the economy, which we understood, that were driving him, but the demands were outrageous and they were definitely threatening. Yet the assessment within the government was that he really did not intend to do anything militarily -- that this was all part of a diplomatic squeeze. In my opinion Saddam's actions during this first six months really caught us off guard. I wrote down these words at the time, "intense irrational insecurity." I think Saddam was insecure and he did see a lot of the things that I have mentioned as directed toward him when they really weren't. The problem for some of the other oil producing states at this time was that they began to lose market share. So raising the price of oil meant they would lose more sales. They were in fact producing in excess of the OPEC quotas. Oil prices in this time had dropped in 1990 from 22 dollars in January to 16 dollars by June, a six-dollar decrease, which is almost 25%. Again, I mentioned earlier that each one dollar decrease cost Iraq a billion dollars in annual revenue.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: This is significant.

*Q: Each dollar --*

GNEHM: If the price of a barrel of oil dropped \$1, it cost Iraq a billion dollars in annual revenue. This is looking at their production. A new economic situation existed which is often not understood by many people. Oil producing states, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, had begun to invest large sums of money in western economies. Today all of these countries have large sovereign wealth funds but Kuwait had established a Fund for Future Generations, which required that a percent of all oil revenue go into this fund to be invested for the future. It was invested. This development changed the way these governments thought about the price of oil and levels of production. Unlike in 1973 when the Arabs imposed a boycott on the US, they now had to be concerned about the welfare of the western economies and thus their investments! Now, these countries had investments in companies, banks, bonds, and securities. Raising oil prices might well undercut the economic development or stability of the industrial world. If so, it would impact negatively on their investments. In such a situation the oil producing countries would lose both market share and investments. So there was no incentive on the part of

these countries to destabilize the global economy by raising the price of oil as the Iraqis were demanding. This obviously made no sense and was of no importance to Saddam. But what did happen is that the day after this speech of Saddam Hussein on the 17<sup>th</sup>, he moved 30,000 troops to the Kuwaiti border. This immediately intensified the debate within the administration as to Saddam's real intentions.

*Q: Had he done this before?*

GNEHM: No. Well, Iraq had moved troops to the Kuwaiti border in some incidents years before before, but not --

*Q: This was way back when the British sent in troops after the Iraqis threatened to absorb Kuwait?*

GNEHM: Yes. This is in the early '60s when they threatened Kuwait right after independence. Qasim, a later dictator, had also threatened military action.

*Q: I mean this was a standard operating menacing procedure -- used previously by Iraqi governments?*

GNEHM: This is true. And that point was made at the time by a number of analysts. And as I said, the most obvious interpretation, that most observers gave, was that Saddam's actions were to intimidate the Kuwaitis.

*Q: What were you getting from INR on all this?*

GNEHM: I don't remember exactly. I only remember that the CIA's assessment was generally accepted at State. It is true that INR has a very independent and often well thought out view of these kinds of things and are at variance often with other branches of the intelligence community. And they've proven right many, many times. But we did demand clarification of Iraq's intentions, and we didn't get anything more than just a, well, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia need to understand our concern and respond positively to our problems, which wasn't terribly helpful. Because Saddam attacked Kuwait and the UAE specifically as working with Zionists and the imperialist United States, the UAE proposed on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July that there be some joint U.S.-UAE military maneuver. This was a first for them. And so two days later we actually did do a joint exercise with them. It was a modest -- but highly symbolic -- exercise. The UAE Air Force was flying American produced fighter planes. We deployed our refueling tankers over the UAE and the UAE Air Force practiced refueling. So while it was a very modest exercise, it signaled to Saddam that we did have relationship with the UAE that was important and that we would stand aside our allies. We asked the Kuwaitis at the same time whether they would like a similar demonstration -- a joint exercise. We suggested perhaps a port visit by one of the naval ships. The Kuwaitis refused.

*Q: Do you feel that they were misinterpreting this all along?*

GNEHM: They were -- yes. I think they were underestimating the threat. They were also still operating under the third-world mentality that we are non-aligned; therefore, we don't permit naval war ship visits of great powers. While this mentality was a factor in their rejecting our proposal, they were also a fearful that it might provoke Iraq. And they do something else a few days later. They actually stood down their entire military. In other words, they had forward deployed them and called up their reserves, as I recollect. They actually sent them all home -- pulled everything back -- tanks back on their bases -- all to indicate to the Iraqis that they were not belligerent or provocative. The important point I want to make is that the exercise with the UAE was the only action that we took in these last few days of July and early August. We did nothing, *nothing*, to prepare for the worst contingencies at all.

In fact, one night fairly late in the evening I was concerned about the ongoing Iraqi military build-up north of Kuwait. I was really quite struck by the fact that we had taken no actions, no naval deployments, no movement. These are things that we had done in the '80s which I was quite familiar with from my Pentagon days. I went to Jock Covey's office and said, "Jacques, I really need to talk to John, but I'd like you to be there to hear it because I don't want to do it one-on-one." So he and I went in to see John. And I said, "John, excuse me for interrupting but all of us have been operating up to now on the premise that for all the threatening, movement of troops, everything else that Saddam is doing, one thing he won't do is invade another Arab country. I agree that historically Arab countries skirmish on their borders and there have been proxy wars; but never has one Arab country occupied another. What if we are wrong? What if this time Saddam is going to do it?"

John responded sharply, "Don't be an idiot. What do you think? Do you think we're going to go to war over them? Are you kidding? Go to war for these pipsqueaks people, who don't even know their left hand from their right hand? Get out, get out. I'm not even going to ... I don't even have time to talk to you about this sort of sh..t."

*Q: He wasn't willing to sort of sit and sort of walk through the possibility.*

GNEHM: That's all I wanted to do. I think I said even to him, "Look, I'm still with the general belief that he won't actually invade Kuwait. I don't expect it, but we haven't even talked about what if we're wrong? What if they do cross the border? What if we're totally unprepared? We haven't moved a single ship, we have" --

And his comment was, "You don't think we're going to go to war over Kuwait, do you?"

So Jock and I left his office. I just shrugged and I said, "I think we're in some real trouble." Here it is -- the 24<sup>th</sup> of July with thousands of Iraqi troops on Kuwait's border. Margaret Tutwiler, the spokesperson for Department of State, was asked about the Iraqi build-up and asked about the U.S. response. She said (and this is in the official transcript of the press briefing), "Let me just confirm the U.S. has no defense agreements with Kuwait." Now, she did add that there was no room in this new world order that Bush had espoused in his speeches for coercive diplomacy. But the very fact that she affirmed that

we had no defense agreement with Kuwait was to basically tell Saddam that he need not worry about the US if he was intending to invade Kuwait. I am totally convinced Saddam had every intention of invading and that intention went back several months earlier. And I say that jumping way ahead to a helicopter ride I took with General Schwarzkopf after we liberated Kuwait. We're flying over Southern Iraq, in the Safwan area south of Euphrates River, and he's pointing out huge catchments of ammunition. The Iraqis built sand berm rectangular revetments into which they stacked huge volumes of ammunition. And he said, "You know what you're seeing out there, Skip?"

I said, "Yeah, I know what I'm seeing that there's a lot of stuff out here in the desert."

He says, "There is more ammunition in this area south of the Euphrates and north of the Kuwaiti border than all of NATO's stocks in Germany today." I said, "You're kidding me. "That's right," he said. "In the months before his troops moved into Kuwait, he prepositioned more ammunition than all of NATO stocks in Germany."

So I have no trouble answering a question that I often get. "Do you really think Saddam planned to move further and attack Saudi Arabia?" To me it is evident that he had those intentions. First of all, Saddam knew that he didn't that much ammunition to take Kuwait. He occupied the entire country in a few hours.

*Q: Yeah, and no real expenditure of ammunition practically.*

GNEHM: Right. Why would he put that much ammunition that close to the Kuwaiti border? Because he intended to use it to go further.

*Q: Did we know what these catchments were -- perhaps from satellite coverage?*

GNEHM: We, we were definitely looking at the area from overhead; but in these days we were not overlying Iraq with the same frequency that we can do today. And drones didn't exist at this point in time.

*Q: But what about our military analysts? I mean were they pointing out this accumulation of ammunition?*

GNEHM: In general terms they were reporting the fact that Iraqi forces had been deployed and they had a good estimate of the numbers; but I don't remember reporting specifically on the quantity of munitions that had been prepositioned.

But let me continue with the description of events that were unfolding. On July 24<sup>th</sup>, Mubarak went to Kuwait and he went to Baghdad to try to smooth over, to dissipate the heated rhetoric and he believed he had received assurances from Saddam that war wasn't imminent. He reported this back to us. And Saddam agreed that he would send a representative to a mini Arab Summit in Jeddah on August 4<sup>th</sup>. Now, that gets us to July 25<sup>th</sup>, next day. Two things happened that day that are really important. One is the very infamous meeting of April Glaspie with Saddam Hussein. The second is my hearing

before the subcommittee, Middle East Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations, my confirmation hearings. We'll take the bigger one first.

Saddam asked to see April. April had not had the experience of being asked to a meeting by the President. She says this in her comments. Saddam just didn't do that. So it was unusual. She had some instructions but they were a bit dated at this point. After the meeting, the Iraqis issue a transcript of the meeting, their memorandum of the conversation. They quote her as saying, quote, "The U.S. has no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait." People, such as reporters here in the United States, members of Congress, and some leaders in the region, interpreted those words as somehow giving a green light to Saddam to move militarily. April testified in March 1991 after the liberation of Kuwait that she told Saddam Hussein that the U.S. did not consider border disputes its business, but that she made it very clear in fact that (and these are her words) "it was emphatically our business that they reach a settlement in a non-violent way."

In other words, they reach an agreement in diplomatic terms. I believe April in her description of this conversation. It was very deliberate that the Iraqis issued their own mem-con the way they did, for deliberate reasons. They wanted to sow the idea that somehow we were giving them the green light. They knew it would create dissension in Washington and that it would undermine our credibility with our allies in the. That's my view, and it has been all along.

The second thing that I wanted to mention was my confirmation hearing. It was both remarkable and humorous in retrospect but it wasn't funny at the time. As you know, every presidential nominee for an ambassadorial assignment has to be confirmed by the United States Senate. That process begins with the appropriate geographic subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The subcommittee holds a hearing in which they interview the candidate to determine whether they agree or disagree with the nomination. On the assumption that they agree, its recommendation goes to the full committee at a business meeting. If the full committee agrees, the nomination goes to the full Senate for their final action. OK?

This particular day my hearing was scheduled for late in the afternoon, around 4:00 or 5:00. In any case I think by the time the hearing began it was closer to five than four. The chairman of the ME Subcommittee was Senator Moynihan of New York. To be very honest, it was quite well known in Washington that Senator Moynihan loved his tea, meaning his cocktails, and that by late afternoon that was apparent. So this is true on the day of my hearing. The Senator comes in through the door behind the raised seats that are

above the table where the candidate sits. I was the only nominee that day and Moynihan was the only senator who showed up. He came down, greeted me warmly, and greeted my family as well. And as one would suspect, in a very normal way I could smell his breath but that was not my business, I thought at that moment. The Senator took his place as Chairman in the center seat above me. He gavelled the hearing open and made very flattering remarks about me and the need to have someone like me in Kuwait. He asked me not read my statement but enter it in the record, which is a fairly routine request. In the course of his saying nice things about me, he stops looking at me and the crowd in the room and seems to focus over our heads on the clock on the wall at the far end of the room. He goes from talking about me and the importance of the region to say astonishingly, "You know, those Kuwaitis are really *awful*. They're just terrible people. I mean they are just...; they didn't support us when we had the attack on the USS Stark. They're always going on and on saying things about their non-alignment. They're really awful." Then to make matters even worse he said, "I know how we can solve this problem. We should just divide Kuwait, give half to the Iraqis and half to the Saudis. That's what we should do. That's the way we'll solve it."

All I can think is, "What are you saying? This is the 25<sup>th</sup> of July and we have got 30,000 plus Iraqi troops on the border." I'm thinking to myself; my mind is in a whirl. These are all like split instant moments. I mean my telling you takes longer than my thought process at that moment. I'm thinking, "I cannot let that stand."

Look who is in the room -- the Iraqi news agency, members of the Iraqi embassy, Kuwait news agency, and Kuwaiti embassy people. If I just sit here and say nothing the Kuwaitis are going to wonder, "Why didn't you defend us?" And the Iraqis are all out there writing their reports about the Senator saying to divide up Kuwait.

Again my mind is spinning. If I do say something and I offend the Senator, he could well decide against my confirmation. If I don't say anything, I have no credibility with the Kuwaitis -- not even thinking what Saddam might now decide to do!

I have to tell you -- there at that moment I prayed to God, "God, please give me the words to say." And I said, "Senator, Senator, Senator." It took a moment for him to realize I was trying to get his attention.

And he said, "Uh-uh-uh, uh yes, yes, yes, Skip. What? What?"

And I said, "Senator, if you do what you just said. I don't have a country to be an ambassador to."

Moynihan: "Oh. Bad idea, bad idea. Confirmed."

Several days after the Iraqi invasion, The Washington Post actually ran an inside page, story, "Who gave the green light?" They recalled Senator Moynihan's remarks made on

the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, during which he talked about dividing Kuwait between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. I only mention this episode because it was a rather trying moment.

I wanted to add one final note about the meeting between April and Saddam. Saddam excuses himself at one point during the meeting to take a phone call. When he returns, he tells April that it was President Mubarak calling and that he assured Mubarak that everything is going to be OK, it will develop fine, not to worry. April then asks, "Do you mean that it's OK for me to leave on my trip?" (She needed to travel for medical reasons.) "And nothing's going to happen while I'm gone?" He said, "You don't need to worry about it," or something to that effect.

So April left the meeting with the impression that there would not be military action while she was away. And we know the phone conversation between Saddam and Mubarak took place because Mubarak picked up the phone almost instantaneously after hanging up with Saddam and called Washington. He confirmed what Saddam has told him, that there won't be action. So April does leave Baghdad. Now, there's an OPEC meeting in Geneva from the 26<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of July. The Kuwaitis do agree to support an increase in the price of oil from 18 to 21 dollars a barrel and to cut their own production by 25%. Saddam puts more troops on the border and by the end of July there are 100,000 troops on the border. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of July, Iraqi Air Defense systems are put on a wartime footing. The CIA changes its analysis around the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, on the day of April's meeting and my hearings, to say assess that Saddam is not bluffing.

*Q: What?*

GNEHM: Not bluffing.

*Q: Ah-ha.*

GNEHM: The CIA now assessed that Saddam intends to make a military move. They don't know whether that means just a border occupation of the northern oilfields or something more. There was still a view that Saddam was trying to intimidate Kuwait to get further concessions -- perhaps on the debt issue. I don't think there was any intimation of a full occupation of the entire state of Kuwait. But again, no one -- and I wrote this down in my notes at the time -- no one in a position of responsibility to my knowledge seems to have considered the possibility that Saddam was going to overrun all of Kuwait. There wasn't even a consensus that Saddam intended to invade at all. Even though the CIA had changed their assessment, there were others who still said an invasion was ridiculous. Remember that both Mubarak and King Fahd had reassured Bush that the Iraqis would not attack. On August 1 the planned meeting opened in Jeddah. The talks collapsed almost immediately; the Kuwaitis refused to forgive the loans, refused to pay Saddam for oil they had taken from the Rumaila oil field, or to lease to Iraq the two islands, Bubiyan and Warba, that the Iraqis were demanding. Remember the dinner that we had in Baghdad back in February. All the issues raised then were on the table in Jeddah. And the talks collapsed and that's probably a very good stopping point because --

*Q: This is fascinating.*

GNEHM: Oh, it was fascinating. Because the next thing that happens is on August 1, at 11 or 11:30 that night. My son, who is watching TV downstairs, comes running up to my bedroom yelling, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, the Iraqis have invaded Kuwait."

I said, "OK Ted, I understand, thank you, thank you." And I turn the light off because I'm thinking what he heard on the news was that everybody is fearful that Iraq is going to attack Kuwait. I figured he didn't quite get the verb tense right. I put my head on the pillow, sat back up, turned the light on, and called the Op Center.

And they said, "We've been trying to reach you. The Iraqis have invaded. Get down here immediately." And that is where I will pick in our next session. I should note an obvious confession. I should give my son more credit!

*Q: You might pick up -- take a look at -- I can't think of the name right now, but he was the, I think the chief analyst in INR for that area. We can -- I'll find it and get it to you. But I have a -- he's, he was convinced that this thing was done, Saddam sort of said on his own. I mean this was not, you know, this was done almost on impulse. I mean, you know, everything was set but he, he didn't think that this was as thought out a plan as you might expect. I mean there were -- certainly the troops that went in didn't seem to be particularly well prepared.*

GNEHM: Ah, but there's another explanation for that.

*Q: But that may be just --*

GNEHM: That we overestimated throughout this period Iraqi military capabilities -- in fact Iraqi capabilities in general.

*Q: OK, well we'll pick this up next time.*

*Today is the 9th of September 2014 with Skip Gnehm. You've been selected to be ambassador to Kuwait, but circumstances have precluded you from assuming the office immediately.*

GNEHM: I'll just give a date or two. I actually learned of my selection by the D Committee, which is the committee headed by the Deputy Secretary, in December of 1989. I learned when I was traveling in Bahrain with Assistant Secretary John Kelly in February 1990 that the President had approved that recommendation. The agreement from the Government of Kuwait was requested on May 7th and they replied positively on May 15th, so it took about a week. Then I was actually announced by the White House on June 19<sup>th</sup>. My nomination went to the Senate for confirmation on the very same day. My hearings before the ME Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that I mentioned earlier were on the 25th of July. The invasion of Kuwait occurred early

morning on August 2nd Kuwait time, which would have been on the evening of the 1st in Washington. This is why you sometimes get a discrepancy when people talk about the date of the Iraqi invasion.

The Senate decided the following day to move my nomination to the floor urgently so that I could get to post. They confirmed me the next day. Events, of course, did not unfold in that direction.

*Q: Before the invasion, while you were getting briefed, did you ever think that there was a possibility that Iraq would move into Kuwait or not. Was that on the table?*

GNEHM: I would say it was haunting my thoughts. We could tell from overhead photography that the Iraqis were deploying large numbers of troops, over 100,000, to the Kuwaiti border. Interestingly enough about a week and a half before my hearing, INR (the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State) organized a one-day set of briefings for me where they brought in experts on Kuwait. The briefers did not focus on a potential Iraqi military threat. It was not what the various briefers focused on. In fact I don't think it even came up.

They were talking about the economic situation in Kuwait -- petroleum and the rentier society in an oil revenue dependent country that was providing extensive benefits to its population. The briefers talked about the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship during the Iran-Iraq War and other things that I actually knew from my earlier jobs. While references to Iraq's historical claims on Kuwait were indeed noted, it was more a statement of fact and not a concern.

*Q: Just to get a little feel for the situation, had the Saudis made any particular claim on Kuwait, or was that not an issue?*

GNEHM: That was not an issue. There had been an agreement reached under British auspices while the British were still running foreign affairs for Kuwait that defined the border between the two countries. In fact, the British gave up to the Saudis about two-thirds of territory that the Kuwaiti Emir claimed at the time. They also created two neutral zones.

There was a diamond shape piece of territory between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Then there was kind of a rectangle territory on the coast between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. That was Kuwaiti-Saudi neutral zone. Subsequent to Kuwaiti independence, there was an agreement negotiated between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia that partitioned that area. It was called the partition zone and the part that remained in Kuwait on the map is kind of a rectangle at the south of Kuwait along the sea. The Saudis retained 50% rights to the petroleum extraction and the revenue. They also set up a joint arrangement, a Kuwaiti oil company for Kuwait and a Saudi contractor, Saudi Chevron working for the Kingdom.

*Q: I'm not sure where I heard this, but when the pundits were talking about the situation, it was expected that the Iraqis might move in to the oil fields to the north and stake out some claims there. Was that at all mentioned?*

GNEHM: Well, yes, in the conversations about possible scenarios. Again, I would emphasize that a large number of government officials in various branches, Defense, State, White House, continued to believe that Iraqi troop movements were to intimidate Kuwait into making concessions and that there wasn't even going to be an invasion. Such concessions might include raising the price of a barrel of oil to improve the revenue stream for Iraq or cutting production, which would have the same result. Kuwait had loaned billions of dollars to Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War, as had Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Saddam wanted these debts forgiven. Kuwait (and the other Arab states) had refused. It was believed that Iraqi troops would not enter Kuwait beyond the oil fields on the border. Again, the generally held assessment was the Saddam was intimidating Kuwait to get those concessions. The oil field that you mentioned was not a significant factor in either country's oil production; but it was a good propaganda issue for Saddam. Also as I mentioned before, Iraq wanted to either use or have transferred to their sovereignty the two little mud islands on the coastline, Warba and Bubiyan. And Kuwait had refused that demand as well.

It was only when we got to the last few days of July that the CIA actually changed its predictions, its estimates. It was the first time they came out and said, "Our conclusion is that Saddam intends to invade." Yet even the CIA remained uncertain how far would he go. Many people pointed out that there have been troubles on the border before and that there have always been arguments about the border demarcation between Iraq and Kuwait. So assessments often said Saddam might well occupy the northern part of Kuwait in the hopes of intimidating them and then either getting what he wanted from them in return for withdrawal. He might even use his stronger position to argue that the border had to be moved south where he thought it should be, or at least where Iraq historically alleged it to be. Very few people believed he was going to occupy the entire country.

*Q: There had been a crisis earlier on where the British had moved in their aircraft carrier and brought troops in. When did that happen and what had that been about?*

GNEHM: Immediately after Kuwaiti independence in 1962. When Kuwait became independent, the Government of Iraq (GOI) said it would not recognize Kuwait's independence because, in fact, Kuwait was a part of Iraq and had been stolen by the British from them at an earlier point of time. The GOI mobilized troops and threatened to invade Kuwait. Kuwait called on the treaty arrangement that they had recently signed with the British, that they would come to Kuwait's aid if threatened, and the British responded by deploying forces to Kuwait. That led to a really interesting development in the Arab world. Nasser, the President of Egypt, was in his rise to becoming the nationalist leader of the Arab world. The United Arab Republic of Syria and Egypt, which had existed from '58 to '61, had just collapsed. Nevertheless, he immediately accused Kuwait of bringing the imperial power, Britain, back into the region. Nasser had only enmity for

Britain. Remember the 1956, French-British invasion of Egypt and occupation of the Suez Canal along with Israel's assistance. The idea that an Arab government would bring Britain back into the region to protect it was an anathema to him. He called an Arab League meeting and there was a split within the Arab world about it. Some supported Kuwait defending itself in the way it did, and others didn't. The compromise they devised was to create an Arab League Force to go to Kuwait to replace the British, and the British would withdraw. That ultimately is what happened. The Arab force remained in Kuwait until the Iraqis backed down. That's the precedent you were asking about.

*Q: Again, I'm setting the background. What was the feeling within the Arab world just prior to the Saddam Hussein move on Kuwait towards Kuwait? And what was our feeling towards Kuwait? I mean, these were not very popular people.*

GNEHM: No. In fact, just simply as a political observer I would say that the Kuwaitis made some miscalculations and that by the time we reach 1990, they had really antagonized all three of their big neighbors. That's not good, smart diplomacy.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: They did it for different reasons. The Iraqis we've talked about, but in fact, with both the Iranians and the Saudis there was overproduction by the Kuwaitis and disagreements about overall production and how to approach OPEC and OPEC's issues. The Kuwaitis remained very adamant. Some of my Arab friends, subsequent to the invasion, described Kuwaitis as arrogant, self-confident, and saw themselves as better than the other Gulf Arabs. Saddam, on the other hand, had promoted himself as a leader of the Arab world. With the war against Iran, Shia, Persian, Arab, Sunni, all those dimensions were at play. In the early part of 1990 he began to verbally attack Israel and its role. He also made statements about the United States now being the only super power, the Soviet Union having collapsed, in which he stated that we were manipulating, extorting, abusing our power in the Arab world to dominate and control. He called on Arab governments to divest from investments in the United States. That propaganda didn't influence leaders, but it did resonate with the general population. So Saddam was certainly seen by the masses at least as more popular than Kuwaitis.

*Q: Prior to the invasion, as you were getting ready to go to Kuwait, what did you see as being your main goals as far as dealing with American-Kuwaiti relations?*

GNEHM: The relations weren't bad, but they certainly weren't particularly close. I would say they were tolerantly OK. We were generally unhappy with Kuwait's active participation in the non-aligned movement and their support for resolutions that were against America's actions in various parts of the world. In terms of strict bilateral relations, we didn't have that many issues. It was just their support, and even active advocacy, for positions hostile to the US that rubbed us wrong. They were not interested in having any American military relationship at all, up to and including allowing any U.S. naval vessel to call in port simply to get water and food. They told us basically, "You can do that down south in other countries, your other friends in the Gulf." There was one

incident during the Iraq-Iran War when an Iraqi plane hit the USS Stark with an Exocet missile. There were deaths and many wounded. The ship almost sank. Of course we needed to respond immediately with medical support and to save the ship.

We asked the Kuwaitis for permission to fly the helicopters from Kuwait out to the ship and back given Kuwait's geographic proximity to the incident site. The Kuwaitis refused, they said "You have the navy in Bahrain, you can fly helicopters from Bahrain." That infuriated some Senators, and one of them that I later had an encounter with as a friend was Fritz Hollings of South Carolina. He was chairman of the Budget Committee, and he reminded me later of the Kuwaiti behavior. Moynihan at my hearing, as I noted previously, also didn't have very nice things to say about the Kuwaitis.

*Q: What do you think -- I mean why were the Kuwaitis so beastly, particularly towards us? What was in it for them?*

GNEHM: The Arabs would tell you that the Kuwaitis saw themselves as the third power in the world and that they were a little upset that the rest of the world didn't recognize that there was America, the Soviet Union, and Kuwait.

*Q: (laughs)*

GNEHM: This is what other Arabs would tell you -- that the Kuwaitis acted that way. Again, they just acted arrogantly toward others. I think it was due in part to the fact that the Kuwaitis were the first of the small Gulf States to become independent -- not only politically but also economically with their early success in exploiting their oil reserves. So they were richer than the others early on and developed earlier on. They missed the fact that the rest of the Gulf had found oil and developed and modernized rapidly. When Kuwaitis were exile, they discovered the paradises of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Bahrain, Doha, and a few other places. Again the Kuwaitis saw themselves before 1990 as being able to play a major role in the world through the non-aligned movement. So they were espousing non-aligned policies and also supporting non-aligned member regimes, Cuba for example.

*Q: Did you have any feel for the effectiveness of the Kuwaiti diplomatic corps and diplomatic policy?*

GNEHM: Not particularly, no. In the earlier days I was certainly aware, and became more so after going to Kuwait, that the Foreign Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah, had been Foreign Minister since the country's independence. We're talking about from 1962 until 1990. That's a long time.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: He was the architect of the policy that brought the first Soviet embassy into the Persian Gulf region -- in Kuwait. It angered the Saudis. Their policy was very hostile to the Soviet Union and its communist ideology. They wanted to keep the Soviets out of the

Persian Gulf. I want to add immediately that Sheikh Sabah is now the Emir of Kuwait and the invasion and U.S.-led liberation of Kuwait changed his and others' minds dramatically. Kuwaitis, including Sheikh Sabah, are deeply appreciative of the US role in liberating Kuwait and in the ongoing US commitment to Kuwait's security. What we've just been talking about is history.

*Q: OK. Well, let's pick up chronologically.*

GNEHM: It was on the night of August first. I was at home in Maryland. I already described how my son alerted me to the Iraqi invasion. As I mentioned, I called the Op Center at the State Department and they confirmed the invasion and asked that I come into the Department immediately. I dressed and went to the Department of State where I pretty much lived for the next few weeks. I went directly to the Op Center and, frankly, took over the crisis team that had been quickly organized. This is standard procedure when there is a crisis.

*Q: Up to that moment, there wasn't a crisis team, was there?*

GNEHM: No. No, it was organized that night.

*Q: But this is a foregone conclusion that there would be.*

GNEHM: Whenever there's a crisis like this, there's a standard operating procedure in the manuals of the Operations Center that a task force team is set up immediately. The manual defines the task force and who composes it. There is always someone from the relevant geographic bureau, always someone from the Consular Affairs Bureau because of the American citizen interest and certainly a representative from Diplomatic Security. You also always have INR, the person who follows the country; present there and probably a military liaison officer to handle contacts with the Pentagon. There was a cluster that gathered, including administrative support, for it. We became engaged very quickly. As early as 9:15 in the morning of August second, John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, came back from the National Security Council meeting at the White House to debrief us on that meeting. He was talking about early actions at the UN and at the Arab League. It was a very brief meeting because there wasn't much information.

In fact, the first information that we got that Iraqi forces had crossed the border came, curiously enough, came from an American who was atop an oil derrick near the border. He was at the top and with his mobile phone called his office in Kuwait City, who patched it through to Washington. "There are all these tanks going by my derrick here and they all seem to be headed toward Kuwait City. And they don't look like they're Kuwaiti, I think they're Iraqi." That was how we actually learned that the Iraqis had crossed the border. During the day, what little information we gleaned did not tell us for sure how just how far they were going to go. We were getting reports of Iraqi presence in different places. We soon realized it was a total occupation. It was uncertain whether Iraqi forces were going to leave because there were some conversations that seemed to

indicate they might be leaving. The embassy in Kuwait City, while it had hunkered down because there were Iraqi tanks in the streets, still was able to move around during the first couple of days and so we were getting some information. There were constant meetings in the National Security Council and immediate calls with some of our allies about the situation. The first thing that we were trying to find out that morning was what the Arab League was doing, what they'd agreed to do, and all the implications of the occupation on oil and finances. There was immediate concern about cutting off any kind of advantage that the Iraqis might gain from the occupation. There was a demarche made that very day in Saudi Arabia and in the UAE about oil production, urging them to expand to the maximum extent possible their production to make up for what we anticipated would be the loss of Kuwaiti production. We were concerned about that. The President said he was going to call King Fahd when he got to Aspen. He was on his way out to Colorado where he met British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. We sent Ambassador Freeman back to Saudi Arabia. I make these points because it tells you where we were at that early moment. 'Chas' Freeman was our ambassador in Riyadh. He was ordered to go back to Saudi Arabia immediately, but via Kuwait. In other words, there was even at that moment in the morning an expectation that the Kuwaiti government was still there. Of course, it didn't happen. Breaking relations with Iraq was discussed, but the decision was made that it might be better not to do anything like that right away. Again, we were uncertain about Iraq's ultimate intentions and didn't want to sever our ability to converse in Baghdad. And we had lots of Americans in Iraq working on many programs, as well as our embassy. Interestingly enough, in this very early meeting the president told the military to be ready to go in, particularly if Americans were in any sort of danger.

*Q: Was there any reference at that time to people who had long memories of the -- was it late '50s -- about when the king was deposed in Iraq and street mobs and, you know, in Iraq. I mean the Iraqis were considered to be rather a dangerous people.*

GNEHM: Violent in response to situations, yes.

*Q: Mobs, yeah.*

GNEHM: There was concern about that. There was a great deal of concern about Americans in both Baghdad and Kuwait early on. Large numbers of Americans were in Kuwait and a smaller number in Baghdad, but still significant for different reasons. It was just simply unclear who was in charge and what might happen to them. It does develop in the negative direction over some time. There was great discussion immediately about drawdowns in the post and whether those should take place. The President called Mubarak and King Hussein of Jordan that very day and instructed the State Department to go out with a worldwide demarche calling on the Iraqis to withdraw. The message to Yemen actually on that very first day was to rap their knuckles about their slackness. In other words, Ali Abdullah Saleh, the President, had not come out strongly against the invasion.

*Q: You might point out the role of Yemen, which was sort of at odds with most of the rest of the Arab world at the time.*

GNEHM: True. Yemen is down in the corner of the peninsula. They are a mountainous people, very independent minded and had ongoing difficult relations with the Saudis due to the constant Saudi interference in Yemen's domestic affairs. The Saudis gave the Yemeni tribes money, paying off one tribe against the other. They were accused at least of being behind the assassination of at least one of the previous two presidents. They were at odds, so to some degree with Ali Abdullah Saleh's relationship with Saddam Hussein. Certainly one factor in that relationship was simply geography. Iraq sat on the other side of Saudi Arabia -- therefore was an obvious ally. Saddam also knew how to handle these kinds of relationships, and that was with money. The Yemenis are not rich and are in fact, very poor. Someone like Ali Abdullah Saleh knew and understood that you rule Yemen by dole outs to the tribal leaders. To make things work, you need money, and Saddam provided that for them. In fact, there are allegations that King Hussein of Jordan was also getting hefty sums of money from Saddam.

Interestingly enough, the question of Israel and its possible reaction came up the very first day. That of course proved to be an important issue as the next few months passed. A demarche was made in Tel Aviv to inquire what they were doing and urge them to be calm and wait to see what the facts were. There was a teleconference later in the morning. The president said he was going to call Hosni Mubarak on his way out to Colorado. He approved the freeze of U.S. assistance to Iraq. Now remember, there were still some programs going on, particularly the food program, and the sale of, of wheat on concessional terms in particular. There was a memo to all heads of departments and agencies effective immediately stating that all financial loans and any export licenses were to be canceled to complete the circle of closing out any advantages that Iraq might have. That all occurred within the first few hours. Now, there was another very important thing that happened on that day (and this became again a very important development in the months ahead): Robert Kimmitt, the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, was delegated to lead an interagency team composed of representatives of all agencies, such as Energy, Defense, Commerce, and all the branches and departments of the Department of State to coordinate the US Government's response to the invasion. This team met on a regular basis, virtually every day for quite some time. Subgroups worked on specific issues, and we reported back on a conference call in the middle of the day.

*Q: This was completely aside from his nuclear responsibilities? I mean this was centered on the crisis in Kuwait.*

GNEHM: That's right. It was centered entirely on that. The reason why I mention it and stress it is that there was amazingly successful coordination within the U.S. government in this administration during these times. Certainly I give credit to the president, secretary, and others but Bob Kimmitt was a jewel.

Kimmit ran the day-to-day operations, pulling it all together. If there was ever a difference at one level or another on a particular topic, it was worked out in this group,

and then it went back up the chain as resolved or whatever. It was amazing, because there was not any doubt about what people were doing and who was doing what. It was just excellent.

*Q: What were your responsibilities at the beginning?*

GNEHM: The role of a crisis task force was to be the hub or command center for the crisis. I essentially became its director. During the first hours that night and early morning the task force was receiving all the communications coming in from the field. By opening of business I had spoken to our embassy in Kuwait and Ambassador Glaspie in London. I was getting full debriefs on the meetings. Based on all the information we were receiving, we produced to do sit-reps (situation reports) on a regular basis for principals. These reports kept all persons informed. Generally the task force served a crucial coordinating role for Undersecretary Kimmitt. The task force was a pivot point. Consequently, I had one of the better insights into all that was going on because I was getting debriefed every time there was a meeting at the White House or development abroad.

*Q: When you arrived within the first couple of days did you envisage a massive American military presence there? What was your feeling?*

GNEHM: Personally my initial feeling was this crisis was likely going to take a long time to resolve. I had lost any kind of confidence that Saddam could be worked with. I saw him as very aggressive and uncompromising. I even thought he might have had some really serious psychological issue in terms of power.

*Q: Bully too.*

GNEHM: He was definitely a bully, absolutely. If we get into the conversations when Wilson, our Charge in Baghdad, actually meets with him, you see that he merely repeated what he said earlier to others. Interestingly enough, I just assumed my role in the Op Center. I was never designated that formally. In fact, John Kelly, who I've mentioned several times, asked me in the course of either the first or second day, "Who gave you the authority to be up here and doing this?" He complained to Kimmitt that as Assistant Secretary he should be the one to designate the person who heads up the task force. Kennett actually told him that the Secretary liked me and will not agree to a change.

*Q: Do you think that that reflected the feelings of others besides yourself as far as his effectiveness and knowledge?*

GNEHM: We have already talked a lot about John Kelly. There were many people who had difficulties with him and found his general reactions to events in the region as bizarre. John continued to be dismissive about major US military action to confront Saddam; I took seriously what I was hearing from the White House meetings, which was that the president was not going to let this occupation of Kuwait stand.

*Q: Mm-hmm.*

GNEHM: I doubted very much in these early days that sanctions and diplomatic action would work, but I knew they had to be tried. I knew we had to go down that road. I also heard the word 'military' used even on the first day. Outside the government circles that wouldn't have gone over with the American public that wasn't prepared for war or for any deployment like we were talking about. However, I thought we would end up having to deploy forces. I thought we might somehow be able to force him out.

*Q: Well, did you sense the normal reluctance of the military to get involved right at the beginning? Who was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the time?*

GNEHM: General Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

*Q: Yes. But Crowe was on TV talking about staying out of the crisis -- not to get involved militarily.*

GNEHM: Yes, he was and that didn't go over very well in the administration.

*Q: Could you talk a bit about the initial reactions of Russia? Was there a push to impose sanctions because it's cleaner, neater, and doesn't involve people, or what?*

GNEHM: Well, there's definitely that aspect. I think that the concern early on that made us focus immediately on sanctions was that we wanted to make certain that Saddam did not reap the benefits for his seizure of Kuwait. Sanctions meant that he didn't have access to the investments that the Kuwait Investment Authority had globally and that he couldn't sell oil from Kuwait. It was more to deny him benefits because we knew if he got those assets they would enable him to pursue his aggression. Remember, at this point in time, we're not certain what his ultimate objectives were. We weren't sure whether it was just to get concessions or whether he intended to go on to Saudi Arabia. We weren't sure he intended to annex Kuwait or just occupy it temporarily. We soon knew it was the former.

*Q: Was there any talk about Saddam's oil producing capacity? My understanding is we found that Saddam had really neglected his infrastructure in order to support his big military presence. That included electricity, but also oil field development. Was that a concern or thinking point?*

GNEHM: It was a given. I mean INR and others wrote about where Iraq was economically and politically. These points were all there. Still, we were one of the major purchasers of Iraqi oil, as we were later during the Clinton administration when we ultimately allowed them to start selling oil.

*Q: As we were considering our policy were we taking into account that we were a major purchaser of Iraqi oil? I mean did we see ourselves having to suffer because it was taken out of the equation?*

GNEHM: That was part of the reason for the demarche to the Saudis and the UAE. We expected we were not going to be continuing to buy the Iraqi oil or Kuwaiti oil for that matter. In fact, we were going to move toward trying to stop them from selling any oil. There was a recognition early on that we should get UN action. Ambassador Thomas Pickering was our very capable ambassador to the UN where the US focused its initial diplomatic initiatives. Early the day of the invasion the Security Council met in emergency session and passed a resolution condemning the invasion and calling for Iraq's withdrawal. This resolution was the first of many that placed the UN firmly united against the invasion and fully in support of Kuwait. The second resolution was the one that imposed economic sanctions on Iraq.

*Q: In a way, given where Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil is concerned, we could certainly cut off a great majority of exporting any of that oil by just declaring a blockade or what have you, because it was almost all ship born, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: Iraqi oil was largely exported from offshore buoys located in the northern end of the Persian Gulf. There were two pipelines, one from the north through Turkey to the Mediterranean Sea and a second that had been built in recent years across Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea. We had conversations with both of these governments in the next few days requesting them to close those pipelines, which they did. That would have left only one route for exporting oil -- overland by truck through Jordan to Aqaba. Obviously the quantity of oil exported in this manner would not be significant.

*Q: So in a way the Kuwait-Iraqi oil complex was quite vulnerable to outside forces?*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: So what happened next?*

GNEHM: One of the first things that happened that morning was the call from April Glaspie in London. She had gone there for medical reasons. She was calling the Department to speak with the Secretary. I had been told in an earlier meeting by Kimmitt that the Secretary would not take a phone call from her. In fact, Under Secretary Kimmitt told me that the Secretary decided that no person in the Department of State would talk to her except for me. I would be the only person.

*Q: Why was that? I mean was she persona-non-grata?*

GNEHM: Yes. This was particularly a consequence of the conversation that she had with Saddam.

*Q: How did we all feel about Ambassador Glaspie's reputation at the time? Do we feel that this was Secretary Baker or was it generally felt that she had done the wrong thing?*

GNEHM: People who knew and worked with April well, including me, certainly never believed that she gave Saddam the green light to invade Kuwait. April was a professional

and an Arabist who knew the region and understood completely US interest in the Gulf. And I had worked very closely with her. I mentioned earlier that I stayed in her house during the trip in February. I mentioned how she and I had similar reactions and concerns over what we were hearing during that visit from the Iraqis. I knew her from her previous assignments in Washington when she headed the Office of Arabian Affairs in NEA. I was at Defense at the time. I knew her very well. I knew that she was a very headstrong personality, a very driven officer and that she had very strong feelings about issues. In this particular case she was an advocate of working with Saddam in ways that would bring him around to be part of the family of nations. That was the policy of the administration; so her remarks to Saddam were not contrary to overall US policy. In my own view, however, she did not understand or grasp the changing view in Washington toward Saddam as he made speeches, like the one in Amman attacking the United States and Israel. Washington was growing more and more negative toward Saddam. While this was happening, she was still out there using all of her energy and all of her abilities to try to alter Iraqi behavior. By the way, she never received instructions that altered ones she had been operating on thus far -- to try to bring Saddam around.

It is worth remembering the context in which she was operating in those few days before she met with Saddam. Iraqi troops were being moved and threats made. Yet the Saudis and others, like Mubarak, were trying to mediate and moderate Iraqi threats. Mubarak went to Baghdad and other people were attempting to reduce tension. A meeting was scheduled for Jeddah to bring the parties together and then that fell apart! That was the regional scene that she was working in to try to get Saddam to change his bellicose behavior. As I've mentioned to you before, April made it very clear that we don't get involved in issues between countries over borders in the region, which is exactly what her instructions from an earlier period said. These instructions were still probably valid; but, as she testifies later on the Hill, she had said such border disputes should be dealt with peacefully, not by use of force. Saddam gave her assurances that nothing would happen during her absence, and she could go and not worry or be concerned. He had told President Mubarak the same thing. As I think I mentioned previously, Saddam left the room during his meeting with April to take a phone call. When he came back in, he said "That was Mubarak, and he asked the same question you're asking, Madame Ambassador. I told him the same thing I told you. We're going to participate in this meeting in Jeddah." We have logs at the White House. Mubarak called President Bush within minutes of that call to tell him he just spoke to Saddam Hussein and had received assurances that he would work to resolve the crisis diplomatically. What Mubarak told the president was no different from what April Glaspie told the U.S. government as a result of those meetings on the 25th. No, I think the Iraqis were very intentional in releasing their version of the conversation; they were very good at propaganda.

*Q: Well, did you have the feeling that Secretary Baker, who'd been in Mongolia when this happened, was using April Glaspie as a scapegoat or that maybe there was a coterie around Baker trying to protect him. I mean do you think that sort of thing was happening?*

GNEHM: It's a fair question to ask. I'm going to answer it as honestly as I can, but I would like to preface my remarks by saying that I'm very fond of Secretary Baker and I feel like he was a fantastic Secretary of State during this period. This lead in was not the best moment for him. There is no doubt about the fact that the administration was focused on the collapse of the Soviet Union and all of the political developments unfolding in Eastern Europe.

One country after another started moving in different ways, with the United States trying to respond. There's no doubt about that being the focus, and I think to some extent Baker felt like he was blindsided by NEA and perhaps April being his ambassador in Iraq. I have a couple of other examples that will come up later, where people were definitely trying to protect him from criticism at different points in time. April came out on the wrong side. She was insisting that morning that she be allowed to go back to Baghdad certain that she could convince Saddam to change his mind and withdraw from Kuwait. Then everything would be fine. The very fact that she promoted that as a course of action flew in the face of where everybody else was at that point in time. It was immediately interpreted as unrealistic. I was told to tell her in no uncertain terms that she was not going back. She was not authorized to go back to Baghdad. If she traveled anywhere at all, it would be to Washington. I wasn't told to order her back at that time because she had medical reasons for being in London; but I did tell her that orders would be forthcoming for her return to Washington. April was very unhappy and remained convinced that she could make a difference if allowed to return to Baghdad.

*Q: Did you talk to her?*

GNEHM: I'm the one that talked to her. She was very upset.

*Q: Did she have the feeling that she was being set up, or was it different, not personal grounds but other grounds?*

GNEHM: I don't think she thought that at the time. I think she believed so much in her capabilities to do things that she wanted the opportunity to try. I took that at face value. I just told her that, like almost all others in Washington, I didn't agree with her that Saddam could be turned around. In any case, the politics in Washington after the invasion wouldn't sustain her going back. It was just impossible.

*Q: Within a day or two after the invasion, did we feel that this wasn't just Iraqi forces coming in, messing around a little bit and saying, "See what we can do," then going back and then take a hunk of the oil fields? Or did we feel that they really were in Kuwait to stay?*

GNEHM: During this first day we didn't know enough about what was going on to be too sure about that. When I arrived at 3:00 in the morning in the Op Center, the issues that we were dealing with at that moment were the Iraqi Occupation Forces. We were asking whether there was security in Kuwait, what the security situation was going to be, and, if we were going to evacuate Americans, how that could be done. We were told by the

embassy in Kuwait that Iraqi “guards” were now at the embassy. There was some resistance in Kuwait City, and the fighting was expanding. There was now artillery fire in parts of the city. That was different from the first day when people had started to go to work that morning in Kuwait City and ran into tanks and troops moving in the city. Everyone was shocked and surprised. Some went on to work and were sent home by Iraqi troops. Others went back home immediately. By the second day again there was some fighting. The President spoke with King Fahd for about a half hour the night before. I called Ambassador Howell, our Ambassador in Kuwait.

He was in the embassy, and the embassy was still fully staffed at that point. There had been no draw down at that point of dependents or officers. We told them to stand fast until there was any decision or authority on draw downs. We considered what his recommendations might be. We asked him if he intended to move dependents into the compound, which would increase numbers significantly. He said he was trying to watch the situation and not sure of the situation. For the moment at least families seemed to be OK in their homes and so he was having them stand fast. He said the Iraqis had to disarm the Kuwait National Guard. There was scattered urban resistance, but also reports that the Iraqis had begun detaining people. It was the first indication he had that the Iraqis might be separating out Europeans and Americans from Kuwaitis. He talked about a joint approach with other governments to the Iraqis about the security situation of Kuwait since the Iraqi forces seemed to be in charge. He reported his understanding that the Kuwaiti airbase had fallen early the morning of the invasion but that many of the planes that were on that base had managed to escape and flown either to Saudi Arabia or Bahrain.

*Q: I am told that there was a guard at the gate who put up his hand and told an Iraqi armored column to stop. Since the Iraqis didn't have orders to force their way into the base, they hesitated enabling the planes to take off. There's this one guard standing there holding off this armored column until the Iraqis got orders of what to do. I don't know if that's true or not.*

GNEHM: The Kuwaiti Air Force chief told me the same story. So I accept it as true. The guard said, “I need to see your authorization.” And of course that disconcerted the Iraqi who didn't have anything to show him. He wasn't sure what he was supposed to do at that point, and in the time it took to check the instructions, the planes took off and left.

Ambassador Howell talked about more Iraqi convoys arriving and where they were located. He lost contact with the British. A little while later in the morning there was a call from Ed Djerejian. I think Ed was in Jordan, but I've forgotten where he was actually. The Swedish ambassador was telling him that it was a possible that Iraqi troops were moving into Jordan as well. That turned out not to be correct. I mention it only in that we were getting information about things happening in the region that didn't bear out in fact.

*Q: Was there any talk about the interaction of the expatriate Palestinian-Jordanian community in Kuwait? Apparently at least the majority were supportive of the Iraqis coming in.*

GNEHM: Not early on. Again, I think people were so surprised by the move that in these first few days this did not come up. There was an interesting conversation as early as this second day in Damascus with Farouk Al Sharaa, the acting foreign minister and close ally to Assad. We pushed hard for the Syrians to condemn the Iraqi invasion and to call for immediate and unconditional withdrawal. The Syrian government actually was strongly supportive of doing that and said they had no intentions to recognize this puppet government that seems to have surfaced in the course of the day. The Syrians said, "We are pushing hard for an extraordinary Arab Summit meeting to reconfirm the condemnation and call for withdrawal." The Syrians asked us to support a call for an Arab Summit. Our contacts with our Arab friends indicated there was no danger on the Syrian-Iraq border. The Syrian Government was watching it closely because they considered Saddam unpredictable. The United States urged the Syrians to deploy forces to the border because we hoped that would force Saddam to redeploy his own forces, fearing the Syrians might in fact cross the border. It's just interesting to me that early on we find that the Syrians were actually on board opposing Saddam's actions.

*Q: Were there any contacts or discussions with Iran at all, informal or otherwise?*

GNEHM: I will get to that, because there were in fact some informal contacts. April Glaspie called me again later in the morning. She had been in touch with a UK MFA to discuss the resolutions under consideration at the UN. Again, she asked to be able to go back to Baghdad. I told her the situation had not changed. She asked if I would go back to the Secretary again. I said, "That much I can promise you, but I don't think you should anticipate any change in that." She said if I were there, I could probably have a lot of influence and change things around. She pointed out that King Fahd had met with the Iraqi vice president to try to convince Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

The Turks agreed to close the pipeline if NATO requested it. That was the word back. We had a report from our Dhahran Consulate that 48 Kuwaiti fighter jets in fact were now at the Dhahran Airport, confirming their successful escape from Kuwait. I called Joe Wilson in Baghdad to ask him whether or not he had had any response from the Iraqis about evacuations and security for the Americans in Baghdad. He said he had repeated the demarche four or five times to different people. The British were making the same demarche, but that they had not gotten a response either. Again, this was very early in the morning Washington time on the second day. There was an NSC meeting early in the morning and a debrief. Saud Nasser al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington, called to brief me on the conversation that he had just had with the Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. Remember, at this point in time Saud Nasser had no contact with his government. He wasn't even sure where the emir was. The emir later surfaced in Dhahran with some of his government. They had fled overland across the desert to evade Iraqi forces, but at this point in time Saud is really acting on his own. We told him to do whatever he thought was suitable and feasible with the Iranians. He reported that the

Iranians were very cordial. They were very concerned about the Iraqi action and that they would like to stay in touch with him about how things would develop. The Iranian dialogue was not with us directly, but we were getting feedback through a good intermediary that the Iranians were concerned about the Iraqi action.

The embassy in Kuwait reported that the oil facilities, the refinery, the export buoys, and the fields were now under complete Iraqi control. They got that information from Kuwaiti oil workers who were working in the field. In terms of the ruling family, the embassy was not sure where they were. They understood from other Kuwaitis that most of the al-Sabah family had fled and left the country overland, but they couldn't confirm at that point where they were.

Deputy Secretary Larry Eagleburger came back from the White House about 11:30 in the morning to debrief on the National Security Council meeting. He reported that the president was hard over and tough when he talked of "the consequences of Iraqis screwing around with American citizen," the words I wrote down. The President said we must be careful and not leave the American citizen issue as the only red line. He was concerned about a hostile power occupying another country, particularly one with that much oil. John Kelly was told to call in the Iraqi ambassador. Eagleburger was going to call Nizar Hamdoon, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iraq. He had been a popular Iraqi ambassador in Washington in the '80s. Eagleburger reported that the sense of the NSC meeting was a growing recognition that this was a very serious issue with strategic consequences and that Cheney, Brady, Scowcroft and the President all felt the same way. Kimmitt agreed. We saw more Iraqi mechanized armored units moving into Kuwait and a group of them within eight kilometers of the Saudi border. This heightened concerns in Washington. That intelligence forced decision-making. According to Kimmitt, "We have to now move in the direction of taking forceful action. We're not there yet, but we're moving in that direction clearly."

*Q: Today is the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 with Skip Gnehm. Skip was about to talk about the second or third day of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and you're trying to find out where the Kuwaiti government is and what they're up to. Did you think that the Iraqis were going to go in, maybe do a little looting, and get back and stay in some of the oil fields? Or did we feel that they were really going to take over the whole place?*

GNEHM: That's a good question. Leading up to the days before the invasion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August there was still a lot of debate in Washington circles about Saddam Hussein's intentions. His public remarks were quite vicious and threatening and there were significant troop movements. It wasn't until 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> of July before the CIA actually then moved to the assessment that Saddam did indeed intend to invade Kuwait.

Your question is appropriate because the agency was still uncertain what Saddam's next steps would be. Was it only occupation of the northern half of the country, which would give them important oil fields? Or was it just a move to put such pressure on the Kuwaiti Government so that they would concede those things that Saddam had demanded

including forgiveness of debts, some reparations for stealing their oil? Or would it be a full occupation but again, with intent to intimidate.

After the invasion on the second, that latter part of your question still remained unanswered. We do know that they occupied the city and then the southern oil fields over the course of the first two or three days. The question of how far they were going to go in Kuwait was ultimately answered. It was everywhere. But now how long they were going to stay and what their ultimate goal was remained unclear?

*Q: What was happening to foreigners there?*

GNEHM: Days after the invasion our Chargé in Baghdad, Joe Wilson, had a meeting with Saddam Hussein in which Saddam made absolutely clear he did not intend to leave Kuwait. This was about the fifth or sixth day, as I recall. During the first day or two while I was running the task force in the Operations Center, I was on the phone with people in London and with Ambassador Howell in Kuwait. I was also speaking with Barbara Bodine who was Deputy Chief of Mission in Kuwait and with Joe Wilson and Jim Van Laningham, who was number two in Baghdad after April's departure.

In the first few days, the embassy in Kuwait was still able to function and some of the people were able to go out and around. There was still some movement, though they were being careful. They were uncertain about what the Iraqis might do to them. As the days progressed, the embassy was essentially closed. Personnel really couldn't go out. In fact they were afraid to go out. By the end of the first week, there were Iraqi forces around the embassy that threatened the staff or at least made them feel threatened. From the very first day there was a huge concern about the American community in Kuwait and in Baghdad. So it's interesting that you ask me that question. There was a big shift in my own conversations with both of those capitals on what needed to be done to help protect and assist American communities in both places. Initially, they were advised to get out; but many, especially those in Baghdad, did not want to go because they did not feel threatened.

By the end of the week, however, there was genuine alarm. The airports weren't open though they expected at the beginning they would be. Then citizens found out that departure from either Kuwait or Baghdad was going to be overland. Then we got notice from the Iraqis that no Americans in Kuwait could go overland to Saudi Arabia; they had to depart through Baghdad. Meanwhile, in Baghdad, as the embassy was trying to arrange evacuation, several convoys tried to go both to the Jordanian border and the Turkish border. Even though at the beginning of the week Nizar Hamdoon, the undersecretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had assured Joe Wilson that people would be free to go and not to worry, in fact, they were turned back at the border. It became clear that the Iraqis were not going to let people leave.

*Q: Were we feeling that this showed a dysfunctional government?*

GNEHM: My interpretation of all of it-- and it remains mine still to this day --is that Saddam, the decision-maker in the Iraqi government, made the decision to invade and occupy Kuwait. My assessment is that he didn't really think about what he would do with all the foreigners.

Then as things began to develop and the pressure came on him from the UN resolutions beginning on the second of August, he realized he was threatened and began to think how he might use the foreigners, perhaps hostages to be used to gain concessions from the international community. We began hearing reports that he was putting foreigners in places likely to be targeted in order to inhibit our attacks.

I don't think that Nizar Hamdoun was acting deceitfully. He was a career Foreign Ministry type. He was ambassador in Washington and had a really good understanding of western thinking. He was most likely responding as he expected the government would act, which was to facilitate the departure of people who wanted to leave. What he ran into was a presidential decision that would not allow that to happen.

*Q: What does somebody who's in the center of things do in the middle of a crisis?*

GNEHM: As I look at these eight days you see the pattern starkly. I was literally the person in the Department at this time who was receiving the phone calls from abroad, from the post that I talked about, but also from Turkey and a couple of other places.

I was passing on the messages to the principals from what I was picking up from Nat Howell in Kuwait, Joe Wilson in Baghdad, and April Glaspie. I then relayed back to them the guidance that I got from the department. I found myself essentially in a very important communication role.

On the second day I was briefed on a decision by the NSC. Robert Kimmitt, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, was tasked to chair an interagency group to provide oversight of all USG actions. He held a meeting every morning that included representatives from all agencies including myself. The meeting would scope out what issues were pending, what needed to be done and who would do it. For example, how the request to King Fahd from Cheney would go, and how we would answer Joe Wilson about how he would deal with the citizens who want to leave.

I would draw up a log of what needed to be done. My job was to work during the course of the day with the people or agencies that attended the morning meeting to make sure whatever it was that needed to be done was accomplished. I would lead a conference call later in the afternoon to report back our hopeful achievements for the day, which would immediately lead to the following day with new events, new information, and new intelligence.

I think it's really important to remember that in the first day or two we had scanty information about what was going on or where the ruling family of Kuwait was. We eventually discovered that they had fled individually and in groups across the desert to

Saudi Arabia. It was later in that week, I believe it was that week, that the Saudis moved them in mass to Ta'if. They just simply wanted them away from the border. As the week unfolded, we began to get a clearer picture of what was going on.

We went from thinking that we were going to have no difficulty getting our citizens out at the beginning of the week to discovering that they were actually hostages. Again, we didn't know exactly what the Iraqi intentions were. We found out after the meeting that Joe had with Saddam. We had the initial announcement by the Iraqis of a provisional government in Kuwait, which floundered almost immediately. We didn't know anything about any of the names that were announced and it turned out that some of them weren't Kuwaiti at all. But by the time Joe met Saddam, the Iraqis had obviously discarded this as an option and Saddam made it absolutely clear that Kuwait was part of Iraq. It was a very interesting conversation. One of the points Saddam made was that the "United States just needs to understand that Jaber and Sa'ad (the Amir and the Crown Prince of Kuwait), are toast, are finished, they're history. Never to come back."

I should just mention that in the course of one day, the second day after the invasion, I spoke to Joe Wilson three times. I spoke to Barbara Bodine and Nat Howell three times. I was with Deputy Secretary Eagleburger briefing him on those conversations and was with Kimmitt twice. So again, I had an important coordinating role --- the one taking these phone calls, documenting conversations, finding out what was happening in the field, and then sharing that information with senior department officials and representatives of other agencies who needed that information

*Q: Where did the President and the NSC fit into this?*

GNEHM: The President had a meeting on the very day of the invasion with the National Security Council. They made it clear that we were not going to accept this. The President also made it clear that he wanted the UN involved. He wanted us to reach out globally and build an international coalition. I'm not sure he used that word specifically on the first day; but as the week unfolded it was clear that that was the way we were directed to go. I should have brought the list of Security Council resolutions and the dates, but there were at least two if not four the very first day. One condemning the invasion and another establishing an embargo because the President wanted to make sure that we could immediately block all Kuwaiti and Iraqi assets in the country --- specifically to keep Saddam from benefiting from any Kuwaiti assets. This was because we assumed that Saddam would try to plunder Kuwaiti Government accounts.

*Q: Kuwaitis had the great majority of their funds in British banks.*

GNEHM: Assets abroad, yes, investments and assets. They had a considerable amount in the Central Bank of Kuwait but most of the banking was done internationally. So it wasn't hard to protect them once you got regulations in place.

In this case, fortunately, Saddam got almost nothing.. I had a call from the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington, Sheikh Saud Nasser al-Sabah, within days of the invasion.

He was very upset. He had gone to the bank to get money to pay his staff only to have the bank tell him, "I'm sorry about your account but all Kuwaiti funds are blocked." I had to call the Treasury Department in OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control), the office responsible for implementing such sanctions. I said, "Hey, come on guys, this was to block the Iraqis from getting Kuwaiti money but not the Kuwaiti government from getting its own money." I got Treasury to amend their order. I think within 24 hours Saud was able to get his money. That blip was illustrative of how things unfold sometimes in unexpected ways. The role that I was playing was to identify the problem and try to have it resolved as quickly as possible.

The critical role of Sh. Saud during these first few days was extraordinary. When the invasion took place, Sh. Saud essentially lost contact with his government. He had no idea where the Amir was. He had nowhere to call to get information or instructions. He had no contact with the Prime Minister/Crown Prince. He knew he had to act immediately and was, for all intents and purposes, the Government of Kuwait in those first few days. He was the only Kuwaiti government official with whom we could deal; the only one that we could reach. And we had to be able to tell allies and organizations, like the UN, that we had Kuwaiti backing for our actions. So he was making decisions saying, "I support the embargos. I support these UN resolutions."

Sh. Saud Nasser was the only one we had speaking for the Kuwaiti government in those first few days. He was remarkable person. The actions that he took and the initiatives that he was willing to take at the time were extraordinary. He was of course distraught. He was receiving a huge volume of phone calls from Kuwaitis in Kuwait, while they could still call out, about the atrocities and the damages. They included calls from his own family that was trapped in Kuwait City. He was a remarkable person through all of these months; he was the face and voice of a Kuwait determined to be liberated. You'll hear me talk a lot about him.

Going back to your question again about the welfare of US citizens, in the first few days I had daily meetings with Undersecretary of Management Selin. The issues centered on the whole question of whether we should be drawing down our posts in the region or not. The first day or two we weren't even sure we were going to move out dependents and, if we were going to move out dependents, when and how we would do so. Later on it was clear we needed to get dependents out of the region as a whole, not just from the countries central to the crisis.

One of the first major concerns was the security of Saudi Arabia. The President decided to send Secretary Cheney to Saudi Arabia to see King Fahd. We were concerned based on our intelligence that the Iraqi forces might continue moving south down the coast into the critical oil fields of the eastern province of the Kingdom. We knew that while the Saudis had a modern military, they did not have a capability to resist the invasion of 130,000 well-armed Iraqi troops. We had no assets on the ground and only the small naval presence in the Persian Gulf which would not have been able to stop the Iraqis. Again, remember that we did not know Saddam's intentions.

*Q: How about stockpiling?*

GNEHM: Prepositioning?

*Q: Prepositioning in Trucial States, Qatar or Diego Garcia. We had assets out there.*

GNEHM: During the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, we did end up prepositioning a fair amount of equipment in Diego Garcia; but Diego Garcia is about 3,000 miles from the Persian Gulf. Yet, the items prepositioned there was equipment and not the troops that would use them.

The most important asset that would have allowed us to be on the ground quickly was a marine amphibious force (MAF). A MAF works off a ship that belonged to marines that has all that they needed to be able to land on a beach and begin ground operations. The unit that would fall in on that ship when it got to the Gulf was assigned elsewhere. Their responsibility for Gulf contingencies was secondary to other tasking. But a MAF would not have been sufficient to counter an Iraqi attack on Saudi Arabia. Yet the President urged Cheney to move the ship with its equipment as quickly as possible near to Saudi Arabia. We thought they were a danger and we needed to get some actions moving rapidly. The President wanted to see Cheney in Saudi Arabia as quickly as possible as well and had asked Fahd to receive the Secretary. Yet there was enormous frustration and anguish with the Saudis. We weren't getting an answer from King Fahd. Based on conversations that I was privy to within our government, it seemed that they were debating how to respond to the President.

*Q: Was there any discussion about using a well-placed nuclear weapon in a supply area or something like that?*

GNEHM: I don't remember anything about deploying nuclear weapons.

*Q: I was just wondering if things really went down the tubes that might be the only option.*

GNEHM: I can't tell you that that didn't go through people's minds or end up being a discussion on the margins of meetings, but it certainly was never part of debriefs from people coming back from the White House. It never came up in the Kimmitt meetings.

*Q: What were you hearing at this point about the Iraqi Army? There were rumors that they were extremely capable but it turned out that they were not.*

GNEHM: You're quite right. The U.S. government's estimation of Iraqi military capability was quite high. We saw them as the third or fourth largest standing army in the world. Of course, they didn't do as well as Saddam would have thought; but compared to other militaries, they had actual battle field experience, unlike Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. They had the latest modern weapons from the Soviet Union, including planes and tanks. During the Iran-Iraq War we had seen a capability that we hadn't see in virtually any

other country. This was their ability to shift forces rapidly up and down the country to response to Iranian threats. So we saw an organizational structure that seemed to be extremely capable. There was clear evidence they had chemical weapons which they were willing to use. There was a great deal of anxiety, about the use of anthrax and other biological weapons. Additionally, there was uncertainty about their nuclear program. The question of nuclear weapons comes up later.

*Q: What about the two major communist powers, China and the Soviets? How did we feel about them? They weren't going to support Iraq, were they?*

GNEHM: We were in the Gorbachev era at this point of time and we saw him as a different kind of Soviet leader. They made it very clear early on that they were opposed to the invasion of Kuwait. The Chinese and the Russians were supportive of actions at the UN.

*Q: What were you up to? What was happening? I remember on TV there was that sort of demonstration of Saddam trying to be nice to a little British boy who was very obviously very uncomfortable.*

GNEHM: In the course of this first week our two embassies were working under the assumption that they could get people out. When the Iraqis invaded Kuwait, the American community in Baghdad didn't feel threatened. When the embassy in Baghdad was talking about the need to consider departures, they weren't in favor of departures at that time even of dependents or private citizens. As the Iraqi occupation became more obvious and a little more organized, they began to pick up westerners in Kuwait of all nationalities, not just Americans. The word spread rapidly that the Iraqis were picking up foreigners and taking them to Iraq. Individuals began to hide and there are incredible stories of people hiding in air conditioning ducts for most of the next five months. They would come out to eat and to go to the bathroom, but they basically spent the day up in the air conditioning ducts or in basements. Fortunately, there were Kuwaitis and others willing to help hide them.

There were Kuwaitis all over the country who, in the course of the first month or two, realized that the Iraqi Forces were looting and stealing and going into homes and taking anything. Again, over a period of five months, this got worse. Kuwaitis began to build false walls in their houses to create spaces where they put their valuables, paintings, rugs, jewelry, and everything else. But they also used these rooms to hide foreigners.

So, by the end of the first week, it was quite clear there would be no orderly departure and that the community was in danger. An interesting note: when the department issued its travel and security advisory on Iraq urging people to leave, the department forgot to include Baghdad as an addressee! Joe called, "I hear that there's been an advisory. I don't know anything about this, what's going on?" It turned out that Baghdad was on minimize, and that requires a special notation on the cable for it to go there. While it was listed, there wasn't the right notation and so it didn't go through.

Another thing that is worth mentioning was that the Department was focused on protecting and evacuating employees in the embassy as rapidly as possible. Joe brought up the issue of equal responsibility for the private citizens. According to the law, the US Government cannot issue any instructions or orders to its official community that it doesn't make known to the private community. Joe correctly pointed out that the Department was focused on the official community, and Joe came back to me saying, "I can't do it. I've been instructed to take certain actions toward our official community. I won't do what I'm instructed to do because there's nothing in here about how I'm going to take care of the local community and etc." It took two days to sort through this issue, a long time in the middle of a crisis.

*Q: This was the first time that the law was put under scrutiny. How did you feel and how did others feel about Joe Wilson? Because Joe Wilson was essentially an Africanist administrative officer who'd been sent to Baghdad as deputy chief.*

GNEHM: In the period we're talking about in this first week, I was dealing with him as a Foreign Service Officer assigned to Baghdad. Suddenly he had all the responsibility; in the absence of the Ambassador he was the United States Chargé in Baghdad. That's how I treated him. That's how I interacted with him. I expected professionalism from him and that's what I feel I got from him. I had no interest in this business of "He's not a Middle East person and therefore I don't trust him."

*Q: My impression is he did very well there.*

GNEHM: It was a very awkward situation for him.

*Q We didn't know what we were doing and the people we were dealing with probably didn't know what they were dealing with either.*

GNEHM: In many ways, the fact that he was an administrative officer having to deal with these issues we're talking about, including the citizen's evacuation among other things, was beneficial. He was particularly knowledgeable in these areas. Dealing with Saddam Hussein and Nizar Hamdoon on other issues would have been more awkward; but we train our officers to be generalists even as they are experts in specific areas. Joe didn't just suddenly appear on the scene in Baghdad.

*Q: Did you feel at this time that there was an attempt to discredit April Glaspie? I got the feeling later on that April Glaspie had been left hanging out there before and not given instructions of how to deal with Saddam Hussein outside our normal stance. Then when all hell broke loose, particularly around Secretary Baker, was trying to develop a fall guy for this --what have we done. And April was sort of the designated -- how did you feel about that? Or was that apparent at the time?*

GNEHM: Oh, very much apparent. I think I mentioned in an earlier part of our interviews, the group that you talk about on the seventh floor was just furious and livid with April Glaspie. They certainly thought she'd mishandled the meeting with Saddam

Hussein, regardless of the details. They did not believe that she had done a good job. Their thinking was that she should have given us more warning. Looking at some of her reporting and the call to me where she asked "Let me go back, I can convince him to withdraw," the reaction was that she was out of it --- that she didn't understand at all what was going on. She'd lost touch.

The order to me on the second day was that I would be the only person in the Department authorized to speak with her. Secretary would not take her call. She tried calling Undersecretary Kimmitt and John Kelly, her assistant secretary. None would accept her calls in accordance with the Secretary's instructions. They were isolating her. They didn't want to deal with her. I was the only person in the Department who talked with her, as I did several times.

I have said this often. April is an extraordinary professional. She knew the region extremely well and she spoke beautiful Arabic. She is a motivated and self-directed person who could always come up on the spur of the moment with an action plan to go from where she was to where she wanted to be. I know that she felt she understood Saddam and Iraq better than anyone else because she was there. She knew our policy seven months before at the end of '89 to early '90. She was still trying to convince Saddam to be a responsible player in the global world, to foreswear chemical weapons, and to give up his diatribes. She still tried even when he started verbally attacking Israel and the United States and then Kuwait, the UAE, and others as we moved from February to June. She was reporting in an unapologetic way, but she was trying to describe what was motivating him --- why he would do such things. Her reporting was not wrong. Her analysis showed that economic pressures and lack of responses on the part of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on the debt issue left Iraq feeling threatened. In addition, Bagdad (meaning Saddam) misinterpreted things happening in the United States. I mentioned editorials and Newsweek magazine depicting Saddam as an "Enemy of the World" peace.

April was trying to explain to Saddam and that was looked back upon as being too close to the client. Therefore, persons in Washington were quick to believe that she hadn't been strong enough with Saddam in that last meeting. The truth is --- and she talks about this later in her testimony before Congressional committees --- that her intention on the issue of Kuwaiti borders was to remind everyone that while the US doesn't get involved with border problems between regional states, they all ought to be resolved peacefully. She used those talking points with Saddam, but with 130,000 troops on the border she could have had a tougher line. She could have said, "It doesn't look like you intend to do that." She did ask for assurances that he was not going to move militarily. And she got those assurances. So did Mubarak who turned out to be wrong, and we didn't blame him. I had innumerable conversations with her. She returned to Washington on the fifth of August, which was three days later, as instructed. She was around but not invited to any meetings. She was excluded from everything. I remained the person with whom she had to talk.

*Q: Can you describe what actions were being taken at this time?*

GNEHM: We were upset that the Saudis were not getting back to us about a Cheney visit to brief the King on our fears of possible Iraqi military moves against the Kingdom. They eventually did. Cheney departed Washington accompanied by General Powell and met with Fahd in Riyadh on the sixth. This was four days into the invasion. They briefed him on our intelligence. Following the briefing King Fahd agreed to a deployment of US forces to the Kingdom. This was a fairly dramatic decision, especially given its impact domestically in Saudi Arabia.

The President ordered deployment of U.S. forces that very day within hours of getting word from Cheney. He instructed the Secretary of Defense to proceed immediately with the deployment. During the next three days there were problems with the Saudis. I was on the phone with Chas Freeman, our Ambassador. He was also on the phone with other senior officials in Washington. The Saudis wanted an agreement with us on this deployment. They wanted to know when we were coming, how long we were going to stay, and when we were going to leave. There were other important issues as well. Washington just wasn't focused on it. From then on Washington was action oriented. Chas got more and more frustrated with Washington and he came under more intense pressure from the Saudis. This matter became an major issue of discussion at the Kimmitt meetings and at the White House.

We kept telling the Saudis that we were going to do it but we didn't quite get there with them. Chas reported that it was clear that the Saudis were actually very worried about our intentions and whether we would leave. The Saudi Government was under considerable domestic pressure.

Also, just a reminder, this is something that I know happened, but I wasn't a part of it. King Fahd did tell Cheney he agreed to the deployment of U.S. forces. Before he announced it publicly, however, he went to the ulema, the Wahhabi-led council of religious leaders in Riyadh, to seek their support for this decision. It was a pretty dramatic decision, inviting foreign forces, particularly Christian forces, to come into the country with its Islamic heritage and two holy sites of Islam. The Council debated the question and issued a fatwa or decree. The fatwa was carefully crafted to sustain their religious views but acquiesced in a nuanced approach. The wording is something along the lines of, "It is acceptable in Islam for the government to accept military support and therefore the hosting of foreign forces if those forces are coming to defend the state and Islam." Fahd and the Saudi authorities made it clear to Washington through Prince Bandar, the Saudi Ambassador to the United States, that this deployment was solely for the defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. There was no discussion whatsoever of action to liberate Kuwait.

We accepted that as political cover. In fact, it remained our public line until late October or early November. You could not find anyone in the American or Saudi governments, in the American Congress, or any other government aside from the Kuwaitis who were really talking publicly about military action against Saddam's forces.

We only talked publicly about economic sanctions to drive him out or convince him to leave Kuwait as well as other kinds of actions, diplomatic ones, to force him out. As time progressed, we came to the conclusion those measures were not going to force him to withdraw. But the President and the administration were really deft in working those issues publicly to move the public, the UN, and the region in the direction of accepting that military action was going to be necessary. That took time, about three months. It was not the case in August.

*Q: How about a status of forces agreement?*

GNEHM: We don't have a status of forces agreement with Saudi Arabia and never have.

*Q: In Saudi Arabia? We had troops there when I was there back in 1958 or so.*

GNEHM: The only written agreement that we have with Saudi Arabia during the times that you're talking about was the agreement about providing military assistance. The U.S. Military Training Mission (USMTM) was set up as the organization to manage military sales and support, but we had no status of forces agreement. We never signed any treaties about the training mission or assistance. This was done below treaty level. As I recall it was a Memorandum of Understanding.

*Q: Was this because of Saudi sensitivities?*

GNEHM: Yes, entirely the Saudis. We wanted a status of forces agreement; but the Saudis would have nothing to do with it. This was largely over religious considerations. The country had been closed for decades. When I got to Riyadh in '76, the Aramco employees who'd been there for some time, reminded me of the days in the '50s. You had to get permission to go to Riyadh. At night they had to go stay at the guesthouse out at the airport, which was outside the walls of the city. Saudis would not allow foreigners to be inside the wall of the city at night. This was the rule only 20 or 25 years before we asked for permission to have our troops stationed there. The mentality of the country was and remains very conservative and the foreign population in the Kingdom was only beginning to grow in the '70s and then more dramatically in the '80s and into the '90s. By 1990 Saudis were seeing foreigners around the country. Traditionally, foreigners were mostly in Jeddah. By the 1990s there were certainly many in Riyadh, but the center of the Kingdom continued to be the most conservative part of the country.

*Q: What were the major issues with which you had to deal?*

GNEHM: Looking at the military, the easiest military presence to get to Saudi Arabia quickly was our air force. So the deployment of F15 planes to Saudi Arabia happened immediately. In that initial period of time, however, they were extremely vulnerable to any Iraqi attack because we had no ground forces to protect the planes. The priority was getting the US military presence there demonstrably, which we did. But then the concern became getting the backup needed to protect those assets as quickly as possible and to be able to respond to an Iraqi incursions, if necessary.

Some movement of equipment began as early as August but by September there was considerable action. It was a humongous effort moving tanks, transport vehicles, and all the other ancillary equipment needed by ground forces. The items had to be moved from their previous locations often as far away as the continental US but also Europe and East Asia. This required an enormous naval lift. The Kuwaitis did provide some of the transport.

*Q: So what was happening in Baghdad?*

GNEHM: I took a call from Joe Wilson at 8:15 in the morning on the 6<sup>th</sup>. He debriefed me on a two-hour meeting that he'd just had with Saddam Hussein and he began to say, "And he's not dead!"

He mentioned that Saddam was really highly agitated but seemed to calm down as the meeting progressed. In his initial statement, Saddam said the U.S. should refrain from being pushed into action on bad advice, lest it find itself embarrassed. Joe took that to be a threat. And Saddam went on to speak briefly how they were frustrated by Kuwait, gave him a history lesson, and asserted that Kuwait is a part of Iraq. Then Saddam went on to say that he had proposed a non-aggression and a non-interference pact with Kuwait like the one he had signed with Saudi Arabia. Saddam had said, "I'm glad they didn't sign because then we might have been awkward with our new government that we just put there." Regarding Saudi Arabia, he said, "Saudi Arabia helped us a lot in the Iraq-Iran War. It was at their initiative that we built a pipeline across Saudi Arabia, and we did it with grants from them, not loans."

This was of course an implicit reference to the loans that Iraq in fact did get from Kuwait and UAE. He said, "If things stay as they have been," meaning with Saudi Arabia, "they, the Saudis, remain our brothers. If there's an attempt on the U.S. part to get them to do anything against us, then we will respond. So explain your policies. If they, as you say they are, really concerned your fears are unfounded. If you are feinting," meaning just doing this as a cover, "and using the Saudis to get at Iraq, that's your decision. At this point, we've not heard any concern from the Saudis, but we're willing to provide any guarantees to reassure Saudis if they're concerned. On the other hand, we're always ready to defend our Saudi brothers if there's any foreign aggression." This was his spin about the U.S. forces moving into Saudi Arabia. It's an insight into the way he often spoke and the spin he often took in explaining events as he would like others to believe.

When Joe later asked, "Are you saying that there's no action or intent to attack Saudi Arabia. Can you please provide me assurances that you don't intend any military action?"

I'll put in quotes from Joe, citing Saddam, "Yes. You may take this assurance to the Saudis and to everybody in the region. We will not attack any party that does not attack us. Anybody who wants our friendship will find us most eager."

And then Saddam said, “You know, I really hadn’t expected this kind of question in view of the fraternal relations between us and the Saudis unless you know something about the Saudi views that I don’t. I saw the Saudis have received Jaber” (the Amir of Kuwait). “That doesn’t annoy us. To be expected. That’s, after all, Arab hospitality. Provided it does not create a basis in Saudi Arabia to agitate against us by supporting Jaber. You need to convey to President Bush in this regard that he should know that Jaber and Sa’ad” (the Crown Prince of Kuwait) “are history.”

Later, Joe said, “I tried to ask about welfare and whereabouts of American citizens and spoke of the responsibility of the Government of Iraq to provide for their security.” Saddam didn’t want to talk about it and he refused to talk about withdrawal from Kuwait when Joe asked him about that.

Saddam said, “We shall never leave Kuwait free for someone else to come and take it away. We will never let Kuwait be an easy bite. Even if the whole world is against us, we will fight all. Kuwait is a part of Iraq and will remain a part. It is not an independent state anymore.”

It was very clear from the mouth of the man himself that they are annexing Kuwait. He no longer purports that there’s a puppy government.

*Q: What about the Iraqi ambassador here in the UN? Were they trying to leave the impression that this was temporary, or were they following the same line?*

GNEHM: I know that the Iraqi Ambassador spoke about this. I don’t have a good recollection of what they were doing at the UN however. I think the Iraqi Ambassador was simply defending the Iraqi actions using this Saddam’s line that they tried to resolve problems but the Kuwaitis were intransigent.

*Q: So what developed from all this?*

GNEHM: The president spoke to the nation. This was on August 8, two days later, at 9:00 AM. He made it really clear that he was trying to explain to the American public what he was doing. He asked the American public for support. He explained that, “Iraq without provocation had invaded a peaceful Kuwait, and that was hours after Saddam Hussein had assured that there would be no invasion. There’s no justification for brutal aggression. We seek the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. We demand restoration of the legal Kuwaiti government. We remain committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. And we will take all actions to protect the lives of American citizens abroad.”

Those four points became the basis of U.S. policy for the next seven months, and the President never wavered from them. The entire coalition and the UN Security Council resolutions were aimed at just those four objectives. These four objectives come up later as an issue. When we liberated Kuwait and the Iraqi Army had collapsed, the question arose whether our forces should continue on to Baghdad. We had always expected that

Saddam in defeat would be overthrown. That didn't happen. Bush asked our three main allies for their opinion. He did not get support from Fahd, Mubarak, or Assad, the three main Arab coalition leaders. Bush concluded that he would not move on Baghdad without Arab allied support. Bush had also made clear throughout the buildup and the war that he had never changed his objectives and he remained reluctant to do that even now. The refusal of the Arab allies to go to Baghdad sealed the decision.

In my opinion the President's leadership from the beginning --- the wisdom of going to the UN, of aiming for international support, of building a coalition, and of clearly stating the objectives of the administration and never wavering from them --- was a stunningly solid policy approach.

*Q: Was your group consulted before the speech?*

GNEHM: I was not personally asked, but the Secretary and Kimmitt debriefed me and others at the Department about the Cabinet and NSC meetings that preceded the speech. The president made it clear in those meetings where he wanted to go. So I was privy to the president's thinking.

*Q: Was there any thought at the time of maybe not going to Baghdad but destroying the Iraqi Army?*

GNEHM: Not at this point in time. That wasn't part of the discussion. The president in my opinion made clear his determination to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait no matter what it took. But we were not talking publicly in August about military action against Iraq. Troops in Saudi Arabia were being deployed to protect Saudi Arabia. Our diplomatic mission at the UN and missions globally were to get global support for the four objectives and specifically to force Saddam out of Kuwait. Over a period of time we inside the U.S. government were moving -- along with the British, Margaret Thatcher -- quickly to the conclusion that it was going to take military force to get Saddam out of Kuwait. But the Saudis did not agree or acquiesce in our changing our public rhetoric until October and early November. Then, there was a major new deployment of U.S. forces and the explanation for that increase in manpower was that sanctions and diplomatic efforts up to that point had not achieved our objectives. Saddam needed to know we were serious; we would in fact move -- and that might include military.

*Q: So this first week we were calling for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces?*

GNEHM: Yes. There was a U.N. Security Council resolution.

*Q: And we never wavered from that?*

GNEHM: We never wavered from that. They constantly agonized over what it would take to get Saddam out. Then as we got further into the year, we wondered, "what if he actually does it?" What if he withdraws from the city of Kuwait across the water to the other side of the bay facing the city and, therefore, continues to occupy half the country?

We knew we would lose international support. There was already some backlash from publics in some countries for the military buildup. Morocco joined the coalition early on and supplied troops. But there was a huge domestic backlash with demonstrations against the Moroccan government's involvement in this military coalition. Morocco stayed in; but we had to deal with that constant concern about the Arab street's continued opposition to military confrontation with Iraq. Will they allow their governments to be part of it? The Egyptians and even Assad of Syria joined the coalition and sent military forces to Saudi Arabia and ultimately fought in battles on the ground, along with several other Middle East countries.

*Q: Were the Syrians, Saudis, and Jordanians saying what they thought we should do?*

GNEHM: During this first week we became concerned about both Jordan and Yemen. President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen flew to Baghdad and met with Saddam. After his return to Sana'a, he was saying things that offered support for Saddam's explanation of why he had had to do what he did. In other words, Ali Abdullah was not condemning Saddam's action but actually defending it. King Hussein of Jordan was also a problem. He resisted our request to issue a statement condemning the invasion. And that alarmed us. In the fall, Bush actually sent me to both of those countries to try to convince them to change their rhetoric. I met with Ali Abdullah Saleh for over four hours. Recall that President remembered and I had a good relationship from my posting there. He liked me. So there was some hope that I could convince him to change his views of Saddam. Bush also sent me to see Hussein. He remembered that, when he visited Jordan as Vice President, I was control officer for his visit. He remembered that I knew the king. I was the note taker in many of the meetings that he had had with King Hussein. Bush hoped that I could convey personally his concern that King Hussein was not being supportive. Bush was very fond of King Hussein and was deeply disappointed with the position that the King was taking --- appearing apologetic for Saddam's actions. The King argued his position and ultimately did not alter his public position. This led to extraordinarily frosty relations between Bush and Hussein and therefore the U.S. and Jordan, which took some years to recover.

*Q: What were we getting from the Turks these early days?*

GNEHM: We were having intense conversations with the Turks and we were pressing them to publicly condemn the Iraqi invasion. More importantly, we asked them to close immediately the oil pipeline that traverses southern Turkey to the Mediterranean from the Iraqi oil fields. Initially, they seemed hesitant or at least they weren't responsive to the extent that we expected and hoped. But by the end of the first week in fact they did do both these things --- condemned the invasion and closed the pipeline. Turkey became a key member of the coalition. Turkey actually permitted us to use our bases in Turkey to conduct military operations, unlike in '73.

*Q: By the end of the first week, did you more or less see how the whole business would be conducted in Iraq?*

GNEHM: No, in this initial period of time the focus was on UN Security Council action and building international diplomatic pressure. The military deployments were all seen as defending the security of Saudi Arabia, with the understanding that that might be the direction that things would go. Again, the President was prescient. He knew there was no global support for military action or war in August. He knew the American public wasn't close to supporting military action. He didn't have the congressional support to go to war. Ultimately in November, the US obtained a UN Security Council resolution which gave Iraq a deadline of the 15<sup>th</sup> of January to withdraw from Kuwait. If that did not happen, the resolution authorized the use of force. We had to agree to that timeline --- no military action until after January 15 --- because many countries at the UN still hoped that the threatened use of force would get Saddam to withdraw. Bush also began to see a shift in public opinion in favor of the use of force as stories of Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait began to surface. And then Bush ultimately got the vote of Congress endorsing the use of military action. The President was patient, yet steady, in building support for the use of force.

Saddam refused to face reality. I think we all, (we being most observers and knowledgeable people), agreed that was because Saddam simply did not understand the world outside Iraq. He had only traveled a couple of times abroad. He had fled to Egypt after involvement in a failed coup. He had to flee for his life. He made a trip to Algiers at one point where he met the Shah of Iran and they signed that famous agreement over the Shatt al-Arab and Kurds. We all gave him credit for being stunningly superb in knowing how to deal with Iraqis and the internal situation in Iraq. He was ruthless; but, nevertheless, look how many years he was in power. He knew how to control Iraq; but he had no comprehension of the global scene. He didn't understand the West; he didn't understand how things operate in western society. When he saw an anti-Saddam article in a newspaper, his interpretation was that the US government put it there. That's the way he did things in Iraq.

So everything that he heard and saw he interpreted in a very narrow way based on his experiences in Iraq. The classic example was Saddam's response to the Algerian Foreign Minister. It might have been October or early November when the President of Algeria sent him to meet Saddam to urge him to withdraw from Kuwait. The Foreign Minister asked to see our ambassador in Algiers. "I'm doing this under instructions from the President, my President. He wants me to tell you in stark terms about my conversation with Saddam. We find his response incredulous and we're washing our hands of any further efforts to convince him to change his policy. We're out of there," meaning out of any further intermediary role. What he reports was that he told Saddam he had a personal message from his president. "Your world is coming down on your head. This buildup of coalition forces includes both Egyptian and Syrian. Please, for the sake of Iraq and your people, think about this and let's try to find a way out." The way out was, of course, withdrawing from Kuwait.

Saddam said to him, "I'm not worried one bit. You don't understand Arabs like I did. You don't understand what's going to happen. I'll tell you right now what's going to happen. What Schwarzkopf, or whatever he is called" (he couldn't get his name right) "orders the troops out of the trenches and across the border to attack us, the Egyptians

and the Syrians in those trenches are going to turn their guns 90 degrees and mow those Americans down right next to them. That's what's going to happen.”

The Foreign Minister said he was stunned. “I couldn't believe it. He's out of it. He's completely out of touch with the reality. When the President heard my report he said, ‘You need to tell the American Ambassador that we're not doing another effort. Saddam does not understand what's coming. He doesn't understand the world.’”

*Q: How did things stand in the United States? Was there any significant anti-war movement?*

GNEHM: At this point in time it had not coalesced. There were voices in Congress in response to the military buildup, basically saying, this is not the kind of mess we should get entangled in. They didn't object to what the president was saying, because he was talking carefully about getting Saddam out, but he wasn't saying that would occur by military action. There were objections in Congress and some public support for those views. Most of those voices used the fear factor. ‘You're going to put troops out there; they're going to be killed by chemical weapons or biological weapons. Is this really essential? Has it really been thought out?’

This line became more prevalent later in the fall when we really have large numbers of troops on the ground in the region. Winter was coming; it was cold in the desert. Reporters were out there amongst the troops. I remember one reporter interviewing the tank commander near his A1 tank. The question was something along the lines of, “Well Captain, aren't you worried? I mean aren't you really worried? This tank is a magnificent fighting machine, but you're in the desert with sand and grit. And aren't you concerned when all that gets into the carburetor, that the tank is not going to function like it's supposed to, and you're going to be in it?”

And the officer says, “Absolutely right. These are major concerns, I would say.”

The press was raising all sorts of issues that might go wrong and what was going to happen. In the end we had none of these problems.

*Q: Well, they were also playing up the Iraqi Army and its abilities.*

GNEHM: That's exactly right.

*Q: I mean it -- I recall it was almost laughable when we looked at what happened.*

GNEHM: Yes. Of course, in media, but in the minds of human beings one doesn't go back and look at all the stuff that was said before. You take what you have and you go forward. But you're absolutely right, the coalition forces fought well together. There was never an issue between Syrians and Americans and Saudis and Moroccans on the ground. The military action was beautifully executed. We haven't gotten anywhere near that since. But I just have to mention again that John Kelly never believed that we were going

to go to war during all this period. The Foreign Minister of Kuwait came with a delegation to see the president in August. I then traveled around the 21<sup>st</sup> of the month with Cheney back to the region where he visited all of the GCC states to negotiate access agreements that would supplement our deployment in Saudi Arabia. He dropped me off in Saudi Arabia where I then went to Ta'if, which was my first meeting with the Amir of Kuwait.

I had been intensely involved for almost three weeks from the second of August to the 20<sup>th</sup>. I had been in the interagency meetings at State. I had been at Defense before as the DASD for the Middle East and known Schwarzkopf in CENTCOM and Powell and others key officials. Fortunately, I had their confidence. Here was one particularly meaningful moment in the Oval Office as the meeting between the President and the Foreign Minister was ending. As I walked with the two toward the door, he stopped the delegation and he turned to me and said, "Skip, don't unpack your bags. You are going to Kuwait. That is a fact."

I repeatedly described that moment throughout the next few months when I was out in the region. I could say with conviction and a little emotion that the president punched me right here in the chest and said, 'you are going to Kuwait!' They became words of assurance that I was able to use over and over with anxious Kuwaitis and sometime doubtful officials of other countries in the region.

*Q: What about Yemen during this time? Were they following Saddam's playbook?*

GNEHM: Yes. This is Ali Abdullah Saleh. He has his own ideas of how to take advantage of the situation. Saudis are always on his back, always undermining him, always causing problems. Now they're in trouble. Saleh would try to find a way to play the situation to his advantage. And you know, Saddam was providing quite a bit of money. It just sort of arrived in suitcases and pouches. I believe Saleh was thinking: "They need to take us seriously down here." I think Ali Abdullah Saleh too miscalculated the prowess of the Iraqi military.

*Q: Well, it was impressive. It had all of us fooled.*

GNEHM: I'll give you a brief insight into this four-hour conversation that I had with him. It was me, him and Abdul Karim al-Iryani, who was a prominent figure in the government of Yemen for a long time. He was there to interpret -- though I spoke often in Arabic. I've studied enough Arabic to understand what Ali Abdullah was saying. Ali Abdullah was a little out of it, too, in grasping reality. At one point he said to me, "Skip, you know what? You guys shouldn't be so attached to all these amirs. They're just like the imams of Yemen. The imams! We got rid of them. Why did we get rid of them? Because they were living in another century! And so are the amirs in the Gulf. You know, the people don't like these kings and emirs. They've got to be gone! They're going to be gone. And you need to be with the people, not with them!"

I said, "Your Excellency, with all due respect," (I was straight with him) "You're wrong. You are absolutely wrong." I said, "Kuwaitis don't look upon their emir the same way the Yemenis looked on the Imam of Yemen, who was considered to be an autocrat still living in the early period of the 1900s and very feudal running a medieval ruling system. The kings and emirs in the Gulf are not like that."

Well, Saleh would have none of that. He said, "No, no, you don't know what you're talking about. You will see what will happen." As I have said, I got to know him quite well. He would often throw out these kinds of remarks as good talking points, but he also did it for strategic reasons. He was not going to change his view. But remember, Bush felt very strongly about these two countries. He thought he had close personal relationships with Ali Abdullah and with King Hussein and that they would value that in considering his appeal that they change their position on Saddam. In this case, other political developments in the region were more important factors for both those two leaders.

*Q: Where should we pick it up the next time?*

GNEHM: What I would like to do is to pick up with the President's meeting with the Foreign Minister of Kuwait, because in that meeting there were important assurances from the President. I'd like to look a little bit more at the UN actions. There are lots of resolutions that were passed at this time. It began to build the structure, the architecture, for what we then did. Then the Emir of Kuwait came for the UNGA in September. He came to Washington and requested Bush to help plan for the reconstruction of Kuwait after liberation. Bush's positive response to that request led the call-up of the civil affairs, army civil affairs reservists, and the establishment of a joint task force with the Kuwaitis. Their planning became a major part of my activity in the months leading up to the liberation. The U.S. government's decision to engage in the planning of the reconstruction of Kuwait stands in such stark contrast to what we did not do in 2003 in Iraq.

*INTERN: How involved was Margaret Thatcher?*

GNEHM: Not only was she here in the US at the time of the invasion but she went before the press out in Aspen with the President to state emphatically that she and the President would stand up to Saddam.

*Q: That's when she said, "Don't go wobbly on me."*

GNEHM: 'Don't go wobbly, George.' The British loved to tell us all the way through this whole period that, if it wasn't for Margaret Thatcher, he wouldn't have had a backbone. I can't say whether this actually happened or not; but the British loved to repeat it! We were in fact already talking with many governments about how to proceed. Initially in these first days the focus was on the welfare of their citizens and evacuation prospects. The Canadians were very worried about their people as were the French and

others. Our conversations did include discussion of how we might confront Saddam to get him to withdraw from Kuwait.

*INTERN: What happened to the foreigners? You said they were taken hostage back to Baghdad? Were they released, were they rescued? Were they mistreated while they were there?*

GNEHM: In that initial period, a trickle of them continued to cross the desert from Kuwait to Saudi Arabia, usually with some Kuwaitis helping them. This soon ended however.

*INTERN: What about the ones that did go to Baghdad?*

GNEHM: The ones that were taken were held and were not allowed to leave. The Iraqis tried to claim that they were taking really good care and protecting them. They did scatter some around to the various factories and plants that they thought we might target, and let us know that they'd done that. None of the efforts in this early period were successful in getting people out. It was really only in December that the Iraqis finally permitted many to leave.

*Q: Today is the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. You wanted to talk about your early meeting with the Minister of Kuwait and meeting various meetings that were forming up and how we were going to respond.*

GNEHM: Let me take a moment to revisit some things that happened in the period right after the Iraqi invasion. President Bush sent Secretary Cheney and Chairman Powell to Saudi Arabia to alert King Fahd to our concerns based on Iraqi troop movements, that Saddam might be planning to continue his aggression into Saudi Arabia. We asked and he agreed to the deployment of US military forces to the Kingdom to provide protection from Saddam. The US initially deployed air force assets that were later supplemented by other forces. I remember there was great concern in Washington that the deployment of fighters without ground forces to protect them was a significant risk since we did not know Saddam's actual intentions toward Saudi Arabia.

In the first two weeks after the invasion I was struck by a couple of different things. One was the overwhelming time spent, as well as anguish and anxieties, over the welfare and whereabouts of American citizens in both Kuwait and Iraq. There was sort of cat and mouse play between us and the Iraqis on that subject. You have two different situations of course. In Kuwait the Iraqi government had demanded that all embassies be closed by the 24<sup>th</sup> of August. At the beginning Iraq insisted that any Americans who wanted to leave Kuwait could do so, but they had to come through Baghdad. In other words, they couldn't go to the Saudi border or elsewhere. They had to go through Iraq. While that may have seemed acceptable, Americans (and the Administration) feared that if Americans departed through Iraq, they might be held hostage.

Then you have the situation in Baghdad where there was a fairly large presence of Americans. At the beginning, they didn't feel under any threat. The military actions were a ways south in Kuwait. Baghdad was basically calm. They became more and more anxious over time however. What was going on was really interesting. Joe Wilson was the US Chargé in Baghdad. Initially he argued that Americans did not want to leave and he did not want the Department to issue a travel advisory. He feared that whatever was produced in Washington was going to be alarmist, when it shouldn't be. He was talking to Nizar Hamdoon, Undersecretary in the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who in the beginning said "Don't worry. There's no problem. People can come from Kuwait. Just go on and we'll work it out." Joe Wilson reminded Nizar that there was a seven-day requirement between when you apply to leave and when you get your pass to leave. Nizar said at the beginning, "Don't worry, we'll fix that," insinuating that they'd waive it. Yet by the time we got another week or so into the crisis, the Government of Iraq had changed things entirely. The Americans had become detainees, the word that we begin to use. The Iraqis still said wives and children could leave but not men. Then Joe has one conversation with Nizar Hamdoon where Nizar actually lays out a completely new and more hostile attitude toward Americans in Iraq.

What's interesting is this is the first time an Iraqi official talked to Joe, or to anyone else for that matter, on political issues. Joe Wilson made a call for me on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August and said, "I got the clear impression from Nizar Hamdoon today that the foreigners currently in Baghdad are here for the duration of crisis." He used the word "restrictees." Joe said, "There would be no differentiation, according to Nizar, between diplomats and non-diplomats." Joe made the demarche about defensive measures that we would take in the area against Iraqis, if Iraqi forces threatened us. The legal advisor of the Foreign Ministry summoned Joe later in the day to say that the United States should not touch Kuwaiti assets because they were now Iraqi assets.

What we were seeing was simply the slow progression of Iraqi thinking. Obviously, Baghdad had not thought through all the implications of its military aggression. It became fairly clear that Saddam Hussein was at the root of these decisions. Nizar was moderate and he understood Washington and western countries well. He mentioned every now and then, "I took your demarche up to the top," clearly implying to Saddam. There were all sorts of rumors and false reports. One day news spread that the Iraqis had opened the border with Saudi Arabia, and cavalcade of 40 vehicles went across the desert from Kuwait to the border only to discover it wasn't true. They were turned back. At another point the Iraqis agreed for a convoy to go to the Turkish border from Baghdad with dependents of foreigners. When the convoy got to the border, the Iraqis took three 18-year-old boys out of the vehicles, saying they were adults. They could not leave because they did not fit the description of dependent children. They were children, of course. Rumors swept Kuwait that the Iraqis were sweeping the city looking for westerners, and Americans in particular. It turned out to be true. People began to hide.

A couple of American contractors actually snuck across the desert. They described the situation inside the Kuwait, especially the fear in the western community. What happened was very interesting. Nat Howell, our ambassador in Kuwait, had conversations with

other diplomats, all of whom faced similar concerns for their citizens. Nat actually met with the former Iraqi ambassador to Kuwait, who was still there. The Ambassador claimed that everything will be all right, but made clear that they were not leaving Kuwait. Nat made it equally clear that we do not make compromises on these sort of things. I just mention this welfare-whereabouts issue as a significant issue during these early days after the invasion.

The other thing that I recall was that the position of Jordan and Yemen became more and more a topic of various meetings in Washington. King Hussein's position was especially upsetting to the President as they had a close relationship previously. King Hussein actually did come in this period of time to see the President, but the conversation was not satisfactory. The King had opposed resort to military action arguing that he could convince Saddam to withdraw. He tried to convince the President that he was not behind what Saddam did and he shouldn't be accused of supporting Saddam. In fact, King Hussein did end up supporting Saddam by not being stringent on sanctions and by not publicly condemning the invasion, as most other governments in the region did. President Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen was even worse.

*Q: Were you picking up at all the theme at this juncture about Jordan and Iraq, that the people of Jordan were apparently rather solidly behind the Iraqi invasion, they just didn't like the Kuwaitis. I've interviewed our ambassador to Jordan at the time.*

GNEHM: Roger Harrison?

*Q: Yeah. And he made the point that if King Hussein had supported our opposition to Iraq that he could very easily be deposed. He also made the point that we were over pressing Jordan to show signs of agreement when Jordan was a major player in the game, and we needed Jordan for a whole series of things, to bring peace to the Middle East. Did that arise during this early period with you?*

GNEHM: Yes, it certainly did. But the Washington view was very much focused at this moment in time on our interest in the Persian Gulf and not too sympathetic about King Hussein's problems. We were trying to get broad support throughout the region and have regional leaders speak out against what Saddam had done. King Hussein wouldn't do that. There was definitely a clear understanding in Washington that the population of Jordan was not supportive of our deployments or our policies. In fact, the population was supportive of Saddam Hussein. There was little love for Kuwait. So there might well have been a backlash had the King come out supporting US actions, but this would not have been the first time that King Hussein would have done things that were not popular in the country. Nor would it have been the first time that he had gotten away with it. Personally, I don't think he was threatened, seriously threatened. But he believed -- much like April Glaspie -- that he could intervene with Saddam in such a way to broker some reconciliation and perhaps withdrawal and political compromises that would resolve the crisis. By the way at this point, given our perception of Saddam's threat to the region, that is exactly what we didn't want to happen.

In fact, this matter comes up in a number of conversations that we had with both Kuwaitis and Saudis. Both those governments were concerned that the good intentions of others would lead to some compromise proposal that would look good but be totally unacceptable to each. There were initiatives from Algeria, the PLO, and at the Arab League --- initiatives that would recognize some of Saddam's demands. The Saudis, the Kuwaitis, and others said "Absolutely no compromise, total withdrawal." President Bush said repeatedly, "You know. I said what I said and I meant it. They have to withdraw completely."

Going back to Nizar and Joe: What Nizar presented on behalf of his government to the United States were absurdities. He offered five possible courses of actions. One was that the UN pass a resolution guaranteeing that the United States would withdraw entirely all of its forces from the Middle East region. The second one was that, if there couldn't be a UN Security Council resolution, then President Bush himself would guarantee in writing in a letter to Saddam Hussein that we would withdraw our forces from the region. I will discuss them further later.

These are absurdities. Where did they think we were coming from? But this is Saddam. King Fahd, when he saw Cheney, which I'll get into when we get to that point, just went on and on about this crazy man, Saddam Hussein, and the inexplicable things he was doing.

The other issue that you asked me about this before was the agreement that the Saudis wanted about our military deployment in Saudi Arabia. The drafts that they presented and the counter-drafts that Chas Freeman presented, just weren't meeting with approval by either side. There was rising frustration and exasperation about that.

*Q: Were there any particular points that were way apart?*

GNEHM: Yes, like who's going to be in charge? The Saudis wanted it clear in any agreement which they presumed would become public that they and their country were in charge of everything that's going on. We were not about to give a Saudi general or a Saudi minister any authority over our forces. All would be under American command. There was a suggestion to establish a joint committee that would be the forum for resolving any differences. At one point in the negotiations the Saudis just said, "Why do we have to have such a profile? We're going to resolve these things between us privately. We don't need a committee that meets. Then we have to argue about co-chairing and everything else." Chas Freeman was the person on the American side who had the sense and wits to resolve this impasse.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of August, Joe met with Hamdoon. Hamdoon asked our help in rounding up the Americans in Kuwait so they could be safe. Joe said, "Under instructions I told him where he could go if he thought we were going to round up Americans and hand them over to Iraq."

But then Nizar went on to say, “Look, here is what you need to know to understand where we are politically.” “We want a UN Security Council guarantee that the U.S. will pull forces out of the region. We want a UN Security Council guarantee of peace and security in the region, in accord with international principles, including the withdrawal of U.S. forces. If one and two are implemented, foreigners will be allowed to leave Iraq.” So he had now linked release of foreigners to specific political actions. In other words, the foreigners were hostages. “If one or two are not obtainable, it would be sufficient to us if Bush pledges in a written letter to Saddam Hussein that we would withdraw American and Arab forces from Arab lands, respect international law, and terminate the blockade of Iraq. And finally, let’s be clear, Kuwait is to be left to the Arabs to decide its fate.”

So these were the points that Joe simply rejected and said, “I should repeat the three points the president has made. The demands are, you know, your complete and total withdrawal from Kuwait, the restoration of the legitimate government and the protection of American citizens.”

I don't think I covered the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister's visit to Washington.

*Q: At the end you emphasized contact with the Kuwaitis, the foreign minister, meeting various ministers of the area.*

GNEHM: Right. The Foreign Minister, who was also Deputy Prime Minister and is the current Amir, Sheikh Sabah Jaber al-Sabah, did come to Washington. He met the President on the 14<sup>th</sup> of August. He met Secretary Cheney the following day on the 15<sup>th</sup>. In the meeting with the President the Foreign Minister started by saying, “We are very thankful and grateful for the American people for standing with us.” He went on to say Kuwait was ready to help in any way possible. The President indicated his complete and total support for getting Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait and restoring the rightful rulers in Kuwait, repeating at the private meeting what he said in public. The Foreign Minister spent some time describing the conditions inside Kuwait, especially concern about the way Kuwaitis were being treated by Iraqis. He said that all the officials, including the Amir and Crown Prince, managed to escape, which we knew from the Saudis. He also said that no Kuwaitis in the country had cooperated with Iraqis--contrary to Iraqi propaganda, and that there was now resistance inside the country. President Bush expressed concern for the Kuwaiti people, their relatives, and all inside Kuwait. He noted that we had a principle here --- that aggression can't go unpunished. That means a free Kuwait with Iraqis out of Kuwait. Then he brought up something that people often ask about. “I'd like the Iraqis to overthrow Saddam, but I think this is wishful thinking,” is what the President said. The Foreign Minister had only one request as I recall. He said that the A4s that had been flown out of Kuwait to Saudi Arabia needed spare parts and needed weapons. He asked if the United States could provide that. The next day at a meeting with Cheney, he raised that request again and that set in motion fast action by DSAA, which is the organization in Defense at the time that handled arms sales. DSAA moved quickly to authorize the expedited provision of spare parts and to authorize the contractor relationship that we already had inside Kuwait to operate now in Saudi Arabia. We did this so that the Kuwaiti-owned American planes, not the Mirages, but the

American produced planes could get back up in the air. In fact the Kuwaiti Air Force flew on the first day of the bombing of Iraq. There were Kuwaiti planes in the air with U.S. Forces.

The Foreign Minister with Cheney was very clear about the danger of Saddam to the whole region. He was convinced and reinforced the President and Cheney's view that Saddam's goal was to go far beyond Kuwait into Saudi Arabia and even further. I thought it was interesting that he mentioned King Hussein and the fact that his grandfather had been the Sharif of the holy places of Mecca and Medina until his family was defeated by the al-Sauds of Arabia. He was convinced that this was in King Hussein's mind and part of his motivation to support Saddam Hussein. The unspoken inference was that King Hussein wanted to regain control of the Hejaz (Mecca and Medina) and that there was some kind of deal between the King and Saddam to divide Saudi Arabia with Iraq getting the eastern province and Jordan getting back the Hejaz.

The Foreign Minister couldn't explain Yemen's stance and asked Cheney if he had any idea why Ali Abdullah Saleh was so hard over in support of Saddam Hussein. The Secretary said we were trying to figure it out --- Saleh's motives as well. One view was that Saddam had provided large sums of money to Saleh.

Then Secretary described US military actions in response to the invasion. "We've made a major commitment and we have substantial forces there already. We have more in route. The build-up will go on in the weeks ahead." The Secretary asked the Foreign Minister about Iran and if they had any conversations or connections with Iran. Sheikh Sabah said yes. He had talked to Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati. Velayati told him about the letter from Saddam Hussein to Iran, that all disputes between their two countries could be reconciled and resolved. In fact they were. Saddam accepted *all* of the things that he'd repudiated when he launched his forces against Iran in 1980. (By way of background in Algiers in '75 Saddam agreed to Iran's sovereignty over half of the Shatt al-Arab, the waterway that runs between Iraq and Iran. He repudiated that agreement at the start of the Iraq Iran War and now he reversed himself yet again to insure Iran would not enter the current conflict against him.)

Again, the conversation between Sheikh Sabah and Cheney went on. Sheikh Sabah was incredulous at Saddam's actions. "How can he give up territory after losing all those Iraqis during the war? How can the people justify this leader that now just said, 'Never mind?' Saddam has such control. It's really doubtful that people would rise up against him." Sabah went on to say that Velayati said that Iran would do whatever they could to help Kuwait. All they needed to know was what the Kuwaitis wanted them to do. Sabah said he told the Foreign Minister that Kuwait needed Iran to support Kuwait at the UN and in diplomatic circles around the world. The Sheikh Sabah said he was traveling on to the UK, France, Russia, and China and asked what we needed from them.

Cheney said, "Well, we need to maintain a worldwide coalition. That's very important. We need all of them stay tight with us. Push the boycott because some of these countries are going to want to continue to supply military spare parts and make other sales. We

don't want that. That will be particularly true with the Soviets and the Chinese. So be careful. Do anything you can to buck up their resolve to stay behind the UN Security Council resolutions."

There were meetings later in the day with Defense Department that helped put the A4 program back on track and that was good. I think I mentioned to you earlier that Sheikh Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington, called me the second day after the invasion. He'd gone to the bank to try to get money to pay for embassy expenses. The bank had refused and told him, "Your accounts are frozen." Saud was very upset and could not even pay his staff. But his bigger anger was aimed at Treasury noting that the block on the accounts was to stop Saddam from accessing Kuwait funds --- not to block the Kuwaiti Government from its own money.

I had to go to Treasury Department, to OFAC, and say, "Wait a minute, the hold was on not the government of Kuwait. It was on everybody else." That was not the only problem like this.

When Foreign Minister Sabah got to the airport that night to leave the country, customs impounded the airplane under the regulations that said any Kuwaiti assets were to be seized and held so that the Iraqis couldn't get them. We had to find the right person in Treasury and customs to get the plane released so that the Foreign Minister could leave the country!

In situations like we were facing some things just happen. You have to keep your sense of humor; you can only chuckle. I'm not sure the Foreign Minister was chuckling.

Again, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, just before Cheney's trip back to the Gulf, officials at the Defense Department were working to try and come up with language that Chas Freeman could present to the Saudis for the agreement on our force deployment. They worried about the language issues not being resolved before Cheney got there and that the unresolved language would undermine reaching an accord on other matters. It wasn't in fact, a problem in his meeting with King Fahd.

David Pierce was assigned to Kuwait as the political officer but was in the United States on the home leave at the time of the invasion. It was at this point that David came into my life. He was assigned to work with me and he went out to Riyadh at this time. He ended up being with me in Ta'if and attending meetings in Jeddah with the Kuwaitis. It's the beginning of my putting together a team to go into Kuwait.

The President asked Secretary Cheney to go back to the Gulf to solidify agreements between the regional states and the US for the deployment of US forces. The immediate question was who would go with Cheney from State. The Near East Bureau asked that I go on the trip as its representative. The Political Military Bureau wanted their Assistant Secretary on the plane as well. In the end we were both accepted by Defense. Before I went John Kelly, the NEA Assistant Secretary, wanted to make sure that I understood my instructions. He told me to stay as far away from the press as possible. He called Chas

Freeman to discuss what my role was going to be and what it wasn't going to be to reassure Chas that I wasn't coming in to take over any of the issues between us and the Saudis. I was going purely to be the U.S. liaison with the Kuwaiti government.

Jumping ahead. After visiting the other four GCC states, we returned to Saudi Arabia and Cheney met gain with Fahd. Chas pulls me aside before Cheney leaves to make absolutely clear that there is only one U.S. ambassador in Saudi Arabia, and that's him. I said, "Chas, you're absolutely right. I have no interest in being involved with the Saudis, other than checking out through the airport security." We never had a problem. Chas and I never had an issue. In fact, we became allies during the next year as we both worked issues with Washington and the U.S. military.

Secretary Baker spoke with me just before I left with Chaney. "You've got to find out when you get out there what's going on with the Kuwaitis. How are they and where are they organized? How are we going to deal with them? Get them acting like a government, especially in outreach to the public. They need to be out in front; they need to heighten their profile. We have security assistance issues which we need to work on, covert action, jamming the Iraqis." The words the Secretary used were harsh but clear. "Skip, I want you to go out there and tell the Amir, 'Buck up. It's time to go out on TV, acted like an Amir, mobilize your people, inspire them, and move out.'" Even I say that we were frustrated that in those first few weeks with the Kuwaiti government. It seemed absent. The Saudis were there; the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington was active; but the Kuwaiti government just absent.

*Q: Was all this talking that was going on while the military forces began to move?*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: So in a way we were basically making a major move.*

GNEHM: It was a major move and I'll get into exactly what we were doing at this time. My instructions, which I will talk about when I discuss my meeting with the Amir, had me a little bit anxious. I was anxious because what they were asking me to do was to go and talk to an Amir—who had been Amir, even if he had been evicted from the country -- for a very long time. He was much older than me. I know the culture and patriarchal society. How was I going to phrase my instructions in a way that would achieve what Washington really wanted? This was my dilemma as I flew around the region with Cheney. Cheney first went to Tabuk and to Dhahran, where he met with U.S. forces that were already there. He was Secretary of Defense and such a visit was appropriate. He pumped them up and pledged to back them. He met with King Fahd and then we went on to the other Gulf countries. We visited Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. As we were flying out of Saudi Arabia, King Fahd called Cheney on the airplane and he said, "I have sent Prince Salman," (now King of Saudi Arabia but then Mayor of Riyadh and a senior member of the family) "to see the Amir of Qatar with the message that Qatar has to be a part of all this."

Now, why was that necessary? Because even then Qatar had kind of set itself a bit aside and there were always these little frictions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia over what I would call petulant issues. I think the Qataris have an inferiority complex and often try to poke others in the eye just to attract attention. With the US, however, the big issue was Stinger missiles. The Qataris were claiming that they had Stinger missiles. Why? Because we had agreed finally to sell Stingers to Bahrain but had refused a sale to Qatar. The Qataris were in a big dispute with Bahrain over the ownership of some small islands (the Hawar Islands) located just off the coast of Qatar. So now they claimed they had them. What we learned from informed sources was that one Stinger missile, probably from Afghanistan, had washed up on the shore in a small boat. We demanded that they give it back to us but they refused. They were pretending for propaganda they had lots of them even though we knew they only had one. In any case, Congress passed a law that said we could not deal with Qatar until they returned this Stinger. I mention this ‘Stinger issue’ as it now surfaces as Cheney is flying around the Gulf. Clearly we face a critical situation in the Gulf and need the cooperation of all the states as we deploy forces. King Fahd’s initiative in sending Prince Salman to Qatar was significant and Fahd called Cheney on the plane to say that the Amir of Qatar has agreed to receive Cheney and it is important that he go there. Fahd said Cheney would get a positive response to his request for cooperation.

After the phone call Cheney called me, the PM Assistant Secretary and his advisors from Defense into the part of the plane where we could sit together. He asked, “So what should I do?” The PM assistant secretary said to him, “You can’t go there. There’s a law that prohibits all activity with the Qatar and you will be violating that law. You can’t do it.”

And so he turns to me, “So what do you say, Skip?” I said, “Sir, as far as I’m concerned we have a completely new situation in the region. We’re at war, or at least headed that direction, and we need to put together all the assets we can. And if the King of Saudi Arabia has set this up and wants you to go to Doha, you should go.”

The PM Assistant Secretary turned to me and said, “That is outrageous that you would counsel him to violate the law. That is absolutely inexcusable.” Turning back to Cheney, he added “You will create enormous problems with the Congress if you go there.”

Cheney turned to him and said, “I will make the decision, not you or Skip. I have been in Congress. I’m not worried about congressional reaction. I’ll take care of Congress and we are going to Qatar.”

I thought to myself, “Yes sir, that’s right.” And Cheney did meet with the Amir of Qatar on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, as I recall. The Amir of Qatar and the Crown Prince were together. They called Saddam Hussein a beast, described his actions as barbaric, and said, “I think he’s gone mad perhaps.” Cheney said that Saddam simply wanted to control the oil, and he’s just an egomaniac and a liar to his people. And then Cheney asked for Qatar agreement for the deployment of combat aircraft “for use in whatever military ops should prove necessary.” The Amir agreed and Cheney said he would send a team to work out

the details. Take note that even as early as August Cheney was projecting the possibility of use of military force.

The Crown Prince asked for arms. He said if we were going to be a part of the operation, we need to be armed in a way to be an effective member of the coalition. Cheney responded, "My mission is to work with friends to strengthen and enhance their defense capabilities. I will see what I can do to address the request and we'll send you an expert to work on it." The Amir took that as a 'yes,' which it was, without being more explicit. That's as far as Cheney could probably go at that point.

The Amir said, "I'm very grateful for your very prompt response and we look forward to your team coming. I assure you that this cooperation is not just from us, but from our people as well. Assure the president that we are very, very keen to be close and cooperative."

*Q: Well, was there any doubt that we wouldn't use military force if things, if the Iraqis didn't leave?*

GNEHM: There was no question in the mind of the President or with Cheney and Baker and that close inner circle of advisors that we would use military force if Saddam did not withdraw from Kuwait. Publicly and in the region, however, we were being very careful because of the Saudi position. The Saudis, if you remember, had agreed to the deployment of U.S. forces on their territory to defend their kingdom, but not for military attack on Iraq. That position would evolve over time.

*Q: Wasn't that implicit in all this?*

GNEHM: It was universally agreed that Saddam had to withdraw Iraqi forces from Kuwait; but, at this point in time, there wasn't global support for use of military force --- not at the UN, not with the American public, and not in Congress. There was support for economic and political sanctions, for the policy the president enunciated. Implicit that we would use force if necessary, you're absolutely right. But again, not everyone understood that early on. And John Kelly, if you remember, told me on more than one occasion that I was an idiot if I thought we were going to go to war over that dinky little country. This was as late as November when we had 100,000 plus troops. I think perhaps we were moving towards 500,000 in the region by then. But to repeat, for the sake of the Saudis we were being very careful in the way we described out military deployment.

During Cheney's swing through the Persian Gulf, he also met with the Amir of Bahrain and the Sultan of Oman. In both places he received full agreement to close cooperation with the US in confronting Saddam's aggression, including the use of military facilities in their countries.

Cheney returned to Riyadh to meet King Fahd. He gave a report on the successes that he'd had in those regional states, and, with regards specifically to Qatar, thanked the king

for the initiatives he'd taken to make that happen. Fahd spent a considerable time talking about Saddam Hussein. What struck me was how incredulous Fahd was about Saddam. Fahd couldn't understand --- explain this personality. He talked about how close he and Saddam were --- how many times they had talked during the Iran-Iraq War. He talked about all the support he gave Saddam. He talked about the non-aggression pact that they had signed with Iraq not so very long before the invasion. He said, "And what's going on? You know, is he crazy? What's happened to him?" Fahd just kept coming back to this point as the conversation moved through other topics. So he really had no explanation. At one point he said, "Maybe Saddam wants to recreate the Abbasid Empire. Maybe that's what he's thinking in his head. It's just these grandiose sort of ideas." And then he mentioned this incredible capitulation to Iran. "*How* could he do this, you know? How, after all the Iraqi lives he lost, could he just give up everything that he had gained?"

*Q: What was the capitulation?*

GNEHM: Iraq withdrew from any territory that Iran had claimed; but most importantly, Saddam gave up sovereignty to half of the Shatt al-Arab, the estuary that lies between Iraq and Iran. Iraq historically claimed sovereignty over the whole waterway --- to the low water mark on the Iranian side of the estuary. In Algiers in 1975 Saddam agreed to a boundary midpoint, actually in the river channel. It was a major concession that Saddam repudiated when he launched the war with Iran in 1980. Now he reversed himself again in order to keep Iran from siding with the coalition against his invasion of Kuwait. Then there was the issue of the Kurds. In the past Iran had supported Kurdish groups that were confronting Baghdad. King Fahd said he heard rumors about unrest in Iraq and he hoped they were true. Cheney had said that maybe the Iraqi military would overthrow Saddam, and Fahd said, "I've heard rumors about that and I hope for the same end, but I don't think it'll happen either. Crazy what Saddam is doing. I heard he hung his stooge in Kuwait."

Now, what was that? Within a day or two of the invasion Saddam set up a puppet government in Kuwait. As I recall, only one person was identified. It seems to have come to naught. The rumor was that Saddam hung this individual because he learned that the guy was actually trying to flee Kuwait so that he could get out and tell everybody that he'd been forced to do this and he didn't agree with it. So according to the rumor Saddam had hung him. We don't know whether that ever really happened or not; but again, these were the kinds stories that were making the rounds at that time.

King Fahd continued, "We must find quick and decisive solutions to this problem. We've got to get the UN Security Council resolutions to send a UN force into Kuwait." This was from a private conversation on the 20<sup>th</sup> of August. So the King did envision the need to go in militarily, but that's not the public line, right? I mention that only because even at this early date Fahd is on board and sees the likelihood of having to use armed forces to reverse the Iraqi invasion.

He was very grateful for and appreciative of Bush for the full support that Bush was giving Saudi Arabia and the region. He expressed concern that "Even if Saddam

withdraws from Kuwait, we can't be sure he won't do it again, but I don't believe he'll withdraw. He plans to stay there permanently." So again, in Fahd's mind he's concerned about Iraq in the bigger picture.

*Q: Well, was there concern on your part and maybe others around you that Saddam might pull something like a withdrawal, but then sit in there with a major army on the borders of Kuwait and we would have a hard time keeping our troops interested or supported in the middle of the summer of Saudi Arabia. In other words, it'd be very, very difficult.*

GNEHM: Yes. It was a concern even in August and it permeated our thinking right up to and including after we had started that long number of weeks of pounding Iraq from the air. As I mentioned, Mubarak and Assad, who were contributing troops, did not want to fight if they didn't have to. That's reasonable. Yet as we got more and more of our troops deployed, we became more and more anxious about Saddam doing something like that. It could have been a number of different things. It could have been withdrawing from Kuwait City across the water to the ridge on the other side of the harbor. It could have been withdrawal a little bit further back, but still occupying the northern oil fields. In any of those scenarios, it would not have been what the President had called for, which was total complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. We would then be in the position of arguing that we still had to go in militarily if he didn't withdraw completely, but we might not have the global international support at the UN or a willingness of our troop contributing allies to stay with us. They might argue, "Well, now wait, wait, he's now compromising. We just have to keep the pressure on him. We just have to let the sanctions work and he'll withdraw the rest of the way."

And again, you had Fahd saying, "I don't think he'll ever withdraw voluntarily." We would have seen a partial withdrawal as a stunt. But we had a big asset working against this 'clever' scenario of partial withdrawal and that was a Saddam Hussein who didn't have the competency to understand the global anger confronting him.

*Q: Did we have any good intelligence that you were seeing about what was going on around Saddam Hussein?*

GNEHM: The only glimpse we got at all were some of the conversations that Joe had with people in Baghdad. It was clear that the senior levels -- but in reality there was only one 'senior level' in the country, that's Saddam -- were becoming more and more rigid about things. I think I mentioned a conversation that our Ambassador in Algiers had with the Algerian foreign minister after he came back from Baghdad. Saddam had rebuffed his plea to withdraw from Kuwait and avoid a terrible defeat saying, "No, no, no, no. You don't understand. The Egyptians and Syrians, when they're ordered out of the trenches to attack the Iraqi forces, will turn their guns left and right and mow down the Americans."

The Foreign Minister was incredulous. "This is ridiculous. What is he thinking? What possesses him to think like that? He doesn't understand Mubarak's anger toward him; he

doesn't understand Assad's desire to see him completely eliminated given the friction between Syria and Iraq. This is unreal."

I think that was the case. I think Saddam was the sole decision maker. And again, what was really clear during these early days was that there didn't appear to have been well thought out sequencing of events on the Iraqi side. It was more of, "OK, we do this and that leads to this and then we're going to do that and whatever else." Take the announcement of a puppet government. Clearly he thought (perhaps impulsively) that such a government would gain some international support. He set up the puppet government but he doesn't really want a puppet government. He wants to annex Kuwait. So he abandoned a puppet government and announced that Kuwait was Iraq's 19<sup>th</sup> province, in other words annexation. I think we overestimated Saddam's craftiness. We gave him too much credit for serious calculations and forethought. We continued to do so throughout the Clinton administration. I would say that we overestimated Saddam and, therefore, the Government of Iraq's ability to organize, think through, and formulate a coherent plan of action. We just made an assumption that because he had a huge military and ran an autocratic state, everything was being run in a very orderly, clear way down a road in a certain direction. So people would ask questions, "Why would they loot Kuwait when took they took it over if they wanted to have Kuwait as their port, as they claimed?" The answer is that there was no discipline and no thought about that at that time. If you wanted Kuwait as the port, which he said he needed for his country, you wouldn't have wanted to loot it. Some things are only explicable if you realize the Iraqis were not that organized.

When we got back to Riyadh, I dropped off the plane. Cheney returned to Washington, and I went to Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, to meet with the Kuwaiti government in exile. When the Amir, Crown Prince and other officials fled Kuwait in the first day of the invasion, they left in whatever vehicles that were available --- mainly their personal cars. They headed out across the desert or down the coast road, sometimes actually passing through Iraqi checkpoints. The Iraqis at this point in time did not know who they were looking for. Again, this exemplifies my point that the invasion was not carefully thought out. I guess they thought they would capture the Amir in his palace. They almost did.

Well, the Saudis now had a large number of the ruling family, Sabahs and the entire Government of Kuwait in their territory. They also had a huge number of Kuwaiti military that had fled into the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. I already mentioned that pilots had flown most of the Kuwaiti air force fighters to Saudi Arabia as well. The immediate issue was where to house the Kuwaiti Government. The decision was to move them to Ta'if in western Saudi Arabia. I am not a privy to what motive the Saudis had for housing the Kuwaiti Government there, but my conjecture has always been that the Saudis wanted to move the Amir and the government out of the eastern province and away from the warzone. Partly so they wouldn't be a target for Iraqi action; but secondly, there was probably a concern about the Kuwaiti cross-border activity that might lead to Iraqi retributions. So they moved them to Ta'if. Ta'if is a *long way* from Kuwait, right? It's entirely across the whole country. It's a summer resort city. The Saudis put them up in the Sheraton Hotel and they gave them another nearby hotel complex with villas for

families. I came and went many times to the hotel during these fall months. It was at times frustrating or exasperating working with the Kuwaitis for a number of different reasons, which I'll explain.

But one day on one of my trips in, I came over the ridge where you could look out across the valley to see the hotel. The hotel was actually built on the top of a little hill and it was a tall building. At that moment when I came over the hill, the sun was shining, but there was this fog cloud that covered the top five floors of the hotel. And I thought, "Isn't that a picture of what I'm having to deal with?" The government is there at this hotel on a hill and it is fog-bound. This may sound particularly harsh or critical. I don't mean it so. The Kuwaitis were without their country, trying to organize the government in exile, and, in truth, located in a rather isolated part of the Kingdom.

So I went to Ta'if with my instructions to see the Amir. This was not the first time that I had met him. I met him in February when I visited Kuwait with John Kelly. But again, as I told you, I was anxious about how I was to handle this initial meeting.

The arrival was worth noting. When my car pulled up to the front door of the hotel, all of the plaza in front of the hotel and both sides of the driveway were full of Kuwaitis in their white thoub--a massive number, all looking at my car. When I got out of the car the young Kuwaiti who stepped up to greet me was Sheikh Salem Abdullah al-Sabah, who is currently the Kuwaiti Ambassador in the United States. That was the first time that I met him and we've been very close friends ever since. I entered the lobby. The hotel lobby is one that is open all the way to the top of the hotel and every floor had a balcony. When I looked up, I saw heads and faces looking down on me from every single balcony on every single floor. It was a momentous moment and not just for me. It was quite a moment for them because here was the representative—the ambassador to be-- of President Bush, who had pledged to liberate their country. What was he coming to say? What was going to happen? I was told that I would be meeting later that evening with the Amir and his Minister of Court Sheikh Nasser Mohammed Al-Sabah—who later becomes prime minister. Sheikh Nasser asked to see me and he said, "You need to understand, the Amir has been hurt terribly by this."

I said, "I'm sure that's the case."

He continued, "I just want you to be gentle; I mean, be understanding." He added, "Also, the Amir wants just to be one-on-one, but I'll be there as the interpreter translator." So I got ushered in. I was in a chair facing the emir. Sheikh Nasser Mohammed was in a chair off to the right, not next to the Amir. I spoke in the meeting half in English and half in Arabic. On key points, I made sure that I spoke in English so the message was clear; but, when I wanted to emphasize something, I repeated myself it in Arabic. I said to him, again given the concern I mentioned earlier, "Your Highness, I understand the difficulties that you have been through. I feel your pain. I just want you to know that. But I need to be very frank with you and straightforward because this is such an important moment in time for you and your country and for me and my country." He was very, very

encouraging. He said, "You must be straight forward." Again I said, "I just, ask you not to take offense. If I say something that's offensive, forgive me."

"No, no," he said, "I won't do that."

This exchange set the tone for the meeting. So the first message, I said to him, "The most important message that I bring from the President is that the President is determined to achieve the objectives that he set, which is to deter the aggression, to get the total withdrawal of Iraqi forces into Kuwait and to restore you and your legitimate government to the country. The President never waivers on this. The president asked me to explain to you that he keeps getting asked questions by reporters. What if this or that happens? Would you really do what you keep saying you will do? The President said I'm refusing to do these 'what if' questions because what they're trying to do is to get me to compromise or to look like I'm waffling on these three major points. So please explain this to the Amir," and I was saying this to him, "He wanted me to tell you not to be concerned when he refuses to answer these questions."

One such question is "Well, you will use force to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait, won't you?" The President responds, "I'm just not going to go there at this point. You know, I'm not going to answer these kinds of questions." It's not because he doesn't know where he's going. It's that he just doesn't want to have people writing op-ed pieces or trying to question his intentions. I related the President's message to reassure the Amir of the President's steadfast intent to achieve the three objectives that he had defined.

Amir Jaber said to me that the President had called him and had said the very same things that I had said and that he had no doubts whatsoever about the President's commitment and what he intended to do. He was deeply appreciative and grateful, deeply moved by the support of the American people, and deeply hurt about Saddam's actions. He then gave me a review of how much he had done to have a good relationship with Iraq. He said, "I used to call Saddam Hussein twice or three times a day during the Iran-Iraq War. How are things going? Do you need anything special?" The Amir said, "I made my port completely open to bring in material for Saddam, and that led us to be attacked by the Iranians. I didn't mind because it was our duty. I went to Iraq and I was given the highest decoration. Saddam spoke in public on Iraqi television about how we were brothers, you know, and then he just went back on everything he had said and crushed us."

The Amir became animated at some points and I got him to chuckle at another point; but generally he was downcast, as I had been warned. I then introduced the topics that I knew were a little sensitive. I told him that the President with his stated commitment was really vulnerable with the American public, the American Congress, and internationally. He desperately needed, as I put it, Kuwait and you in particular to be out there with a very high profile, inspiring your people, giving leadership, and making it clear that you are the Amir of Kuwait and you are the legitimate government. It was important to counter the propaganda from Saddam and others like Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen. And he agreed. He said this was important. Sheikh Nasser Mohammed had said to me before the meeting that I needed to build up the Amir's morale. So I went through the conversations

that Cheney had had with Fahd, with the Amir of Qatar, and other Gulf leaders. I reported all that they said about him and Kuwait and their commitment and determination and the promises they made us to be part of coalition to help liberate the country. As I talked, I could see that he actually was, in fact, encouraged from hearing about those things. He said he was really grateful, deeply, deeply appreciative for what King Fahd was doing. He noted that the King was his host as well. The Amir then asked me when we would move against Saddam Hussein. He said, "I hope it's soon."

I used Cheney's response noting that he had been asked that same question by others during his Gulf meetings. Here's how Cheney had answered the question and here's what I used with the Amir. I said, "The Secretary of Defense has said to everyone, 'I have been ordered by the president to deploy sufficient troops to achieve our objectives. I am doing just that. Forces are coming in at a rapid rate, but they are not yet at the levels recommended by my military commanders. So I will continue to do what we are doing and we will be doing that rapidly.'" Cheney did not give any leaders a timeframe nor did I with the Amir. In my assessment that I reported after this meeting, I noted that the Kuwaitis all thought liberation was going to come in a matter of days.

Here is but one example. As I went into the lobby with Sheikh Salem on my arrival, another member of the family comes running over to me, puts his arms around me, kisses me on both cheeks and said, "Oh, Mr. Ambassador, we're so glad, we're so glad you're here. You know, you've got to get us back, get us back by the first of September. I am head of the Civil Aviation Authority and we are hosting the international ICAO meeting in Kuwait in two weeks! I need to get back and get ready!" In my inner thoughts I'm thinking 'you've got to be kidding.' I knew how many Iraqi troops were in Kuwait. I knew how long it was going to take to mobilize sufficient force --- not to mention diplomatic support --- to be ready to initiate military action. It was ridiculous to expect to be going back to Kuwait in days! Yet it was an important revelation to me that that is exactly what most Kuwaitis thought as August unfolded. I included this point in my assessment back to the Department. I think, as a result of my meeting with the Amir and my informal conversations with other Kuwaitis, they understood it was going to take time to get the military up to the levels needed to take military action. When they spoke of weeks, I spoke of months; but no one in Ta'if thought it would not occur until 1991! That's where the mindsets were at the time.

Despite the fact that I was asked to tell his government to stand up, I raised it in a delicate way. I told the Amir that we needed ministries, we needed ministers, and we needed to know with whom we had to work with on economic issues, financial issues, intelligence issues, etc. I said to the emir in very gentle terms, "You know, Your Highness, this is really your business. I'm getting into your government; but we need you to reconstitute the government as quickly as possible, particularly the key ministries such as defense, foreign affairs, and finance."

The Amir said, "I already reached that conclusion. The Crown Prince, who is the Prime Minister, will arrive tomorrow and my first instructions to him is to stand up the

government and get those ministries operating so that you have someone to work with.” I replied, “Washington will be very happy to hear that.”

*Q: This brings up a question. During all this, from Cheney’s visit on, was there a question of who’s going to pay?*

GNEHM: Yes. It comes up in particular with me when I got back to Washington, but it had been raised already. Again, remember that we really hadn’t had any contact with the Kuwaiti Government until this meeting. Except with Sheikh Saud Nasser, their Ambassador in Washington. In those first few days even he had no communication with others in his government. He was making big decisions in the Government’s absence. When officials got to the eastern province, he could make some phone calls to the Crown Prince. He knew that what he was doing had to have the Crown Prince’s backing. It was within that context that the subject of finances came up. It came up with the Crown Prince telling Saud Nasser, “We were going to support the United States any way we can, financially, whatever else it takes.” I’ll expand on this more later.

Then there was another curious thing that happened during my first meeting with the Amir. I did not appreciate at that time. I could see the Amir was depressed and understandably so.

While he was engaged at some points and I got him to chuckle at least once during the meeting, I could see he was beginning to wane again. At one point he looked up at me. I had papers in my hand. I felt like I needed to say something to him again to encourage him. I put my papers down on the side of the seat and I said, “Your highness, I want to make you a personal promise. I am certain that we are going to Kuwait. We are going to be back in Kuwait, both of us. I make this promise. I’m going to be there one step behind you when you go in. And when we get there, and not before we get there, will I present my credentials to you as ambassador.”

Now, I knew I hadn’t been sworn in yet. I knew that Nat was still in Kuwait and was THE US Ambassador; but people thought I was going to be presenting my credentials. I made my promise as an assertion of my confidence in what was going to happen. Word spread throughout the entire building. ‘Liberation is really going to happen. The ambassador has actually put his entire career contingent upon ‘us’ getting liberated and is saying he won’t present his credentials until he gets there. That’s how certain he that this will happen.’ I had not intended for this interpretation --- merely had wanted to give the Amir my personal assurances; but it actually became part of the lore in my own status that began to build with the Kuwaitis over the next several months.

*Q: Yes, well one can see this. People who depend on status within a bureaucracy, what they were saying was that you had a real commitment.*

GNEHM: That’s right. It was remarkable. Then, there was an important conference in Jeddah chaired by the Crown Prince. I was not at the conference in Jeddah; but my political officer, David Pearce, was. It was a convocation of Kuwaitis who were outside

of the country. They were exiles. Two things were going on. First, the Amir and Crown Prince --- the Sabah family --- wanted a convocation that made it clear that there was no dissention about their role. Second, the people coming to the conference wanted a commitment from the Amir and the Crown Prince that, when they got back to Kuwait, there would be elections and parliament would be restored.

Now, just a historical note, the parliament had been prorogued, that is suspended, not in accordance with the constitution. The family had created something called the “National Council,” which had no constitutional basis whatsoever. The family hoped that it would be a legislature that they could control better than the one that was constitutionally mandated. That legitimacy was never achieved in the minds of Kuwaitis. So they wanted to make sure that there would be elections that would restore the constitutional parliament. The family, the Crown Prince himself, committed to hold elections to parliament as it was defined in Kuwait’s constitution. Kuwaiti participants fully endorsed the Sabah family as the legitimate rulers of the state. This was an important compact between the Sabah family and their subjects and a very important rebuttal to Saddam’s efforts to convince world public opinion that Kuwaitis did not want the Sabah family as their rulers.

The Sabah family undertook one other initiative to solidify support from Kuwaitis in exile. This effort was toward their Shia constituency. Kuwait’s population was estimated to be about 35% Shia. A number of this community fled to Iran after the invasion. The Amir sent his Minister of Communication, Habib Hayat, to Tehran to meet with Shia Kuwaitis. As he later told me, the Amir told him that the Shia community would be treated fairly and equitably after liberation. There had been some harassment of the Shia before --- challenging, for example, their right to gather together. Security forces would appear and demand the gathering disburse. I am talking about gatherings in Shia homes not unlike the diwaniyyas that Sunni Kuwaitis hold virtually every day. There was, without question, a feeling in the Shia community that they were being discriminated against. Habib was to assure the Shia with whom he met in Iran that this would end. Habib admitted to me his concern at undertaking this mission. He did not want to reassure the Shia in Iran only to find out later that the Sabah family’s commitment was not genuine. He asked and received assurances from the Amir that he would keep his word after their return to Kuwait. In return the Amir wanted to know that he had that community’s support. After returning to Ta’if, Habib said the community in Iran received the Amir’s message positively and had sent a message back with him that they supported the Amir and the Sabah family.

As a postscript, after liberation Habib came to me quite upset. He had met with some of the family leaders (not specified) and he feared that they were going to renege on the commitment that he had conveyed to Kuwaiti Shia in Iran. He was upset that his integrity would be compromised but, more importantly, that the Shia community would be once again treated as they had been before the invasion. In point of fact, his fears fortunately proved unfounded. The Amir and Government were far less heavy handed on the Shia after liberation.

*Q: This group of exiles was Kuwaiti. What about Palestinians or Jordanians that served in large numbers in the bureaucracy? Were they at the conference?*

This is a very good question. Regarding your question, the answer is no. Palestinians living in Kuwait were not Kuwaiti citizens. They would not have been invited to this meeting. Nor were Jordanians, for that matter. There was such anger among Kuwaitis toward the Palestinians after Arafat supported the Iraqi invasion. The Palestinian community at the time of the invasion was very large --- about 400,000 within a population of about 1.2 million, according to my recollection. You're talking about more than a quarter, maybe a little less than a third of the population of the state were Palestinians. And they were involved in everything. They were the editors of the newspapers; they were the reporters. An often heard joke was that, if you went to a Kuwaiti Ministry, the first three people you see from the doorman to secretary to the office director are all Palestinians. And if you get into the minister's office or the senior director's office, it would be vacant because there was no need for the Kuwaiti official to come to work because others were doing the work. I hear Kuwaitis say during the exile as well as after they returned, "The only thing that Saddam did that was good for us was that he saved our country from us losing it to the Palestinians," because of course after liberation the number of Palestinians in Kuwait went way down.

There were horrendous stories about Palestinians who were in Kuwait siding with the Iraqi occupation. I know one very prominent businessman, who told me about how his mother had virtually adopted a young Palestinian boy, who had no family, and raised him with the family. When the family had to flee, this young man brought the Iraqi forces into the house to loot it showing them where everything was including secret hiding places. My friend, the businessman, isn't bitter now when I talk to him years later, but he does not have very fond recollections of Palestinians, let me put it that way.

What I want to say add that what was not as widely reported at the time was that there were lots of Palestinians in Kuwait who actually were working with the resistance. Because they were Palestinian, they were not being watched as closely as were the Kuwaitis and were considered by the Iraqis as safe and even supporters. As a result, they could move around and do things, i.e. move money or arms for the resistance. There were many stories that I heard in those first few weeks when I got into Kuwait about Palestinians who helped the resistance. Of course, Kuwaitis in exile harped incessantly against the Palestinians and they brought their feelings and anger into Kuwait when they returned.

Actually, this allows me to introduce an observation that is something that you discover in these situations: the differences that arise in people's minds from those who remained inside under occupation as opposed to those who were outside. There are huge divergences in views --- in interpretations of events. Even during the occupation period, people inside were communicating how angry they were that the family fled, that all these people that were rich just took off and left 'us.' They didn't stay to fight. At the same time Kuwaitis on the outside who were accusative of the Kuwaitis who stayed as somehow being, if not collaborators, at least not genuine patriots because they stayed to

look after their own houses or wealth. I'm giving you stark extremes. There were many other differences in views, specifically attitudes toward Palestinians. Those who remained in Kuwait had a much more nuanced view of Palestinians than did Kuwaitis in exile.

*Q: But this happens, of course.*

GNEHM: It happens in these situations. And this was a big issue I had to deal with after liberation, and one the Kuwaitis grappled with for a years. In fact, many even are still grappling with it frankly.

Just to close out comment on the meeting in Jeddah, it was very important. It was a coming together. It began to bring the exile community into some sort of organized direction to move forward. I returned to Washington. It was not intended that I stay at this point.

Before I left Ta'if, I met with the Crown Prince alone. That was an important meeting and established a close relationship with a key figure in the family and the Kuwaiti Government. Because Crown Prince Saad Abdullah al-Sabah was, as was customary, both Crown Prince and Prime Minister, he ran the government. He was the one that I most regularly worked with, not the Amir, for multiple different reasons. He chose the ministers and chaired Council of Ministers sessions. He was in the hotel. If I needed decisions to be made and I couldn't get them at a lower level, I would go to him.. He was the one I confided in. I can never fully describe how open he was and how valuable this relationship became. He became a very close friend and someone that I worked with even after we went returned to Kuwait.

I later did come back to Ta'if and I was there for a number of weeks. I traveled back to Washington several different times. I also travelled extensively in the region meeting with Kuwaiti exile groups and with government officials in all the regional states. I end up taking up residence permanently in Ta'if in early January 1991

*Q: Was there any thought during this whole time of either you staying in Ta'if as sort of the point man or a deputy or somebody like that dealing with the Amir?*

GNEHM: Yes, the view in my going out was to establish myself with the Amir and the government. I was to be United States government liaison with the government in exile. David Pearce, my political officer, stayed in Ta'if when I was not there. Again, when I came out later, I stayed for weeks on end. I did a lot of traveling in the region, which I want to go into next time. From that January, I remained there until I actually go in with the troops at the end of February, early March. My meeting with the Crown Prince was interesting because of what we talked about earlier. His first question to me was, "Just why are U.S. forces in Saudi Arabia?" You could probably get the thrust of that question. "Is it defense or is it liberation?" Essentially, he was asking is it for the defense of Saudi Arabia or is it for the liberation of my country. I understood the intent of his question. He

also expressed a lot of concern about the deteriorating situation for Kuwaitis inside the country.

So I repeated the president's three objectives. I said that we were confronting the situation with all our different tools: economically through the sanctions, financially through the support from Kuwait and militarily. This meeting is when I first talked about funding, intelligence cooperation and diplomatic initiatives to undermine Saddam Hussein. On our understanding with the Saudi Arabia -- I was very clear with him -- that at this point in time that the US military was in the Kingdom essentially for the defense of the Kingdom, but we are working very closely with the Saudis on the military front to be prepared to do whatever is necessary to do to achieve the president's objectives.

*Q: You couldn't have this point said yes, we are going to get Saddam out of Kuwait.*

GNEHM: No. The Crown Prince said, "So will you *use* your forces?" He was not going to let me off the hook.

I said, "I cannot say the President has made the decision to use military force." I noted the Secretary of Defense's statements that he was putting sufficient forces in the region to enable the President to achieve those objectives if they were necessary to do that. I said, "The President has not ordered the use of force, but he has not ruled it out either." And I said, "You just need to be confident about the President's determination to see that your country's liberated and you get to go home."

*Q: Were you watching the tipping point moving towards forcing the Iraqis out as opposed to being purely a defensive force?*

GNEHM: I was, but not everybody in my chain of command was. As I mentioned, John Kelly was not paying attention, I guess, or wanting to see it. He continued to tell me there would be no military action; but there was no doubt in my mind. It was clear from my personal conversations with Cheney that he was mobilizing to be ready for military action. If it wasn't necessary, that's a different issue altogether. But his understanding from the President was he needed enough forces in the field to be able to liberate Kuwait should force be required. Cheney was mindful of the political sensitivities with the Saudis. And I think he played it well in the way he presented it. I knew how the military deployment was developing. As I traveled around I was in Dhahran. I was in the headquarters in Riyadh with Schwarzkopf on a number of different occasions. I sat there listening to them talk about how many tanks were rolling off the ships each day. I heard the status reports to Schwarzkopf and his chief of staff. We were not talking of modest numbers but figures in the hundreds regarding tanks and armored vehicles. It took a while to get them there as I mentioned earlier. Initially, we flew in planes to demonstrate that we were determined to defend Saudi Arabia. Yet inside the Pentagon and in the White House, we were deathly afraid that the Iraqis would not stop at the Kuwaiti-Saudi border. The Pentagon knew those planes would not stop an Iraqi ground attack. And in fact we might have to fly them out of the Kingdom creating an impression of retreat. We were glad they didn't continue south. We had to fly in troops in transport planes, which takes

some time. The equipment for ground forces was going to take even longer as most of that would come by sea.

When I was back in Washington, I was once again working with the Kuwaiti Ambassador on a number of issues. One of them was just this transport issue. Saud Nasser informed me and the U.S. government that all Kuwaiti shipping in the world, particularly ships controlled by the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC), would all be at American disposal. Saud said, "We have ships in Japan, in the Mediterranean, in fact all over the place. You tell me where you need a ship to go and whatever it's got in it will be dumped!" And so, that kicked in almost immediately. Then there was the funding issue. I think one of the early payments was several billion dollars. It was clear from the Kuwaitis. "We will do anything that we have to do --- everything we have to do. The money will be there to cover cost. We don't want one single thing delayed because you need appropriations."

*Q: The Kuwaitis had -- basically their money was in England, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: Outside the country, and England probably but elsewhere as well.

*Q: Yeah. So they had access to that.*

GNEHM: Yes, they did. And we were talking even in these early weeks that the Kuwaitis needed to be prepared to support the Egyptians and the Syrians. The Syrians came a little bit later perhaps. It was the Egyptians and the Russians who needed to see some financial support for their diplomatic positions.

*Q: Did you have any contact with particularly the Egyptians during this time when you're in Ta'if?*

GNEHM: Not in Ta'if, but I did in my travels around the region. I remember there was a big issue with the Egypt early on. Frank Wisner, our Ambassador in Cairo, was working the phones. The United States was pushing Egypt to host a multilateral conference in Alexandria of naval powers to organize the naval sanction regime against Iraq, which had been agreed to at the UN. Egyptians didn't want that profile at all. They had their own internal domestic problems. Mubarak was solid and deployed a lot of Egyptian troops ultimately; but he also had internal opposition. Even though the Arab League voted during this period of time to support the deployment of forces to the region to get Saddam out of Kuwait, there were negative votes in, including those of Algeria, Yemen and the PLO, of course.

The other thing that was going on is something so typical in the Middle East, but I'm sure it happens elsewhere: The question of who moves first in the matter of deploying Egyptian military forces to the Kingdom. Egypt told us that they were ready to send troops to support and defend Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia told us that they would welcome the Egyptians, but they didn't want to be seen as asking the Egyptians. The Egyptians didn't want to send forces unless they were asked. It is ultimately resolved in a

way these things sometimes get resolved. Both sides agreed that if the other side told us what they wanted to hear they'll accept it (*laughs*). To my knowledge, the Saudis never really asked for the deployment, but they told us they would be happy to have the troops. The Egyptians said, "Well, we'll be happy to provide." That's my recollection of how it gets played out.

*Q: Well, during this early period, what was the role or any of Israel?*

GNEHM: Well, Israel had come up in this earlier period in a couple of ways. We were watching the chemical weapons issue at the time. I didn't go into this detail, but in one of the morning meetings with Kimmitt, the intelligence reports reported that they'd seen Iraqi forces around one of the chemical weapons sites, possible launch sites. They were in their chemical weapons coveralls, which was alarming. You might be so dressed if you were running a test or facing an emergency, but you also could be doing it because you're getting ready to launch something. Earlier on, if you remember back in February and March, Saddam had threatened Israel with chemical attacks using Scud missiles, which they knew could reach Israel. The Israelis were privy to that intelligence. They came to us and we said that we're watching it. From the very beginning there was an overwhelming consensus within the U.S. Government that the last thing in the world we wanted was Israelis involved in this confrontation with Iraq. It was our view that they had to understand they had to stay out of this. Therefore, we were probably going to have to do some things to make sure they didn't intervene. For example, we ultimately deployed patriot missile defense missions. We didn't threaten the Israelis; but we did say essentially that we needed this coalition of Arab states and you're getting involved could lead to dissention.

*Q: Did you get involved to get Americans out of the potential war zone, but at the same time to keep Aramco Americans in Saudi Arabia to keep producing oil?*

GNEHM: Yes, and again, there was a number of times that I was on the phone with Dhahran and others. I really didn't go a lot into this, but Ivan Selin was the Undersecretary for Management at the time. He was the person in charge of the whole issue of evacuations, which included issuance of travel advisories. This was usually a consular issue, but in a crisis such as we were facing, it's all consolidated. Ivan was in the driving seat on this. And we had problems all over the region. We really didn't want any negative impact on oil production from Saudi Arabia. In fact we had asked them and they had agreed to expand production to make up for the Kuwaiti production that was no longer going to market --- not to mention the loss of Iraq production. Complicating the matter, there were dependents in Saudi Arabia who didn't want to leave, and there were dependents in Saudi Arabia who did want to leave. Therefore, trying to come up with a travel advisory that straddled this was difficult. In Yemen the big problem was that they thought they were so far away from all of the problems that they didn't need a travel advisory at all. Charlie Dunbar, our Ambassador in Yemen, was weighing in on the issue.

I recall the Peace Corps refused, absolutely refused, said, "We're not leaving. You know, we've developed relationships with all these people which we would destroy if we pull

out just because there is trouble way up there?” Now, demonstrations began to take place and that made Selin and lots of people in Washington more and more anxious. In the end, Washington ended up opposing them and said that there would be a drawdown whether they liked it or not. Dunbar demanded another day to be able to come in with his own arguments against it.

*Q: This is the Holy Land we're talking about.*

GNEHM: The Holy Land. Whether it is holes or holy, it's incredible. I mentioned to you that Sheikh Sabah, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, had been in Washington and saw the President. I mentioned that he got the commitment to provide US military assistance for the Kuwaiti airplanes that had flown to Saudi Arabia. Their discussion then turned to the Amir's desire to come to Washington. We were aware that he wanted to address to the United Nations General Assembly around the 24<sup>th</sup> of September. The President made it very clear he wanted to welcome the Amir, thought the visit was a great idea and wanted a full formal official state visit. This led to discussions with Ambassador Saud Nasser in Washington, and obviously in Ta'if to work out a date and details.

GNEHM: I can just mention one other thing. Kimmitt reported that a decision had been made in the U.S. government to forgive Egypt's foreign military sales dept. We were doing such things to support the building of a coalition and advance political support in the region.

*Q: OK, so we'll pick this up the next time and I'll turn this over for you interns. But just as a Middle Eastern hand I think I'd mention one thing that I think is very interesting. Do you know what the most common boy's name registered at birth in Israel was last year?*

GNEHM: No.

*Q: Mohammed.*

GNEHM: Is this because of the Arab population?

*Q: Oh yes. They're more likely to name their kids Mohammed when the Israelis are all over the place.*

GNEHM: Yeah, yeah.

*Q: What a, what a world. OK, would you like to -- have you got any questions?*

*INTERN: Yeah, just --*

*Q: Could you tell who you are and --*

*INTERN: Yes, Gabrielle INTERN. Want me to spell it? G-A-B-R-I-E-L-L-E, B-A-R-B-O-U-R.*

GNEHM: Thank you, Gabrielle. That way I have the guest list for the dinner.

*INTERN: So I had three questions. First, you said the Kuwaiti forces were absent, you said were absent the first few weeks. But did they really have the capabilities, especially numbers, to really combat the Iraqi forces?*

GNEHM: No. I thought I used that word meaning the government wasn't present; it just wasn't organized. The military wasn't either. The military, the planes, pilots were on the base. They saw what was happening. They jumped in their cockpits and flew their planes to Saudi Arabia. They had no ground equipment or spare parts; they had nothing but the plane itself. There were some military that got in their tanks and drove them across the desert, but again, there were no spare parts or support, just a tank. And military units --- people just fled-- took off in cars and trucks and Jeeps to head off. So no, there was no Kuwaiti military of any organized structure. And the government had to work, meaning the Kuwaitis, had to work to pull things together. We had Kuwaiti officers, like the Chief of Staff and others, who quickly linked up with Schwarzkopf's command as part of the coalition force, and it was through them that they gathered from the community and the eastern province everybody who was in the military and tried to put the units back together. And then the air force was working with the Pentagon.

*INTERN: And also, you said the Iraqi forces weren't very organized. Do you think that was because of poor leadership and management, or was the decision to invade in general kind of last minute?*

GNEHM: The invasion and the orders to various units and where they went were probably quite clear. What I'm really saying is there was no forethought. We have to be careful about criticizing them because when we went into Iraq in 2003 we ended up having the same problem. For example, there's no evidence that any one Iraqi commander was in charge of Iraqi forces in Kuwait, right? There's no evidence whatsoever that Saddam made any decisions about a government structure. He seemed to have resolved some of the lack of foresight after he occupied it in hours probably thinking "Wait a minute, you know, I need something there." And then he ended up this idea of a puppet government, a Kuwaiti who stands up and says, "Thank heavens we got rid of that corrupt Amir and the Sabah family and never again. I'm now the new government of Kuwait." But then he realized that there was no local support. In fact, the guy was in danger of being assassinated or killed by Kuwaitis. He disappeared from the scene; he just vaporized. Evidentially Saddam had decided to annex Kuwait as his 19<sup>th</sup> province, but you can't annex the 19<sup>th</sup> province if you've got a puppet government. So you have got to get rid of that government quickly. So it just disappears and Iraq annexed Kuwait. But again, there's just no evidence that this had been thought out ahead of the invasion. So I'm saying that we gave Iraq a lot of credit. When I arrived in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti resistance took me to Kuwait University and walked me through the classroom buildings. As you walk down the hall you see sprayed on every door the name of an

educational institution in Iraq that is to receive the equipment in that room. So at that point, there is some organization; but the Kuwaitis told me that the way they stripped the classrooms was without any concern for the delicacy of the equipment that they were moving. Items were stripped off the wall or ripped off the table raising considerable doubt that much of it would be functional.

Computers! They were dropping computers out of second-floor windows onto trucks, according to eyewitnesses. They took out the ATM machines. They had never seen a machine that that created money. They wanted it at home. So they were taking it home so they could actually have it in the house and get money out of it! They did loot extensively. They would go into these very wealthy parts of town and go down the street one house after another taking out the paintings, the carpets, even pulling the electrical cords out of the wall, the sockets, the fixtures, anything in the room, the grates, the doors, the strip molding. Anything that could be taken they would take throwing it in a truck and drive off to Iraq.

*INTERN: Nat Howell was the actual ambassador at the time, correct?*

GNEHM: Yes, he was.

*INTERN: How were responsibilities divided between the two of you?*

GNEHM: Easy, it was a matter of geography and a matter of capability. He was inside Kuwait, trapped in the embassy. His only communication was via satellite. And he had no one to work with. There was no government in Kuwait. The Iraqis had the embassy surrounded. After the first several weeks they could not go out and people could not get in. I, on the other hand, was on the outside dealing with the government in exile.

*INTERN: So why wasn't he on the outside as well if he was the actual ambassador?*

GNEHM: Good question. There were two reasons. As the invasion unfolded, it fascinating to see how many days passed -- perhaps 10 days to two weeks --- before the realization set in that this is real and is not going to change very soon. The Embassy personnel are virtually hostages, not just staying because we were determined not to be forced out. More importantly, there was a decision made in Washington that we would not comply with the Iraqi government order that all diplomatic missions in Kuwait be closed by August 24<sup>th</sup>. To have agreed would have been tantamount to recognizing that we were accepting what the Iraqis had. So the decision was made that Nat and a core group would stay. Now, in the end the Kuwaitis would not let him leave.

*INTERN: Yeah, when you were going back and forth he was --*

GNEHM: Right. And he didn't leave until like the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. And the decision was made that I would not be sworn in, which is the next step following Senate confirmation and the President's appointment. I was not sworn in as ambassador until the second of January. We feared that, if I was sworn in while Nat was still in Kuwait, the

Iraqi Government could claim that he was not in fact an ambassador anymore. They could then use that as a pretext for taking action against him.

*Q: Today is the 8<sup>th</sup> of October, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. You said you've talked to the Amir of Kuwait and he wants to come to the States, meet the president, and address the UN.*

GNEHM: Right. Before I talk about the Amir's visit to the US, I missed mentioning a very important meeting that Secretary Baker had with the Amir when he called on him in Ta'if on September 7. The content of that conversation is important to document. Baker's essential message was to emphasize the president's commitment to the liberation of Kuwait, total Iraqi withdrawal, and the restoration of the legitimate government. He used the words: "U.S. resolve is firm, undiminished, and unyielding." I think he preempted a question by telling the emir, "There is no interest in compromising on this. There's no in between. This always goes to that question that keeps coming up, what if he withdraws halfway or what if he tries to make a deal?"

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: And Baker made it very, very clear that that was not in the cards.

*Q: Did you have any feel for any debate within our government about this question, whether there would be a compromise?*

GNEHM: None whatsoever. It was just so clear from the beginning.

*Q: I would think so, but I was just wondering.*

GNEHM: Sure, and there often is in government, as we know, policy difference and sometimes concerns. In this case there, there really wasn't. The other issue that Baker had to address with the Amir had to do with timing of coalition action. Clearly, the Amir was gently probing to learn the answer and encouraging us to act to liberate Kuwait sooner than later. Baker's response was that the most important thing for us right then, in September, was to continue to build and maintain the international coalition and international support for our objectives. He also argued that moving too quickly towards the use of force would create problems for that coalition and could lead to us losing support at the UN, for example. He said, "We need to maintain international consensus. That means if we're going to use force -- and we may have to -- we need to lay the proper predicate making it clear that we tried everything else." This was a consistent line that the U.S. took with the Kuwaitis.

*Q: We all know that the whole situation had to do with oil. What was happening to Kuwaiti oil? Had it just stopped? Was there any movement of oil, the Far East depended a great deal on it?*

GNEHM: There was no oil production after the invasion because UN Security Council resolutions prohibited trade with the occupation force in Kuwait.

*Q: Were there objections coming up from the Japanese and others?*

GNEHM: Concern, absolutely. That was the reason that in those early conversations with the Saudis that we encouraged them to increase production, which they did, to compensate for the fall off of Kuwaiti production. Other countries did as well, though they didn't have the same capacity as Saudi Arabia did. In fact, global production levels remained sufficient to meet supply demands.

*Q: What happened next?*

GNEHM: I thought it was interesting that Baker acknowledged in his conversations with the Kuwaitis, even at this point in early September, that use of force might be necessary. He went on to say that we were not yet ready to launch military operations but that we were continuing to move forces into the region and we would soon be ready. But again, he fell back on the point that we had to work our way through the non-military options to convince the world that we had tried everything short of military action and that they had simply failed. Baker and the Amir talked about Egypt and Syria, both of whom had offered to send troops and were in the process of deploying units. Baker also raised Turkey and the need for Turkey to be the second front. He asked the Kuwaitis to do what they could with all three of those countries to encourage them to stay online and move forward. And the Kuwaitis agreed.

Baker again raised Saddam's PR campaign noting that he was good at trying to make it look like it was the Kuwaitis and that west that had created the problem and not him. We all needed to be diligent to contradict that narrative. Baker said that he knew -- and this was a theme that I had to deal with throughout this fall -- that there were press reports parsing different statements by different Americans or others that would raise doubts in the Amir's mind about our commitment. And Baker repeated, "I just want to say. Do not doubt our resolve."

*Q: Was there any movement on the Iraqi side to make a deal or anything like that during this time?*

GNEHM: The only efforts were proposals that were made to Joe Wilson in Baghdad. But they were so outrageous, for example that we acknowledge that Kuwait was and always had been a part of Iraq and in return they would go more light-handedly and might even let the Americans depart.

*Q: What we're really talking about is real sheer arrogance.*

GNEHM: Totally so. And again, it comes up repeatedly with the Iraqis that they don't appear to be conscious of how much international opposition there is to their action.

*Q: Were there informed voices within the Iraqi government saying that while this is what our leader wants, this isn't going to fly? In other words, from their diplomatic corps or others, was there any sense that there's an informed, realistic person calling the shots?*

GNEHM: It appeared that Saddam from his unchallenged position was calling the shots and it was him and him alone who was hardnosed about their actions. Again, the conversations that Joe had with Nizar Hamdoun and others often seemed to be reasonable --- seemed to be suggesting ways out of the crisis with the hostages or the detainees in Iraq. Then invariably the next meeting would be, "Well, I've taken it to higher authorities and there won't be any exodus until you agree X, Y, and Z" kind of thing. Back to Baker's meetings in Ta'if... After the meeting with the Amir there was a second meeting led by the Crown Prince. Sheikh Sabah, the Foreign Minister, was present. This was the first time that there was a detailed conversation of our request to the Kuwaitis for financial support --- Kuwaiti contributions toward the cost of the deployment. The Secretary said, "The more that you can help, the longer we will be able to enjoy strong American support." And he particularly said, "There needs to be sharing of responsibility and it needs to be equitable." He asked for cooperation obviously in the military area, meaning having the Kuwaiti Military participating in any subsequent actions, but he also said, "We need economic assistance for certain frontline states."

Sheikh Sabah said, "We're ready to share," and he introduced Sheikh Ali Khalifa al-Sabah, the Finance Minister, who was in the meeting, saying, "We will not spare any efforts."

Baker continued: "Well, let me give you unabashedly a number. We need about six billion dollars to use by the end of the year. And we may even have to come back to you later. We'd like a list from you of the countries you're aiding. We are particularly interested in Egypt and Turkey, but there is also Morocco, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. So we are not asking for money just for direct military defensive expenditures, but it's to help the frontline states and to build the coalition internationally."

The Secretary made it clear that on the military side we were asking the Kuwaitis to cover our incremental costs. During this part of the conversation we weren't asking for salaries and things of that sort, which we would have paid anyway, but for the deployment costs and costs specifically additive due to our deployment. This topic actually appeared to have changed the course of the conversation, to be honest with you. He said, "Three billion would be for our cost and one billion -- oh, we would be covering three billion dollars," which is what we considered our cost, "and we would need the one billion to cover incremental costs." Other Americans present said the frontline states near-term costs can be as high as --

*Q: When you say a frontline state. Kuwait is sort of between Saudi Arabia and Iran, what do we consider a frontline state?*

GNEHM: They were talking about Jordan, Syria, but as I mentioned to you, they went further afield to Morocco and Pakistan.

*Q: In other words, Islamic states with an interest.*

GNEHM: Yes, and particularly Arab League states. Yemen became a big issue in the next two weeks with the Saudi actions against Yemeni workers. So the figures they were talking about are quite large, and Ali Khalifa said that he had already given Egypt half a billion dollars. He also spoke with Turkey that very day and offered 300 million over the next few weeks. He said a similar amount to the Syrians would be forthcoming soon. He said that there was going to be a GCC meeting the following day and that they wanted to have the rest of the GCC contributing to the direct cost of the operations. In other words, this should be not just Kuwait, but other countries as well.

*Q: What is the GCC?*

GNEHM: Right, the Gulf Cooperation Council is an organization of five smaller Arab states in the Gulf plus Saudi Arabia. So it is composed of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman.

*Q: Now, did Iran play any role, either on the sidelines or anything else in this?*

GNEHM: It did, but it didn't come up in this meeting. I can come back to that because the Kuwaitis were talking to Velayati and the Iranians, both in New York and elsewhere to find out where they were going to be in this whole crisis. Again, the Kuwaitis made it clear that they were willing to contribute to the direct cost of the military operations. But Sheikh Ali Khalifa then explained -- and this came up several more conversations -- that the Kuwaitis were now without a revenue stream, given the fact that they couldn't export oil. They also needed to support the Kuwaitis in exile throughout the world. As a result, he said that they would be drawing down on their investments and their cash globally. Furthermore, he said that it would be really important to draw down their investments incrementally and cautiously so as not to destabilize the global investment market. He said that the four billion to four point something billion dollars was doable. He later explained in a subsequent meeting that the Council of Ministers already agreed to 4.2 billion for distribution for both of these purposes. The Secretary said, "Well, our priority is in fact to cover the incremental costs. We have to do that. So we would want the first payments to go for that and then we'll talk about the rest."

The Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah, also the Foreign Minister, did press politely for moving forward quickly, meaning toward liberation. The Secretary again repeated what he'd said earlier to the Amir, "I understand, but we're going to be very deliberate about it. We're going to work to maintain a consensus and that means having to work that issue forward over time." Then he mentioned again to need to complete the military deployments. Sheikh Sabah then spoke about Syria. "We're looking at Syria different from other countries. We were looking at Syria through the Arab lens and context. It's very important to separate Syria from the Palestinians and the Libyans who were within the Arab League representing the opposition to what was happening with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. We know there's a deteriorating economic situation in Syria. We intend to

help. We are probably going to give them about a half million dollars quite soon as they deploy their troops to the region.”

It was also about this time that the Department and I began considering how best to organize our presence in Ta'if. This led to conversations with Chas Freeman over the establishment of what we decide to call the Kuwait Liaison Group—the group that I would be organizing in the hotel in Ta'if. We became the Kuwait Liaison group with the subsequent deployment of some American Foreign Service and security forces to Ta'if. We worked in an office that the Kuwaitis provided in the hotel. We were later given a small villa located just outside the gate to the hotel (but owned and operated by the hotel). This Kuwait Liaison Group was the group that would later enter Kuwait with me and become the U. S. Embassy in Kuwait. Chas was quite concerned about having another diplomatic mission present in his territory that wasn't specifically under his executive authority or his ambassadorial authority.

*Q: Well, what was the problem? I would think that something like this would operate quite independently. Thinking bureaucratically, I can't think of any particular collision?*

GNEHM: In the end, there wasn't. I think Ambassador Freeman was thinking about a number of things. For example, if I was going to be residing in Saudi Arabia with a group of eight to 15 people, what about visas or resident permits. Would they have diplomatic immunity? Were they not part of the diplomatic mission under him? What status was I going to have? How were the Saudis going to treat me? We were bringing in equipment for communications, how was that equipment entering the country, etc. Who was going to provide administrative support for this new office? Is it going to be the Consulate in Jeddah? If so, what about budgets and who was going to pay bills?

In the end though, he was most concerned that I not deal with the Saudi government. That was his job. And that was fair enough. In fact, again, whenever I went to Riyadh to see or communicate in any way with Saudi officials, he was always present and the person in charge of the meeting. I was accompanying him to meetings. Again, it was never a problem. Chas and I worked together extremely well.

*Q: He's a remarkable person, isn't he?*

GNEHM: He is a remarkable person.

*Q: He's one of the few people that I've dealt with that I would put probably in the genius category.*

GNEHM: Me too. Just before I got to the Amir's meeting with the President in September, I got a call from New York from John Kelly and Jock Covey, his deputy, asking me to call the Foreign Minister of Yemen, Iryani, regarding Yemen's position in the Security Council. There was to be a vote on the 24<sup>th</sup> for Resolution 669, which had to do with air sanctions and strengthening an embargo on air traffic to Iraq. The resolution

was to terminate all flights with Iraq and it looked like the Yemenis would either vote against it or abstain. We wanted them to vote for it. In the region the Saudis had announced that they were expelling all Yemeni workers from Saudi Arabia as a result of the Yemen's pro-Saddam position on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. There were hundreds of thousands of Yemenis in Saudi Arabia at the time. Their expulsion was going to cause a major economic crisis in Yemen as these workers remitted large sums back to Yemen. Yet Ali Abdullah Saleh seemed unwilling to alter his position. In fact, he proposed to mediate between the Saudis and the Iraqis and the Kuwaitis and the Iraqis. Of course neither Saudi Arabia nor Kuwait had any interest in having him play such a role, given his pro-Iraqi bias.

I called Iryani. While I had been in Yemen for three years as a DCM, this was the first time that I had become embroiled with the Yemenis over this issue. On the base of my instructions, I was able to offer Iryani the following: if Yemen would vote that day for the resolution, the United States government would intervene or attempt to intervene with the Saudis to gain some relent on their expulsion decree on Yemeni workers. At first, Iryani said no, that they would abstain; but he called me back in an hour and said, "We'll vote yes," which they did. But he added, "You have 24 hours to get back to me about the Saudi business." We did raise it with the Saudis, but it didn't make any difference to them. And so the diplomatic confrontation between those two states just gets bigger and bigger.

*Q: Were you getting any feedback from our embassy in Riyadh about expelling the Yemenis?, It was a big workforce, these were people involved in a lot of critical work. What was this going to do to the Saudi oil production, and economy?*

GNEHM: I don't recollect that the Yemenis were deeply involved in the oil sector, but they were in small businesses all over the country. They tended to run them without proper permits or perhaps under arrangements with a Saudi citizen. But the Saudis had long accepted the Yemenis as being in a different categories as other expats. But to answer your question, the Saudis were very much afraid that they would be fifth column working inside the Kingdom to destabilize it while it was under threat from the north.

*Q: Was this an excuse to get rid of all the Yemenis? Were there many Saudis who felt threatened by these other businesspeople moving in there?*

GNEHM: I would say very definitely the first element was a fear of internal troubles that the Yemenis might cause. Secondly, there was definitely a view that Saudi Arabia had actually allowed too many of them in the country and that wasn't a good thing. And so cutting them down was seen as a good move.

*Q: You mentioned before that Ibn Saud, had a very strong concern about Yemenis who were mountain people, fighters, and very numerous.*

GNEHM: Population, huge population.

*Q: He saw them as essentially a threat and that it was better to keep them divided and out of Saudi Arabia.*

GNEHM: A consistent Saudi view of Yemen was and is that they are potentially a dangerous neighbor. That's right. So reducing that number due to Saleh's position on Iraq might have been a cover, but Saudis were generally happy to have it happen.

The Amir's meeting with President Bush, which I participated in, was a very good meeting. There was the Amir with his delegation and Secretary's Cheney and Baker. The President greeted the Amir very warmly. "I'm very, very distressed about what has happened to you." He asked, "Your highness, what can I do? What can I do for you?" The Amir responded -- and the president later said to me after the meeting, "I was both impressed and surprised at what he said."

The Amir: "Mr. President, the one thing that you can do for me is help me and my government be ready to rebuild our state, our country, and take care of our people after liberation." The President's remark to me that he was really impressed and surprised with the Amir's request was that the emir did not say, 'I want you to confirm me that you're going to liberate my country.'

*Q: It was already a given.*

GNEHM: Which you would have thought he might have asked. The President understood that the Amir already accepted that he would do everything possible to liberate Kuwait and restore the legitimate government. He didn't need to ask for assurances. Nevertheless the President himself raised it. "I don't want you to leave here without hearing directly from me what I have said in public and what I have communicated to you previously. Our intentions are to liberate your country totally from Iraqi occupation and to restore your Government."

The Amir responded, "I did not need to ask you that question because I know that is the way you feel. I am absolutely certain of that; I have no doubts in my mind." So when the emir asked the President to help plan for the reconstruction of his country, the president turned to Cheney and asked, "Can we do that?" Cheney replied, "I don't see why not, good. Let's meet at the Pentagon and work it out."

This request proved to be an important development. The Amir went on to New York and made a speech at the UN General Assembly. He stayed there a few days and returned to Saudi Arabia. Several of his ministers, including Sheikh Ali Khalifa, the Finance Minister, and the Minister of Planning, Suleiman Mutawa, came back to Washington for a meeting at the Pentagon to be briefed on what the Pentagon thought it could do in regard to this request. Essentially, the colonel, who conducted the briefing, drew on the regulations and experiences of the US military after World War II for the occupation of Germany. He laid out how the army has a civil affairs unit in their reserves who are competent people who know finance, economics, health, education, etc. This unit could be called up to take the lead with the Kuwaitis. I think this may have been the first

reservists that were called back to full duty. The briefer proposed that the Kuwaitis name three persons from each Kuwaiti ministry, officials in other words, to be the counterparts to the activated civil affairs officers and they would form a joint task force. At this point in the conversation, a woman stood up in the upper part of the auditorium interrupting the colonel saying, "Everything you've just said is illegal; you cannot do any of the things that you are proposing."

It was very embarrassing to have this outburst take place in front of the Kuwaiti ministers, especially after the President and Secretary Cheney had agreed to the briefing. The woman was a lawyer that I had worked with when I had been at the Pentagon. I knew her and she was a bit of a strict structuralist, if you will. I remember the colonel paused, looked down -- he was really poised -- then looked up and said, "Well, this is what we did in Germany for a number of years using these very regulations. If it was legal then, it's still legal now." And then he picked up where he was when he was interrupted and kept going.

I thought, "Right on, man."

The plan proposed by the Pentagon happened. The Kuwaitis came through naming counterparts from each ministry. The reservists, I think it was the 452<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Company or part of it, was called into active duty. They rented offices on K Street and began planning. I'll just mention it in general terms now; but we'll come back to it later. It played a very important role in the months leading up to liberation and in the months after. Through October, November, and December, this task force looked at every single sector of the country --- what we assessed might be the situation in Kuwait on the day of liberation and what needed to be done to be ready.

I'll give you just one example at this point. We feared the Iraqis would blow up the sole desalination plant. There's no fresh water in Kuwait; it's all desalinized water. The estimated population at this time of about 350,000 had to have water to drink and had to have water immediately. You couldn't put it off for five or six weeks or something, right? So the contingency plan for providing water to the state of Kuwait on liberation day and until the desalinization plant could be repaired was a contract with a Turkish firm for water trucks. I believe the number was about 160 water trucks that this Turkish firm provided. They drove them all the way down through Syria, Jordan, across Saudi Arabia, and parked them in a very large cantonment in the desert, just one next to the other, to be ready when the liberation occurred. At that point a convoy of water trucks would commence going north full, coming back empty, and starting all over again. Now, in the end the desalinization plant was not destroyed. The Iraqis had wired it, but for some reason, the explosives either malfunctioned or the Iraqis forgot to trigger it. We don't know for sure --- only that the plant could continue to operate. So in the end while we did use the water trucks to supplement water from the plant, it wasn't as dire a need as we had feared. I could go through medical sectors, food, health, etc. where there was similar planning. I'll drop an editorial remark here which I will come to in more specifics when we get to 2003. When we get to our occupation of Iraq, I was appalled that we failed to do in Iraq what we had planned and what we had done so successfully in Kuwait. We had

proved in Kuwait that we had the capability and the experienced personnel to plan and execute a reconstruction and recovery effort, but we didn't do it.

So establishing an organization to plan for Kuwait's reconstruction was one very important thing that came out of the Amir's meeting with the President. And again, the president was very, very good with the Amir and I know that the Kuwaitis left the States reassured about everything except maybe the timing of the country's liberation.

*Q: What was your impression at this particular time with Cheney, who was secretary of defense?*

GNEHM: That he was on top of things, that he was in charge, that he was coordinating and orchestrating things to support the President's objectives, that he was deft in working with foreign officials in his conversations to put the coalition together and to maintain it. Again, he was a very strong member of a very remarkable group of people.

*Q: It was really a good very good team, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: It was an incredibly good team. They seemed hand in glove with each other. I've mentioned to you several times that during these weeks Robert Kimmitt, the Undersecretary, chaired an interagency group that worked with the blessings of all of the Secretaries to deal with every issue that came up and to task which agency would take the lead and provide feedback if there was ever any trouble. You had people in the room working together to figure out how they were going to approach an issue, and you worked through problems, one after the other. So confidence began to build very quickly and, while we may have had differences, we'd get together under Kimmitt's leadership and we'd find a solution. So whether it was the CIA and what they were going to be doing, or whether it was the military in terms of rapid deployment or the agreement with the Saudis about the host nation status arrangement --- the interagency process worked very well.

*Q: Although it wouldn't have been in your province, what was the end game regarding Iraq? Did that come up at all?*

GNEHM: My notes don't reflect any such conversations.

*Q: OK, well I mean that's an answer.*

GNEHM: Right. I know that there was an assumption that Saddam couldn't suffer the defeat he was going to get and survive. So when we get down to the war and the fact that he did survive, there was some confusion within the ranks of the administration. There was uncertainty about what to do about Saddam, how to approach Iraq --- which tells me that it wasn't an issue that was dealt with carefully during this period, and maybe one of the only issues that wasn't really dealt with.

One of the things that became important for me to do --- and I did a lot --- was in the area of public relations and outreach. For example, I was asked to do two teleconferences organized by USIA. One of these teleconferences was with participants in Amman, Tunis, and Damascus, and a second one was with participants in Cairo, Abu Dhabi, and Muscat. It was interactive. I was on the screen and people in these countries could ask me questions. It was an effort to address the questions that people in the region were asking about US policy and intent.

A second large initiative that I participated in was under the AmPart program, which is American Participation. It's a program that USIS had to take American officials, not just officials but professors and others as well, abroad to explain American policies, experiences, and culture. I was put in that program to visit the region to explain American policy toward Iraqi aggression and the liberation of Kuwait. From October 20<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> I visited Abu Dhabi, Manama, Doha, Cairo where I met with government officials, the Kuwaiti communities in exile in those countries, and media and press. One consequence was that these activities gave me a very big profile in the region because I was -- short of the Secretary of State -- the person out there on television and dealing with hard issues. Having had this interactive run, I then went out to the field and in some instances I ended up meeting the people who had been on those teleconferences that I mentioned earlier. It gave me an opportunity to have a second follow-up encounter. The public appearances were really very effective. By October the big question in the region was whether the United States was truly committed to what we were claiming we would do. You might say that's crazy, look at all the troops that were there and the consistency of American statements.

*Q: I mean with a huge build-up of troops.*

GNEHM: It was the clock; it was ticking. It had now been nine weeks since the invasion and the sanctions were in place; but it didn't look like anything was happening. There were efforts by some countries like Morocco and Yemen and King Hussein of Jordan to come up with compromises and agreements, the very thing that we dreaded. You had the regional states that were very much engaged with the coalition and committed to the liberation of Kuwait, i.e. the Gulf States, Egypt, Syria, struggling to counter the diplomatic activities of some of the Arab states, such as Libya and Algeria for a while. It happens that people were asking me the basic question of America's intent and commitment. Reporting cables from the field affirmed that my teleconferences and my press conferences and meetings in the Gulf and in Cairo were extremely effective in underscoring our commitment and explaining our issues.

*Q: Did you sense any doubt with these various frontline states, that we could actually defeat the Iraqis?*

GNEHM: You mean were there any doubts?

*Q: Yeah, were they wondering whether we could or not do it?*

GNEHM: It's a very good question, and I have to come at it in several different ways. The bottom line to your question was 'yes,' that issue was at play but for some unexpected reasons. Remember that through the month of October, our public position on our troops in Saudi Arabia was that they were there for the defense of the kingdom. We were not talking about using force for the reasons that had been explained to the Amir and others. The international community was not there yet and had not concluded that there couldn't be other ways of getting Saddam out of Kuwait. Therefore we were not stressing the use of force.

At the same time – and this is the second point in response to your question -- you have American media interviewing troops in the field, talking about the vulnerability of sophisticated American military equipment to operate in a desert --- sand and grit getting into the carburetors and whether the tanks' treads could actually be effective in that kind of terrain. So while the Pentagon kept stressing that we could do it, we had interviews saying otherwise. I saw them on TV with a commander of one tank saying "Yeah, I'm worried about that." It gave some basis for some unaware readers and observers in the Arab world to wonder whether we could actually succeed militarily. By unaware, I mean unaware of the sophistication, specifics of equipment. There was also the hype about chemical and biological weapons and other Iraqi capabilities. There were assumptions that Saddam had them and would use them. The military, of course, was making sure that our forces were able to fight even if confronted with these weapons of mass destruction, as they were described. Do you remember the pictures of troops training in their gas suits? The question arose whether we were going to fight a war and successfully maneuver in such big bulky suits? That raised a little anxiety and concerns that maybe the U.S. wasn't going to be able to accomplish what we said were our objectives.

Let me just mention one really specific thing that happened. When I was doing one of my teleconferences, a young boy asked me a question from Abu Dhabi about when he was going to get to go home. I said something to him along the lines of "I don't know that I can tell you exactly when you're going to get home, but it will be soon. You will go home." When I got to Abu Dhabi, I held a press conference and the boy showed up. He stood up and said he had something he wanted to say. So I brought him up to the microphone. He was Sheikh Ahmed Khalid Al-Sabah, a member of the ruling Sabah family, nine-years old. The nightmare of any speaker is that when you give your podium to someone else, they won't quit. Well, this little boy had lots to say. He went on and on. But his most important point and question was, "I really want to go home; when am I going to get home?"

I said to him what I'd said before, that I was sure he would be going home, and I mentioned the President of the United States had poked his finger in my chest and said, "Don't unpack your bags. You are going to Kuwait."

Then he gave me a little gift--- a wood carving of a Kuwaiti door. And he said, "This reminds me of my grandmother's door. I want to go back through that door and see my grandmother."

And I said, “And you will.”

And he said, “When?”

I said, “Soon. And I will make this promise to you, Ahmed. When we get back to Kuwait, I’m going to come to your school with the biggest cake I can possibly make and your friends in that school and I are going to have a big celebration.” And I did that in October after the liberation. I went to his school with a big cake and we had a big party. My colleagues told me that those responses that I gave and these kinds of things that I did just appeared in every single newspaper in Abu Dhabi that day. And it was picked up in several regional news outlets.

I was determined to maintain a human element in the way that I approached things. I understood the conditions and the promises. Another example was when I was in Bahrain later and appeared on the morning TV talk show with the host. The host told me that on some days, when the weather is really clear, the Kuwaitis can actually see Bahrain television. And, he added, the weather conditions that morning were probably such that they will see the program. I knew right then that my message and responses during the interview were going to be different from what I thought they would be. I assumed I would be speaking to the Bahraini community and I was. But now I realized I had another very important audience as well. So when we came on air, the host asked me a couple of questions. As we got to talking, I stopped him and said, “Can I just do something? You told me before the show began that with the good weather people in Kuwait might be able to see this program. Can I say something to all of our friends and all of those people up in Kuwait that are suffering so terribly?”

He said, “Absolutely.”

So I turned into the camera and I said, “If you can see me today, I want you to hear one message from me. We are coming. You are going to be liberated. You are going to be free. That is a promise the President made to me and made to your Amir. We are coming. You do not need to doubt that. And I have only one other piece of advice. I know that you want to resist occupation. I know they have been brutal to you. But be judicious in your resistance because we want you alive when we get there.” That is pretty close to what I said that morning

And again, jumping ahead, when I got to Kuwait right after liberation, Kuwaitis said, “I saw you on television in Bahrain. You lifted our spirits and we were certain after that that liberation was coming. It was going to happen.” Even more than 25 years later, when I return to Kuwait, someone will bring up my message on the morning show from Bahrain. If you ask me about the role a diplomat even in times of war, I point to the messages that we can deliver to people in times of stress --- messages of hope and reassurance.

*Q: Yeah, great opportunity.*

GNEHM: Take advantage of the opportunity -- you know what the message is. You know what the policy is. You know what the objective is. You don't need to go into classified information. All you need to do is to just take all of that and put it into the moment of time and be conscious of the audience that you're dealing with and what their concerns are. That was one of my contributions throughout this period.

*Q: Was anybody talking to you about the Iranians? Were they trying to on their own support what we were doing?*

GNEHM: The Kuwaitis were definitely talking to the Iranians. They could; they had diplomatic relations and so there was no issue. Were the Kuwaitis wary of the Iranians? Yes. That reminds me of a conversation I had in Ta'if one night with a couple of the ministers and some other Kuwaitis who were sitting there. To my shock (and I will use that word appropriately in this case) they said to me, "Skip, you know, Iraq is not the country that worries us. It's Iran that worries us. You're going to take care of the Iraqis. They're going to go. But the Iranians..."

And I said, "Are you kidding? You're telling me while you are going occupied by the Iraqis that you are more worried about the Iranians than the Iraqis?"

And they said, "Look, Iraqis have threatened us before and we do have serious issues with them. But the Iranians are hegemonic. They have these grandiose designs on the whole region." And what I heard from them was -- and this is my effort to interpret it to the American audience -- that for the Kuwaitis, Iraq was the summer downpour like in the southern United States that I grew up with. Pretty and sunny in the day, clouds would roll in, followed by huge black clouds that dump torrents of water, and then an hour later the sun is out and steaming. Meaning the Iraqis were there and that they were trouble and bad, but then they're gone. The Iranians, on the other hand, were a frontal system. When they come in, it lasts and it may stay. Now, the Kuwaitis definitely wanted to talk to the Iranians in a way to ensure that they were at least neutral and, if not neutral, even supportive and helpful on some issues. The Iranians gave them assurances that they would be supportive of the sanctions and other things like their position diplomatically.

*Q: Now, what about all these Palestinians who'd been working in Kuwait? Do they play any role or was this a force to be reckoned with?*

GNEHM: This was a major topic of conversation and discussion throughout this period. The realities were that the Palestinian community in the country *generally* favored Arafat's position supporting Saddam Hussein in a broad sense.

But that's not everybody. Because of the economic sanctions and of the complete collapse of economic life, schools closed, life as the Palestinians generally enjoyed was non-existent. For example, some newspapers were still printing but not like before and sales of papers was almost nil. The result was an exodus of Palestinians, people who wanted their families out of a war zone, and, yes, certainly concerned about the anger from the local Kuwaiti population. There was not a lot of evidence of actions against the Palestinians during this time, because the resistance was aimed primarily toward the Iraqis. By the time the war actually begins, air war in January and the ground war in

February, the Palestinian population is much, much smaller than it was before. It was almost nonexistent by the time I went in March. There was still some number, but it was in the tens of thousands where it had been 350,000 prior to the invasion.

*Q: What about when the emir talked to the United Nations. How did that go?*

GNEHM: He was warmly received. I think he received stand-up ovation when he finished speaking. He's wasn't a strong speaker, a public speaker. He was just not trained in public speaking and he was speaking in Arabic. Nevertheless he received an overwhelming endorsement and virtually universal recognition of his plight. By the time of his appearance, there were six or seven resolutions already passed by the Security Council that condemned the invasion, imposed economic sanctions, and annulled the Iraqi decision to annex Kuwait. Others condemned Iraqi hostage taking, implemented sanctions on shipping and air, and reaffirmed the sanctity of people and diplomats -- all had been passed. The United Nations was strongly on board for all of these actions in support of the Kuwaitis.

*Q: Was there any movement during this time we're talking about of the hostages? Because we have quite a few Americans and other people in Iraq?*

GNEHM: In Iraq and in Kuwait. Yes, I spent a lot of time talking about that during the initial couple of weeks. But the consequence of all of these conversations that Joe Wilson had, or even that Nat Howell and his contributions from Kuwait, was that it became increasingly clear that Saddam was holding everybody as a trump card to play against the United States and the coalition. This was not really reconciled until December. It was December 6<sup>th</sup> that Saddam announced that he would permit all foreign nationals to leave the country. And just like that, it happened.

Going back to your question about who makes decisions. Because the Iraqi borders had been closed by Saddam, people had been kept in hotels or put around the country in different places like power plants, as a way to intimidate the west from hitting these places militarily. All of a sudden, Saddam made this announcement. I cannot explain to you why that decision was made, whether he thought the pressure was going to increase and this would release some of the tension. I don't know. It was about this time that internally in Washington the President reached a decision that it was time to withdraw our diplomats from Kuwait.

Now remember, the decision had been made back in August to maintain our diplomatic presence in Kuwait to demonstrate that we were not accepting Saddam Hussein's annexation of Kuwait. This despite his demand that all diplomatic missions close. And of course the plight of our diplomats became very difficult. After the first few weeks when people could come and go, Kuwaitis were bringing food to the embassy. They passed it through the door in those first few weeks. Then Saddam tighten security around the embassy. At some point, I don't remember exactly when it happened, he had people going around the perimeter of the embassy on the outside cutting all the water pipes providing water to the mission. He obviously anticipated that when they didn't have water

to drink, they would have to come out --- leave. Now, the lore, which the embassy in Kuwait suggested and we endorsed in Washington, was to say that the embassy was surviving by drinking the water in the swimming pool. The truth didn't come out until much later, until after they were out. There was, in fact, one small water pipe that the Iraqis missed. We wanted the Iraqis to think that we were drinking the pool water so that they wouldn't go looking for that other pipe. So, in fact, they had water. There was one point when my CIA friend/colleague called and said, "You need to call the embassy and tell them that they need to take a little water out of the swimming pool. From our satellite we can see that the level of the pool water hasn't really gone down very much. If we can see it, certainly the Iraqis who are looking over the wall can see it." He said, "Tell them to start taking buckets of water out of the, out of the swimming pool."

Now, the other lore -- and this really is Nat Howell's or Barbara Bodine's tale and not mine—was that at some point they ended up with cases of tuna fish --- a gift from a Kuwaiti as I recall. I'm talking about 36 cases of tins of tuna fish. They actually survived on eating this tuna fish for much of the time that they were there because they couldn't get other food. They had hoarded a little bit, but all of them will tell you that for a long time they had no appetite for tuna fish! So the decision was made with the concurrence of everyone that they would withdraw, and Joe Wilson had permission from the Iraqi Government. He had been told that the Iraqis were going to allow them to leave Kuwait through Iraq and then out. So on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December, Nat Howell and those who were left at the embassy did leave and drove out through Iraq. They had no significant problems, even though we anticipated they might.

*Q: While our embassy was there, what purpose was it showing other than having an embassy there?*

GNEHM: That was about it. They were not able to assist any of the Americans that were hiding out around town. They had some communications at some point because while cell phones were still working but that faded. It was a symbolic, diplomatic policy to prove that we weren't taking orders from Saddam and we weren't adhering to any of his rules and regulations. And we were not recognizing his authority or annexation.

*Q: Were you consulted regarding the diplomatic aspects of our military thinking about going into Kuwait, what should we get, where should we go and where to put troops and where not to?*

GNEHM: In a limited way. That raises an important topic --- my relationship with General Schwarzkopf in Central Command (CENTCOM). Overall it was a good relationship but there were moments of real tension. The first one erupted really early on in September when the US military that had been in Kuwait working with the Kuwaiti Air Force and our contractors fled and came out to Saudi Arabia. They wanted to continue working with the Kuwaitis in Saudi Arabia. The issue with Schwarzkopf was who did they report to? Prior to the invasion they had reported to the US Embassy in Kuwait as part of the OMC, Office of Military Cooperation. He was not about to have them report to me as the ambassador on the outside. He wanted them under his authority.

In the end it worked out with the most obvious solution, with me saying, "I don't have any problem with the chain of command. They can be under your complete and total control as long as they're still working with me and pragmatics and practicalities and with the government of Kuwait in the practical and pragmatic the way necessary to do their job." That's what was agreed to. But Schwarzkopf had a temper, short fuse, and he could often react very, very strongly. He could say things in a very angry and sometimes impolitic way that had to then be smoothed over by other people on the staff. That was often the case.

The second time there was some tension was in October. I was being briefed by Central Command about the military planning and their likely battle. I thought that there should be some briefing to the Kuwaiti government about the military planning. They were asking for it. Even beyond the briefing for the Kuwaiti Government, I had told Schwarzkopf that I needed for him to assign an officer to work in my Kuwait liaison group. He would be my liaison with CENTCOM, an advisor to me on military matters especially when my assistance was needed, and available to respond to questions from the Kuwaitis. Knowing the culture, I knew it would be wise to have a military person residing with them who they could get to know and develop the personal relationship that is so important in building trust and confidence. "Absolutely not," said Schwarzkopf. "Absolutely not! Under no circumstances am I going to do that. I am outraged that you even think to ask. I'm not going to have any military down there, nothing at all."

So we wrestled back and forth and I went to Riyadh to meet with him. In the end, he agreed that Lt. Colonel Terry Potter could reside with me in Ta'if, understanding he was under the authority of Central Command and not me. I said, "Absolutely, totally, OK. I'll just consider him my military advisor."

When the military planning was moving ahead a little later, the Kuwaitis asked for a briefing. I did ultimately get permission for Potter to brief the Cabinet on military plans, in general terms. There were no dates because we didn't have dates at that point. I felt very good about the briefing. This was the first time in the history of Kuwait that the Cabinet – the Council of Ministers -- allowed an outsider to attend a Council meeting and present a briefing.

I should mention that on October 30<sup>th</sup>, the United States announced that it was deploying an additional 200,000 troops to Saudi Arabia. That represented a big change from defense to offense. It was done with Saudi approval understanding that we had come so far down the road and sanctions were not forcing Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait. They agreed to the deployment of additional troops to communicate to Saddam clearly that we were prepared to use force, if we had to, to liberate Kuwait. If there was a date when things shift from deemphasizing the military to raising that profile, it was on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. You could not deploy another 200,000 troops and not indicate your intentions to move militarily. Again, it was at this point in time, in early November, when I made another of my many trips to Washington. I had another verbal confrontation of sorts with John Kelly. When I told him how things were developing militarily in the region and that the

Kuwaitis are getting antsy about timing, he yelled at me, “You don’t think we’re going to war for this little emirate, do you?”

And I said, “Yes! I do as a matter fact.” “Oh,” he said, “that’s outrageous. We’re never going to go to war. That’s a crazy thing to do. Where’s your head these days?”

And I’m thinking to myself -- and I think I even said it to him, “John, tanks are rolling off the ships. Troops are coming out of planes in the tens of thousands. This is not just a Hollywood presentation. This is the real stuff.” He basically asked me to get out of his office. I think that is the polite way to describe it.

*Q: Would you say that the Foreign Service team dealing with this was pretty much all on board?*

GNEHM: I had nothing but support from the department across the board, with the exception of my Assistant Secretary, who had a different idea about things and was trying to reign me in. I guess he felt I was somewhat of a provocateur perhaps.

*Q: Did you find with the Assistant Secretary who occupies an important position there that people were sort of rolling their eyes behind his back or something?*

GNEHM: Oh, absolutely, definitely. I respected his position and knew my status with him. I knew who I was. I did not mean to have these confrontations. I didn’t deliberately try to create them. But what I did know, and I could be confident about, was that if I went upstairs and saw Kimmitt or talked to the Secretary, they were totally on board with where I was. I was totally on board with where they were, whichever way you want to come at it. There was no misunderstanding at that level.

*Q: Well, did you have any feeling that -- or see elements of Kelly being bypassed?*

GNEHM: Your question reminds me that the military was not briefing at the Assistant Secretary level about their war plans. I had good relations with the military because I had been at the Pentagon. I knew them, they trusted me, and I was in the field. I had a few confrontations with Schwarzkopf over some minor things; but CENTCOM briefed me on everything. So I was privy to things that John Kelly was not privy to, if you will, in specifics. I knew that Kimmitt knew what I knew. I don’t know that the military or the seventh floor necessarily went around Kelly deliberately; but I do know that they all called me to ask me to do things that might otherwise have gone to NEA. But again, I tried always to be circumspect and humble about these things. I was asked to do things because I was so much involved in different ways --- my previous jobs, the fact that I ran Operation Center there for the first few weeks, the fact that I was in Ta’if, and the fact that I was in all the meetings at the White House. There were no other people at the State Department who had had the kind of meetings and access that I had. That’s why I got asked to call Iryani in Yemen. I called Iryani and then I immediately called our Ambassador, Charles Dunbar, to debrief him on my conversations with his foreign minister. Because of my personal relationships in Yemen, the assessment in Washington

was that I had a better chance of convincing Iryani to get Saleh's agreement to our request for their vote at the UN than the Ambassador did. Their reasoning was based solely on my personal relationship with President Saleh from my tour there and the war that we went through together.

Similarly later in the fall President Bush asked me to make two trips on his behalf. One was to see Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen to try to convince him to change his views of Saddam, and another one to King Hussein in Jordan. In both cases, Bush knew I had a personal relationships with those two and hoped that that relationship would produce desired results.

*Q: OK, how was the Jordanian element treated during this?*

GNEHM: Well, people were *not* happy with the king. In fact, the king knew that at one point in September. He actually came to the States in August to try to convince the administration that he could mediate between Saddam and the Kuwaitis. He was insistent that we did not need to go to war; he could work things out. He was rebuffed. No one believed that he could convince Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait. And then later, I think in September actually, King Hussein called Washington and, I think, spoke to the Secretary. He called to say, 'hey, I'm not behind the invasion; I didn't do anything to encourage Saddam. And I didn't get anything from Baghdad.' That was responding to the public suppositions that Saddam had somehow paid him off for his support. Our poor ambassador in Jordan was bereft in what he could do. In fact, it became clear that we were going to terminate our aid program and other things that we were doing with Jordan. The King's refusal to condemn Saddam's actions was going to cost Jordan big time.

I remember Sheikh Ali Khalifa, the Kuwaiti Minister of Finance, telling me about his conversation with his friend, the Jordanian Foreign Minister. The Foreign Minister came up to him at the UN and saying, "Oh, I'm so very sorry, you know, for what you're going through." Ali Khalifa said, "Don't be sorry for me. You need to be sorry for yourself because you have not a clue what's coming down the road for you all." He said the Foreign Minister was really taken aback at this his blunt response. The Foreign Minister said, "Well, don't take this personally..." Ali said, "*Personally?* I do take it very personally; but one thing I know." ( and this is Ali Khalifa telling me the story) "One thing I know is that I'm going to be liberated; I know I'm going home. But you haven't a clue what's going to happen to you. You're going to pay for this for a long, long time."

Now, that comes, by the way, with Ali Khalifa having told me about Kuwait's offer to King Hussein. "We have told King Hussein that we will cover all of his expenses, all of the cost to Jordan as a result of his support for Kuwait's liberation. You support us -- and that meant subsidies for oil and everything else." (They couldn't provide oil directly, of course, but they would pay for it.) The fact that the king didn't accept that deal just fed the conspiracy theory both in Kuwait and in Riyadh that there was some deal with King Hussein. Our relations had hit the rocks. We ended up pulling people out and reducing our size of our mission.

*Q: Well, were any voices saying, "Look, let's not put too much pressure on Hussein because he's an important element to the peace process with Israel with everything in that area? And if he gets too far out in front of his people who were supporting Saddam move into Kuwait it could dethrone King Hussein."*

GNEHM: Yes, that came up in discussions. At this point in time, however, the priority was clearly on the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. To the extent that the Arab-Israeli and the Palestinian-Israeli issue played a role, the concern was over potential Israeli actions that we wouldn't like vis-à-vis Saddam Hussein and not the peace process itself. When the President spoke to me about King Hussein and Ali Abdullah, it was clear that he thought he had a very good and personal relationship with both and that should make a difference in the calculation of the two on their policies toward Iraq. He thought he had a good relationship with Yemen because of his involvement in the petroleum sector in Texas and the fact that U.S. companies were working in Yemen in the petroleum sector. He had been a friend to Yemen. He was confident in his relationship with King Hussein because he visited when I was DCM and paid an official visit as Vice President. He knew the king. After all, he'd been head of CIA and he knew the special relationship the CIA had with King Hussein. He anticipated a more friendly and supportive position from those two leaders. I know he was acutely aware of their divergent views and the domestic factors both in Yemen and in Jordan. But I know he was really hurt by their position, hurt by the fact that his personal relationships with them accounted for naught, or little --- though I never heard him say it.

My conversation with Ali Abdullah Saleh lasted four and a half hours. Iryani, my friend, was with me. I tried repeatedly to make the point that he was making a terrible mistake and he didn't understand the situation. He needed to know we actually were going to use our military: we'd go all the way if we had to.

Ali Abdullah kept basically telling me that I didn't understand the region, that these sheikhdoms, like this Jabber guy, were just like the old imam of Yemen, a piece of history, they should be done away with. The people in the region would get rid of them, that's what the Kuwaiti people wanted. And I looked at him, said, "You know, you're making a huge mistake. These are not like the Imam of Yemen. This is a completely different political situation and a completely different problem." I couldn't convince him. His view was that Saddam was going to win. His view was that we weren't going to go to war like we were threatening to do, and that we were underestimating Saddam Hussein's ability to use chemical weapons particularly. I don't remember that he mentioned biological weapons. His retort to my asking if he really understood what he was getting into was some reference to Saddam and his importance to the Arab world vis-à-vis, security and what would follow.

King Hussein had a completely different personality. He listened to me. At the point in time in which I went to speak with him, which was several months after the invasion, he had not been successful in changing Saddam's mind or in convincing Washington that he had not made some deal with Saddam. He said "You played it all wrong, you the U.S.

You know, you didn't listen to me. We could have avoided all this; you would not be where we are today. And now you're coming to me?."

I said, "Yes, I am coming to you at the personal request of the President, your friend, to ask you to reconsider your public position on Saddam's aggression." I was very blunt about it, and politely blunt. There was no reason not to be. I knew how strongly the president was on this issue. I said -- even to the point of telling him-- "The president is very hurt. The president does not understand why you've done this." And Hussein repeated all the reasons why he had taken the position that he had taken. Again I was straightforward, "You've told him this, and he doesn't believe you. And you know that Saddam is a very bad person. Why do you think he won't turn on you?"

In the end I accomplished nothing in either of those capitals.

*Q: Did they have any feeling that the Iraqi Army was really getting ready for our attack?*

GNEHM: Of course once the invasion took place we did see in the subsequent month or months a larger deployment of Iraqi forces into Kuwait. They were hardly needed to control Kuwait. We all saw this as a continued threat to Saudi Arabia. There were conversations in Washington and with British and others particularly during October regarding concern that Saddam was planning an action to underscore his ability to do things. We didn't know what that action would be; but there was speculation that it could be rockets against Israel or something similar. There was concern about how Israel would react to any Iraqi attack. We were also concerned Saddam would do something worse to the population inside Kuwait, which we wouldn't be able to deal with at the early point in time. There was also concern that he would start trouble with Saudi Arabia, such as cross border military actions. There was in fact an incident in Khafji, which is a Saudi border town, just a couple of weeks after occupying Kuwait, when Iraqi forces did cross the line into Saudi Arabia.

*Q: One town where they were turned back?*

GNEHM: It's called the Battle of Khafji, where the Saudi forces fought back and the Iraqi forces withdrew. Again, was this a deliberate? Was this intended to send a signal to the Saudis was it inadvertent --- the action of a local commander? We didn't know for sure. It certainly underscored and highlighted the concern we had about the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. And again, within the U.S. military during September and October, even as we had explained to both the Saudis and the Kuwaitis, we had good air force presence and we were beginning to get a ground force presence, but we were still not ready to launch military action. We didn't use the word 'vulnerable,' but within our own military we considered ourselves vulnerable during this early period.

*Q: Where should we pick it up next time?*

GNEHM: Why don't we pick up with the evacuation of the US Embassy personnel from Kuwait City? Following their departure, we were now in the position to swear me in,

which occurred on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January. That was just before Secretary Baker went to meet Tariq Aziz in Geneva.

Before we close today, let me go back and hit two things that set the stage for what now develops. On November 29, 1990, the UNSC passed UNSC Resolution 678. It was a really important resolution. After months of intense diplomatic activity and a growing international sense that economic sanctions were not convincing Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait, the Security Council was ready to pass a resolution that authorized the use of force. Both Russia and China supported the resolution which was passed under Chapter Seven of the Charter requiring mandatory compliance by all member states. The US and our key allies had to make one concession to gain the support of several countries who feared that we would use passage of the resolution to immediately launch a military strike against Iraq. The concession, hence the resolution, gave Saddam Hussein a January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline to withdraw from Kuwait after which use of force was authorized. That placated those who were questioning a use of force resolution, because it gave them time to convince Saddam that the UN (and the coalition) were serious in demanding his withdrawal. The six week window also allowed the President to argue in domestic circles that he was doing all that he could possibly do to avoid war.

The other thing I want to mention to you, because I think it's important from our Foreign Service perspective and for the profession. Midway in the fall I was authorized to begin recruiting a core group of officers and staff who would work with me in the Kuwaiti Liaison Group in Ta'if and then would go into Kuwait with me to re-establish the US Embassy. One of my first recruits was James Seward. Jim was the administrative officer in our Consulate in Dhahran when I was sent to Riyadh. While the Embassy in Jeddah was responsible for my admin support, they were not always attentive. Jim, on the other hand, called me soon after my arrival to offer any assistance that I might need. He came through on any number of occasions. I was very impressed by his willingness to help and, even more, his incredible ability to network and get things done. Jim was now retired but I asked the Department to recall him. They agreed and Jim launched immediately to pull together personnel and material. The latter was challenging in that there was not any budget for the liaison group and he had to scrounge using his contacts to get the equipment that we needed, particularly the communication equipment. I will forever be in his debt for his service.

David Pierce, who had been the political officer in Kuwait but was outside the country when the invasion took place, was now in the region with me as my political officer. He agreed to return with me to Kuwait. Another officer was my Consular Chief, Gail Rogers. Gail had married Bruce Rogers prior to their assignment to Kuwait. She had proceeded to Kuwait ahead of her husband, who stayed for some training at FSI, and was caught there when Iraq invaded. Bruce had been with me in the Operation Center after the invasion. Gail was among the Kuwait Embassy personnel who left Kuwait in December after months trapped in the compound. I was brazen to ask Gail if she would be willing to return to Kuwait with me. She and Bruce discussed my request and agreed to go with me. She was a true representative of the dedication and commitment that I saw from Foreign Service Officers during my career. She was an excellent Consular Officer and Bruce held

down the economic portfolio. Bruce went on to become a DCM before his untimely death.

Another very important person on my team was John Frese, assigned as my Security Officer. John was an outstanding professional. He combined a deep commitment to excellence with a strong sense of compassion for people. He coordinated the security elements including the special security detail that was assigned to provide me with 24 hour security once we got to Kuwait and he organized the locally hired staff. I remember how John would get up in the middle of the night to walk around the perimeter of the Embassy to talk to the guards and thus underscore his personal concern for them and for the security of the compound. He became a close personal friend as well --- always concerned about my security but also about the pressure that I was under.

I had a few other officers, including a communication unit. They all did yeoman's service under difficult circumstances both in Ta'if and in liberated Kuwait. If I hold dear to any memories from this time, it is toward the people who supported me in these extraordinary times. They were terrific.

The Kuwaitis gave me the use of the villa just outside the hotel gate which I mentioned previously. We set up the operations of the Liaison Group in that villa. Up until this time I had been living in the hotel but didn't actually have an office. After they gave us the villa, I continued to live and eat in the hotel.

At this point, I was able to send and receive cables as the Kuwait Liaison Group. I now had a good support team. The team and the Department continued to pull together what would be needed when we were ordered to Kuwait. The cars that were used to get the people out of Kuwait ended up in Turkey. They were now driven from Turkey all the way to Saudi Arabia and given to me in Ta'if. These were vehicles that in the end were loaded on the plane that flew me into Kuwait. So these cars had made a complete circle.

So everything was actually moving along very well as we prepared for the embassy's return to a liberated Kuwait. In terms of where to pick up, I think we should aim for January 1, 1991. I was sworn in on the third. Baker leaves on the fourth or fifth of January to go to Geneva. I met him in Ta'if after his Geneva meeting when he came there to brief the Amir on that meeting.

*Q: All right, I'll turn this over to our intern.*

*INTERN: I was just wondering, did any Palestinians in Kuwait link up with the Iraqi forces at all?*

GNEHM: They did. There was a reasonably large number of Palestinians who knew Kuwait, who went to the Iraqi forces, and were cooperative and ready to show them where important buildings and material were located. There were Palestinians who worked in the Kuwaiti ministries who took Iraqi forces into the ministry to get records. There were Kuwaiti employees of these ministries who went to their offices and hid

records as well. And then there were Palestinians who actually were helping with the Kuwaiti resistance. So it was mixed.

*INTERN: You said the Saudis were worried about the Yemeni people. Had the Yemeni people ever made moves to occupy Saudi Arabia, or ever get involved?*

GNEHM: Yes, but that goes back in history. When Abdul Aziz ibn Saud unified the country, one of the last parts of present-day Saudi Arabia that he took militarily was the Asir region, which is located just north of the present Yemeni border. The people of the Asir while they are a little bit different from Yemenis, do have an affinity to Yemen as well. Yemen always saw the Saudi annexation of the Asir and the treaty that they were forced to sign that accepted the annexation as aggression. Going back still further there has always been tension on the boundary between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The Saudis know that the Yemenis harbor some hostility toward the Kingdom even as many work there. The Saudis also know that Yemenis are fighters, armed, and belligerent and that, if they could ever be mobilized, they would be a security threat to Saudi Arabia. Also given the hundreds of thousands of Yemenis living and working all over the kingdom, the Saudis were probably more concerned about subversion in the Kingdom and not a cross border invasion by an army.

*INTERN: Right. OK.*

*Q: Today is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. You were talking about picking up at the end of 1990. You said there were two things: one was the UN resolution and the other was your setting up. Did you get involved in any of the UN considerations and negotiations?*

GNEHM: No, not really. That was being done between the Department of State and USUN and between the Department and allies, permanent members of the Security Council, and others. The extent of my involvement was my discussions with the Kuwaiti government about what was going on at the UN.

*Q: Did you have the impression that the Kuwaitis had a pretty good position in the UN? Did they seem to play a pretty good role in the UN?*

GNEHM: Yes, I'd say so. There were occasional difficulties, but by and large there was overwhelming support from the UN, including in the General Assembly and the Security Council, for the liberation of Kuwait --- the demand that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait and that this was an unacceptable aggression against a member state. That particular point was one that most countries could agree on without any hesitation. There were a couple of countries that gave the Kuwaitis and us trouble such as Jordan and Yemen. Of course Iraq was a member of the UN as well, but in the Security Council, the Yemenis were very pro-Iraq and either abstained or voted against several of the resolutions. Otherwise the UNSC was unified.

*Q: What was driving the Yemenis?*

GNEHM: We felt that Saddam was giving Ali Abdullah Saleh considerable sums of money. After having had that four-hour conversation with him that I mentioned earlier, I was also willing to say to my colleagues in the department that Saleh actually believed in the republican form of government that Saddam and he represented. You could not completely dismiss his personal assessment of the region.

*Q: You were forming an embassy in exile essentially. Did you feel the hand of our Secretary of Defense? Because he certainly was influential in whom we sent to Iraq when the time came to send people in, and I was wondering whether his influence reached down?*

GNEHM: Yes, and in fact I met with the Secretary of Defense and General Powell between Christmas and New Years and right after my swearing in to coordinate with them what I was doing. I had an ongoing relationship with General Schwarzkopf and his command in Saudi Arabia. Clearly we were both aiming in the same direction, and it was going to be his action that would determine when I would be able to go into Kuwait. He was kind of a rascal. He had a temper and could be tough and hard on his deputies. Sometimes he was negative on things I needed or asked for and at other times he was totally supportive. In the end I would say that my relationship with the command was a good one overall. I was certainly kept informed and briefed.

*Q: What about Cheney, Secretary of Defense? He came out of the whole exercise with a very mixed bag reputation? Was he a problem?*

GNEHM: Not to my knowledge. Nothing that I experienced would in any way indicate that he was anything other than a prominent and influential member of the team carrying out the President's orders. His trips to get countries' agreement for deployments, his subsequent visits to the troops, and his participation in meetings in Washington, to the extent that I was aware of them, were all part of a team effort.

*Q: Were various members of the team consulting with the Kuwaitis? I mean we were going to take care of Saddam Hussein, but Kuwait in a way was not fixed in their minds outside of getting the troops out.*

GNEHM: Right. Let me start by saying that there was good communication between senior US officials and senior Kuwaiti officials. The Amir had met with the President in Washington and the Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah, came at least twice. The Secretary of State met with the Amir, the Crown Prince/Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in Ta'if after the invasion and after his meeting with Tariq Aziz in Geneva. So there were on going conversations. In truth, however, the most direct and regular communication between the U.S. Government and the Kuwaiti Government was through me or through Sheikh Saud Nasser al-Sabah, their Ambassador in Washington. Sheikh Saud and I worked together like twins. I kept him informed of everything I was doing. He did the same. Inevitably, it worked better when he weighed in as the Kuwaiti Ambassador with our government, and I weighed in as the ambassador-to-be with my

own government. Working in tandem we could get the decisions and the actions that were needed. He would often get the requests in Washington about what we needed, for example, in terms of economic support for the coalition forces. Then I would take it up directly with the same people he would be reporting to. So it was a very good relationship.

*Q: During this period, which became very controversial later on, was there any discussion of what should be the end game?*

GNEHM: Oh yes, indeed. Let me emphasize once again that the President had laid out his three objectives clearly at the beginning and repeated them in public speeches and in communications with our coalition partners and with the Amir directly. These objectives were repeated by the Secretaries of State and Defense in their conversations. In other words our policy remained consistent. However, behind the scene there were discussions and some differences. One of them came up during late November when we undertook an initiative with Iraq. We did not inform anyone, either in our coalition or in the Kuwaiti government. This initiative was a communication to Saddam Hussein in which we proposed an exchange of visits --- Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz to Washington and Secretary Baker to Baghdad --- to try to reach a diplomatic resolution. We made it very clear the visits would be on the basis of the President's three points, including total withdrawal. Well, the Kuwaitis were really upset that they didn't know about this initiative ahead of time. They were fearful that Saddam would manipulate it and procrastinate, half-respond, not respond, or otherwise buy time. They also had in mind that the UN resolution of late November authorized the use of force on January 15<sup>th</sup>, and they feared that Saddam would use these discussions that we were proposing to push that day back. In other words, he would conclude that that January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline was flexible. So there was a meeting between Sheikh Sabah, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait, and the Secretary on December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sheikh Sabah made his concern very clear when he said, "You know, we're worried that you're changing your policy and that Saddam may use this to alter the UN resolution."

The Secretary was equally clear; he said we had to do something *dramatic*. To be honest there was a sense that we did not yet have the necessary public support or the Congressional support that we needed to exercise the authority that the UNSC had given the coalition. In light of the resolution to use force, we needed to prove to our own public and to the Congress that we'd taken every possible step, short of war, to achieve our objectives --- most certainly the complete liberation of Kuwait. The Secretary said he did not expect Saddam to respond. He understood Sheikh Sabah's concerns calling them valid; but he stated emphatically that we had no intention of letting Saddam manipulate the terms of the UNSC. It was clear in our communications and our conversations with others that midnight of January 15<sup>th</sup> was hard, fast, and irreversible.

*Q: Were you getting good advice from your Arab colleagues about what was going on in Iraq?*

GNEHM: Yes, we were. They were often colored by the politics of the country, such as when Ali Abdullah Saleh would tell us 'Saddam is strong and he has backing and will defeat you,' or when Jordan would say 'this all can be resolved without war.' We had an interesting communication from the Algerian Government.

The Algerian Foreign Minister called in our Ambassador in early December, as I recollect. He said he had just come back from Baghdad and President Bouteflika had instructed him to inform the US about the conversation that had taken place with Saddam. The Foreign Minister started off by saying, "I had the most unreal conversation with Saddam that you can imagine."

According to the Algerian Foreign Minister, he tried to convince Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait, begin negotiations, and comply with the UN Security Council resolution so that there would not be a resort to force on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Saddam responded, "You don't understand. You don't know what's going to happen. I will tell you what's going to happen. When Schwarzkopf orders the troops to advance out of their trenches into Kuwait against us, the Egyptians and the Syrians are going to turn left and right, turn their guns on the Americans, and gun them down."

The Foreign Minister said, "I was just stunned that he was so out of touch with reality that he didn't realize how committed both Egypt and Syria were -- particularly Mubarak and Assad as individuals -- to confront Saddam for his invasion of Kuwait and that their support for the coalition was absolutely irrevocable."

The French came up with another idea: to send their Foreign Minister to Baghdad to try to convince Saddam to comply with the UN resolution. The Kuwaitis were very upset. The Saudis were also really upset about this, because they felt that that would actually encourage Saddam not to act. Even though the French said they were going to make it clear that the date firm, everyone was concerned that the French initiative was giving Saddam an excuse to procrastinate. In the end their initiative did not go anywhere.

It was also in the meeting with Sheikh Sabah that we discussed what to do if Saddam only takes partial steps to withdraw --- a constant concern in Washington and Ta'if. Baker said, "Yes, he might try to do that, but the resolution says total withdrawal. We will use force if he doesn't comply totally with it." The Secretary was reassuring with the Kuwaitis, but the political figures within the Administration understood that, if Saddam did respond partially, that would undercut the very strong position that we had within the UN, with our coalition, and with the U.S. public and Congress. It goes back to the reason why the President wanted to attempt this initiative with the Iraqis --- to prove that he had done everything possible to avoid war. In the end Baker never went to Baghdad nor did Tariq Aziz come to Washington. The result of our initiative was the meeting between Tariq Aziz and Baker in Geneva in early January.

The other thing to mention at this point in time was the consequence of the evacuation of our embassy people from Kuwait on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December. The issue of my status was not the same as it had been before. I mentioned that the decision was made not to swear

me in -- even though I'd been confirmed and appointed -- because that would jeopardize Nat Howell and Embassy Kuwait's diplomatic status. With his departure the question was when and how I would be sworn in. The Secretary and the President made the decision that I would be sworn in on the third of January, just prior to Baker's departure for the meeting in Geneva with Tariq Aziz. It was quite a momentous occasion. The swearing in ceremony took place in the Benjamin Franklin Room on the upper floor of the State Department. The Secretary wanted to swear me in personally. There was a huge amount of pressure from press and media to cover the swearing in. The protocol people came out with their traditional answer, which is "This is a private ceremony. We don't allow any coverage." The Secretary and Margaret Tutwiler, his press spokesperson, overruled them immediately. It was the first time there were ever cameras and live filming of a swearing in. There was a platform directly across the room from the podium with a panoply of press. The reason for the public swearing in was that the administration wanted to send a public message, both to the American people and to the Kuwaitis that the time had come and action was moving forward. The Secretary made very significant remarks about the President's policy and our intentions including that he would be meeting with Tariq Aziz, but there would be no change to our policy. Saddam had to comply entirely and totally with UNSC resolutions. He had essentially until the 15<sup>th</sup> but really the 14<sup>th</sup> because 15<sup>th</sup> would probably be too late for him to actually comply.

On a personal note the swearing in was very meaningful to me. All the senior officials involved in our Iraq policy were present including Secretary Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell. But most important was the presence of my extended family. Also present was my former scoutmaster, one of the people who inspired me as I was growing up. And then there was the presence of Sheikh Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador, with whom I had worked so closely and developed a deep personal friendship. The one picture from that day that I cherish is one of our embrace after the ceremony which I have always viewed as a personification of our special relationship.

*Q: What can you say about the well-publicized meeting between Baker and Tariq Aziz in Geneva?*

GNEHM: Before I answer your question, let me tell you about my conversation with my Assistant Secretary, John Kelly, in December and subsequent meeting with General Powell. At some point as John and I were discussing Secretary Baker's upcoming meeting with Tariq Aziz, I commented that I had better take more than one suitcase when I went out to Ta'if this time --- obviously anticipating that I might not return to Washington before going into Kuwait. John's responded emphatically that I would be coming back to Washington --- no question. In fact when I tried to explain why I thought I should take more clothes, he said he had just given me an order! "You will come back. That's that!"

In my opinion John once again was out of touch with the movement of events and the direction of developments on the ground in the region. I thought my returning to Washington the first week of January was absurd certainly not in sync with the direction

of events. Just before the New Year I went to the Pentagon to see General Powell. We talked about the current situation in the region and the upcoming meeting in Geneva. Then I posed the question that I intended to raise with him. "Sir, do you think it wise for me to be traveling back west when everyone else is headed east?" He tilted his head and looked straight at me. "You take your orders from the Secretary of State." "Yes," I said, "I take my orders from the Secretary of State. Now do you think it odd that I would be traveling west when everyone and everything is moving east?" "Yes," he said, "I think it odd."

Regardless of John's 'order' I made the decision that I would take at least two, if not three, suit cases back to Ta'if and I would just see how travel plans might unfold. My next conversation with John on this subject came at the airport in Ta'if when he arrived on the plane with the Secretary from Geneva. I will cover that after answering your question about the Geneva meeting.

The setting, as I recollect it, was a large conference table in a hotel, with the Americans on one side, the Iraqis on the other, and a huge flower arrangement in the middle that almost obstructed the view each had of the other. Baker laid out essentially what we'd been talking about --- specifically the requirement that Iraq comply with all UNSC resolutions in their entirety. After Baker made his verbal presentation, he reached across the table to hand Tariq Aziz a letter from the President to Saddam Hussein. Tariq Aziz simply refused to take it by making no motion to accept it. The Secretary purportedly dropped the letter on the table and for months the lore, the legend, was that that the letter was still sitting on the table in the hotel in Geneva (*laughs*), because nobody wanted to move it.

*Q: (laughs)*

GNEHM: I don't know whether that's really true or not.

*Q: Was there any effort to publicize the awesome power that the United States had. I mean this was the first real use of weapons like guided missiles. Were there attempts to try to let Saddam Hussein know what he was up against?*

GNEHM: That's one of the points the Algerian foreign minister was trying to make to us. He said, "I tried to tell Saddam about the kind of weaponry that was coming against him, and that no matter how much Saddam had, it wasn't a match for all that was coming." Saddam just refused to acknowledge that that was true. It's an interesting question that you posed because I remember during all of these weeks during our build-up, we were looking at intelligence trying to determine the reality of his chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities. We didn't have the best information, and we didn't have on-the-ground covert informers inside Iraq. Those who worked with the Iraqis were not in any sensitive areas. So our information about Iraq WMD capabilities was largely based on rumors.

You also had a media that was really hyped about whether or not our sophisticated equipment would actually work in the desert environment as well as what some in the military were saying. I remember one news clip on an evening news program. The interviewer was standing in front of the M1/A1 Abrams tank with the commander. He was asked, "I realize this is the most sophisticated tank in the world. Will this tank work after it's been in the desert for three months and when it's churning through the sand?"

The commander said, "I think it will, but there could be problems."

It seemed that the press was bent on questioning whether our high tech material was really going to work, especially with the risks of chemical and biological weapons.

*Q: They were also building up how the Iraqi Army had fought a major war against Iran and won.*

GNEHM: You are quite right. They were hyping the capability of the Iraqi military. Numerically, it was the fourth largest military on the face of the earth, seasoned, experienced from war, and assessed to be a difficult military to confront. At the time, the press and some of our own analysts overlooked the fact that during the Iran-Iraq War this highly lauded army didn't perform that well. They took land, but then they lost every bit of it. They really weren't ever able to defeat the Iranians for multiple reasons. I think you're quite right that the atmosphere as we approached January wasn't as certain as it was in retrospect.

*Q: Yeah, it became the world's greatest spectator sport during the war, watching the wonders of smart bombs.*

GNEHM: Well, we're not quite there yet. I want to tell you about a few things that happen before we started bombing. Prior to the fighting the media actually did come to the Pentagon to ask if their embedded reporters could have cameras placed on their shoulders or heads, so when they went in with the troops, they would be able to get real time pictures of the fighting for audiences here in the States. Well, you can imagine the reaction of the Pentagon. "Are you kidding?" This request was impossible to fulfill, but the media accused the Pentagon of not being open. Finally, the one reason the Pentagon concluded it could give and still receive public support was 'we are *not* going to have an American family sitting in their living room seeing their son move forward, get shot and killed, right there in front of them on television. We're not going to have that happen.'

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: Then the press had to fall off because they couldn't really argue against that. Of course the enemy would have had real time intelligence as well. If you've got a good television set in Baghdad (*laughs*), you just got all the intelligence you needed to make tactical decisions on the battle field. So it wasn't a smart idea, but this was the kind of milieu that we were dealing with.

As I mentioned, I was not at the meeting in Geneva. I had flown ahead to be in place in Ta'if when Secretary Baker came, but I was in the meeting when he briefed the Amir on that meeting. But before I get to that conversation, I had an encounter with John Kelly at the airport in Ta'if when they landed. I was at the foot of the steps to greet the Secretary. John was right behind me and immediately pulled me aside. Heatedly, he asked if I was planning to return to Washington after the visit and that the Secretary would be angry if I intended to remain in Ta'if. He said that he was putting me in the car with the Secretary and I had better explain myself to him --- or else (whatever that meant).

I did ride in the car with the Secretary and during the rather long ride to the hotel to meet the Amir, we had a long and good conversation about Geneva and about the likely course of events. I told him that I thought it best that I remain in Ta'if. "Where else would you be?" he responded. I chuckled and told him I had brought some extra clothes just in case I ended up in Kuwait before my next visit to Washington. "Good thinking" was his reply. When we arrived at the hotel, John came running from his car, grabbed my arm, and asked if I had told the Secretary I was returning to Washington. I said, "We did talk and he thinks I should stay in Ta'if." The crush of the moment ended any further conversation. And I stayed in Ta'if!

The Secretary went directly to see the Amir. It was an interesting conversation. He said he was with Tariq Aziz for six hours and that he had underscored repeatedly the certainty of the January 15<sup>th</sup> date. He had told Tariq Aziz that, if Saddam withdrew entirely, there would be no attack. If he didn't, he could count on an attack.

Another issue that speaks to the question about other pressures that were at play was the Arab-Israeli dispute. If I can just step back a little bit, the Arabs had raised with President Bush the need for serious US attention to the Arab-Israeli dispute. They said they needed this not only because the issue needed attention, but because it would placate opposition within their own countries at working with the United States in a military venture against another Arab country. Early in the fall Bush had resisted linking those two issues. He had told the Saudis, in particular, that he just simply wasn't going to make that kind of commitment. However, when we got into November and faced the decision of deploying large numbers of troops and using force, Bush relented and promised, "I will undertake a serious effort after we've dealt with this problem to try and resolve the Palestinian-Israeli one." Now that set in motion the possibility that the Iraqis would come to us and say, "OK, we'll do this, we'll comply, but we want a commitment from you that you will do X, Y, and Z on the Arab-Israeli issue." We had told this to the Kuwaitis earlier and Tariq Aziz in Geneva. We reassured the Kuwaitis again, that we were not allowing that issue to impact on the UN Security Council resolutions. The Kuwaitis were fearful of that. In fact, the French played on this issue as well just to be a little less than helpful to us.

The second part of that conversation in Ta'if had to do with financial support. Baker said, "In our earlier conversations in the fall we talked about the financial support that we need from you, and I'm back to talk about it again. I want you to understand that we're going to be spending a lot of our own money, but we're going to need to have financial support. This is very important in getting domestic support at home, to be able to say that we're

being financially supported by you and others. We are talking to other countries about their share of this.” He brought up Turkey as a country in particular need. This was because Turkey needed aid and Özal, the Prime Minister at the time, was very committed to the coalition but had a lot of domestic opposition. We felt like significant economic support would help shore him up politically at home. The Secretary gave the Amir a copy of the letter that he had tried to give Tariq Aziz. The Amir was very pleased with the way the letter was worded. So there were no difficulties there. Regarding finances, the Amir said, “There’s no problem here. I’ve told you before that we are committed to support you. Yes, talk to the Crown Prince about the details.”

Baker asked the Amir, “What do you think Saddam is likely to do between now and the 15<sup>th</sup>?”

The Amir said, “Look, Saddam only cares for himself. He doesn’t care about his people or whether he gets hit. I doubt he will do anything to comply. Maybe at the last moment he will announce the withdrawal but won’t be able to complete it by the 15<sup>th</sup>. He’ll announce it at the last minute and we’ll be kind of stuck.”

To which Baker said, “No, we won’t be stuck. He has to do it before midnight on the 15<sup>th</sup>. He knows that that is what the UNSC resolution and the President’s letter said.”

Then the Secretary said to the Amir, “The government of Kuwait must be ready to return immediately as Kuwait is freed.” This became an issue later when the government of Kuwait didn’t go back as fast as the United States thought they should, and I ended up going in ahead of the government.

The meeting with the Crown Prince that followed right afterwards was also very good. The Crown Prince had started off saying, “Look, you’re going to be very happy with the answer to your questions on finances. So let’s just start there. Don’t worry about it.”

He then went on to ask when the coalition forces would move in. Again, the 15<sup>th</sup> is the cutoff, but that didn’t necessarily mean we were going to start the war on that date. He kept pressing because all during this fall and even with the meeting with Tariq Aziz, the Kuwaitis wanted to know, “When is it going to happen? Why are we waiting?”

At this point the Secretary just said to him, “Look, it’s not going to be before the 15<sup>th</sup>, that’s for sure, but afterwards military action is authorized. I’ll tell you honestly that no time is set. Due to operational security the President hasn’t yet made the decision, but I want to be clear. You are not going to be notified in advance, nor any of our allies. The military will know; we’ll know; and we will be in touch with you when it starts.”

There was a discussion regarding the upcoming congressional vote that took place a couple of days later on the 12<sup>th</sup>. Baker basically told him that he thought the House was fine. The Senate might be a little bit tougher, but that he thought the resolution giving the President authority to use force would go through. The conversation went back to the issue of finances and direct support. In addition to Turkey, Eastern Europe was the other

area that Baker was hoping to get financial support for. He then talks about Desert Shield and he said, "We need about 850 million dollars if there is no hostilities. Obviously if there are hostilities, we'll need to come back to you. We're going to be asking Congress for 32 billion dollars for the balance of FY-91, and we are asking the Saudis for a similar amount of 850 million dollars." He mentioned several other countries who were being approached with a sum for UAE at 400 million dollars, Germany at 335 million, Japan at 500 million. Those last two countries by law and constitution couldn't send troops or military equipment, so the Secretary said we were pressed them for financial support. We asked Italy for 155 million. He said, "We're not asking the UK and France, because they are contributing troops."

The Crown Prince replied, "Understood, not a problem. We do understand."

Then Baker got very specific about Turkey. He said, "We want to start over a five-year period a five billion dollar defense fund for Turkey. The U.S. and Turkey each are going to contribute a billion. We're asking Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and you to contribute the other three billion in 200 million dollar installments for five years."

Well, the Crown Prince was a little hesitant about this. He said, "Look, we have already given Turkey some money. We will be giving them more, but this idea of a five-year fund at that level, are you sure you know who'll be prime minister of Turkey in five years?"

That request was left unresolved. For the Eastern European countries they were talking about a figure of around 800 million dollars.

It was in the middle of January that the French came up with the initiative that I mentioned to you earlier. On the 14<sup>th</sup> the French talked to the Saudis and said they were going to seek a UN Security Council resolution that would in fact delay the January 15<sup>th</sup> deadline if Saddam Hussein withdrew any troops, in other words started to withdraw, and they would promise the International Conference on the Peace Process within six months. The Saudis opposed the first entirely. They asked the French, "Have you talked to the U.S.?" The French said 'no,' and the Saudis said, "What? You're an ally and you haven't talked to them about a UN Security Council resolution? How in the world are you going to promise an international conference in six months when it's the U.S. that's usually in the lead on this?"

Well, the Saudis briefed us on what the French were going to do this. We talked to the French and in the end they didn't go through with it. This is just to give a sense of the efforts taken to hold everything together. There were other issues that were at play in the first two weeks of January that had to do with the civil affairs group that had been called up to plan for the rebuilding and the reconstruction of Kuwait. The first issue was a tendency on the Kuwaiti side to take forever to make decisions. Right before January 15<sup>th</sup> there were several contracts that had not been signed, and I was putting a lot of pressure on the government in Ta'if as was Washington through Sheikh Saud. For example, there was the contract for the water trucks so that we could provide water in Kuwait, a contract

with a core of engineers, and then there was a contract that the working group on reconstruction had recommended with Parsons, a U.S. firm. The idea was to have Parsons monitor --- coordinate --- the reconstruction effort. The Kuwaitis could not understand why we were pushing Parsons for this very large, what to them looked like a very lucrative contract. It was a multi-million dollar contract. They could not understand why the US Army Corps of Engineers could not do this work. We explained that the Corps of Engineers does not do the actual construction; they supervise and manage the work. They'll go in and decide what a building needs, but they don't do the work. I learned, as this frustration went on, that in the Kuwaiti mind, when people push a company for a contract, there was some lucrative under the table dealings going on. Even though we don't work that way, that's how they saw our motivations. That's what led them to not sign the contract with Parsons.

The other part of the problem was an ongoing series of questions about the role, location, leadership, and operation of the civil affairs group. I had written a long telegram arguing the necessity for having the group collocate with me when we went into the country because what they were going to be doing were largely the kinds of things that I would be having to deal with, such as water, sanitation, health, hospitals, etc. They were the ones familiar with these sectors and had relationships with their Kuwaiti counterparts. I got reassurances several different times that they would be collocated with me. Then someone somewhere in the military hierarchy would issue orders that were directly contrary to that understanding. For example, the army issued orders for them to report to Dhahran to be deployed into Kuwait as traffic police. I said, "What? You're a health person. You're going to be out standing on a street corner directing traffic? I don't know what your plan was. That's not what we've been doing since September." I kept thinking I had the matter reconciled and then would find out that somewhere in the military system (*laughs*), it wasn't.

*Q: Did the Kuwaitis have a military that had capabilities for things like traffic control and water distribution? In other words, did they have rather multipurpose military?*

GNEHM: No, the Kuwaiti military was not organized in that way. They did not have the capability that we have in our army. Our civil affairs units were reservists. Back in September, there were concerns about calling up even the small number that they did because it would hit the newspapers as reservists being called up for the war. The administration didn't want that kind of publicity at that point in time. It did explain successfully that this was a very small group of people with lots of special expertise. The person who was the water and sanitation expert in this task force was none other than the head of the Washington Area Water and Sanitation Commission. I remember at the beginning when the Civil Affairs Unit showed up with their Kuwaiti counterparts in their fatigues, the Kuwaitis looked at them with some concern. I knew what people like the Crown Prince and others were thinking: 'I know what our soldiers who look like that know, and that's nothing. Why is the US giving us a group of people who know nothing?' I mean that was just a cultural snap. It was my job, as the ambassador, to explain their expertise to the Kuwaitis. They learned within a few weeks that these people were real experts in their respective fields.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: On the 15<sup>th</sup>, I got a call from General Graves informing me that the Civil Affairs Unit would be mine, and to continue their work as had always been planned. I was skeptical that that was really the resolution of the issue, but in the end they were with me. The 17<sup>th</sup> of January, Fitzwater at the White House announced, “the liberation of Kuwait has begun.” CNN was broadcasting the very famous clip from Baghdad of bombs and flashes and lights. That began what we labeled “the Air War” that went on from the 17<sup>th</sup> of January until the decision was made to launch the ground war on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February. So we’re talking about five and a half weeks of bombing. Well, I can tell you exactly when it began because I was in the hotel when it started. There were shouts and celebrations among the Kuwaitis in that Ta’if hotel like you’ve never saw before. All were glued to the television like lots of Americans were everywhere. As this air war went on and on and on I could feel the level of frustration growing over just how long the air war was going to last. On the second day, Saddam fired seven SCUD missiles at Israel, killing one Israeli. This led to a number of very intense negotiations between us and the Israelis. Again we were concerned that if the Israel retaliated, it would cause us problems with our Arab coalition partners (and their publics).

*Q: Did you get involved in convincing the Kuwaitis to acknowledge that the Israelis were there?*

GNEHM: I didn't mince any words about it. I had described to them how the Israelis were under pressure to retaliate, and that we obviously did not favor that because of the Kuwaiti concerns. They actually understood our position with the Israelis and that satisfied them. Of course in the end the Israeli government announced a few days later that they would not retaliate, and then they later denied that they ever told us that. It was their domestic politics that dictated what they said publicly. We ultimately offered Israel the deployment of the patriot missile system as an air defense system, and that gave the government of Israel some cover domestically. The Israelis did stay out of the fighting, but there were interesting conversations with the Syrians and the Jordanians and the Egyptians about possible Israeli actions. Egyptians were relaxed about it, as you might imagine, since they had diplomatic relations with Israel. They basically said, “We understand Israel’s need for self-defense.” The Syrians were interesting. The Syrians told us, confidentially, that if the Israelis decide to retaliate against Iraq they would not leave the coalition; but, if they attacked them or the Jordanians, it’s another whole game. Now, the Israelis never did retaliate against Iraq, but I thought it was interesting that the Syrians said at one point, very clearly, “We’re not leaving the coalition now.” Again, we still didn't want the Israelis involved because you have the whole Arab-Israeli tension throughout the region, and it would have complicated our alliances.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: Now, the other action that we undertook to address Israeli concerns, in addition to deployment of the Patriot system, was that Schwarzkopf made hitting the SCUD

launch sites in western Iraq a top priority. I can't tell you that he was ordered to. I think he might have concluded to do it himself, but maybe it was a combination of both. We were flying air cover and searching for the mobile SCUD launchers to try to destroy them before they could launch missiles at Israel. They are easily hidden in the desert and fired quickly. By the time you get the coordinates, the launcher is no longer anywhere where it was before. We were conscientious in efforts to find and destroy the mobile launchers; but it wasn't entirely successful. So there were continued launches of SCUDs against Israel for a period of some time.

*Q: What was your impression of the Saudi military and its build-up?*

GNEHM: I did not have a lot to do with it, so my knowledge of that is through debriefs about the situation from either the Embassy in Riyadh or from the Central Command. My knowledge was not always complete because I didn't get briefings every day. I got them when I was up to Riyadh or when my liaison officer had some information. My impression was that the Saudis were fully mobilized. HRH Prince Khaled bin Sultan was the general on the Saudi side, Schwarzkopf's counterpart. He was collocated in the headquarters with Schwarzkopf. He's a rather interesting personality (*laughs*). He has an enormous ego and he sometimes had ideas that didn't quite meet with the way Schwarzkopf thought things should go.

*Q: Did the Kuwaitis have a significant military force in Saudi Arabia when this started?*

GNEHM: I wouldn't call it significant because they don't have a significant military force, period. Of course what they did have was denigrated considerably by the fact that it had to flee. They made good efforts to reconstitute their military with significant assistance from the US.

They did manage to get many of their tanks to Saudi Arabia and they flew the F18s and the Mirages out. The F18s were maintained by DynCorp in Kuwait before the invasion. DynCorp also came out of Kuwait at the same time as the Kuwaitis, and just restarted their support for those planes to keep them flying. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the air war, Kuwaiti planes actually flew over Iraq with ours. The administration made that a key public relations point. The Kuwaitis were very proud of it. I know they only dropped iron bombs, but they were there. They were in the air. They actually lost a plane at one point. It was a little more than symbolic since they did fight with us. It was important for us domestically in the United States to be able to say, "They're fighting for their own liberation, but they don't have the ability to fight the Iraqis without us."

Now, there was another development I should mention to illustrate the kind of problems that we faced. The last weeks of January after the bombing started, the Kuwaiti employees in the Burgan oil field bribed some Iraqis to get access to the oil fields. They disconnected the wires to the detonators that the Iraqis had placed on the wellheads. The Iraqis had planned to blow up the oil field so this was quite a successful operation by the resistance inside Kuwait. I was told about this effort from Kuwaiti individuals who actually went into the oil fields. Astonishingly, the Oil Minister of Kuwait told a news

conference that he wasn't concerned about destruction of the oil fields because they have taken care of it. This remark prompted the Iraqis to check the wells and discover what had happened.

Toward the end of the month, some of the wells were burning and there was significant leakage into the Persian Gulf from the refinery and export port. This becomes a huge issue for the Saudis and us. The current in the Gulf is counter clockwise. It carried the oil slick down from the leakage down to the Saudi coast. The Saudis wanted it stopped. We do too, of course, but the Saudis were insistent that we take out the facility so that there would be no more leakage into the Gulf. The Kuwaitis go ballistic at the thought of bombing their oil installations even if it was to stop the leakage. It is their sole source of revenue. At one point the U.S. Military was looking at the possibility of an airstrike on the island station, the offshore buoy, or other sites. Sheikh Ali Khalifa, the Kuwaiti Oil Minister, called me, "Skip, if you all take that out it will be two years before we're able to export oil." So we went back to the drawing boards. The US military was asking to see the plans for the oil complex. We had learned that a set of the plans was in the London office of the oil company. At first the Kuwaitis refused to share them --- arguing that they were sensitive. Ultimately, they did agree for us to see them. I remember sitting on the floor in the Crown Prince's office with him in the hotel with the engineering plans of the facility. He kept repeating, "You can't bomb our facility. You can't bomb it."

Ultimately, from the plans of the facility, we determined that, if we hit two manifolds, we would cause an emergency shut-down that would stop the leakage. Later, I was called in and told that the resistance had been able to turn the valve off, again by bribing the Iraqi guards. This was not satisfactory to the Saudis or to us since the Iraqis could go back and turn it on again. To prevent this, we did hit the facility. We were not sure right away whether the strike succeeded in stopping the flow. I can tell you that the conversations that I had with the Crown Prince over the next few hours were really difficult.

In the end, the oil technicians said that given all the things that could have been done, it was the most insignificant of actions and the damage could be repaired quite quickly at a later date. Before we reached February 24<sup>th</sup>, when troops were ordered in, the Iraqis set charges off on the well heads of around 1,100 different wells around the country. This created not just an oil spill on land, but a huge plume of black smoke, soot and oil that was carried by the wind and Gulf currents southward. That plume went all the way to the United Arab Emirates. That is a long way down the Gulf.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: Therefore it covered part of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar. It was contained in the sense that it looked like a river of smoke. When I was in Kuwait, the oil fields were still burning. One day the wind moved the plume of smoke across the city of Kuwait. When it was exactly over the embassy at about 1:00 pm, the city was pitch black. I mean there was no light anywhere. The plume was that wide and that thick. So you can imagine as it swept back and forth across the coast of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and Qatar and UAE, it was a big, big issue. One of President Bush's national security

directives stated clearly that, if the Iraqis destroy or try to destroy the oil fields, that act will precipitate the military action on the ground. I think that was one of the reasons why President Bush decided to move at that time.

*Q: Well, in the war fighting business, was it pretty much the coalition versus the Iraqi Army. Was there much input on the Kuwaiti side on say, the war fighting?*

GNEHM: It was limited. In fact, I recently found a piece of paper that I actually used to brief the Kuwaitis on our targets. Once military action started the reference to the military presence changed from Desert Shield to Desert Storm. But from January 17 to February 24 it was air and naval action, not ground. We were hitting command-and-control sites. We were trying to hit leadership, air defenses, nuclear sites, and chemical and biological weapon sites to degrade the ability of the Iraqis to fight but especially to use their weapons of mass destruction. We also wanted to hit SCUD sites. Saudi Arabia was also taking scuds hits, and I think at least one or two hit Bahrain. SCUDS are indiscriminate missiles. They have no guidance system. You shoot them up into the air and they fall wherever their trajectory takes them. I remember being in Riyadh one night when the sirens went off watching the incoming SCUDS and the explosion and flash when they hit ground. They landed in residential areas largely. They create terror.

*Q: I interviewed Ken Stammerman, and he talked about something that occurred to all of us watching this here in Arlington. There was a well-known reporter standing on the rooftop in Dhahran saying, "Well, that one fell over here and that one fell here." If you knew about scuds you knew that they really weren't that directed, but people were calling from the States saying that he was helping the Iraqis aim the missiles.*

GNEHM: You are right in your description of the SCUD's capability. Remember, tragically one of the SCUDs actually hit a US military mess hall. We lost more Americans because of that one SCUD missile, which only happened to land in the mess hall, than we did at any other point in the war.

*Q: Was there any concern about the Saudi populous as far as what they might do after absorbing these attacks?*

GNEHM: There really wasn't, at least not that I was aware of. During the trip or two I took to Riyadh we all did the very thing we were told not to do. We all went to the rooftop to watch it.

There definitely was concern in the population about their welfare, but if you're asking whether there was rising criticism against the government for being involved, no, I think they all viewed Saddam as a real threat.

*Q: Did you get involved or see anything about American embassy personnel in Saudi Arabia or even in your own staff being unduly nervous about these attacks?*

GNEHM: I don't remember that at all. My staff was located in Ta'if at this point in time -- out of the range of the SCUD missiles.

*Q: I ask because I remember interviewing Chas, and I think he was critical of how the State Department handled people who bailed out of his embassy.*

GNEHM: OK.

*Q: This was a time of war and you don't leave your post, and these are some people that just basically said, "I can't stay here." Some felt they were treated with a little too much insensitivity.*

GNEHM: Look, let me say this on this issue. I was putting together the team that was going to go in with me to Kuwait under completely uncertain circumstances. I reached out at the first instance to a person by the name of Jim Seward who I mentioned earlier. He enthusiastically volunteered to come back into the Foreign Service to be my admin person in a hostile environment. I reached out to Mark Johnson to be my DCM. "Absolutely," he said. I asked David Pierce, who had been in Kuwait if he would stay with me and go back in. "Absolutely." I already mentioned that I had the nerve to ask one of the diplomats who had been trapped in Kuwait over four months if she would return to Kuwait with me. She thought about it for a few days and said, "Yes, I'll go back in with you."

What I know is the commitment and the dedication of so many officers to do what needs to be done in situations like this. I want to just add one other observation. When I was in Beirut in 1975 in the middle of really intense shelling and we were evacuating people under fire, what I learned was something that I've never forgotten to this day. Some of the officers in the Arabic school that I thought were solid, strong, and reliable went to pieces. On the other hand, a couple of people that I thought would not do well in such a situation were the ones that actually lifted the heavy weight. What I learned in that was the way people react under pressure can be very different from the way they are in normal circumstances. Some people are not just able to handle that situation, and you have to accept that. That doesn't mean they're not great officers and able to do terrific jobs in another situation. That's just the way life is. I gather from what you're saying that Chas implied that the Department's reaction to some who wanted to leave was not appropriate or at least led his employees to feel discriminated against in some way. That's just not appropriate. I learned a lot in these situations. I had a great team, a *great* team. I never once had any concern about these people and what they would do. They were all gung-ho, all committed, all directed.

*Q: This is probably a good place to stop. And we'll pick this up where?*

GNEHM: I think we should pick this up in mid-February when we launch the ground war and then I move to Dhahran and then Kuwait.

*Q: OK. Now, would you like to ask a question?*

*INTERN: Just one. I don't seem to understand. If Howell's already in Kuwait as ambassador, why did they send you? Why wasn't he doing what you ended up doing?*

GNEHM: First of all, Nat's three-year tour was due to end in the summer of 1990. He was staying in Kuwait until I got confirmed and could be sworn in. He would then leave to go to his next assignment and I would go in as the new ambassador. When the Iraqis invaded, he was in the embassy and stuck. When Saddam ordered all the embassies closed claiming there was no longer a country for the staff to be accredited to, we refused to accept that. We didn't want to withdraw Nat and his staff to make it look like we were acquiescing in the annexation and thus accepting that there was no longer a Kuwait. So he could not get out of Kuwait to do what I was doing. We needed him to stay there to maintain this policy position. I couldn't go after the invasion, and the government in exile needed someone as a liaison with us. I was the natural person for this assignment because I was designated as the next ambassador and I was at least confirmed by the Senate.

*INTERN: So since he was the sworn-in ambassador, his presence at the embassy was recognizing Kuwait still being a country, and that was why they were remaining in the embassy because the Iraqis did not want them to leave.*

GNEHM: That's right.

*Q: Today is the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, we're basically starting when the allied attack on Iraq started. Were you at all privy, or were the Kuwaitis privy, to the planning or anything of this nature?*

GNEHM: Well, the Kuwaitis were privy to planning particularly because the small Kuwaiti military was in effect working as part of the coalition. So when the action began on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, there were actually Kuwaiti air force planes that flew that day. The United States made a big point of that in the public affairs presentations. That was very important for the American public and for American Congress to know that the Kuwaitis were willing to fight for their own liberation, even though it was a few planes.

*Q: Was there any problem with that from your point of view?*

GNEHM: No, not at all. They dropped iron bombs that were not that sophisticated, but that's what the planes were configured to do. There was a lot of pride among the Kuwaitis in Ta'if that they were there fighting and flying. So it was an exciting moment.

In an earlier conversation, the Secretary had told the Amir that the date was approaching, but he couldn't tell him exactly when it would occur. In fact, he would not tell them in advance and we would not tell anyone else in advance because of the element of surprise. The President did call the Amir when ground action was launched to tell him. I learned about it about half-hour later. When I went to see him, he smiled and said, "You know, I've already heard – the President already called me." Of course as you can imagine, the hotel where I was staying in Ta'if was nothing but a jubilant celebration.

*Q: Was there any concern that you felt or that anyone else was expressing about weapons of mass destruction or surprises that Saddam Hussein might have tucked up his sleeve?*

GNEHM: Yes, this was a constant concern, particularly chemical weapons. From the 17<sup>th</sup> of January until the decision was made actually to launch the ground war, there were almost always a section in the daily reports, the briefings, and the battle damage assessments focused on our efforts to take out the sites that we thought were storage locations for chemical weapons. I don't remember much in the reports on the biological weapons. It was mentioned a couple of times, but usually the focus was on chemical weapons. The other item that was a constant issue from almost the beginning remained the SCUD missiles that Iraq fired toward Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. That was clearly Saddam's effort—especially as it related to Israel--to draw them in hoping that Israeli involvement would impact negatively on the Arab states in the coalition. Our diplomatic efforts with the Israelis focused on trying to keep them from responding. Our partial reassurance to them, as I mentioned previously, was the deployment of patriot missile-aligned defense systems to demonstrate to the Israeli public that we were standing beside them. As I mentioned before, they ultimately agreed not to retaliate against Iraq.

*Q: Did the Kuwaitis do anything that you were aware of up to the attack and during the attack, against the Jordanians? The Jordanians had a lot of people working in Kuwait, but they did not join the coalition.*

GNEHM: Yes, in this period from the 17<sup>th</sup> of January when the air war started to the order to go in with ground forces in late February, there were a number of different conversations where the issue of Jordan arose. In briefings I learned that King Hussein had issued orders to his military that they were to make no favorable remarks about the coalition or U.S. efforts. He also instructed them not to make any negative comments about Saddam Hussein and Iraq and what they were doing. We were not happy with the Jordanians.

Then a bit later in the middle of February, there was another note that the Jordanians were actually jamming our search and rescue frequency, making it difficult for our planes that were flying over Iraq, not Jordan. They were actually jamming us and so there was a great deal of hostility toward Jordan by the U.S. government, and certainly great animus by the Kuwaitis. By the way, the Saudis were absolutely certain that King Hussein was an ally to Saddam almost in a formal sense. He was using his diplomatic connections around the world against the coalition. In fact, King Hussein sent a letter to Turkey and also to Damascus and Cairo as well -- asking them formally to withdraw from the coalition. That was an active overt effort in opposition to the things we were doing.

*Q: Was there the feeling that the King Hussein was playing sort of a kabuki game or going through the motions, not really committed to Iraq? Or how did we feel about it?*

GNEHM: No, I think we felt he was serious. I know that President Bush felt he had a personal relationship with King Hussein and made a number of efforts to reach out to

him. As I mentioned to you, he actually sent me there in the fall of '90 where I had a long conversation with the king. He just basically said, "You know, you're all wrong. What you're doing is not the right way to go. There's a way to solve this peacefully." When the war started his actions were clearly hostile.

*Q: This didn't put the Jordanians in a very good light.*

GNEHM: Not at all, Their bed partners were the PLO and Arafat, who had announced publicly that they not only supported Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait but recognized Kuwait as a province of Iraq. Arafat went further calling upon all Palestinians to support the Iraqis. Now again, it's important to remember that there was a very large Palestinian population in Jordan. I don't, however, believe that that was a significant factor in King Hussein's mind. I think it had all to do with his relationship with Saddam Hussein that had built up over the previous decade.

*Q: King Hussein came out of this in pretty good even though that outcome was not necessarily in the cards. It could have easily turned against Jordan.*

GNEHM: I remember a conversation that I had with his son, King Abdullah in 2002, when I was Ambassador to Jordan. At that moment of time the king and I were talking about Iraq and our upcoming confrontation. The king was quite clear. He said, "I am not making the same mistake my father did. We are going to be on the right side this time." When we get to that period of time, I can explain this further.

*Q: When the war started, what did you do?*

GNEHM: This period was actually very hectic. Until the last minute, we had not reconciled three different categories of agreements between us and Kuwait . One was a status of forces agreement. What would be the status of our forces inside Kuwait when we went in? Second was a host nation support agreement. What were they going to do to support us when we were there? The third was something called a 607 agreement. My recollection of this was that we were seeking their approval for us to be able to use Kuwait government facilities when we went into Kuwait and that there would be no liabilities to us for doing so. I guess the presumption is if there were barracks or there was the building that we had to occupy for offices we would be able to do that. We wouldn't have to ask each and every time for permission. Again, this is contingency planning. Had we used it and the Iraqis bombed it and destroyed it we wouldn't be liable for the damage. And for a variety of different reasons, final agreement just kept getting strung out. It was to some extent a problem of the American side of getting language that we would approve.

*Q: We're talking about lawyers in the middle of a war.*

GNEHM: In the middle of a war. Also, it's important to remember that a status of forces agreement or a SOFA is a Defense Department responsibility. And then you have

CENTCOM deployed into the region with all its various commands from all the services --- the army, the navy, and the air force, all of whom wanted input.

On my side, I was working with the government of Kuwait that was functional, but it was certainly slow in response. It was wary as could be about everything, very uncertain of itself. It was outside its territory, had a small military, and was totally dependent on the United States. It had a coalition supporting it but worried constantly about the possibility that there might be a back channel agreement between us and the Iraqis or the Iranians. They were aware of several initiatives that they feared might derail the liberation. The Soviets had an idea/initiative at one point. The French who went to Riyadh with a game plan again in this period. The Kuwaitis were just terrified that somebody was going to make a back room agreement that was going to modify the UN Security Council Resolution that authorized the use of force and undermine the President's word about immediate and unconditional withdrawal. Operating in this environment, I trying to get all of this done as various US Government entities wanted --- even when there was not complete agreement. Frankly I was frustrated by both the Kuwaitis and my government.

Another focus was the KTF, the Kuwait Task Force, the Civil Affairs Unit, which I have previously discussed. By January there had been an enormous amount of planning. I think about 30 contracts had been signed. So some sectors were moving ahead. Yet, a huge numbers of them were not moving ahead and there was a frustrating delay in signing contracts. Sheikh Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington who in the first few months exercised with a lot of independence but now decisions had to be referred to the government in Ta'if in this isolated hotel in the middle of the backside of Saudi Arabia. They were ever agonizing over whether they should really sign this or that contract even knowing that their representatives in the KTF had approved and recommended that the contract be signed. They knew that the KTF had negotiated the price and terms of the contract; but they questioned whether it was padded. There was always a question of who was getting the profit. There were all of these conspiratorial and cultural sorts of issues involved. I was the one on the scene that took the calls. For example, I took a call from Randy Elliot, the colonel leading the task force. He said "You've got to do something to move this forward." So I was the one who had to convince the government in Ta'if to authorize a signature on the contract. There were just constant wrangles.

I remember a day after the air war started. I couldn't get them to make decisions and was very frustrated. I remember walking in one day, late morning, into the room that served as an office for all the ministers. It was a conference room with a big table. Each of the ministers had a chair. This was where the Crown Prince/Prime Minister held his Council of Ministers' meetings. For most of the ministers, that was the only office they had and there were usually five, six, or seven of them in the room. This morning I walked in, there were several of them in puttering away on paper or chattering. I blurted out, "Are you all ready to go into Kuwait tomorrow?"

And there was a shocked look "What do you mean? Are we going in tomorrow?"

And I said, “No. But are you ready if we were? I don't think you are. And I have to tell Washington that the government is not ready for your own liberation?” And I turned and walked out. Of course after I had let my words sit for a while, I went back and made up with the ones that I had just talked to. I was simply trying to make a valid point that during this air war, none of us knew how long it was going to last and when we would be returning to Kuwait. They just were not thinking how suddenly they might be facing their return and the need to be prepared.

One day I knew we were going to be told the army has just been told to across the border, and we certainly didn't anticipate it was going to take a long time for the liberation. They weren't ready. All the planning was for the recovery that had to begin immediately after liberation. There were so many important issues still unresolved and time was ticking. There was the question over how are we going to handle security when we go in? Who's going to be in charge when we go in? At what point would the military hands over authority to civilians? The lawyers were trying to come up with the papers and the agreements that would address all of these issues.

I was being given guidance by lawyers. State gave it in a benevolent way; Defense was more assertive, even aggressive, to remind me that, while I might be physically present in Kuwait as the US Ambassador, if fighting was ongoing and no end had been declared, the military was in charge and I was subordinate to the commanding general, not vice versa. I really didn't have a problem with that because I already had built my relationships and I knew how it was going to work, how the pragmatics of the moment would take over. Another aspect of the issue of how is in charge is financial. While the war is going on --- before you declare an end to the hostilities and conclude an agreement or treaty, the military is responsible for all costs. The minute you declare end of hostilities, then the tab for whatever needs to be done falls to the civilian side.

Let me illustrate the point. One of the first problems we faced after liberation was that the Iraqis had mined the entire Kuwaiti coast. But both the U.S. Military and the Kuwaiti government needed ports open to bring in supplies and all sorts of needed material. Obviously by the fifth day the fighting was over, but our military force was all over the country. The navy asked me, “Do you think the government would like us to clear the channel coming into Shuwaikh port?”

I said, “You bet they would, and we need you to do it. They don't have the capability.”

And then there was the law that I mentioned. The officer said, “I'm not sure who's going to pay for this. If the war is on-going, then I can do it. I'm not going to ask the lawyers. I'm just going to make the decision that, as the navy commander, I need access to the port.” And he did it. There was no problem in the end; but this is an example of the ambiguities that we were facing.

I'll jump ahead and make this observation. All of this agony, all of these debates, horrendous hours and meetings in Washington, all the issues just vaporized with the reality of what happened on the ground.

There are two other issues that are worth noting here. The first is a democracy issue. I was under instructions on several different occasions to raise this matter with the Crown Prince/Prime Minister. It was an important issue for the Administration given public comment on our fighting a war to restore a monarchy. There were several things at play. There was the Jeddah meeting, which we talked about earlier, in which the Amir and Crown Prince spoke about their commitment to the constitution and to the restoration of parliament. This was at a time when they were very weak and they were trying to make sure that the exiled community that was gathered there would support them. When we get into the January/February period, rumors began to spread in the exile community in London that the government did not intend to restore parliament.

Admittedly, the former Speaker of the Parliament, Ahmed Sadoun, and a couple of other former parliamentarians, all of whom were critics of the Sabah family, were in that community. Of course, Washington sees press coverage of their allegations and asked me to clarify what their intentions were. Washington wanted the Crown Prince to issue a new statement that would reaffirm the agreement that had been reached in Jeddah. Such a statement would reassure us and our public and the Congress but would also quiet this dissonant group among the exiles. This touches on an issue that we discussed once before --- concern within the Kuwaiti government over how they were going to be received when they returned to Kuwait.

Well, the Crown Prince's first reaction was, "Hell no, I'm not going to make any more statements. You know, these people are crazy." Unfortunately, that fed the idea that maybe they weren't ready to reaffirm the same commitment. At least one of his ministers, who had been involved in obtaining the agreement in Jeddah, took my arguments to the Crown Prince again and said, "You need to do this. We need to do this to solidify support from the Kuwaiti community in exile."

In the end the Crown Prince said, "Well, I'm not going to go one step further than what the Amir did in the fall."

To which I said, "That's all we ever asked for." I think they did in fact issue a statement. This is one of those issues that just continued to fester. The American media was still attacking the president from time-to-time, calling into question what we were doing, questioning why we were risking American lives to put a monarch back in place. Are we democrats? Don't we believe in democracy?

The second issue was concern that as we were liberating the country, there might be retribution against "displaced persons," the word that we were using. In truth we were talking about Kuwaiti retribution against Palestinians still in Kuwait. We were concerned that when our troops went in and when the Kuwaiti government began to reassert itself, that there was going to be reactions against the Palestinian population. We were not necessarily saying it was going to be by Kuwaiti forces or police. In fact, we had some confidence that that would not happen, but we were fearful about retribution by individual Kuwaitis. Frankly, there was no indication that those inside were going to do

something, but we were a worried about Kuwaitis returning from exile. They had a particularly hostile attitude toward all Palestinians.

I was instructed and had numerous different conversations with the Kuwaitis about forming police units, security units, which would deploy with the troops to establish a security presence in the various suburbs and communities to make sure there were not extrajudicial actions against the Palestinian community in particular. We certainly did not want to be the policemen in the streets. We discussed establishing an exit route for people who wanted to leave Kuwait. We talked about Kuwait paying for planes that would fly people out of Kuwait that wanted to leave.

The Kuwaitis never really took to the idea of flying people out. As we got closer to the ground war, they agreed in principle to form police units; but they never did. Again, that's one of the things that just kind of fell apart as events moved forward so rapidly.

As I said, we did not want to be the ones policing the situation inside after liberation; but as I will tell you later, we ended up having to intervene several times.

*Q: All the time you were dealing with the Kuwaitis, was there almost a seething anger against the Palestinians?*

GNEHM: Generally speaking Kuwaitis in Ta'if and those I met as I traveled around the region all had great animus toward the Palestinians. I did meet a few Kuwaitis, who would talk about their good Palestinian employee, but the truth is that there was much anger there. This is why we were concerned about what might happen immediately after liberation. There was a real difference in attitude by Kuwaitis who remained inside and those who were in exile. Kuwaitis who remained in Kuwait often had Palestinians working with them against the Iraqi occupation. The ones who stayed were a lot less antagonistic toward the Palestinian community than those who came back in. I have to say that the atrocities or abuses, that I recollect personally, were undertaken by Kuwaitis exiles after they returned and who were determined to get even with the Palestinians for what they thought they had done.

I'd mentioned earlier the issue of jurisdiction over the Kuwait Task Force and the civil affairs reservists: whether they were under my authority or my command, where they would be physically located (with me or not), and what they would do when we went in. This was something that I had to work on assiduously and repetitively. I thought I had an understanding with CENTCOM but someone in the command decided to make an issue once again of the line of command and where the KTF would be located. This time the matter went all the way to the Deputy's Committee meeting at the NSC level in Washington. After all the months of planning and establishing strong relationships with Kuwaiti counterparts, it was astounding to think that they might be disbanded. It was also critical that they be co-located with me. I was, after all, going to be the one dealing with the senior levels of the Kuwaiti Government and could serve as a facilitator for the KTF group.

Well, with my efforts with CENTCOM, General Schwarzkopf came around. Ultimately, his people all agreed that my position was reasonable and we reached once again an understanding that the command structure was through the army; but they would be co-located with me. They would be under my general guidance and supervision but not under my command, with which I agreed. I sent a long cable to Washington laying out the issue and the agreement reached with CENTCOM because there were still people in Washington who didn't agree, but the Pentagon actually supported me. They had no problem with the arrangement that I had negotiated with CENTCOM. They thought it was a great idea. The cable that came out from Washington confirmed that that was the way it was going to be. That seemed to solve everything. It did and it didn't. The next person who raised their rearing ahead a week or two later, as if nothing had ever happened, was commanding officer of the army component of the Central Command.

*Q: Here you are, a professional diplomat, speaking Arabic. I mean did General Schwarzkopf or any sort of people who were involved in the military have access to what amounted to our Arab think tank or people, like yourself or others, and say, "Well, the Arabs say this, but they actually mean that. Was there anything the equivalent or informal or what?"*

GNEHM: Well, he had a POLAD (Political Advisor). I think it was Gordon Brown, a Foreign Service Officer. He certainly knew the region and spoke Arabic. He was one of the people that I could go to and talk to when I needed help. I also had an officer that Central Command placed with me, Lt. Col. Terry Potter, who was getting the intel on a daily basis and briefing me every day. I was then able to use that information, as appropriate, with the Kuwaitis to let them know what was going on during air war. So, to answer your question, I would say, yes, but not more formal than that. Of course Schwarzkopf was dealing with Chas Freeman in Riyadh, and to some extent with me. I dealt a lot with his staff, but obviously he wasn't available each and every time these things came up.

*Q: Well, in many ways it was probably handy since you didn't have a big staff of your own.*

GNEHM: Right.

*Q: Sometimes you had to go out and do it, but also means you had the contact.*

GNEHM: That's right. I had a lot of support from the Deputy at CENTCOM and many others. And again, by this time, I wasn't considered a threat to them. I was considered part of the team.

I talked often about the Kuwaiti government and their reaction to events unfolding around them. There were some troubles between the Kuwaiti government and CENTCOM largely as a result of actions that we took without consulting with them. I remember one point the Crown Prince/Prime Minister Sheikh Sa'ad called me in. He was really upset over three different actions. He was upset that we had hit the sea island

offshore buoy and destroyed it or damaged it. First, he was really angry that we didn't ask him before hitting the buoy since it was their property. Second, he was upset because he thought that we were actually hitting and damaging some of facilities in the oil fields. Third, he heard from some Kuwaitis that U.S. marines had landed on the little island of Maradim . It is very small --- a piece of sand that comes out of the water and has some weeds growing on it. I think there was a little house in the middle that had a weather vane, but that's it. There were definitely no Iraqis there. When we landed, our troops ran up the American flag on the weather vane. Sheikh Sa'ad just went berserk. He was angry because he had no foreknowledge that US forces were going to occupy a part of Kuwait. And the fact they raised the American flag was, in his mind, insensitive and embarrassing. It was definitely a nationalistic reaction and emotionally charged; but he had reason to be upset in my opinion. One of the ministers explained that it was so important that the Crown Prince be seen as knowing what was going on and being a part of important decisions.

It was, of course, my job to explain our actions and placate the Crown Prince. I later gave him a CENTCOM photo of oil leaking from the sea island before it had been hit, so he would understand that it was already damaged. I also gave him some intelligence about what was going on in the oil fields --- that attacking it was not our objective. We had no reason to attack the oil fields.

Regarding the issue of the flag, I didn't apologize. There was no need to apologize. I just said, "Look, you have to just chalk this up to a non-thinking trooper who was just, you know, so proud of the fact that they got territory. He wasn't claiming the island for the United States of America. We have no intentions of any territorial claims on Kuwait."

Now, the Iranians were interesting in this period of time too. Most of my information that I'm going to share, I got from the Kuwaitis who had diplomatic relations with the Iranians and who went there from time to time. After we start bombing Iraq, a strange thing happened. We pick up on our radar that there were Iraqi fighter planes flying to Iran and landing at an Iranian air base. In the end, I think in the end Saddam moved 140 Iraqi planes and helicopters to Iran to remove them from the risk of being destroyed by our bombing.

Of course, the Kuwaitis feared from the initial intelligence information that somehow the Iranians were then going to join the Iraqis in some way in the hopes of getting something out of Iraqi's weakened situation. That might mean they would not be supportive of the Kuwaitis and instead, might compromise their previous statements that had called for a total and immediate Iraqi withdrawal.

So the Kuwaitis sent Sheikh Nasser Mohammed al-Sabah, who was the Amir's Minister of Court and one of my prime interlocutors, to Tehran . I think he met with Velayati and with then President Rafsanjani as well. Iraqi officials had been there too. The Iranian response was "Hey, we didn't even know the planes were coming. We almost shot them down because they didn't ask for permission. They just landed. We've protested this

incursion to the Iraqis warning them that we might have shot them down thinking that they were flying to attack.”

In the end the Iranians received the airplanes. They refused to let them go back when the war was over. In fact, I think some of the planes have only gone back to Iraq here in the last year or two.

The other thing that the Iranians said was, “We are unabashedly where we were before, and remain. Saddam has to withdraw immediately and completely.” So the Kuwaitis were reassured. Again, as I have said, the Kuwaitis remained nervous as they learned of peace initiatives being planned by others. The Soviets, toward the very end of the air war, came out with a proposal ‘if we tell Saddam that as long as you announce your withdrawal today, you can carry it out within a certain number of days or weeks. In that situation we would not launch the ground war.’ The United States said ‘not under any circumstances.’ We shot it down. Again, the Kuwaitis sent their Foreign Minister to Moscow to find out about this. The Soviets told him “We didn't change our position; we didn't change, we were just trying out an idea.” This was in the Gorbachev era.

I was told in a call with Washington right at the very end of the air war that that we weren't really that concerned anymore about the Soviet initiative; but they sure had made a lot of people mad in Washington.

*Q: This is just the time when the Soviet Union was falling apart.*

GNEHM: That's right.

*Q: Unlike everything else in the Middle East, this was very clear-cut. What were you getting about the air war, while you were in Ta'if? Were you seeing these briefings that Schwarzkopf was having on TV? It was the greatest game in town. Everywhere you went people were watching the briefings. I'm told that people who served in Africa were in the bars watching these briefings and the Iraqi trucks escaping. It was really incredible. It was the first time that the accuracy of these smart bombs was both being displayed and being used. Were you getting a lot of this?*

GNEHM: Yes, there was a mass of pictures. There was a large sitting area outside the room where the Council of Ministers met where there was a television. It was on 24 hours a day --- mostly on CNN. The room was usually full of Kuwaitis watching the latest broadcast.

I was given a briefing every single morning on what had happened since the previous day. In fact, a couple times it would be more than once a day if there was some dramatic development. The briefings included targeting, what we hit, assessments of the capabilities of the various Republican Guard units, and communications intel.

*Q: Did you hear any American military people saying, you know, they're really not that fancy, the Iraqi soldiers?*

GNEHM: I don't ever remember hearing that. I didn't hear anybody giving them great glory as the fourth largest army either. I think I was privy to almost 90% of what they knew. In fact, I'm glad they didn't give me anymore; I was quite saturated with information. We were seeing units beginning to collapse. There were stories of desertions coming in from some of the Kuwaitis in the resistance, and some people, like the Palestinians who got to Jordan, who would talk about the Iraqi disintegration in Kuwait. We were seeing equipment being abandoned.

Further into February, we were watching movements and redeployments trying to assess what they meant. You had some moving forward; you had some going back toward Iraq. It was clear that he was keeping some of his Republican Guards for protection of Baghdad, personal protection obviously, against a coup attempt. Whenever the military saw troop movements, they tried to figure out if the moves were for aggressive purposes. In other words they did not interpret a move northward as a retreat, even if it was a pullback of some sort. It might simply be a repositioning for some other purpose. We had reports and, frankly, we had overhead that showed movement in some chemical weapons cantonments, loading trucks for example, which heightened concern that Saddam was getting ready to use CW. These things take a life of their own and, when you see it moving, there is a question of where the trucks went. We can't find them. What do you mean you can't find them? So in a war you don't have perfect information.

We had been privy to some of the Iraqi communications for a while. We had managed to put a few clips on telephone lines inside Iraq. But we were also destroying those communication lines to keep them from being used by the Iraqis. So we denigrated our own ability to pick up information. The Iraqis got better too. They began to realize what we were doing and they began to camouflage things. One of the big things they did was to build and deploy decoys. They began to produce SCUD missile launchers that were made out of wood and cardboard.

*Q: Even if they weren't trying to use them as decoys, we considered tanker trucks, scud missiles, etc. --We probably didn't hurt anything, except the drivers.*

GNEHM: There was an intense focus in the western part of Iraq to find and destroy SCUD missile launchers. I mentioned earlier that one of the promises we made to the Israelis was that we would make a priority of killing the SCUDs that were being moved out there to put them in range of hitting Israel. The trouble was that they were very mobile. The minute the Iraqis shot one, we would pick it up on radar. Even if a plane was in the air, unless it's right over the site, they can move, hide and camouflage it faster than a plane could get to the location. Part of the reason for their producing decoys was that in fact they distracted us. Frankly, we weren't so successful at terminating the SCUD attacks. They continued right up to the end. The Patriots did a fairly good job --- not always --- but a fairly good job.

*Q: Did you get involved in all of the British or Syrian activity?*

GNEHM: No, not really. From time to time an ambassador from a country would show up in Ta'if to see the government, but there weren't many such visits. The French and British ambassadors came.

*Q: Chinese at all involved?*

GNEHM: I don't remember hearing anything about them at all, except that the Saudis told us that they had decided not to use the Chinese missiles that they had procured earlier, against Iraq. The curious reason why they gave us was that they were worried about the relationship with Iraq after the war was over. They didn't want to do something that might completely destroy an ability to reestablish some sort of relationship with Iraq.

*Q: Was the survivability of Saddam Hussein a subject of conversation during the air war?*

GNEHM: For a certain period of time, rumors had spread that he was hiding from his own people because at one point there was a coup attempt that he had been able to put down. There were always rumors that there were dissident forces that were going to move against him. Certainly in all the meetings and conversations that I was a part of there seemed to be a foregone conclusion that he just couldn't survive the kind of defeat that he was going to suffer. We expected that some military unit would overthrow him or he would be assassinated. One of these two scenarios was going to play out.

*Q: Did you particularly feel that the Saudis had another game playing, a straightforward one supporting Kuwait?*

GNEHM: Yes, and that was proving that they were the dominant Arab state and everybody should know it. There were a host of situations that came up. One that comes to my mind almost immediately relates to General Prince Khaled bin Sultan. He was the Saudi counterpart to Schwarzkopf in the coalition command structure. Because Schwarzkopf was located in the kingdom where most of the coalition forces were located and launch point for the liberation, Schwarzkopf had to deal with the Saudis daily and as equal partners. Prince Khaled was always thinking about his own status and Saudi positions. He was both ambitious and arrogant. It was a constant challenge to manage him. Once he came to Schwarzkopf with his grand plan for the liberation of Kuwait --- not the army movements in general but actually occupying Kuwait City. Schwarzkopf's description of the conversation to me went something like this. "He came to me and he said, you know, here's what's going to happen. I am going to lead Arab forces into the main square, the big square in Kuwait City. I'm going to ride on a white horse carrying a Kuwaiti and a Saudi flag, and I'm going to give the Kuwaiti flag to the Amir as a symbol of the coalition's success in liberating Kuwait."

And Schwarzkopf said, "You're what? Are you kidding me? A white horse with the Kuwaiti flag that you are going to give him as a symbol of getting his country back? Are you serious? No way. Absolutely no way." The plan all along was to let Kuwaiti forces liberate Kuwait City, like we let De Gaulle go into Paris. Prince Khaled's idea was

preposterous. It was an attempt to demonstrate Saudi Arabia's importance in liberating Kuwait; but it was also a blatant attempt by the Prince to bolster his own profile. The Prince's plan got no traction anywhere.

In the end, again, I tell you a lot of things that were planned didn't quite happen the way we expected. Of course, the Amir didn't go back immediately. He wasn't there in Kuwait City when it was liberated. In fact, some U.S. forces didn't follow orders not to go any closer to the city center than the Fifth Ring Road. They actually got downtown when they weren't supposed to be downtown. In the end, Kuwaiti forces did go into the city.

Whenever the Saudis were mad, they would stop providing support just to let the Kuwaitis know who was in charge and what they needed to be thinking about. For example, there was a C130 that belonged to Kuwait that was flown out the morning of the invasion. It was getting ready to be repaired when the invasion occurred. The needed spare parts, of course, remained in Kuwait. The Saudis started providing the spare parts agreeing that they would whatever was necessary get the C130 back up flying. The Saudis got upset with the Kuwaitis over something. Honestly, I don't remember the cause. The Kuwaitis came to us and said that they weren't getting the spare parts anymore, and the Saudi provided workers had left. We ended up having to finish repairing the C130.

In another example the Saudis were providing Kuwaitis with ammunition for their airplanes during the initial days of the air war when there was a delay in getting the FMS (Foreign Military Sales) case signed and deliveries underway. It wasn't a high priority for us to get those kinds of things out to the war zone. There was so much else that was badly needed. Then the Saudis stopped providing the ammunition. So we had to adjust a case, make an exception to our rules, and fly out the material at some cost. I don't want to denigrate the Saudis. They were contributing a lot, doing a lot, and for the most part the relationship was fantastic; but sometimes their inclination to take actions to demonstrate their ire with others caused unnecessary issues.

*Q: You know, think about the money that -- I mean all the oil was practically Saudi oil, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: Yes, and they were paying out billions as well. They were contributing a significant part of the payment that were being made by the Kuwaitis, the Emiratis, and the Saudis, to Egypt, Syria and Russia for their diplomatic and military support. I think the main issue in the first example I gave you had to do with the Prince's own ego.

*Q: Ego does intrude itself sometimes in nation-to-nation relationships.*

GNEHM: It does.

*Q: Moving beyond the air war, was there anything else going on?*

GNEHM: I think we've actually covered almost everything. I didn't mention one thing that's worth a historical note. During this period, --- around the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, I believe --- there was a military confrontation between Iraqi and Saudi forces, the Battle of Khafji. Iraqi forces actually attacked across the border into Saudi Arabia. The battle went on for several days. The Kuwaiti reaction was interested. They weren't really engaged in the battle; but I was briefing them generally on how it was going. They were very anxious that somehow this military strike was going to embolden the Iraqis. They were immediately afraid that, if the Iraqis succeeded somehow, it would make them even more obdurate in withdrawing from Kuwait. In the end, that passed but it tells you how sensitive the Kuwaitis were to each and every development --- always fearful that somehow events would work against their liberation.

During this period the actions of King Hussein continue to anger the US and others. It just keeps coming up. People were concerned about what he was doing.

I guess we should mention the fires in the oil fields. Around the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> of February we began to see some wells on fire. We were not certain what caused them. It could have been collateral damage or it could have been Iraqis. There was no certainty then; but, by the 21<sup>st</sup> we actually saw about 61 wells on fire. This was when I got the first report of the large black smoke plume coming out of the Burgan field, the largest Kuwaiti oil field located just south of the airport south of Kuwait City. It is, in fact, one of the largest oil fields in the world. It was burning and the smoke plume was swept by the winds all the way down the Saudi coast, even as far as the United Arab Emirates. We still weren't sure what had caused the fires. A couple of days later it became clear that the Iraqis were actually blowing up the wellheads. Iraqi forces had put the detonators back in place. At one point the Kuwaiti Resistance -- these were oil workers who were still being used by the Iraqis in the fields -- were able to either cut the wires or disable the device. The Iraqis caught onto it and replaced them and then they began blowing them up. That was actually one of the precipitating factors, I think, that pushed the order for the air war to cease and the ground war to begin. This had been in an earlier national security directive from the President as one of the trip wires for confronting Saddam. If the Iraqis started damaging oil fields, that would trip wire the fighting.

The President called the Amir on the 24<sup>th</sup>, early in the morning. It was 4:00 AM local time to tell him that the ground offensive had begun. When I got to the Amir's suite about 45 minutes later, he had already heard. General Schwarzkopf actually sent a really nice message to the Crown Prince saying that the liberation has begun and, God be with us, you will be home soon. It was a very nice touch.

So the 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> were really the major three days of military ground force actions. The ground operations went faster and better than anyone had anticipated. As is publicly known, the Iraqi forces surrendered in large masses. There were great numbers, literally thousands, of prisoners of war walking down the road to surrender.

*Q: Well, were we ready for that?*

GNEHM: No, we weren't prepared for that. What do you do? They were all coming down the road with their hands on their heads. There were no guards on them at all. They just wanted to get out of the fighting. Working with the Saudis, we started setting up massive camps and putting them in it for the time being.

*Q: Were we prepared? Did we have supplies?*

GNEHM: Yes, we were OK. We had enough sufficient supplies because we had planned for a longer war. In these first few days, it was clear the war was moving rather more rapidly than we had ever expected. We did get reports through Kuwaitis intelligence from inside Kuwait that the Iraqis were not only blowing up the wellheads in the oil fields but they were blowing up buildings inside Kuwait. The reports proved true. The Iraqis blew up most ministry buildings, most of the palaces of the Sabah family, and other important sites such as the National Museum. There was great concern that they had wired the desalinization plant, which was the only source of drinking water, and the power plant as well. There was also a huge underground water reservoir just north of the city that we feared had also been wired for destruction.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> Baghdad radio announced during the night that Iraqi troops had been ordered to pull back to the August 1 pre-invasion positions. We weren't sure what was really happening. For me, my first initial thought was that it was propaganda, would be great if it's true, but who's to know for sure? We were making great progress on the ground defeating Iraqi forces, but we were not sure we should believe Saddam's actually intended for his troops to withdraw. What we learned subsequently was that, when this order was given, there was a massive exodus of Iraqi forces and all their sympathizers trying to flee north to get to Iraq. The Kuwaitis would later tell me, when I got into Kuwait, that when they woke up that morning and went up on their roof and looked down on the super highways going north, they saw highways completely devoid of traffic but littered with debris. All six lanes, three that were going north and three that were going south, were used as lanes bearing traffic to the north! Some of them had watched during the night and talked about how, if a car broke down and there was a tank behind it, the tank just rode straight over the car with all the Iraqis in it, killing them all and kept going. It was just pandemonium. The departing vehicles were piled with clothes and whatever loot the troops had accumulated. Much of the debris on the highway was loot that fell off fleeing vehicles

When I got to Kuwait the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, there were Iraqi tanks and vehicles strewn along the highways and streets of the city still burning. There were still bodies lying around them. The streets were littered with clothes and broken television sets, things that had obviously been in vehicles by Iraqis who were trying to take things home with them. And there was much concern during these last few days about atrocities. The Government in Ta'if was hearing that people were being picked up and carried off, carted away, and executed.

The President asked our intelligence, could we find out whether this was true or not --- to validate it from other sources. It was not easy to do and then in the end the liberation

happened so fast that it was over. During this period I am still in Ta'if. I had been talking and planning for the liaison group to enter Kuwait. The military provided a C-21 to fly me, my staff and equipment into Kuwait. I have my staff ready, some in Dhahran and some in Riyadh. All were going to meet me in Dhahran to go in together.

The Department was pressing me, "What are the plans for the Kuwaiti government to return? We've been talking about it and trying to plan for it; but we haven't heard anything from the Kuwaiti Government." For months I had been trying to get the Kuwaitis to plan and be ready for this very moment; but there seemed to be uncertainty and even some controversy within the leadership as to how they would return. They had talked about several ministers going in initially, but this turned out to be another one of those things that didn't happen. They finally decided at the last moment that the Minister of Interior, Sheikh Salem Salem al-Sabah, would go in first. That wasn't a great decision in our opinion. The Ministry of Interior had the reputation of being thugs and certainly the heavy hand within the government. We were concerned about their intentions in reestablishing that presence first. We feared they might go after the Palestinians or worse act against Kuwaitis who had been in the resistance --- people that some in the family feared would not be politically supportive of their return. We just thought that he didn't seem to be the right person.

We thought the Crown Prince should lead the government's return. I pressed for him to return in a conversation that I had with the Crown Prince/Prime Minister, and Sheikh Salem was present. I pushed saying, "Washington is asking where are you? When are you going to Kuwait?". " Sheikh Salem verbally attacked me in front of the Crown Prince in great anger. "You're trying to kill my Crown Prince. You're trying to kill him. I know that's what you're doing, because you don't want him to get back in power."

I turned to Sheik Sa'ad -- this is after me having lived with him for all this time--and said, "Your Highness, we just went to war and have liberated a country for you and your cousin, the Amir. It would be a disaster for American policy if something happened to you, if we couldn't protect you. What good is that for us? It would be like a great defeat for us if the Iraqis or someone could actually attack you." The crown prince told me not to worry, that Sheikh Salem gets emotional sometimes, and that he was worried about my welfare. I thought, "Yes, OK." But again, it didn't bode well for them being organized and managing the return well. Later developments would prove the validity of my concerns.

While Washington was pressing the Kuwaitis (and me) to return immediately to Kuwait, I was told to hang lose by CENTCOM. CENTCOM wasn't certain that the security situation was good enough for me to go in. Army Special Forces had been given the task of securing the embassy compound for me. Our intelligence, which was entirely from overhead, indicated that the compound remained OK. We had no evidence that the Iraqis had ever entered it. But it was the task of the Special Forces under Colonel Jesse Johnson to secure it for me. That was the way it was supposed to play out. The British and the French both had similar teams who were going to go in and secure their embassies. But the word was that there was still shooting going on.

Again, it was at 4:00 in the afternoon of that day that Baghdad had made the statement on the 24th that I had the call from the CENTCOM to ask me just to hang loose, be flexible. I got a call a little while later, I guess it was 2:30 the following morning, from the Department ordering me to go to Kuwait, whether the government of Kuwait was going or not. The country was already liberated, I was told. Everybody in Washington wondered where is the Kuwaiti government. Why aren't they headed back? This order to move to Kuwait created a dilemma for me. If you remember I told you that when I first met the Amir back in August, there were some pretty extreme instructions to get him to stand up and start acting like an amir. When I realized how depressed he was, I had promised him that we were going to Kuwait, a liberated Kuwait, and that I would go in one step behind him. When we were both there, I would present him my credentials making me official. Now, suddenly I'm being told to leave him and move to Kuwait ahead of him. In fact, it was rather crudely said to me. "You tell him, if they have any business with the United States government on any matter whatsoever, they can find you in Kuwait, and you will tell Washington. Tell them not to call here. We are not going to accept their phone calls."

I know the Administration was under pressure. There was beginning to be some criticism from the media, from the Hill, and from others. The issue being raised was "Wait, we had liberated Kuwait. It's free so where is the Kuwaiti government? I thought you were putting the government back?" So you can imagine the political sensitivities in Washington. I did understand but it did not help my dilemma with the Amir. Nevertheless I immediately at that very early hour went up to floor of the hotel where the suites for the Amir and the Crown Prince were located. I roused their staff telling them that I needed to see the Amir as soon as possible. I knew there was no way I could see him at 5:30 in the morning; but I did see him quite quickly. I went in and I said to him, "Sir, the news is really good, as you know. Coalition forces have moved throughout Kuwait; the city is liberated; Iraqi forces have fled. There is still some fighting. There is still some things that need to be done to stabilize the situation. But I asked to see you so early this morning to tell you that I have been ordered by Washington to go to Kuwait this day. I am here because I promised you that you and I would go in together and I'd be right behind you."

And you know what he said to me? He said in a very nice voice, "Skip, you have your orders and you have my permission. You should go. You should follow those orders and I will come in when I can."

I saw the Crown Prince afterwards and, of course, I told him with more emphasis, that Washington is not happy with the Kuwaiti Government's hesitancy to move into Kuwait. I told him that I had been being ordered to go immediately and leave them if they decided to remain in Ta'if. I did tell him that Washington did not want to receive phone calls from them in Ta'if but from Kuwait City. "They think you have to go there now." He said, "Well, we are still a little uncertain about security there."

I said, "I understand that. But as we talked already, you know that we will provide the necessary security. That is not going to be a problem, but I can't stay. I have to go."

Sheikh Saad said, "Well, no, you should go. Sheikh Salem will be there when you get there. He's going in the same day."

So then the plane arrived. From the 2:30 a.m. phone call on February 28<sup>th</sup> until sunrise and while I was meeting with the Amir and Crown Prince, my team was packing all our things into boxes and loading the two vehicles that had once been in Kuwait. We drove to the Ta'if airport.

There is one funny story that happened in route. I was in the second vehicle and I looked at the first vehicle in front of me and strapped to the back with ropes was the exercise bicycle that I had borrowed from the hotel. The staff thought it was mine and had packed it. It was going to Kuwait. There was no way I could turn around to return the machine. I'm thinking, "Oh, good grief, I guess that is not the biggest problem I have this morning. I just hope I never see these people again because they will say I stole their stationary exercise bike!"

Here is another anecdote worth noting. So we loaded up the cars into the body of this C-21, I was sitting up in the little seat behind two pilots with my team in the back. We were flying over Saudi Arabia. It was a hazy day with a lot of wind and blowing sand. You couldn't really see the ground very easily. We were about half way across Saudi Arabia in the Riyadh area when the pilots tell me, "We have a problem, Mr. Ambassador." And I thought, "Are we going to go down?" The pilot laughed and said, "No, no, no, no, no. We probably can't go into Kuwait today. I don't think we're going to have sufficient visibility be able to fly into the Kuwait airport today."

I said, "What do you mean? The Secretary of State just ordered me to go to Kuwait. What's wrong?"

He explained, "Well, you remember the heavy smoke from the burning oil wells?" I nodded. "The smoke is now covering the airport. As there is only visual landing absent electronic systems, we cannot risk a landing. We would not even be able to see the airport. We'll land in Dhahran and see if there's a change in the situation, but I doubt it. I doubt it." Then too, we were already late in the afternoon and there were no lights on the runways in Kuwait. So we couldn't land at night even if the smoke lifted.

We landed in Dhahran and then taxied over to where the US military had their flight control. I went, with my security detail following along, to this big tent-like structure that housed the command and control unit at the Dhahran Airport. I entered and told the officer in charge that I needed to use his phone to call the Secretary of State. He turned around to his people and said, "This guy -- can you hear this? This guy wants to call the Secretary of State." And they all sort of laughed. And I said, "I'm dead serious about this. I'm the U.S. ambassador to Kuwait and I need to talk to him." And he said, "Yeah, and I'm General Schwarzkopf."

At that point my security detail stepped up to him and said, "You better put this guy on the phone to the Secretary of State or I'm going to make sure that your balls get busted,"

or something to that intent -- may not actually put that into the oral history, but you know, or else --

He suddenly jumped up and he said, "Well, yes sir, we'll do this. Put it through." When I got through to Secretary Baker, I said, "Sir, I'm calling you because you think I'm going to be in Kuwait tonight and there's a problem. The smoke from the oil fires is covering the airport and planes cannot land." He said, "Skip, that's the way it is. No problem; but thanks for letting me know"

As I indicated, I had been led to believe that my immediate move to Kuwait was an issue for him; but he was very calm and cool about it. This goes back to a number of other encounters that I've mentioned when the NEA Assistant Secretary would get a little emotional about things. The Secretary was always calm and pragmatic.

*Q: He gets very proprietary.*

GNEHM: Exactly. I then went to the residence of our Consul General, Ken Stammerman, where I spent the night. It was evening. We were all sitting around before supper in the living room with a big television tuned to CNN. That was what was always on in those days. Everything was CNN, CNN, CNN! We're all there chatting away and talking, when all of a sudden we hear, "This is breaking news, breaking news," and picture comes on of a helicopter coming in over the Embassy compound in Kuwait. As a rope drops from the helicopter and three or four people start shimmying down it, the announcer says, "And there they are! The American ambassador is arriving in the embassy in Kuwait."

And I look around and say, "Wait a minute! That's not the ambassador arriving in Kuwait. I'm sitting here in Dhahran, down here." They had it completely wrong. So I picked up the phone and called the Operation Center in Washington and said, "That was not me coming down that rope. I'll do a lot for my country, but I won't go down ropes!" They all laughed and said, "No, we knew you were in Dhahran. But it was funny." And I said, "Would you please put me through to my wife? I think I should let her know the same thing."

*Q: White coats taking you into custody.*

GNEHM: It was funny. It was just as funny as it could be. The next morning was a bright sunny day and the pilot alerted me that it was possible to fly in and I did fly in that day. But I have to admit to another funny personal story. When I looked at myself in the mirror that morning, I realized that I really needed a haircut. And if I was going into Kuwait, I bet I wasn't going to find a barber for a long, long time. I said something to Ken Stammerman as we were loading up the cars, "I sure wish I'd gotten a haircut in Ta'if last week." He said, "Well, my cook cuts hair." "Do you think he could do it right now?, I asked." "Yep." So went in the kitchen and he cut my hair while everybody waited outside.

The reason why I tell this at all is that when we did fly in and land in Kuwait, I noticed that there was a small jet on the tarmac. I learned quickly that it had brought the Canadian Ambassador back to Kuwait. He landed about a half-hour ahead of me, OK? If I hadn't gotten my hair cut, I would have been the first ambassador back to a liberated Kuwait. In fact I wasn't. The Canadian was! But as I will tell you later, the Kuwaitis always said, "Oh, Skip was the first ambassador to come back in." I would always correct them to say, "No, Larry Dickenson was the first one. He landed 30 minutes ahead of me. The Kuwaitis refused to believe it. They never ever accepted it and they immediately repeated that I was the first ambassador back.

*Q: Yeah. Well, you know, there is a point to this because there is precedence, isn't it?*

GNEHM: No, I think that still would be determined by the date of the presentation of credentials. I hadn't presented credentials yet and he had. Our arrival in the country would not determine precedence. It was just 'poor Larry.' For the entire time that he and I served in Kuwait as ambassadors, he was never able to convince anybody that he arrived first. I was always was apologetic.

*Q: Yeah. Well, one last question. Was there the thing that we all see on TV and all, when the good guys come in or the bad guys come in, retribution, shooting, and that sort of thing, or was it a fairly peaceful takeover?*

GNEHM: The Kuwaiti forces were integrated with the U.S. forces and others. There was not an issue with them. There does develop an issue in the next few days.

*Q: OK, well we'll come to that.*

*INTERN: Really my main question is you had said the U.S. media was constantly questioning whether US forces would succeed. Did the media portrayal of everything kind of change?*

GNEHM: You know, my sense of the media, I'm talking about the networks, was that through the whole period of the fall through this period of the air war, and then afterwards, they were always negative on the issues of democracy and retributions. They were always probing about the weaknesses of the military, the desert, about the ability of the U.S. forces to deal with CW and BW. Then they would relate our military build up to the question of restoring democracy in Kuwait using generally negative and derogatory terms. 'So how do you justify sending so many troops to put a monarch back on his throne?' Barbara Walters interviewed me telling me how all the American newspapers were saying there was no democracy in Kuwait. "And if that is true, Mr. Ambassador, why did we do what we did? "

*INTERN: Did we elect a National Assembly?*

GNEHM: Yes, we'll talk about that later. The way questions are asked and the way the issues were posed just tended to be in a derogatory manner. So for me and Kuwaitis, we

were on the defensive in responding to their inferences. I had no problem explaining the facts. I don't know, that's the way media is sometimes.

*INTERN: Were the Crown Prince and the other leaders of Kuwait in any danger during the invasion, or did Iraq not really go after them?*

GNEHM: Oh yes, they did. They intended to capture them. They went after them. They went looking for them. The family and people who were with them found out about the invasion in just enough time to be able to load them in cars and head south or get across the desert.

*INTERN: And they didn't continue to pursue them throughout the time they were there. They just kind of let it go?*

GNEHM: Oh, they kept looking for Sabahs.

*INTERN: OK.*

GNEHM: In fact, they killed one of them. But those who did stay inside used aliases and hid. In fact, the Foreign Ministry people told me that those people, who were on their way to work at 9:00 in the morning of the day of the invasion, saw all these Iraqi tanks and troops. They pulled into the parking lot at the Foreign Ministry and went into the Foreign Ministry only to have the Iraqi Guard at the door usher them into the minister's office where everybody else was gathered. And there were Sabahs in the group. I was told that the Iraqis didn't have any pictures or names or positions or know anything about who was in the Foreign Ministry positions. Finally after a few hours the Iraqi guards just told them to get out of here. You're finished. You don't have a Foreign Ministry anymore. And they left and then fled. So as I have mentioned before, the Iraqis were not as well organized as people gave them credit for. That's the same question about the military. The military was not as good as it purported to be. The Iraqi Government didn't have plans --- didn't think through their actions. If they had designated a group to go to the Foreign Ministry, you would have thought they'd have given them the list of the people in the Foreign Ministry. They would have told them, "Don't let anybody leave without checking their IDs, etc."

*Q: I interviewed a man, I can't think of his name right now, but he was basically our top INR man on Iraq. And he's pretty well convinced that the invasion was all a spur of the moment thing by Saddam Hussein. He'd moved in and all but whether the final push to go in or not was almost -- was not well thought out.*

GNEHM: I think that assessment is right. Saddam didn't exactly take people into his confidence. So I doubt many in the government knew he intended to invade and occupy Kuwait; therefore, there would not have been any planning as I was just describing.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: I mean in terms of the deployment of forces and putting large quantities of ammunition near the border, Saddam did those kind of things right. But on the political side, he floundered. At one point there was a provisional government in Kuwait composed of people who are opposed to the Sabahs. When he couldn't find anybody to be in it except one person, and that person disappeared as did the whole idea of a provisional government.

*Q: OK. Today is the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, we left you repelling down the helicopter onto your embassy while under fire.*

GNEHM: I think I left off last time with my morning departure from Dhahran into Kuwait. As I mentioned, I had to layover in Dhahran because the smoke from the oil fires had closed the airport in Kuwait. It was a bright, sunny day the next morning and I was told that the airport in Kuwait was open.

*Q: What day is this, by the way?*

GNEHM: This is March 1. The flight into Kuwait was uneventful though I remember seeing the scarred landscape below. There was considerable war debris --- destroyed vehicles, trenches, huge pools of oil and, of course, the fires from the well heads. As we neared the airport, I could see that the terminal building and some of the hangers had been torched or destroyed. Then I saw the remains of a British Air commercial jet on the tarmac. At some point the plane had been burned leaving its carcass. And I do mean carcass. The tail with the British Air logo remained pointing into the air. The four jet engines lay nose down where they had fallen when the wings burned. The plane cockpit was similarly nose down. Between these parts were the charred remains of the seats leaving the impression of a fish skeleton. It was eerie.

I was held at the airport. The rest of my team with the two vehicles drove over land from the airport to the embassy compound. For security reasons my security team did not want me on the ground; they wanted to take me by helicopter. They also wanted to hold at the airport until the convoy was near the embassy and able to report back that the area around the embassy site was actually safe. The Army Special Forces unit that had been tasked to secure the embassy for me had done so the day before and confirmed that the compound was safe.

Finally, after what seemed to be an interminable wait, the helicopter lifted off and we flew out over the Persian Gulf. It was an exciting moment. Rather than fly directly over the city due to possible sniper fire and other ongoing encounters, we went out over the water and then flew up the coast to the embassy. The embassy is located right across the corniche highway from the sea. It's virtually on the coast. I remember as we flew up the coast seeing dramatically the entrenchments that the Iraqis had dug along virtually the entire coast of Kuwait. Of course, I didn't see the whole coast at that point, but beneath me were trenches and emplacements for artillery. The Iraqis were convinced (and we had deliberately led them to believe) that our military action to liberate Kuwait would be amphibious, in other words come from the sea.

*Q: Marines.*

GNEHM: Marines. From the sea. Our intention was to distract them from what in fact we planned to do. So they had constructed this huge entrenchment for more than 60 miles along the coast. Much of it had been hit by the air attacks, but you could still see the gun emplacements that were still there. As we neared the embassy compound, the helicopter came in low across the corniche and landed in the parking area inside the compound. I was met there by Colonel Jesse Johnson who headed the Army Special Forces unit. With me in the helicopter was Mark Johnson, my deputy chief of mission, Nabeel Khoury and Jim Callahan who were in public affairs, my fairly large security detail, Charlie Chase from the Diplomatic Security, and David Pearce, my political officer. We had to walk up from the parking lot landing area, past the residence on the left and the swimming pool on the right, up to the flagpole of the embassy compound located in front of the embassy building. The embassy building was on the left and the marine barracks on the right, the tallest building on the compound. In front of it were trailers. They had been set up to accommodate a staff that had grown too large for the embassy building itself. There had been great plans over the years to build an embassy, but we had been in this temporary location since the '50s. This was 1991. The area around the flag pole was packed. I saw lots of military in their fatigues. There was a whole bevy of reporters with cameras. One of my staff was carrying the American flag that Ambassador Nat Howell had taken down from the embassy pole on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December when he left. He brought it out through Iraq back to Washington and then gave it to me to take back in and run it back up the pole when Kuwait was liberated. It was a very, a very heady moment, a very great occasion. I remember Col. Johnson saying, "If you give me the flag I'll run it up the flagpole."

And I said, "No sir, I'm going to put the flag back on the flagpole, because it was my predecessor who had to take it down."

And so we attached it to the rope and I ran it to the top! I made a statement to the press about what a momentous moment it was. I thanked the U.S. Military for all of their bravery and what they had done to make it possible for Kuwait to be liberated and for me to be back with the flag. I underscored that I had just put back the flag that Nat had brought out. Again, it was a big, big moment.

I would add this point. I did not have access in Kuwait to see what Americans were watching at home. We didn't have that capability. So it was quite some time before I fully understood the impact in the US of that flag going back up that pole and of what I had said. This was one of those moments in history, moments in time that just got replayed over and over and over all day long.

I was then informed by Col. Johnson that the embassy was secure. I was, however, quickly alerted by my security detail that the embassy compound had been severely damaged by the Special Forces when they 'took' the embassy compound. So I was not escorted into the chancellery building at that time but down to the residence where I learned what had happened. I will describe it.

The US Marines that came up from Saudi Arabia on the four-lane coastal highway had orders to stop at the Fifth-Ring Road on the outskirts of Kuwait City. The liberation plan was to permit Arab forces, Kuwaitis in particular, to be in the vanguard of troops entering the city of Kuwait like was done with De Gaulle in France. But the marines were advancing fast. There was no resistance as they swept up the coast road. The Iraqi Army had completely abandoned their positions along the coast and had fled the day before. When the Marines reached the fifth-ring road, they just kept going (*laughs*). They soon arrived at what they determined was the American Embassy.

They pulled their vehicles up against the wall of the embassy compound and climbed up on top of their vehicles. This was covered by CNN News; that's why I can describe the scene. From the top of their vehicles, they looked over the wall and reported back to their command that the embassy looked empty! They said they saw no Iraqi troops inside the compound and everything seemed fine. When Col. Jesse Johnson heard that the marines had reached the embassy and reported that all looked fine, he was livid. He and his Special Forces unit had been designated to secure the compound and they had just been scooped by the marines!

Col. Johnson went over to the hotel that overlooked the embassy and told all the press who were residing there to be on their balconies at a certain time the following day. He told them they would get good pictures as his forces came in to secure the embassy. And that's what happened. Unfortunately, when their big helicopters swept in over the embassy compound, they generated such strong winds that they ripped off the limbs from the huge eucalypts trees. The massive limbs flew in all directions, destroying the entire canopy at the pool, sending all the pool chairs into the swimming pool, and spreading debris everywhere. The helicopter that came in over the marine house, which was the tallest structure in the compound, bent the communications antenna 360 degrees so it was pointing down alongside the building. They tried and failed to get into the marine house. That wasn't surprising as it had been constructed to withstand exactly the assault underway. So they came down to the front door and must have unloaded an enormous amount of ammunition into the reinforced Plexiglas door. When I saw it, they had shattered the bottom; but the only hole in the glass was about the size a ball-point pen!

Now, Colonel Johnson had been given a set of keys to the embassy because we knew they needed to enter the building to check it out; but they were certain that the Iraqis had booby trapped the embassy building. So they were not about to enter through the front door. They went around to the backside of the chancellery. Understand that the chancellery had a front-floor lobby, a public affairs office to the left, and a below ground area of offices. Then there was a long straight wing with offices along the corridor. At the end of the wing was the office for the secretaries of the Deputy Chief Mission (DCM) and the ambassador. The ambassador's office was to the left and the DCM's office to the right. So the Special Forces team went to the back of the building and used an acetylene torch to cut through the metal grate that covered the window to the DCM's office. This window was at ground level. Unfortunately, the heat from the acetylene torch broke the glass and set the curtains in the DCM's office on fire. To get in quickly to put the fire out,

they placed an explosive charge against the back wall to blow a hole they could use to enter the office. Anyone who knows anything about bombs knows that the blast force from the device travels a path of least resistance. In this case, it traveled the entire length of the long corridor, hit the far end of the embassy, and then came back all the way to where it started. In its path it blew out all of the hung ceilings and lighting fixture. When I walked through the corridor, I saw the ceiling panels lying on the floor and the light fixtures hanging ajar dangling from loose wires. All the struts supporting the roof had been snapped. The DCM's office was charred.

Simply said, the embassy building was uninhabitable --- unusable. We had watched the chancellery from satellite while the previous staff was there and after they had departed. We never had any indication that the Iraqis had ever entered the compound. That was of no consequence, however. The drama had already unfolded.

*INTERN: Why didn't they just break a window to get into her office?*

GNEHM: Well, there were big iron grates on all the windows for security. Even if you had broken the glass, you couldn't have gotten into the building. I'm not even sure the Special Forces had fire extinguishers! They obviously didn't expect to set the building on fire. When I did go to the residence, I noticed when I went into the sun room that there was glass all over the floor. One of my security details said, "You know, something must have happened here." He picked up one of the wicker chairs and there was a graze cut where a bullet had passed ripping off part of the straw. I later discovered that the Special Forces, thinking that the Iraqis might have entered the residence, had shot the glass out of one of the windows so they could enter the residence. At least the residence was inhabitable. They had not destroyed it in the same way that they had destroyed the other facilities.

The bottom line to this story is that we were unable to occupy and use the chancery as we had expected. The residence became the embassy. I remember being told by one of my friends in the State Department within the next couple days that, when the Assistant Secretary for Administration reported in the Secretary's morning staff meeting about the destruction by the U.S. Army Special Forces, Secretary Baker said to him, "Look, the last thing in the world I'm going to do at this point in our history is to ask the army to pay for repairs. Just fix the embassy. We'll cover the cost. Don't go after the army on this." In the end a team was sent out and the place was put back together, but it took months. I think it was perhaps as late as April or May before I was able to use the embassy. So we worked out of the residence using the dining room as a conference room and the living room for work space. It wasn't great; but it worked. Of course, I was upset by the destruction; but we had lots of other problems to address. For many this was an unbelievable story. I was astonished (but not unhappy) to see that the army newspaper about a month later actually ran a story documenting exactly what I have just described.

*Q: Was there any confrontation that you knew of between those two opposing, ancient opposing forces --- the Marines and the Army?*

GNEHM: Not to my knowledge. But I can tell you that it wasn't the best of relationships between me and Jesse Johnson. I didn't let the relationship become a big problem, but Jesse had a big ego. He had lost his big moment. And then I didn't let him raise the flag either, which he didn't like at all. The main problem I had with him over the next four or five days was related to his armored vehicles. He, of course, had brought his armored vehicles inside the embassy compound for security reasons. I understood that. By the fifth or sixth day, however, it was clear that there were no threats to him or his vehicles. I had to tell him, "Look, we're a diplomatic mission, not a military compound. Now that the city is secure, I need you to move your military vehicles outside the compound."

Also Col. Johnson had moved his officers and himself into the marine house, which made sense the first day or two. But I had a marine contingent that had been deployed with me, and they had no place to sleep. When I mentioned this to the colonel telling him that he was going to have to vacate the marine house, he said, "Well, I'll take out all my troops except my senior officers."

The gunny pointed out to me, "We have standing regulations in the Marine Corps. We don't cohabitate our marine security guards with officers and there's a reason for that."

In spite of my verbal request, Jesse Johnson refused to vacate the marine house. So, I actually had to send him a written communication that said, "By tomorrow all your officers, including you, will have to be out of the marine house. I have a spare bedroom at the residence, which is yours to use as long as you wish to use it."

Well, of course he would have nothing to do with the bedroom in my house and he moved out with others. I'm very thankful for all the U.S. forces did, and this story is not intended undercut that in anyway. These things happen and then things move on.

I spent considerable time during my last few days in Ta'if discussing with Washington on several important issues that we might face when I entered Kuwait. One of our main concerns was retribution or retaliation against two groups by Kuwaitis once liberation had occurred. The first was against any Iraqis who might have been trapped in Kuwait, either civilians and military. Any Iraqi military would be considered POWs and therefore covered under international agreements. The second group was the remnant of the Palestinian community. The Palestinian community in Kuwait had been about 350,000 prior to the Iraqi invasion. With a population in Kuwait between 800,000 and a million, the Palestinian population was substantial. We estimated that, when we liberated Kuwait, the number of Palestinians had shrunk to about 150,000. But that's still quite large. Arafat's siding with Saddam Hussein and support for his annexation of Kuwait left the community in Kuwait very vulnerable. You can imagine how incensed Kuwaitis were. Interestingly, there was far more anger in the Kuwaiti exile community than among those who remained inside Kuwait. In the two weeks following my arrival, I learned that the Kuwaitis, who remained inside and who undertook some resistance, actually had assistance from some of the Palestinians who stayed. Not all of the Palestinian community agreed with Arafat and what he did. This wasn't common knowledge or

appreciated in any way by the Kuwaitis who were in Cairo, UAE, Bahrain, London, and elsewhere.

An unforeseen development following the massive Iraqi retreat on February 25<sup>th</sup> and in the entry of U.S. forces on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> was a huge inflow of Kuwaitis overland from Saudi Arabia back into the city --- many with arms. Maybe we should have foreseen it? But we weren't prepared to control it. We hadn't thought about it and didn't seal the border. A number of these people came back determined to get even. I had talked extensively with the Kuwaiti government in Ta'if that we had to stop any retribution. We couldn't have the news stories on the day of liberation be Kuwaitis kill Palestinians or Kuwaitis killing Iraqis. Any such actions would have been fodder for the press back in the States who would call into question US efforts to liberate Kuwait. "Are these the kind of people you liberated the country for?"

I knew that one of my very first tasks had to be to try to keep that from happening, or if it did happen—at a minimum. In the last month and a half before liberation, I had worked closely with the Kuwait Task Force, the civil affairs unit that had been planning for the days after liberation, on exactly how to deal with this concern. Several members of this group were in liaison with various U.S. forces who were supposed to maintain order in the country. One of the important people in the Kuwait Task Force group was Andrew Natsios, who was head of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the Treasury Department. He was a good example of the high quality of officers called into service. His focus was on humanitarian issues. In those first few days after liberation, he was out and about town. He reported to me daily what he saw and what was going on. His reporting gave the information we needed to contain humanitarian abuses.

Now, why were there Iraqis still in the country? There were two kinds. One was Iraqi Military and the other were Iraqi civilians who were there for whatever reasons. There was a fairly large number of Iraqi troops trapped in the city, when we liberated it. When Saddam ordered all of his forces to retreat on the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>, there was pandemonium amongst the Iraqi forces. There was no organized withdrawal --- in fact chaos. Individual commanders issued orders to the troops that were collocated with them to get in their vehicles and head for Iraq. It wasn't as if the commanding officer got everybody lined up in a row, took a roll call, got them into vehicles, and then left in convoy. No. Soldiers crammed into vehicles and tore out onto the highways heading north. People were pouring out of bedrooms and houses. In most locations military units had taken over villas. Since no villa was big enough to hold the whole unit, some soldiers were in the next-door villa or across the street. In many cases, the troops in the primary compound simply forgot to go next door and tell them, "We're leaving." When the section of the unit staying in the villa next door woke up an hour or two later, they discovered that the compound where the commanding officer was staying was completely empty. And there were no vehicles. They had no way of getting out of the country unless they happened to have a vehicle of their own at their villa. So a fair number of Iraqi soldiers were essentially abandoned.

Then there were Iraqis in hospitals. Again, fortunately the hospitals were not destroyed or looted. They were full of patients --- Kuwaitis, Iraqis and other expats there for different reasons: victims of attacks, upcoming operations, wounded, etc. I feared that Iraqis in the hospitals were vulnerable and needed some protection.

I had an idea that I implemented on the second day after my arrival. I knew that CNN was following my every move. They were looking for stories. I also knew that every Kuwaiti who had a satellite dish was tuned in to every CNN new break. I had a plan. I told CNN through my public affairs people that I was going to visit hospitals. My intention was to visit Iraqis in the hospitals knowing that Kuwaitis would see the CNN news feeds within hours. I calculated that it would be much harder to “disappear” persons who had just been photographed talking to me. I was also counting on my high profile before and during liberation (as President Bush’s man on the scene) to also counter those who might want to take retribution on Iraqis. Obviously, I could not go to a hospital and visit Iraqis and not visit Kuwaitis. So I visited Kuwaitis as well.

Before I went to the hospital, the task force group located Iraqi military who were there not because of the invasion but because they’d been wounded in the weeks of the air war or were simply sick. When I went into their rooms, they were quite stunned that the American ambassador came. I assured them in English for the American audience that they were safe and I repeated it in Arabic for the Kuwaiti viewers. I affirmed that they were being treated as POWs by the U.S. Military who were documenting them, and that they didn't need to be concerned. That message came across and was in the homes of Kuwaitis with a couple of hours. I think that communicated to them that this person, the Ambassador of the United States, who they’d seen on television, if you remember from Bahrain, saying, “We are coming. We are coming. Don’t risk your lives; stay safe.” I had this persona with them. They also saw me talking to Kuwaiti patients demonstrating humanitarian concern that gave me again some cache.

In the embassy during these first few days I had my team of embassy officers and representatives of the Kuwait Task Force (KTF). The KTF had experts in all areas that we would have to address in rebuilding Kuwait --- economic, health, education, finance, etc. They were reporting back to me daily the conditions that they were seeing around Kuwait. I remember Natsios came in one day very concerned that in Hawalli, a district of the capital largely populated with Palestinian, there were Kuwaitis gathering. He feared trouble and violence. I notified the military who deployed to Hawalli to simply provide a barrier.

There was another time when I heard some Kuwaitis were gathering. I went there myself, stood in front of the Kuwaitis and talked to some of the ringleaders. I began very positively and said “I came to see you to tell you how great it is that your country is liberated.” They responded by saying, “Yes, long live America, long live Abu Abdullah,” which was their favorite name for President Bush.

Then I shifted completely and said, “The last thing you want to do, my friends, my brothers, is to embarrass the President, Abu Abdullah. You don’t want to embarrass him!” “No, no, no, we don’t want to embarrass him.”

I said, “You will if you do what you were coming here to do.” I didn’t say that I knew what they were planning to do, but I did emphasize that we didn’t want any violence between them and Palestinians. That conversation turned them around.

Thinking of this time in Kuwait right after liberation brings to mind what happened in Baghdad in 2003. In Baghdad that there were no orders to U.S. forces to stop the looting. This was very different to what happened in Kuwait. We were active and engaged, both as civilians and as military, in Kuwait to maintain order --- to put things back together. We had been planning for months for what needed to be done in the aftermath of liberation. That was not done in 2003. It is a terrible tragedy to me to know that we could do it, that we did do it, that the military had the capability in 2003 as they had in 1991, and that there was still no such planning in 2003.

Moving back to Kuwait 1991, there was no water or electricity in the country for three weeks. There was no water because without electricity you couldn’t pump water. More to the point all water in Kuwait comes from a desalination plant that required electricity to operate! The great fear that we had before liberation was that the Iraqis would destroy the infrastructure in the country. This fear largely stemmed from the fact that the Iraqis had blown up the oil fields. That’s why we had contracted for water trucks and for other support. We also received information in the last three or four days before we got into the city that the Iraqis were blowing up buildings, palaces, ministries, left and right. So while the city was liberated, living conditions were stark.

When I arrived, I drove around the city to get a good sense of conditions. The corniche and the main highways were full of Kuwaitis in their vehicles, trucks, and cars, decked out with all sorts of flags --- American flags, Kuwaiti flags, Saudi flags, flags of the Emirates, the Bahraini flags. They were shouting and celebrating. Unfortunately, however, they were also shooting into the air and their bullets were coming back down on top of everybody. There were injuries. One bullet that came down through the roof of the residence into my living room while we were having in one of my country team meetings. Fortunately, no one was injured.

In the first few days after I arrived, there were still Iraqi tanks lying upside down or sideways and still burning. There were bodies still lying on the street from the air war. The streets were covered with loot, clothes, televisions, and other things that had fallen out of vehicles in that massive Iraqi retreat on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February.

*Q: Was there any discussion with the army, the marines, and the Kuwaiti Army about what to do about the Palestinians?*

GNEHM: This is an extraordinarily good question. As early as December and early January just before the air war, there were discussions in the Kuwait Task Force

regarding the Palestinians. Natsios actually had an idea that he proposed early on to provide a corridor during the hostilities for Palestinians. They could be warned to leave and given a safe way to get out. Later on as we got closer to the land war in February, I was talking to the Crown Prince Prime Minister and his Minister of Interior about how to create a force inside after liberation to provide security and protection for Palestinians. I specifically said Palestinians even though the word minorities was the word that was usually used. The Kuwaitis agreed and Schwarzkopf and his team negotiated with the Saudis that there would be joint Saudi-Kuwaiti patrols, not police. Patrols were to be posted around the city to stop any trouble.

In the end, none of this happened despite all of talk and planning. In fact, not everything went according to plan especially on how we would get the Government of Kuwait back in place. I would lay the blame largely on the Kuwaiti government. They were not that well organized. This became apparent later. They simply did not appreciate how much destruction and disorganization there would be. To the surprise of many people, on the 27th of February, the last full day I was in Ta'if, the Crown Prince Prime Minister issued a decree under the Amir's name declaring martial law in Kuwait. He then appointed Sheikh Sa'ad as the military commander of all forces in Kuwait. He never discussed this with me. It was never discussed with Washington. It was never discussed with Schwarzkopf. It was not part of the plan. The Saudis went *ballistic*. The person who became the voice of Saudi ire was none other than Prince Khalid bin Sultan, the son of the Saudi Minister of Defense and commander of Saudi troops in the coalition! He was outraged. The King of Saudi Arabia was outraged. Prince Sultan was outraged and said, "If he thinks our troops are under his command they're crazy." Of course, American forces were not going to be under his command either. By this point, our troops have moved into Kuwait and were in control of the country. The order was ignored by everyone. General Schwarzkopf said that Prince Khalid stormed into his office saying, "All friendly forces-- that is an insult to us, an absolute insult!"

Schwarzkopf said, "What's wrong with being called friendly?" Prince Khalid replied, "Because we are *brotherly*! He should have said all *brotherly*." It was one of the sideshow acts of the moment.

For the record, Prince Khalid and General Schwarzkopf worked very closely through many issues such as deployments and movements, when there was trouble between U.S. forces and Saudi citizens, issues with the liaison, the building of the coalition, etc. These were all issues that the two of them worked on throughout these months and worked very well together. It was just that Prince Khalid had this view of the Saudi role in Kuwait --- a view that was not necessarily ours. This Saudi attitude is something that has been symptomatic of the Saudi-Kuwaiti relationship going back to pre-independence days. It still surfaces from time to time. Now in 2014, it is playing out in the former neutral zone where there is contretemps over Saudi rights in that zone. The Saudis believe they have the legal right to extract their share of oil from that area and made decisions without consulting Kuwait. Kuwait believes Saudi Arabia is violating Kuwaiti sovereignty.

Ultimately, even the plan that we had discussed with the Government of Kuwait was ignored. So Crown Prince Sa'ad ordered his Minister of Interior, Sheikh Salem Salem al-Sabah to move immediately to Kuwait as the Government's representative until the Kuwaiti Government assessed that the security situation inside Kuwait was safe for their return. So, I end up having him as my counterpart in Kuwait --- not the full government. He was a very senior member of the family; but a person known among Kuwaitis as a hardliner, a person not hesitant to use force. He tended toward the belief that force had to be used to prove that the government has control. This opinion of Sheikh Salem was a pre-invasion view in Kuwait. So, there was concern about the way he might use the Kuwaiti forces now under his command. For example, there had been a resistance movement inside the country. We knew from intelligence sources that the Government of Kuwait (and Sheikh Salem personally) was concerned about the loyalty of the resistance to the Al-Sabah family.

The US Government did not share this concern. We had no evidence of hostility to the al-Sabah family. These were people doing inside what they thought they could do to thwart the Iraqi occupation. They organized themselves. They worked surreptitiously at night and day. They bribed Iraqi people to get food and money to enable Kuwaitis to survive. The resistance took actions in an effort to disrupt the occupation, but the Iraqis were brutal in their retribution. If the resistance killed Iraqi soldiers, the Iraqi soldiers would go down the street and arrest every single person on the street where it occurred. That is why I said in that broadcast from Bahrain, "Don't put yourselves in jeopardy. That's not necessary. We are coming to liberate you." We gave advice to them to do what they can to take care of Kuwaitis and to report back what they were seeing. We told them that we needed good intelligence on the whereabouts of Iraqi forces, but they should not provoke the Iraqis into taking retribution --- killing, hanging, or shooting Kuwaitis.

When I went on that visit to the hospital, the hospital administrator, a Kuwaiti, wanted to show me the morgue. It was gruesome. It was utterly gruesome. When they pulled the gurneys out to show me the bodies of the Kuwaitis, some of them had holes drilled in their skulls or were shot through the neck or in the face. Some had eyes gouged out. I had to look at it for their sake. I didn't want or need to see it, but again it was important for CNN team covering my visit. There had been a hearing in Washington in the House of Representatives chaired by Congressman Tom Lantos-- Democrat from California. Kuwaitis had testified about these atrocities. All those who testified were covered for protection. The Kuwaitis outside knew that if the Iraqis learned the names of people testifying, they would go after their relatives and families still inside Kuwait. One woman testified that she had been in a maternity ward where Iraqis came in and dumped babies out of incubators to steal the incubators to take them to Iraq. It later came out that this woman was none other than the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington, Sheikh Saud Nasser al-Sabah. On the date on which she claimed she saw it, she wasn't in Kuwait. She had already fled the country. I knew from talking to her that she did see it before she fled Kuwait; but testifying on the specific date when she wasn't there discredited her. Everybody went after Lantos that his hearing was a fraud, that the Kuwaitis were just creating all of this to gain sympathy and that atrocities such as what she described simply didn't happen.

My trip to the morgue was body proof of atrocities. Also there were women in the maternity wards telling CNN and other news outlets that Iraqis did steal the incubators. Just as an aside, several years later Lantos was running for reelection for congress. He was attacked viciously by his opponent for this hearing and the incubator allegation. They called him and a party to deceit. I saw this in the media. I called Larry Eagleburger, Deputy Secretary of State, telling him, "Larry, I know the truth behind this story and Lantos is being savaged wrongly. I'd like to write him a letter with the truth of this allegation and I know he will use it to defend himself. Is that OK with you? I'm still in government and want to be sure such a letter is OK."

Eagleburger said, "Skip, if you're just writing him a letter documenting what you know to be true, I don't have a problem with that. You might get pilloried by his opponent." I said, "I don't care about that. I just don't like what I see going on."

I called Lantos and he was grateful. I wrote him a letter that said, "I've seen news reports that discredit the hearing and I just want to thank you for what you did. While there were some errors in some of the facts, the overall picture was the right one. Had you not held the hearings, the American public would not have been aware of the atrocities. Lantos published the letter. Writing such a letter is not something that career Foreign Service officers normally do; but I thought the truth was important."

Going back to Kuwait, I will start with the date that the Crown Prince Prime Minister Sheikh Sa'ad al Sabah actually returned. It was four or five days later on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> of March. Until he came, I was pretty much running things. The Minister of Interior had some of his people. They did eventually get cars and communication equipment, but essentially I was the one with personnel and equipment assets. All of the arguments about who the Kuwait Task Force was going to report to and work for and whether they'd be with me or the military all vaporized in the practical requirements of the moment.

I knew it would turn out that way if I could just get there. It's important to note that the Kuwaiti officials from various ministries who had been working with the KTF actually deployed into Kuwait with the U.S. Military, unlike the rest of the Kuwaiti government still in Ta'if.

When the Crown Prince came to Kuwait, he arrived on a Kuwait Airlines 747. He brought some of his ministers from Ta'if. Other ministers came from Dhahran where they had positioned themselves. Hundreds of Kuwaitis were at the airport to greet him. The Crown Prince came down from the plane and kissed the earth. The immediate issue was where the Crown Prince would go. His own palace had been torched. The Iraqis had destroyed most government buildings. They used phosphor bombs inside buildings. That generates intense heat and sears the inside of a building.

The National Assembly building was one notable target. The Army Corps of Engineers did an assessment of the building's condition. Their initial assessment was that there was major damage, but the building was structurally repairable. They found that the heat from

phosphor bombs inside the assembly hall had been so intense that it had melted the iron re-bars inside the poured concrete. This meant that while the roof of the building was still there, it was not attached to the four walls.

The Kuwaitis thought we were going to reconstruct everything; but we had told them we weren't, they had to do that. We had tried to get them to sign a contract with Parsons, a U.S. company, to help manage the reconstruction effort, but they never did. I think they suspected there was trickery and that there was too much padding of contracts. They also thought that Parsons would have too much authority. I believe the Kuwaiti Government thought that in the end the Army Corps of Engineers would do what we were expecting Parsons to do.

The U.S. government at the presidential level made the decision that we would repair one building, the National Assembly, and that was clearly for symbolic reasons. So it was the Corps of Engineers that managed the repair of the National Assembly. That included jacking the entire roof up off the four walls and reinserting the connectors and re-bars to be able to reattach the roof to the walls.

I don't remember a single government building that wasn't destroyed. On about the fourth or fifth day the KTF was out with their counterparts and were reporting back to me that large numbers of Kuwaiti citizens were showing up at the ministry buildings. They anticipated going back to work and getting things back to normal, only to discover they couldn't enter the buildings because there was nothing left.

I will recount this story in more detail later, but I came to Washington in 2002 from vacation with notes to talk to Rich Armitage, the Deputy Secretary of State, and to the Secretary about going to the Pentagon to talk to them about how we had approached the situation in Kuwait after liberation in 1991. I wanted to discuss what happened after the successful military action --- things we had done right; things I wish I had done differently; lessons learned. At the top of my list of lessons learned was the importance of seizing the ministry buildings *immediately*. On the day you get to Baghdad, cordon off the ministry buildings because you will have people who work in those buildings showing up to work a) because they're nationalists, b) because they want to go to work to get things going, and c) because they need the salaries and the food baskets that come with being a government employee. I couldn't do that in Kuwait because the buildings had been destroyed before we got there. As you know, in Baghdad in 2003 we didn't secure the ministries, except for the Ministry of Petroleum. The consequences there were exactly what I predicted; people showed up and couldn't work. Anyway, I'll come back to this in more detail later.

Going back to Kuwait, we had to find other locations for these various ministries. The options were very limited and available space could only accommodate a small number of employees. When the Crown Prince came, he couldn't use his palace because, as I said, it had been burned and heavily damaged. The shell of the palace remained but the interior was gutted. His office was completely irreparable. So, he took up residence as a guest in

one of the diwanias of a rich, well-to-do, established Kuwaiti business families, the Shi'ya.

What is a diwaniya? It is a gathering of family and friends in large sitting rooms where all come together to visit and chat. It's a Kuwaiti institution --- very unique to Kuwait. There are similar gatherings elsewhere in the Arab world but not like Kuwait. The origin goes back in history to when Kuwait was essentially a trading state using wooden dhows to trade to and from the Gulf to Africa and India.

*Q: I remember going down to Trucial State and looking at all the dhows pulled up there.*

GNEHM: Exactly. Each of the family compounds have a special room where they receive people, a huge room where there are seats on either three or four walls. The patriarch of the family sits and receives his guests. As the guests come in, the patriarch greets them and they take their place around the room. It is in many ways a gossip session and they talk about politics or any subject that comes to mind. The custom originally started when the dhows returned from either the African or the Indian coast. Everyone would gather at the diwaniya to hear the crews tell their tales from their trading voyage. The tradition developed over time and the patriarchal families began opening their diwanias on a regular basis. It wasn't just when trading vessels came back from their travels. There were a large number of diwanias, perhaps as many as 50 or 60 before liberation. Now there are between 300 and 500. Everybody has one.

Back to the Crown Prince's return... One of the large merchant families offered the Crown Prince the use of their diwaniya. The room was very beautiful with a huge chandelier and a single piece Persian carpet obviously fabricated for this room. The Crown Prince set up court there. He sat in the patriarchal seat and presided over the comings and goings of persons interested in talking to the Crown Prince. Ministers were there as well. I spent a lot of time there as I was involved in much of what was happening in the country in these early days. On the other hand, I was careful not to be there all the time. I wanted the Crown Prince and other Kuwaiti officials to be seen as governing --- seen as the authorities. I knew who I was and what influence I had. I also knew I had the means to get things done. There was no need for me to prove any of this.

I didn't need to prove my position or status; I had a good reputation from the role I had played during the exile period, as well as what I had done in those first few days after liberation. Furthermore, people could see that the government wasn't standing up quickly and it was important to the USG that the government be seen as in charge. I remember that I had a country team meeting and I said, "I do not want anyone throwing my name around or telling Kuwaitis they needed to know how much ability or influence we had. You're not to do that. We're going to conduct ourselves with a low profile. At the same time we're going to do what we have to do. I will stand up to the plate if ever anything needs to be done, but I'll do it in a way that bolsters the government of Kuwait's position in the country and maintains our dignity."

So, whenever I went to the Crown Prince's diwaniya, I did what everyone else did. I crossed the floor, went up to him, greeted him, and kissed him on both cheeks. He usually would gesture for me to sit next to him, which is an honorific position. I would sit there if I had business or I would sit there for a moment until I had my first cup of tea. Then I would often excuse myself and go sit next to someone that I wanted to talk to. I would remove myself from that seat because others were coming in and that was my way of not being perceived as a proconsul. That was the word I hated and didn't want it to surface. I explain my approach in such detail now because, as I go through my tales and stories, you're going to see how it plays out in a very positive way.

*Q: Something I'd like you to maybe cover a bit, because I'm thinking of this as eventually a lesson to be learned by young officers coming up the string. How did you distribute your very sparse resources of people? How did you assign them out at the very beginning?*

GNEHM: At the very beginning, I was fortunate having the personnel from Kuwaiti Task Force co-located with me. They had vehicles from the military and communications from the military. They had their own protection detail and so they were able to move around. I had my officers who came into Kuwait with me. My political officer, David Pearce, went with me to the diwaniya if there was going to be something that needed to be reported. My administrative officers, Jim Stewart, who had been working with me in Ta'if, and Wayne Logsdon, who was also assigned to come in a bit later, were busy trying to get the compound to work.

It turned out that all the vehicles that Nat Howell had left in the compound worked. Nat's team had sabotaged them hoping the Iraqis would not take them. They had clipped some of the wires, so they weren't easily driven off. Nat's staff had documented their work, which my admin officer fortunately knew about and had access to. So, they fixed all these vehicles, including the huge black Cadillac that was the ambassador's car. That was the armored vehicle that my security team forced me to use around town even though it was so ostentatious --- the only Cadillac in the country, I believe.

I had the security detail of 15 to 18 people. Many from the military. I had a couple of SEALs and Special Forces. It was a combined group. John Frese was my Regional Security Officer, an exceptional officer. Charlie Chase, another outstanding Diplomatic Security (DS) officer, was the security officer in charge of my security detail. Everywhere I moved, I had a vehicle in front and a vehicle behind, and these guys were hanging out with their guns pulled. Again, during these early days we were uncertain about the security situation. I was in this very ostentatious standout vehicle, which was the last thing I wanted to be in; but it was armored, and I understood why the team insisted that I be in it.

Nat will forgive me for saying this, but he is a very large person, physically. The car was old and ready to be replaced. The springs in the back right seat where ambassadors usually sit were no longer there. Being of smaller size, when I climbed into that seat, I was below window level! I had to push myself up to look out the windows. I felt like I

had been dropped into a bucket! My security detail thought it was great for security. We laughed about it. I didn't have to fly a flag. Everyone in Kuwait knew that it was the American ambassador's vehicle. As I said, there wasn't another black Cadillac in Kuwait, at least of that vintage.

I'll tell you an anecdote about how those in exile failed to comprehend the situation to which they were returning. On the first day that the Crown Prince arrived on March 1 in the evening, I went to see him at the diwaniya. After greeting Sheikh Sa'ad, I had taken a place at the opposite side of the diwaniya, which would in protocol terms be the lowest place in the room. During these early days, it was the first chance for the people who'd been in the country during occupation to see their Crown Prince again. I didn't want or need to be up front. I wanted to be there but not in the forefront. Hence I sat at the far wall. Khalid Hajraf, the Crown Prince's personal secretary, who had been in Ta'if with me and the Crown Prince, came over and he sat down next to me.

He said, "Mr. Ambassador, I have a big problem. I have a big, big, big problem." I said, "What's wrong, Khalid?" "Oh, yeah it's a big problem," he said. "Khalid, what is the problem?"

He said, "You know, it's coming up on dinnertime and there's no food in the kitchen for his Highness's supper tonight."

I said, "I'm fairly sure of that, there's been a scarcity of food." He said, "Yeah, but what is he going to eat? You've got to help me. Can you send some food over from the embassy?"

I said, "Khalid, I'm eating rations. The military gave me boxes and boxes of rations. My own staff are eating rations. I could send them over, but are you sure you want to get rations?"

"Oh, I can't give his Highness rations, no. No, no. But please, go to the military and get me some food from the mess hall. We'll eat whatever they've got at the mess hall; we'll eat the same food they're eating." "Khalid," I said, "we don't have any mess halls inside Kuwait. They're in Dhahran. All the troops you see are eating rations. That's what we brought in!"

"Oh! What am I going to do? What am I going to do?" I said, "Khalid, I'll be happy to share my rations with his Highness, but that's all I can do for you."

At this point Khalid runs out of the room. About 25 or 30 minutes later a colonel from the Ministry of Defense came in who I knew from my Ta'if days, came in, sat down next to me and he said, "Oh-ho-ho. You've heard I guess." I said, "Oh-ho, yes I've heard." He said, "Well, I went over to my mother's house. She had two frozen chickens that she'd been saving in case she didn't have anything else to eat. I brought them so the Crown Prince will have chicken tonight. But that's all he's going to have --- just these two chickens."

The Crown Prince came on a 747 with trunk loads of clothes, items that they had accumulated during their exile time but they didn't think to bring any food. I have great love and compassion for the Crown Prince personally and for everybody else on his staff for that matter. I understood they were thinking about going home and about security. They were not thinking about what was going to happen when they arrived. Should they have thought of food? They just had not comprehended how difficult the situation was in Kuwait after so many months of occupation. Yes, they should have thought of food; but under the circumstances, I am willing to give them some slack here. Fortunately for me and my embassy, it only took about 48 hours for the Kuwaiti government to contract with a caterer in Saudi Arabia. The food came from Saudi Arabia in convoys in massive quantities and it wonderfully good food on a continual basis for the next several weeks. The embassy staff and I were invited to dine from the crown prince's kitchen at the diwaniya. Since we were eating rations at the residence, I tried to bring enough of my officers over time so they got good hot meals every now and again.

*Q: What did you use the various officers in your embassy for in the initial hours?*

GNEHM: They were doing whatever was needed to be done. They were going out with the KTF people. There was concern about security, as I said.

The economic officer was trying to establish liaison with the oil people who had remained in Kuwait during the occupation. We also KTF people working with the people down in Ahmadi, where the headquarters for the oil companies was located. That is also the area where the Burgan oil field, the offshore buoys and the refineries were located. The oil company employees were a big part of the resistance. There was a huge and very effective resistance group of oil workers down there. In fact, they had been the ones that sabotaged the Iraqi effort to wire the wellheads for destruction. They convinced the Iraqi forces in the oil fields that they had to be allowed into the fields to maintain it. That was technically what the Iraqis wanted because they hoped to be able to export oil at some point. The oil workers were using their access to watch what the Iraqis were doing. They saw the Iraqis wiring each of the wellheads with explosives. They then in and snipped the wires putting it back so it looked like it was still connected. Their efforts to sabotage what the Iraqis had done was closely held until the then Minister of Oil was asked at a press conference, "Aren't you afraid of what the Iraqis might do in your oil fields?" He said, "No, we've taken care of that."

This alerted Iraqis that something was going on. When I got to Kuwait, I became really close friends with the group in Al-Ahmadi. They told me all about their efforts and their fury when the minister revealed what they had done. They were ready to assassinate this oil minister. Once he made his public remark, Iraqi forces went out and checked and realized that their sabotage efforts had been sabotaged. Of course they reconnected the wires, and that's why they were able to actually blow the wellheads later setting the old fields on fire.

Going back to your question, my KTF people were working closely with the oil field employees to determine what was needed to deal with the oil fires and how we would go

about it. My economic officer was with them throughout this time. So again, we were able to use the great assets that we had to get out and about. The admin people were busily trying to get the embassy back in operating condition. Getting communications in place was critically important. Initially we had no direct communication with Washington. Our messages from the Department were being relayed through the military. As I mentioned previously, I had picked Jim Seward because I knew that this guy was an enterprising individual who knew how to get things done. He had a great personality as well --- always a spot of humor which was badly needed during these trying days. But most importantly, he could ferret out connections. He could work deals.

We had excellent relations with the Minister of Communication thanks to the close liaison between the KTF officer and the minister's liaison staff with the KTF. The minister approached Jim to ask if the embassy would be willing to allow the government to locate a satellite dish inside the embassy compound. At this point in time there was no ground communication capability in Kuwait and they feared placing the temporary satellite dish in an unprotected area. They had contracted with AT&T to immediately provide the satellite dish. I believe the dish provided 150 international lines.

Jim Seward responded immediately, "I am sure we can do this. In return for the security we need 20 open lines for our use."

The minister agreed to our use of 20 lines in exchange for the location in the compound and the security we would provide. The big satellite dish arrived and was placed between the residence and the chancery. For the next five months, we had free international telephone service.

These lines supplemented the communication package that we had brought from Ta'if. I am talking about the commo gear that connected us to the Department of State and other USG agencies. In the first few days we could call out, but no one could call in. Some would see this as a great situation! Even when we did get the lines working, we would get calls but sporadically. As I mentioned, the Department was still relaying messages to me through the military --- especially classified material. And it was still not easy to return calls or send a response back through the military. So, I was operating much on my own. I had a good sense of what the issues were and what I was likely to be told to do or not do. I recall that my Assistant Secretary, John Kelly, whom I have mentioned previously, was particularly upset that I was not getting guidance from him on an ongoing basis. By the way, no other official in Washington, including the Secretary of State and the Undersecretary for Political Affairs ever expressed any concern --- in fact quite the opposite.

*Q: As far as you were concerned, what was his role?*

GNEHM: John would try to call or have others call me because he feared that I did not understand what was happening in Washington and that I needed careful supervision. Again, I have mentioned my encounters with John and it was clear to me that he was often not on the same wave link as others in the Department. I did not want or need

confrontation with him and the difficulty in communicating with Washington served this well.

Further people in Washington who were having to deal with lots of other issues were did not grasp the totality of what I was having to grapple with in Kuwait during these early days. We still had no electricity or water. The Government of Kuwait was still operating with minimal structure and capability. I was still concerned about developments in the city --- the situation of the remaining Palestinian community but also the tension between Kuwaitis who had remained in Kuwait and those who had fled. I was up over my head in things that were happening left and right. Every single evening, I would get in my car about dusk escorted by my security detail, and I head out into town. I would go where we had heard that there were Kuwaitis gathering --- usually in private homes or diwanias --- just as they had during the resistance.

Going out at night like this was eerie. This city was pitch black at night --- with a light a mile off here or two bulbs over there operating from a generator. From where I sat in this little hole of a seat in my car, I could see the headlights of my car as they turned and swung over burnt out buildings and wrecked vehicles. There was nothing else moving in the streets because of security concerns, except for me. But I was determined to be out and I was in the first few days literally looking for people. When I saw a light bulb, we would stop. Security went in first to make sure that it was safe. Then I went in to their shock and surprise and pleasure to see that the American ambassador was there. Those first nights were full of stories and of questions to me. I think in the first four or five days I probably did up to five of such visits a night. Word got out that I was there and out and about. I was always very humble about it. It was information gather. It was an effort to reassure people who were still coping with the occupation mentality. It was “how are you,” “what’s going on,” “is there anything I can do for you or need to do for you?”

In fact the people I met were quite self-sufficient. These were people who had been there through the whole resistance period. Now they were no longer worried about security. They were no longer worried about their own life. They had food or money and things that they hoarded and kept hidden. I was not trying to replace the government. My visits were a means of getting to know what was going on in the country. This was where I got most of my knowledge about the workings of the Kuwaiti resistance.

As I mentioned, the Kuwaiti government in Ta’if had been concerned about whether this self-organized resistance inside Kuwait was loyal to the al-Sabahs and whether there would be internal problems when the government came back to Kuwait. There was also a concern about whether the resistance was working with the external groups that were hostile to the Kuwait. I mentioned the Tehran to meet earlier that the Crown Prince had sent his Minister of Communication, Habib Hayat, a Shia. To meet with the Shia community in exile in Iran, to reassure them that their situation would be different when they returned after liberation.

The government was not able to do that same thing with those inside. I was concerned based on some intelligence that the government might take some retribution or some

actions against their own people --- those that they were suspicious about. There was a particular group of exiles in London who had been in the opposition before the invasion. Ahmed Sadoun, a former Speaker of the National Assembly, was one of that group. This group was attacking the Sabahs for not being honest about what they were going to do when they got back to Kuwait. They demanded more assurances about elections and the constitution --- especially the return of the National Assembly. The resistance inside Kuwait had ties with some of these external groups and so it wasn't unreasonable for the government to have concerns about potential problems. What would have been unreasonable, however, was taking any action against them.

I had to make sure that didn't happen and so I went out to get a feel and a sense of the situation. I did not hear anyone in the resistance groups indicate any interest in displacing the Al-Sabahs. Did they want things to be a little bit different after liberation? Yes, but all within the constitutional system that was there. I reported my information to Washington and I reassured the Crown Prince privately at the diwaniya. I would sit next to him and whisper "Oh, I was over at the so and so diwaniya last night." He might raise his eyebrows but would say, "Oh no, it was fun, it was fun and interesting." And I would tell him "They are all for you. They're glad you're back." I told him what I was hearing just to reassure him. I wasn't certain what kind of information he was getting back from his own sources in his government.

*Q: There was something that sounded horrific at the time regarding missing children taken out of Kuwait and adopted in Iraq. Can you expand on that?*

GNEHM: It was part of a bigger issue. From the very beginning of the Iraqi occupation, the Iraqis began to seize people and take them to Iraq. By early January, it looked like the air war was going to start and then, when it did start, the Iraqis began taking more hostages. Kuwaitis were not the only people taken hostage by the Iraqis. In the immediate days after the occupation Iraqi forces searched for all expatriates and took them to Iraq. In September, October, and November, these hostages -- the Americans, the Brits, the others -- were being put in factories and at military bases to try and deter us from attacking those places. On the other hand, Kuwaitis were put in detention camps.

The Iraqis did take children. I can personally attest to one real tragedy. The Director General of the Foreign Ministry was Suleiman al-Shaheen. He was in exile residing in Riyadh where the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry was located, not in Ta'if. I saw him quite often. He was in and out of Ta'if all the time. We became close friends. In fact, his brother, Ibrahim al-Shaheen was the senior Kuwaiti official working with the KTF. A third brother, Mohammed, had twin boys. One day the young boys were out playing in the street. They disappeared. Neighbors said they saw them picked up by Iraqis. They were among the several thousand Kuwaitis that were missing when Kuwait was liberated. The international community passed resolutions trying to get the Iraqis to account for the children through the Red Cross. The Iraqis refused to cooperate. Within a few days after liberation, word spread around Kuwait that the detainees were coming back and that buses were sent up to pick them up and bring them home. I remember going to one of the co-ops, which had a big parking lot. I went to be there when the hostages came back.

There were hundreds of Kuwaitis there, families hoping to their loved ones. Then the buses began to arrive and disgorge their passengers. I saw families finding each other and hugging and kissing and crying and yelling and laughing. As they began to dissipate, I saw the group who didn't find anyone. And the question in all our minds was where are they? Are they coming back or are they dead?

The stories of the atrocities were terrible. I heard some of these from the resistance. I heard even more stories when I began to run into these returnees during my nightly runs. I remember one story in particular. It was awful. The returnees said that they were at a certain military base in southern Iraq near Basra. They were put in military barracks. These barracks were typical, where you had beds on the left and right side. They were long, rectangular buildings. There was a walkway down the middle with doors at each end. The hostages were crammed into these barracks sleeping side by side. At night they would hear screaming and yelling and then a gunshot and then some more screaming and yelling a little bit later and another gunshot this time a bit closer. The routine was that the door would open at one end and a group of Iraqis would enter with their guns and pistols out. They would walk down the center, randomly grab one of the Kuwaitis, execute him, leave him lying on the floor, and go out the door at the other end. This was the Iraqi way to instill fear. The returnees said they didn't know from one day to the next whether they would be the one picked as the next victim. They could not even be certain that what they had heard outside really happened. It might have been theatrics to scare the prisoners. In some cases, however, they did see people executed in their own building.

Well, going back to the story about the two children. After a number of weeks, a few more detainees returned. Others began to straggle back as order in Iraq disintegrated. While the U.S. forces didn't go that far into Iraq, the Iraqi Army was in disarray. So some of these Kuwaitis just simply got out or were released or were told by their captives, "Get out of here, go, get away." The two boys that I mentioned didn't come back. During the years that I was there, which was until '94, there was no information about them at all. I know from my friend, Suleiman, that his brother had a nervous breakdown over this. He was depressed. He just never could recover.

After 2003 and the U.S. occupation of Iraq, we began finding mass graves. I understand from Suleiman that two children's skeletons found in one mass grave were identified as being the twins. This was 14 years later.

*Q: Any Americans found?*

GNEHM: No. There was a pilot, in fact they named the Spiker base after him in 2003, that was downed during the fighting. He was the only pilot known missing from the 1990-91 period. He was flying his plane over the desert in southern Iraq when he crashed. We knew where the site was, but we were never able to find his remains. There was some evidence that he might have been picked up and was being held in Iraq, but we never found him or any of his remains.

There was another thing that surfaced during the first week after liberation. I heard from the US military through the KTF there was a Kuwaiti detention center down along the coast with detainees who were being tortured. This was really bad; this is what we were afraid of. I told the officer who had brought me the information that we had to see the Crown Prince to put a stop to this immediately.

We went to the diwaniya where the Crown Prince was sitting. We walked in, crossed the room to where he was sitting, greeted him, and sat down next to him. I put the officer who came to me with the information on my left. And I said, "Your Highness, we have a problem. This is what I've been told."

He said, "Well, it's simply not true." I said, "Sir, it is true. There is a person here who was there and who's aware of it. Do you want him to repeat what I've just said?" "No," he said, "we're not torturing people. We are opposed to that. We're not letting that happen."

"Your Highness," I said, "in all the months that we've been together I have never once lied to you. I'm not lying to you now." He had become really huffy --- close to anger for him. He said, "All right, you be here tomorrow at 8:00 and I'll tell you that it's fixed."

I stood up. I confess that I sometimes am a little theatrical; but in this case I did it for a reason. I stood up to take my leave and said, "Thank you, your Highness; but I will not be here tomorrow at 8:00." (He tensed and looked ready to explode.) And I continued, "Because if you tell me you're going to do it, that's all I need to know. I'm not going to have to come here at 8:00 to hear it."

Again, I did it for a reason. I wanted to let him know that I had enough confidence in our relationship that if he said he was going to take care of it, he would. I also knew that I had people who were going to be able to check to know for sure. They told me that within four hours some Kuwaiti officials arrived and taken over the site. The torture had stopped. There were still people under detention, but the issue of the moment was taken care of. I went to the Crown Prince's diwaniya the following night at 10:00. I greeted him and went and sat on the far side of the room. I didn't give him a chance to say anything. He looked at me and wiggled his finger for me to come up to him. I went back up and I sat down next to him and he said, "And?" I said, "You did what you promised, thank you. I knew you would."

And he said, "We can't let that happen. We just can't let that happen." I tell you this story not to pat myself on the back but to say that because of all the months I had been with him and the relationship that I had with him, I didn't need to handle this issue so everybody in the room could hear this. I didn't need that. All I needed was the results that I got.

GNEHM: One more final story. The Kuwaitis both who remained in Kuwait during the occupation and the Kuwaitis who were pouring back in were becoming more and more

angry at the government, accusing it of incompetence, and of failing to take care of them. They complained especially that there was still no electricity or water.

The main power plant in the country located just north of the city had been phosphor bombed by the Iraqis as they were retreating from Kuwait. I spoke with the Minister of Electricity, "You know that the power plant is completely destroyed. They've been working to try to find a way to rig up a part of the plant that would enable some generation of electricity; but so far they haven't succeeded. Kuwaitis do not realize how badly damaged the plant is. I have this idea. Remember when I visited the hospitals with CNN following me? Let's visit the power plant, and CNN will follow. Then everyone will see just how badly damaged it is."

That's what we did. We drove out to the power plant accompanied by CNN team. We entered a cavernous building with its really high ceilings. It was like an enormous cave, a cavern covered totally in black soot with wires and cables hanging down like serpents. And there were the huge bent and twisted hulks, the remnants of the generators. The scene was like out of one of the nightmare story from hell and Hades. Of course there was no electricity. The only light in the cavern was from the CNN team shooting their pictures of the destruction. I had one of the engineers describe to the minister on camera what had happened and how serious the damage was. Then of course the CNN reporter and the other press that was with us turned to me and said, "Mr. Ambassador, this is absolutely awful. What are we going to do?"

I said to the press, "You need to ask the minister this question." And so they immediately turned to him. He had already had a briefing from the KTF as well as his own people about the condition of the power plant. So he was able to explain the problem. I deliberately had the minister respond to the press as it reinforced his authority as well as his credibility with Kuwaitis.

That night when I went out on my diwaniya run, everyone was talking about the horrendous damage the Iraqis had done to the power plant. The public criticism of the government's failure to restore power ceased. They now understood that the government's explanation wasn't a fraud. They saw how badly the plant looked and the minister got credit, not me. Everybody knew I took him there. They saw me on camera standing next to him, but he was the one explaining the situation. Having him do the talking was crucial. Enhancing his credibility was an important step in restoring the government's credibility --- an important objective for the US.

Again, this was just my way of saying to everybody, "I can do things, but I don't have to be the thing." And the more I did that, the more influence I received and the more people looked upon me as a good guy that they trusted.

*INTERN: What ever happened to the Kuwaiti ambassador's daughter who testified?*

GNEHM: You can understand there was suspicion about the veracity of her testimony. The Ambassador of Kuwait had a reason, a motive for having the atrocities highlighted in

Washington for the American public. In the end the hearing proved important in building public support for the President's determination to liberate Kuwait.

Let me mention one final story that occurred after I arrived in Kuwait. I got in really bad trouble the very first night I was there. CNN wanted to grab me that first night to ask me about my first impressions. At the very end the interviewer said, "I know, Mr. Ambassador, that you've had a long day and it's been a hard day and we thank you for doing this interview with us. Let me ask you one last question. If you could have anything in the world right at this moment, what would you want?"

And I said, "A Coca-Cola."

And they said, "Well, we'll see if we can find one for you," or something like that. Of course there weren't any Coca-Colas in Kuwait at all.

I was later told that the Coca-Cola bottling company was ecstatic when they heard of my response. They wanted to run it in an ad! "What does the American ambassador in Kuwait want when he and the State Department arrived in Kuwait? A Coca Cola!" I don't know whether the Coca-Cola company called the State Department or State Department called them, but the Department immediately warned them that my remark was a violation of federal law. A government official cannot use his or her position to advocate a particular product --- even a Coca Cola!

*INTERN: So they didn't send you any Coca Cola? They weren't allowed to?*

GNEHM: So anyway, the Department told Coca-Cola, "If you use it in your ads, we may have to prosecute the Ambassador." The Coca Cola Company said that given the Department's position they were not going to run the ad. And they didn't. The department told me, "If you do that again, you're going to be in big trouble!" I said, "I didn't even think about it, it was an honest, straightforward question and I really would have loved to have a Coca-Cola."

Four or five days later I got 30 cases of Coca-Cola from the distributor in Bahrain, flown in on a special flight. So I asked them, "Can I accept these 30 cases? Will I be in trouble?" They said, "You can accept them if they're available for everybody in a mission." I said, "Done!" And I enjoyed the Cokes!

*Q: Today is the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. We were covering the first couple weeks in Kuwait. We talked how you were soliciting Coca-Cola (sic) and also going to the power plant and all the other activities that you were doing during the first few weeks there.*

GNEHM: I recall intensely virtually every single day of those first three to four weeks, which included most of March 1991. There was a certain amount of routine. For example, virtually every morning and often once or twice during the day, I would meet with some of the officers in the Kuwait Civil Affairs Unit (KTF). They would brief me

on the entire gambit of issues that we were facing. These reports covered efforts to get the power restored, issues with the water treatment plant, security concerns, etc. They were working with their Kuwaiti counterparts to reopen the banks, repair facilities, and a host of other issues.

*Q: Was the power system deliberately sabotaged or was this the result of war?*

GNEHM: Truth of the matter, it was a combination. The major damage was a result of sabotage. The Iraqi forces had rigged most public utilities so they could blow up if they had to retreat from Kuwait. They wired the water desalination plant, the main power plant, most of the sub-stations in the power grid, and the huge underground water reservoir located just north of the city. As the Iraqi forces retreated they detonated the explosives in the main power plant which I have described; but for reasons I cannot explain they failed to detonate the charges that they had planted in the desalination plant or at the underground water reservoir. This was a blessing. Even with the problems at the main power plant, the efforts to restore power and water would have been immeasurably more difficult and taken far longer than it did had the Iraqis destroyed those other two facilities.

But there was damage as a result of the bombing during the war. There was major damage to the power transmission lines throughout the country. For example, there was a major power transmission line from the large power plant in the south near the Saudi border up to Kuwait City. There were hundreds of breaks in the power lines largely a result of coalition bombing of Iraqi emplacements or troops located near the power lines. There was similar damage to power lines elsewhere in the country. There was a huge effort to repair the power lines. On the main transmission lines from the south, the Saudis fielded a team that began working from the border north, repairing those power lines. There were other teams working south from Kuwait City. It took several weeks to complete the repairs; but the line from the southern power plant was essential in restoring power to Kuwait City.

I have not mentioned the sewage and sanitation problem. Because there had been little to no flow of liquid sewage flow in the sewers, the sewers had become entirely clogged --- not just clogged but solidified. Even with the restoration of water, the sewers would not function until they were actually bored out --- a process that would take months.

In addition to power, water and sewage, another critical issue during these weeks was internal security, specifically standing up the Kuwaiti police. It seemed to take forever. Initially after liberation, the U.S. military was the only force with the capability of maintaining security in the city. We had no desire to have that responsibility and I argued incessantly with the Kuwaiti Government that they had to reconstitute a Kuwaiti police force to handle security in the city. Ultimately, they did; but US forces had to provide security for far longer than they had anticipated or that we desired. They were responsible for two and a half weeks. Just to remind you that we were concerned in those first few weeks after liberation about two specific issues --- the treatment of minorities, a

buzzword for Palestinians in particular, and the potential for mistreatment of Iraqis who were left in the country, both civilian and military.

*Q: Must have had a lot of prisoners of war somewhere.*

GNEHM: There were a lot of POWs but largely they were being moved to Saudi Arabia. They were being moved out of Kuwait for the reasons of concern that I have mentioned.

Access to food and food distribution was also a very serious problem in these early days. There wasn't sufficient food in the country, especially with the huge influx of Kuwaitis coming overland from Saudi Arabia in larger numbers than was ever anticipated. The planning was to prohibit the return of Kuwaitis until the situation in Kuwait was able to support them. But, in reality, you couldn't stop them. They were streaming back in the tens of thousands, adding to the problem of both food and drinking water.

We had a plan for dealing with the water problem, a plan that was implemented and worked. The Government of Kuwait had signed a contract, while it was in Ta'if, with a Turkish company to provide water tanker trucks that could run convoys from Saudi Arabia. As I said, it worked; but inevitably getting that water distributed around the city to neighborhoods and houses proved far more difficult. Kuwait had a system of cooperatives located in each of the sections of the city. Those cooperatives became the location for distributing food and water.

I remember that every day I was getting reports from one section of town or another that there had been no food or water distribution in three days or so. Again in those early days it was the Kuwait Task Force and their Kuwaiti counterparts that took the lead in monitoring the situation and resolving distribution problems.

One such problem related to the large Philippine population of expats who were working prior to the invasion and were trapped there after the Iraqi. When we arrived, they were destitute for food and water. This would not have been the priority of the Kuwaitis as they distributed food. Again, my civil affairs group pointed out their needs and worked to redirect food and water to those areas.

The frustration of the U.S. Army, the U.S. military as a whole, and General Schwarzkopf personally was that they wanted to redeploy out of Kuwait as rapidly as possible, particularly out of Southern Iraq. There were delays in getting the Iraqis to accept and implement a ceasefire agreement. The Kuwaitis did not want us to leave before that was done. Initially the Kuwaitis wanted to make sure that the Iraqis agreed to the 1974 border demarcation lines before we withdrew. We kept saying, "That's not going to happen. There's no way to do that. The border needs to be surveyed and then demarcated. That is going to take time." There were intense discussions between us and the Kuwaitis in this period over what and how we would handle the fact that Saddam was still there and a continued threat. What kind of security would there be on the border? What kind of U.S. force would remain in Kuwait --- temporarily at least? What kind of UN Security Council

resolution would deal with Iraq's weapons of mass destruction -- biological, chemical, and nuclear? How would we handle the demarcation of the border?

Also in the first few days after liberation, there was a sub-issue on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border that became quite serious. Almost immediately, there were people who were caught in Iraq during the war. They could have been Kuwaitis who simply went there to buy food. Kuwait, after all, was the 19<sup>th</sup> province in those days. So there was no border issue. Others went up there for medical reasons or to visit relatives. There were other nationalities that were also caught in Iraq and wanted to return. The Kuwaitis were very anxious about this. In fact, General Jaber, who was chief of staff, actually told me and General Kelly in the civil affairs group at one point, that the Iraqis were trying to re-infiltrate Kuwait under the guise of returning residents of Kuwait. They were sending people back into Kuwait to cause trouble--including snipers, he said, with a goal to bring down the Kuwaiti government.

As a result the Kuwaiti Government closed the border to all persons. Quite rapidly we saw huge buildup of returnees, or people who claimed the right to return, trapped just across the border in Iraq. Both the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), as well as the U.S. Military who were the only force on the border at the time, were very concerned about feeding and housing them. There was a temporary camp at the border crossing; but it lacked all facilities. At one point, it became so serious that I tried to get the Kuwaiti government to be more open in screening those people in order to allow as many back that were legitimately Kuwaiti as possible. I discovered very quickly that the Kuwaitis didn't have the capacity to do that early on. They did later.

One longstanding issue that complicated the processing of persons at the border was the bidoon issue. Bidoon in Arabic means "without." When applied to certain persons in Kuwait, it means individuals who lived in Kuwait --- perhaps for decades --- but were not recognized by the Kuwaiti Government (GOK) as Kuwaiti citizens. We may be talking of about 400,000 people before the invasion. The GOK claims up to this very day that these people snuck into Kuwait from neighboring countries because Kuwait was rich. They could get benefits and jobs. Kuwait argues that they were, in fact, tribal migratory Bedouin --- Iraqis or Saudis, and perhaps even Syrian or Jordanian. The Shammar tribe, they would point out, is one of the largest tribes in the Middle East. Its members migrate from Northern Saudi Arabia through the western part of Iraq into Syria and partly into Jordan and back again as the rains come and they search for pastures. So, the Kuwaitis claim that many of them just dropped off in Kuwait because it was rich and because they could get nice benefits. Over the years the Kuwaitis had not been able to deal with this matter. In truth many Kuwaiti citizens did not want a large infusion of Bedouin that were of a lower economic and social strata. The GOK believed that a large number of the people at the border were in fact 'bidoon' attempting to return to Kuwait.

So again, the problem on the border became more and more serious. At one point, I pretty much demanded that the Crown Prince send one of his ministers up to the border with me to see the situation firsthand and be able to report to the Crown Prince.

The Crown Prince designated the Minister of Social Affairs, Abdul Rahman al-Awadi, to accompany me. I had gotten to know him well in Ta'if. At the border we met with some of the refugees and with the American military. There was a small contingent of the Kuwaiti Army that was working with us there to try and get hands around what the facts of the matter were. That helped me get a food distribution and water distribution system going.

I should note that the Kuwaitis allowed us to care for those who were there; but these people were on the Iraqi side of the border and scared to death the U.S. forces would pull out and leave them at the mercy of Iraqis who might come back to the border crossing. That didn't happen, but that was just the kinds of issues that I was dealing with.

I want to describe in detail my experiences when I went down to Saudi Arabia to join the Secretary Baker who was in Riyadh to talk to the Saudis. From Riyadh we flew to Ta'if to meet with the emir. This was on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March. I think that elements of that conversation are extremely important. There were themes in that conversation that we had to deal with a lot during these first few weeks and in subsequent months.

Baker began, "Your Highness, what do you intend to do about democracy in Kuwait?"

The Amir: "We decided that. We decided that in Jeddah." He was referring to the conference with Kuwaitis that he had held in Jeddah in the fall after the Iraqi occupation.

Baker: "Well, how are you going to do it?"

The Amir: "Well, we're going to do it in accordance with\ the constitution."

Baker: "What about women? Are you going to give women the right to vote?"

The Amir: "Well, that's not in the constitution, but it can be considered."

Baker: "Well, when are you going back to Kuwait? When are you going to return?"

The Amir: "During this week."

"Why has there been a delay?" said Baker.

"Well, they're very private reasons," (and he didn't elaborate).

The details of that conversation are really interesting. Obviously, the Amir said right off, "I'm glad to meet you. I'm sorry it's not in Kuwait, and I look forward to meeting you and hosting you in Kuwait when things will permit that."

The secretary said, "The President told me to tell you the American people are very glad that Kuwait is liberated and its people are free and we are glad we could play a role. We would like to work as close with you in peace as in war." Baker continued, "Securing

peace in the region will not necessarily be an easy one. I see four major challenges, and I'd like to get your reaction. The first is the Arab-Israeli conflict, and I will talk about that in a smaller group with you. The other is the regional security arrangements after liberation now that you're free."

The third was arms control and cooperation in the region, and this particularly had to do with Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The fourth challenge was economic cooperation in the region.

Later Baker explained that he was looking to the well-to-do Arab states to provide economic assistance to the poorer Arab states so that the entire region can take advantage of progress and development. He said, "We are very, very grateful for what the government of Kuwait did up to now in economic support, the pledges, and the fact that you paid in a very timely fashion just as you promised." That last point concerned support for coalition military operations.

"We are concerned with respect for all minorities, and especially the Palestinians. I will be visiting with the Crown Prince and we will be talking about this further; but please do what you can to protect minorities and establish security in Kuwait as quickly as possible. And we do look forward to your return this week."

So the conversation goes back at this point to security arrangements for the region. "What are your views?" Baker asked the Amir. "We believe that the primary arrangement should come from the states in the region. We supported your Foreign Minister's statement in Damascus." (The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, met with the foreign ministers of Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia to talk about involving them in some sort of regional security arrangement.)

Baker then added, "We do not see it at all advisable for a permanent U.S. ground presence, although we would see the need for some presence during this transition period until other security arrangements are in place. I talked to the Saudis yesterday and I'll be talking to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) states as a group about an enhanced U.S. naval presence in the Gulf, an increase in military exercises with GCC states, prepositioning of supplies and equipment in the region, and perhaps a forward headquarters for CENTCOM in either the UAE or Bahrain. These arrangements would make it much easier for us to return, if it was ever necessary."

The reason why I am going into this in some detail is that these ideas are the basis of our conversations with all the GCC states in the days to come. In addition we also raised our desire to see Arab security forces in any plans for regional security.

*Q: By the way, you mentioned the UAE or Bahrain, but not Qatar.*

GNEHM: I noticed that as well. Qatar was not one of the countries that he mentioned at the time.

*Q: Was Qatar in good straits with us at this time?*

GNEHM: You will remember that I described earlier how Secretary of Defense Cheney went to Doha in August 1990 where he negotiated the access agreement for U.S. and coalition forces in Qatar. They did join the coalition. They were part of the GCC Peninsula Shield Force. They did not have a high profile; but then they are a small country both in geographic size and population. Furthermore, given the previous problems that the U.S. had with Qatar, I wouldn't say the relationship was as close with them as it was with the other five GCC states. I think that explains why Baker probably did not mention them as a possible site for CNTCOM headquarters in the region. Baker went on to say that he thought in addition to Arab security forces, as was discussed in Damascus, it would be our thought to work towards some symbolic UN presence --- UN observers, for example. He said, "I think it's important that the UN remain involved in peacekeeping efforts. Such a role is very important for political symbolism. It's true that air and ground forces coupled with strong bilateral relations between the U.S. and GCC countries, including exercises are critical elements in providing security in the region; but the ideas that I mentioned will would permit us to be able to return quickly as necessary."

"But we really think a permanent ground force, U.S. ground force, is not desirable." Baker repeated this point as he was aware that the Kuwaitis were talking to me about their desire to see a permanent U.S. presence in Kuwait for their own protection. They saw this as desirable from their point of view. But Baker went on to say, "The President wants U.S. forces home as soon as possible."

There was a brief discussion of a demilitarized zone in Iraq of undetermined size at this point. Although our military said they didn't think that would have much military significance, meaning even if you had a 10-kilometer DMZ (demilitarized zone), Iraqi forces were strong enough to come through that pretty easily. In fact, just as a footnote, later on a DMZ is established along the Iraq-Kuwait border monitored by UNIKOM, a UN observer force established by the UN Security Council.

The Amir and Baker also talked about the question of the ceasefire and getting it signed. Baker said we hoped it would be signed soon; the Iraqis are not being forthcoming. We've had talks, but we've not reached any agreement. Baker said that we now believe that there is a need for further Security Council decision, meaning a resolution, to deal with all of these things that are pending --- that remain unresolved --- such as a UN observer force or the question of sanctions, which ones would stay, which ones would be eased. Our intention is to maintain all sanctions on arms shipment to Iraq, and to keep in place all the oil export sanctions that were placed on Iraq by earlier UN Security Council resolutions. At least until all weapons of mass destruction had been destroyed. These points actually become a part of the omnibus resolution, the Security Council 687, the so-called ceasefire resolution, that became the basis for U.S. actions toward Iraq through the entire years of the Clinton administration.

Baker mentioned the border question. “We might leave to the UN to affirm -- or confirm -- the 1963 border agreement. We might have the Security Council guarantee the territorial integrity of countries in the region.”

The Amir responded, “Regarding the security situation, I don’t disagree with your presentation. The statement of the eight countries in Damascus does not mean that we will end up only with an Arab force. There should be international force that includes other countries who would want to leave forces here to protect the region. Perhaps you could take up this idea further in your discussions with the GCC countries.” Baker mentioned that an important point for all to consider is the Iraqi regime that now remains,” meaning Saddam Hussein. How are different countries going to deal with this particular regime. It is essential that we know how other countries are going to deal with Iraq.”

The Amir said, “I have talked with foreign ministers from Europe and they shared the same unease that something must be done, one way or another, about this region. This is a part of answering the security situation.”

Secretary Baker responded, “We are following the internal situation in Iraq closely. We would much prefer to see a change in regime, but we have been unwilling to adopt that as a war aim because it is not advisable that we occupy Iraq. So that is an answer to the many questions that I get, and probably everyone gets as well, as to why didn't we go to Baghdad. Why didn't we change the regime. It was that we made an assessment that going to Baghdad was not advisable. But it goes on. Whether Saddam survives will mean a lot on how we will deal with Iraq and how others will deal with Iraq. You're quite right. There will be much less willingness to rescind or alleviate, ameliorate, the sanctions if the current regime remains in power.”

The Amir, “You mentioned about minorities in Kuwait, so let me address that. I think the issue should not be taken as it seems to appear to be taken. Kuwait does not wish to eliminate or harm minorities. That thought never occurred to us. Now, admittedly, some persons collaborated and they will be dealt with properly; but the majority of the people will live peacefully and be members of our society. The issue now is that after the defeat and escape of the Iraqi Army, much of this weaponry that they left abandoned in the country was picked up and taken by non-Kuwaitis. That’s a serious issue for us and we are trying to get those arms back. That’s probably why there are noises on this particular issue in the press.”

I’m going to add a footnote here that that line from the Kuwaitis was one that they used to legitimate their actions against the Palestinians, to be very honest. And I had to deal with that in those three weeks that I was back.

*Q: Was there much weight to that?*

GNEHM: I think there was little weight to that.

*Q: I can't think of a Palestinian, for example, grabbing up an AK-47 and tucking it away*  
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GNEHM: They certainly didn't move tanks into their car garages or things like that. I think to answer your question, certainly the Palestinians who were caught in Kuwait --- particularly during the month and a half of the air war and bombing, probably picked up small arms for protection for themselves. But, bottom line, the Palestinian community that remained in Kuwait was not heavily armed. Most Palestinians were civilians. They were not fighters. They were not members of any militia. There was later an allegation that there were some 40 or 50 armed PLO fighters holding up in the PLO embassy. That's different. I managed to convince the Crown Prince when I got back to Kuwait not to undertake searches in the Palestinian community during the period that the Kuwait security forces were searching and retrieving the caches of armaments abandoned in the more public places. The security forces did find caches of weapons and ammunition stashed in parking garages, in private buildings, government buildings, and some of the villas that had been taken over by the Iraqis from Kuwaiti families. These caches were items that had been abandoned in the chaotic flight of Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

Then about the third or fourth week of March, the Crown Prince said to me, "We're now going to search in the Palestinian community." I urged them to have either other observers with them or to be very careful. This action had the potential of causing enormous problems. In fact their searches largely came off without a big issue.

Back to the Secretary's conversation with the Amir in Ta'if... Secretary Baker responded to the Amir saying, "I appreciate what the Crown Prince actually told the Ambassador on this particular subject. We do understand the need for controlling security and for you to regain control of the city; but we hope that will be accomplished with some regard for the rights of the people, Palestinians and others. On the question of reparations, UN Security Council resolution 686 required Iraq to accept responsibility for reparations and we will hold them to that. On arms control and proliferation, we would like to see this question discussed on two levels --- weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons."

"Ninety percent of the weapons in the region have come from the five great powers. Supplying nations must act together in concert, possibly creating regime in the region to control the weapons. If so, it must include Israel. We think it is important to explore with our regional allies and with others to eliminate the most destabilizing arms in the region. As long as the current government in Iraq remains, it represents a special problem."

This idea was a grandiose concept on our part. It, of course, never took place. I'll talk a little bit about that later and why the so-called Damascus Declaration never really came into fruition. The question of economic cooperation was the fourth point that Baker had raised. He thought that there might be mechanisms through the Gulf Cooperation Council to look at ways of achieving economic stability in the region. Baker felt that without that kind of progress, you simply would not have political stability.

He talked about creating a development bank for the region through the World Bank, pointing out that the Middle East was the only region where there wasn't a regional development bank. "This would give some protection to you from bilateral pressures and the World Bank could encourage investment development," he explained.

The Amir said, "Please consider it is extremely important to be clear regarding the border with Iraq. This is an issue we feel very strongly about. In the past we signed a 1963 agreement with Bakr," then the President of Iraq. "They did not honor it, or present the agreement to RCC," which was the ruling governing council, "though he was head of the RCC at the time. And then there's the problem of the oil fields, the burning oil fields that the Iraqis destroyed. We're very concerned by the number of fields on fire. The Rumaila field," (the one that crosses the border between the two countries) "is there a way for the revenue from that field, which was not burning, to be used to compensate Kuwait? I would like an answer later on these points."

The Secretary: "I mentioned reparations and what Saddam did to the oil fields. This kind of action raises correctly the importance of reparations. We have to let lawyers examine this question but I see no reason why it is not a proper claim for reparations. The questions of how you recover reparations, I think, is appropriate to consider in resolutions of the UN Security Council and we can look to that."

Again, a footnote, a UN Security Council resolution actually was passed requiring that all Iraqi oil sales be through the United Nations with the revenue being deposited with the United Nations. A fairly significant percent of the oil revenue was going to a claims commission. That claims commission was authorized in UN Security Council resolution 687 and set up in Geneva, Once established the commission sent out notices globally for everyone who felt they had claims against the Iraqi government to file their claims with the commission. The work of this commission was probably one of the most effective parts of that resolution.

*Q: Did money go to the Iraqi government to purchase food?*

GNEHM: No, that was part of a different resolution passed later. Resolution 687 required that a percent of all revenue (I think it was 30% at the beginning) would go to the claim commission to pay claims. Later there was an oil for food resolution which authorized Iraq, again controlled by the UN, to sell oil and use the revenue for food and medicine and other humanitarian items.

Again, the Secretary said it would be appropriate to include something in UN Security Council resolutions about reparations. He thought that it would be best to control Iraqi exports and an appropriate way to do it would be to talk to both the Saudis and the Turks who controlled the major oil pipelines from Iraq. Regarding the borders, he said it was appropriate for a subsequent UN Security Council resolution to confirm the existing border and the validity of the 1963 agreement, and then demarcate the border with visible markers, and then guarantee it, he said parenthetically.

The border question did become part of that same resolution (UNSCR 687). It also established UNIKOM, the UN Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission. It was an observer force on the border between the Iraq and Kuwait. Its mandate was to maintain security on that border, but also to support the surveying and the demarcation of the border. The UN voted to guarantee the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border as it was demarcated. To my knowledge, this international border is the only border on the planet Earth that has a UN guarantee.

Baker said he wanted to talk about the peace process between the Arabs and Israel. He said he was speaking for the President. "I want to speak candidly and freely with you, as I did with King Fahd yesterday. We Americans want to see peace between Arabs and Israelis. We think the region as a whole will never be stable or prosper until that occurs. We have established a new basis of friendship and trust with many Arab countries, including foremost you as a result of the Iraqi invasion and the liberation of Kuwait. I want to ask you to put some trust in us. We've always been close to Israel and we understand that. But you have today an administration in the U.S. willing to be frank and candid with Israel, an American administration that Israel does not feel it is particularly close to. We intend to address the question of Arab-Israeli peace without regard to domestic politics in the U.S. because we think that there is a better chance today than ever before to make progress on this problem. All you have to do is to listen to Bush's statement of a few days ago. Bush," he quotes, "the U.S. stands for a comprehensive settlement through negotiations on the basis of 242 and 338, territory for peace, security for all states including Israel, legitimate Palestinian political rights. That's U.S. policy. There can't be too much difference between us and your policy on this question," said Baker.

"The question is how do we bring Israel around? We have a chance to do it if our Arab friends will be helpful. We want to approach this on a dual track --- Arab states and Israel and at the same time Israel and Palestinians. My first meeting will be with Israel. I want to tell Israel that they must move on both tracks. And if they do, they will see movement by Arab states. We believe the United States is singularly well-placed to act as a catalyst, particularly in the aftermath of this war. We took care of the greatest threat to Israel's security and also the greatest threat to Gulf States in defeating Iraq and Saddam Hussein. And there's now a strong Arab coalition including Egypt and Syria. So we will be approaching Israel and will ask them to consider doing certain things. For example, stop rejecting specifically the concept of land for peace. Say you will accept complete peace on the basis of 242 and 338 --- that you will ease conditions on Palestinians in the territories. That's the most important thing for them to do --- stop deportations, reopen universities, withdraw the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) from population centers, permit free and fair elections, agree to withdraw from the West Bank after a period of peace, maybe say six months, state some willingness to withdraw from the Golan, and accept a confederation between the West Bank and Gaza.

If we expect to make progress, we need to be in a position to talk about the things that the Arab states will agree to do in return. I'm not asking for an answer now, but here are some ideas that I want you to think about --- ideas designed to get the peace process going, a process that could result in a permanent settlement. Let me just add that it's a

mistake to start off at the beginning of the process saying that we have to have a full agreement at the beginning. The U.S. does not reject an international conference at the right time, but first let's get the process going to build up confidence. So here's what I think the Arabs need to consider: drop the boycott, reject or rescind the Zionism is a racism resolution at the UN." (The racism resolution was subsequently reversed but not at this point in time.)

Baker: "End the formal state of belligerency with Israel, state a willingness to normalize relations with the peace treaty that will be concluded, possible hold quiet meetings with Israeli government officials and persons in the private sector. Work with Arab coalition partners and with Palestine on the question of representation in these talks. Find some Palestinians who can sit with Israel so there can be a dialogue. This could lead to real progress towards peace and there's never been a better time. If we can't make progress now, the conflict will continue to poison the region for a long time. The U.S. wants nothing but peace."

*Q: I may have missed it. Was the question of Israeli settlements mentioned?*

GNEHM: No.

*Q: This obviously had to be deliberate, but were the Kuwaitis at all interested in this?*

GNEHM: Yes. They were very partisan to the Palestinian cause before the invasion. They were obviously of a different mindset subsequently when the PLO supported Saddam Hussein, but the Arab-Israeli question was still a delicate issue.

As the President was building the coalition in early fall 1990, the ME states, specifically Egypt and Saudi Arabia, indicated their willingness to join but they wanted a commitment from Bush that he would tackle the Arab-Israeli issue. The first response of the administration, during August, September, early October was, "No, we're not going to make such a commitment just to get you to join the coalition which is in your best interest." The President was simply not prepared to bargain. As we got into the October - November period, however, the administration changed its mind. In fact, we told these countries informally in our private conversations that the president would turn toward the Arab-Israeli issue to do what he could once the Kuwait situation was dealt with.

This was a very general commitment; but he kept his word. We ended up in Madrid and there was more progress on this issue as a result of Bush's initiative than there had been previously. There were many things that subsequently flowed out of the talks in Madrid, including an agreement by Arabs as well as Israel to set up some informal joint groups on topic areas where there might be useful cooperation, like water.

*Q: In preparation for this meeting, did you have any input or connection to putting his agenda together? Do you have any feeling for how the agenda was put together?*

GNEHM: That's a good question. I was involved through my calls back and forth to Washington during these days on some of these issues, particularly concern for minorities and Palestinians as well as the issue of a residual military force and potential security arrangements. On that particular issue, I would tell you point blank I was more forward than General Schwarzkopf and General Powell, who was then the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I simply couldn't imagine withdrawing forces entirely and turning control over to any Arab force knowing how unsettled Kuwait was. This was also when the Shia were rising up against Saddam Hussein in southern Iraq leading to the deployment of Iraqi forces just north of Kuwait. Events proved my analysis right.

Let me talk about the Damascus Declaration. The six GCC states, Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia met in Damascus to discuss what actions they should take to ensure that an Iraqi invasion did not happen again. The Kuwaitis clearly wanted some force there to supplement their own military. So the Syrians and the Egyptians agreed to maintain a residual force indefinitely in Kuwait and, in return, the GCC states agreed that they would cover all the expenses of the force. The GCC also agreed that they would establish a development fund of some significant size to support Egypt and Syria economically. Initially this seemed a grand idea but it unraveled quickly for a couple of different reasons. The first was that the Kuwaitis were hesitant to have a large Arab force stationed in their country. They recognized that the presence of such a force could be used to pressure them on other issues --- even if the contributing states were 'brotherly.'

Secondly, the more the Saudis and the Kuwaitis thought about the stationing of such a force on their territory, they realized that really didn't want Syrian Ba'athi ideology resident in their territory.

Those two concerns were reinforced by the Egyptian and Syrian definition of the level of economic support that they were expecting. It was a major percent of oil revenue that they expected would flow automatically into this fund which they would draw from. This issue is a recurrent problem between the less rich and the more rich Arab states. In fact, Egyptian President Nasser tried to claim that all the oil in the region was Arab oil and all countries should be putting the oil revenue into a fund that would then be divided based on per capita. This would have been nice for Egypt and not so nice for Qatar with its few hundred thousand people.

Given these three issues, the prospect of any implementation of the Damascus Declaration faded. When the Egyptians and Syrians realized that they weren't going to get the levels of economic assistance that they wanted, they began to withdraw their troops. So this initial idea for collecting defense of the Gulf fell apart quickly.

The thought then went to what is the alternative? The alternative that the GCC came up with during this early period was to expand the GCC force itself and make it an honest, significant fighting force. The Saudis were proponents of this. At the GCC Summit, they delegated to Sultan Qaboos of Oman the task of studying and coming back to the summit with the plan of what that force would look like, its structure in terms of numbers, in

terms of fire power, air force, navy, land forces, etc. The heads of state would then endorse the plan.

Sultan Qaboos actually did what he was asked to do. Our own military privately said they thought it was a remarkably good design for an effective fighting force. Sultan Qaboos presented his plan at a subsequent meeting of the GCC heads of state. They gave their normal platitudes of thanks and that was the last that topic ever was discussed.

*Q: Why?*

GNEHM: Because the Saudis made clear that, of course, the general who would head this force would be a Saudi and the headquarters for this force would be in Riyadh. Yet, there was another unspoken reason for explaining the reluctance of the other five to agree to this combined force. Since there had to be interoperability between all six states' military, then there had to be decisions on what military hardware to purchase. Who was going to make those procurement decisions? It became clear to the other five that if the force was going to be dominated by the Saudis, the Saudis would be insisting on making the procurement decisions. Now, no one ever said this to me. I do think that the main reason why this plan never went forward was the unwillingness of the other five GCC states to place themselves under Saudi authority. I think there was an important secondary reason. The other five countries wanted to make their own decision about procurement for their military.

*Q: And this was big stuff.*

GNEHM: Exactly. Large procurements inevitably entail benefits to some individuals. For example, a ministry may decide to procure a particular fighter plane. There is probably a very well-to-do merchant family in that country that is an agent for manufacturer. Then there are all sorts of secondary agreements between the company and the government about other projects that company might do in the country.

So any interest in the great plan presented by Sultan Qaboos dissipated quickly. It was more or less just shelved.

The third approach to regional security was the one that actually took place. This approach entailed each of these countries entering into military agreements with the United States. Such arrangements had been under discussion during the previous six months to a year. The smaller GCC countries wanted direct a bilateral relationship with the United States. CENTCOM was in favor of this approach realizing that the other options were simply not going to happen. We basically agreed that we would negotiate status of forces agreements or military arrangements with each of the countries. I negotiated the one with Kuwait. We signed one with Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE. We never did sign one with Saudi Arabia. Our entire military cooperative effort with Saudi Arabia is based on a very early agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia on providing arms and arms training, which established the U.S. Military Training Mission

(USMTM). All our military relationship with the Saudis, including exercises, were always associated with that agreement.

Up to this year, 2014, the basis of our presence in Kuwait with the use of two air bases and a prepositioning and exercise program is all a consequence of the bilateral agreement that I negotiated.

You asked about Qatar earlier. The CENTCOM forward headquarters that we established in Qatar in the 1990s was developed under our bilateral agreement with Qatar. The port facilities that the UAE gives us were part of their bilateral agreement. I think there are more naval ships making port calls in the UAE than in any other port in the world. In essence the United States became the hub of security in the Gulf and these bilateral agreements were spokes that tied the various GCC countries together.

I remember, as Ambassador, that in the subsequent three years arms sales became a big focus in our bilateral relationships in the region. These states made billion-dollar purchases including the Patriot Air Defense system. That system alone cost Kuwait multiple billions of dollars. It is a very expensive system but an essential system given the potential threat from Iraq. I was always arguing Central Command's core point, which is 'if we ever have to fight again together, our equipment needs to be interoperable. If you go back to my story about the French Mirage fighter planes flying with the coalition with the Iraqis flying the same plane, you will understand my point.

The Kuwaitis caught that one loud and clear.

*Q: I'm told at the beginning too that in the initial Desert Storm the French found themselves somewhat isolated because they hadn't had the interoperability with NATO on navigations.*

GNEHM: That is true. That did come up.

*Q: And this almost precluded them from much of the business, which of course annoyed their military people, their politicians cutting them out from necessary equipment.*

GNEHM: Yes, it was definitely that. If I go back then to the conversation that Baker was having with the emir in Ta'if, Baker laid out our thinking on how to approach the Arab-Israeli issue and how he hoped the Arabs would respond. Baker's position was reinforced by another American person in the meeting who said, "Look, to the extent that you can give the secretary the kind of things he's asking for, you will improve his ability to convince the Israelis to do the things that he also said we hope the Israelis would do."

The Amir's response was really interesting.

He said, "Let me be frank as well. The Arab world, when it looks at the United States, sees the U.S. as the one country that stands by Israel against the entire rest of the world. Everything you said is in fact possible; but, if these ideas come through an international

conference or the UN Security Council, it will be viewed differently in the Arab world and in Arab countries than if comes directly from you. The UN Security Council would be a good place for these things to come from. I know that other Arab countries are interested in ending the state of war with Israel, but all will be more encouraged if the ideas come from the UN and not the United States. So this particular issue will have tremendous impact on the disarmament question obviously because there won't be the need for as many arms if the Arabs-Israeli conflict is in fact settled."

So in effect, in a very short response he demurred --- not from any specifics but from the idea of a US-led approach. Remember. The Secretary had said, "We're not for a conference, an international conference, at least not now. And we think we're the ones who could best facilitate progress."

And the Amir said, "I don't think that's the case." He didn't reject it. "It's not impossible." But he just said the UN or an international conference were the better paths to success.

The Secretary responded, "Now, I'm not asking you to take the first step. I'm asking you to think about the range of things that I mentioned. You're not committed to anything unless the Israelis agree to do some of the things that I suggested for them to do. But in order for this to happen, someone is going to have to negotiate and act or serve as the catalyst. We are the only country with influence in Israel. And we have a lot. But we cannot deliver Israel as a fiat. We can influence them, encourage them, get them to move like no one else can. I do not believe that we can use that influence to get Israel to move if we go to the UN Security Council. Israel will be very resistant to anything that involves the UN. Israel sees everyone at the UN as against it. We may later put the process into a multilateral situation, but it's up to Arabs and Israelis to grasp the nettle of the process. We believe it's important to move forward now. So that was why I have made this proposal to you."

*Q: Obviously Jim Baker was at the top of his game, but it sounds like the Amir was not just a family figurehead.*

GNEHM: He was engaged.

*Q: He was really engaged and thought over this and was willing to stand up at a difficult time when the United States pushed him with rather heavy pressure.*

GNEHM: It's true. The Amir had not yet returned to Kuwait. The country had deliberated about the date of his return; but they were still concerned about the security situation. I think you're quite right to perceive it that way. I did.

*Q: What did Baker come back with as far as his impression of Kuwait under fire and how things were going do you think?*

GNEHM: The feedback that I was getting through Bob Kemmet, the Undersecretary, and to some extent from John Kelly, the Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, was a great deal of frustration with the Kuwaitis --- slow to getting back, slow to getting set up, slow to responding. I was experiencing the same frustrations.

Having been in Kuwait, I had a slightly better appreciation of the situation we faced than people in Washington. Baker, the President, and others were caught in the Washington media spin having to respond to The Post, The Baltimore Sun, and The New York Times. The press stories were about no democracy, about the atrocities against Palestinians, and about the Kuwaitis still living it up in Cairo and other places around the world rather than going back to Kuwait.

The Administration was looking for something demonstrable, such as the arrival of Amir and the government speaking from Kuwait, to indicate progress. Concern tapered off once the Crown Prince got back and then the Amir. I think things in Washington began to turn in different directions. I had to deal with a lot of these issues with an eye both to the U.S. domestic situation and the local scene in Kuwait. The best example is the democracy issue. (I believe I mentioned this before.) Back in January in Ta'if, I was instructed to rise with the Crown Prince, the need for them to reiterate the commitments that they had made in Jeddah toward democracy, the restoration of parliament, etc. and why that was important. There was a group of exiled Kuwaitis in London. It was well organized and very vocal. Ahmed Sadoun, a former speaker of the National Assembly before it had been closed down, was one of the prominent Kuwaitis in the group. It was correct to label them dissidents against the government; but they were not against the al-Sabah family but against the Amir's decision to purge the National Assembly. They were getting a lot of press coverage. Washington saw that it was being picked up in local American media raising questions about our policy toward Kuwait. I remember my conversation with the crown prince about this and he was just adamant. He insisted that there was no need to say anything further than what was said in the Jidda conference. He absolutely refused to respond to these people. Frankly, he couldn't stand Ahmed Sadoun. He wasn't going to do anything that looked like he was responding to him.

There was another minister, Suleiman Mutawa, the Minister of Planning, in the meeting. Essentially, due to his persistent and conscientious attitude, he had become the executive officer of the Council of Ministers. He was the one that moved things and understood that decisions had to be made. He was very helpful. He told the Crown Prince, "Look, Skip is right. You know, we can't let them dominate the PR campaign out there."

Finally the Crown Prince said, "OK, but I'm not going one step further than what we said in Jeddah." To which I said, "That's fine! That's OK!"

They issued some sort of a statement. The issue remained when we get into Kuwait. The Crown Prince gave a press conference and said, "We are for a democracy and we will act in accordance with the constitution to restore a parliament." Then the question was when. He answered by saying when it was suitable, when it was possible.

What does that mean? “Well, we’re faced with a security situation internally and this is obviously not a time when we can have elections but they will come.” His response was not entirely satisfactory to those Kuwaitis who remained skeptical of the Government’s commitment to restoring the National Assembly. Elections actually didn’t occur until the fall of 1992; but they did take place. The National Assembly was restored.

I had a very interesting interview with Barbara Walters on ‘Good Morning America.’ It was in one of the three or four days right after liberation. The press corps had ensconced themselves in the Safir Hotel, which was directly next to the embassy compound. In fact, from even the second floor you could look right down into the compound. The hotel itself had eight or 10 or 12 floors. The American security even before the invasion hated it and had a reason to hate it. From any room facing the embassy you could track anything going on in the compound.

Anyway the press had ensconced themselves on the roof of the second floor where you could get a great shot of the reporter with the famous water towers that became symbolic of Kuwait. I was asked to be on “Good Morning, America” with Barbara Walters. I said sure. So I went up on the hotel roof standing with my back to the towers looking at the camera, right? I couldn’t see her but I could hear her through an ear piece. The interview started.

“Good morning, Mr. Ambassador, wonderful -- I guess it’s not morning where you are, OK, but I’m so happy that you’re here with us today.” And she continued, “But before I ask you a question, let me just read from a couple of American newspapers what Americans are reading today about Kuwait so you get a sense of what’s going on back here.” So she began reading from one. I don’t remember which paper. “Kuwait is liberated, but there is no democracy. The Amir is back.” And then she went to the next one and it was also hostile and negative that there was no real commitment on the part of the al-Sabah family for restoring democracy.

She started into the third one. I had been forewarned that the interview was going to be X number of minutes, right? As I stood there, I noted how many minutes she was taking reading the lines she wanted her listeners to hear; but I had learned my lessons through the years not to let the interviewer control the interview. So as she started into the third article, I said, “Barbara! Barbara!”

And she said, “Uh-uh-uh -- yeah, what, Mr. Ambassador?”

I turned slightly sideways and I looked at the camera. I put my hands up and said, “Barbara. I’m in Kuwait. The sun is bright and shining. The sky is blue. You can hear the honking of horns, the people shouting down there in the streets. If you look down there, you will see many American and Kuwaiti flags. They’re so jubilant to be liberated and celebrating.” I turned back to the camera. “Are we talking about the same country?”

Dead silence. “Oh. Well, Mr. Ambassador, I-I-I -- no, I just wanted you to have a sense of, of, of what people were saying.”

I said, "Well, I just think you have to understand. It has only been a few days since liberation and they're just so happy to be free and so" -- and I put it in a plug -- "so appreciative of Americans and the President and the American Military for what they did. That's what they're all focused on. And this is a great time in Kuwait."

She ended the interview: "Thank you very, very much for being on the program this morning," I confess that I felt really good about the interview.

I walked back to the embassy. As I got to the residence, the phone was ringing and my secretary said, "Secretary Baker is on the phone. He wants to talk to you." I said, "Oh, OK," I took it. He said, "Skip, I just had to call you. I just watched you interview with Barbara Walters. I just had to tell you. I have never seen Barbara Walters speechless. But you did it. It was just great. Just great."

I was constantly being asked the question about democracy and the restoration of the National Assembly.

*Q: How stood the issue regarding women's right to vote?*

GNEHM: The Amir and the Crown Prince were asked the very same question repetitively. In fact, I remember Bella Abzug, a member of Congress, confronted the Crown Prince with this question. The Crown Prince and the government actually said, "This is something we need to do." They were actually very forthcoming. It didn't happen in the timeframe I was ambassador, even though I raised it over and over.

There was actually opposition among Kuwaitis and opposition in the elected parliament in 1992 to giving women the right to vote and the right to run for office. Several years later the government forced a vote on it in the National Assembly. The proposal lost by one vote. Then there was another election, another parliament, and women were given the right to vote and to run for office. So if you look back at the history of this issue, it was the ruling family that actually ends up being the champion of women being able to vote and run for office.

*Q: In this context how were women treated in Kuwait? I've served in Saudi Arabia, in the '50s and women were kept off the streets.*

GNEHM: Kuwait is definitely not Saudi Arabia. I would quickly note that women in the Middle East live in a culture and in a society that is male dominated --- a patriarchal society. No doubt about it. But Kuwaiti women drive and they drive just as fast as men. They go out and about town whenever they want and usually dressed in western clothes. They were very involved with the resistance during the Iraqi occupation moving food and money around the city at great peril. They are also very vocal. There was a well-organized women's movement for getting the right to vote. It was active and had visibility on television and in the press. They are very outspoken and very much a part of the community. There were several women elected to the National Assembly the first

time they were eligible to run for office. Granted the number is not large; but they have been elected. There have also been women ministers in the government.

I talked to the Crown Prince after the Secretary's meeting with the Amir in Ta'if. He raised the same issues. I knew that the Crown Prince and the Amir worked closely together. I never doubted that, when I spoke to the Amir or the Crown Prince, the other one knew what I had said. I had more opportunity to speak with the Crown Prince simply because he was the Prime Minister and more accessible day to day.

The Crown Prince was very concerned about Saddam still in power and about their remaining military capability. He didn't think a UN observer force on the border was strong enough. He was really anxious about the Security Council affirming the 1963 borders and having the borders demarcated. He didn't want us to forget that.

Regarding the long term security relationship, he noted that Kuwait wanted to strengthen the GCC states but Kuwait also wanted a direct relationship with the United States. This was the Kuwaiti view even this early on. He wanted to make sure that we weren't going to lift sanctions before Saddam had done everything that he was required to do, including reparations and the border among other things. His position seemed reasonable to me given their experience with Saddam.

*Q: Were we still working under the assumption that Saddam wasn't going to survive?*

GNEHM: No. I think we knew that once he put down the Shi'a uprising in the south, which he did by the middle of March that he was likely to remain in power.

*Q: Was there any feeling that we should do something about the Shia uprising?*

GNEHM: This Shia uprising was very awkward for us to deal with. I don't think that the United State came through looking very good. President Bush during the latter part of the military operations appealed to Iraqis to rise up against Saddam. It would have been nice for us to have trouble inside Iraq that might have forced Saddam to withdraw troops from Kuwait or at a minimum, he would not have been able to fight effectively as he faced two fronts. The Shia in southern Iraq to this day will tell us that they responded to Bush's appeal and thought the United States would support them. The problem for us, as I understood it from where I sat in Kuwait, was that we had not developed any connections with the Shia in Basra. We had diplomatic relations with the government in Baghdad, but we didn't have relationships with the Shia. We certainly had no ties with the uprising.

The initial fear or concern was that this was an Iranian fostered uprising. If so and if it succeeded, it would lead to a breakup of Iraq --- possibly an Iranian dominated south. Recall that we saw Iran as a threat to our interests in the region as well. I received instructions to inquire from the Kuwaitis what they knew about what was going on in southern Iraq and whether they would support our providing aid to the Shia?

The Kuwaiti response came back very quickly. Absolutely not. It's Iranian instigated. The Iranian influence would be right on our northern border, and we don't want that. That seemed to be the reaction that we got from Saudis and others as well. So we didn't develop any plan to aid the Shia.

There was another development that had serious consequences. The Iraqis in the first few days of March were having a lot of trouble dealing with their own internal problems related to the distribution of food and water. They asked General Schwarzkopf through the military liaison for permission to use helicopters for humanitarian purposes. Schwarzkopf gave them permission. That was the first time we allowed any Iraqi action in the air. In fact, Saddam used them as gunships. Within 48 hours, the Iraqi Government had pretty much undercut the Shia rebellion. By that time, incidentally, the conclusion by our analysts in Washington was that the Shia uprising was a legitimate indigenous uprising and not fomented by the Iranians. But by then it was too late to come to their aid. The consequences of our decisions back then came back to haunt us in 2003-2008 and even in 2014 as we try to deal with the situation in Iraq today. The Shia have not forgotten our failure to assist them and the dramatic cost to them from Saddam's actions.

*Q: Was there any questioning or unhappiness about the fact that we didn't follow through on destroying the Republican Guard? We had them trapped basically. Why didn't we march on Baghdad to destroy Saddam's capabilities?*

GNEHM: There was little discussion of that, be it publicly or privately inside the government. A couple of reasons come to my mind. One, as I mentioned earlier, it became clear after Schwarzkopf told Bush that the noose had been closed around the Republican Guard forces north of the Kuwaiti border and the group trapped, that that was not the case. Schwarzkopf discovered to his horror that the army general was not where he had told Schwarzkopf that he was. So the noose hadn't been closed. Worse, there was a pontoon bridge across the Euphrates River that the Guard was using to move its tanks away from US forces. Recall that it was on the basis of Schwarzkopf's assurance that President Bush announced an end to the fighting. Once the President made his 'hundred hour' announcement, it wasn't going to be very easy to admit that they had made a mistake based on bad information. To then launch another attack on Iraq would have led to all sorts of criticisms.

*Q: And you had a hundred hours -- which sounded great and it's one of those PR moments.*

GNEHM: A sound bite for history.

*Q: Yeah, sound bite for history.*

GNEHM: That's what it was. So even though the president and others knew immediately that the Republican Guard tanks were getting out, he couldn't really reprimand anyone for the mistake. He couldn't really authorize a resumption of military action. So nobody

wanted to talk about it, right? And everybody was caught up in the jubilation of liberation.

*Q: Regarding the Palestinian-Kuwaiti relationship, it turned out to be sort of a family betrayal, which is much worse than two different groups.*

GNEHM: Yes, I heard many stories from the Kuwaitis. When I was in Kuwait last year (2015) and having lunch with a prominent businessman, I heard it again, just exactly what you're saying. He said to me, "Skip, I told you once before, my mother went to an orphanage one day where she worked and she found a young boy --- an orphan of Palestinian descent. She fell in love with him. She adopted him! She raised him! With me! He worked in my company. When the Iraqis came, he took the Iraqi forces into my warehouses. He brought them into our home! And they looted it. How could someone that was like a brother to me --- was like my mother's son do this?" That experience is a harsh one to get over. Again, not every Palestinian was that way at all.

*Q: No.*

GNEHM: There were Kuwaitis among the resistance telling me about how the Palestinians said, "Look, you can't do this. It's too dangerous for you; but I can because everyone knows I'm a Palestinian. I can deliver what you need." So there were many Palestinians aiding the resistance. I didn't tell you about the return of my national employees, did I?

*Q: I don't think so.*

GNEHM: I should do that. I'm very proud of that particular story -- where I was a violator of international law, but that's OK. I enjoyed it. In the fall as I was trying to reconstitute what the embassy was going to look like, I had been recruiting people to go in with me after liberation. Our locally hired staff, as you know in our embassies around the world, do an enormous amount of work for us. I had said to Jim Stewart, who had been recalled to be my admin officer: "Let's pull the files of all the FSNs," --- Foreign Service Nationals as they were called in those days. He did and I said, "Now, let's go out to a cable to all the Americans who worked in the embassy during the last three years with these people to get a very candid view of whether the employee was good or bad, would they hire him today." I knew I was not going to bring back everyone. The embassy was not going to be that big to start with; but I also knew--given my own experiences in embassies--that over time some employees lose their interest or you have people hired because of connections. In other words, you inevitably have employees that you wish were still not with you. But in normal circumstances it is difficult to fire people. So I said to Jim, "Let's do a review of all the former FSNs. We will bring back the ones that get good recommendations and not the others."

So after reviewing the files and the responses from our inquiries, we selected 24 individuals. The department notified them that they were being recalled. They had actually been severed when we had reduced our embassy staff to a few Americans. So

they were brought back on board. They were prepositioned in Cairo ready to return to Kuwait when we decided it was secure enough to bring them in.

How were we going to bring them in? Jim Seward convinced the military to fly them in. They were flown in from Cairo all together. They had no entry visas of course. There was no Kuwaiti at the airport, no Foreign Ministry to issue visas and nobody at the airport to check them in. But there was a little bit of concern that there might be trouble when they arrived. So I went to the airport to be there to greet them, and that was the right thing to do.

I had met some of them briefly when I visited the embassy back in February of 1990, but I didn't know them all. I had my vehicles at the airport and they got off the plane with their luggage. We drove them to the embassy and they became the core of our embassy staff.

Sometime in April, the admin officer came to me to say, "I went to the Foreign Ministry and they say that they understand that I have employees who are undocumented working at the embassy." I wondered how long it would take them to get around to asking about this. He says, "Yeah, but they're saying that they have to leave the country to get visas to come back and they're not going to allow the Palestinians to return."

"Well," I said, "I've got an idea. You go back to see them at the Foreign Ministry and you tell them that you briefed me on exactly what they said. Tell them that if they have any difficulties along the lines that they described to you, they should have the Crown Prince raise it with me personally." He came back and said, "They didn't like it."

I said, "I knew they wouldn't, but we'll just see if they have whatever it takes to raise it with the Crown Prince." And I said, "But look, we'll work it out. We'll work it out." I saw the Foreign Minister at some later point. I said, "I did bring them in, and I did bring in my Palestinian employees as well. I'm not going to discriminate on the basis of nationality. These are my employees. They work for me so we need to find a way to regularize them all."

In the end we did. I wanted to tell you about this because it's a good thing to note in an oral history. The FSNs I brought back, and particularly the Palestinians, had a really tough reentry. Though some of them did have unpleasant encounters. It was the fact that I brought them back to an environment that was totally different from the one that they had known before the invasion. Before the invasion there were about 350,000 plus Palestinians in Kuwait; they were a huge community with their clubs and social connections. They tended to stick together as a community. It was a community cluster that supported itself. They didn't have to deal with many other people. Anyway, Kuwaitis didn't want to deal with them. They didn't really care about the Kuwaitis either, but as long as life went on, well. The situation was totally different after liberation. The community had been disrupted and the number of Palestinians in Kuwait was very small. The clubs were gone and there were not going to be clubs. There was no longer the

support that the large community had provided in the past. They were lost and a little isolated.

It took a while for them to get their feet on the ground. We supported them in ways that are not part of the regulations, but you could do that when you're in the field and you're in this kind of an unscripted situation. For example, I issued the boxes of rations to those who wanted to eat them. If I got food delivered to the embassy in any way, it was distributed to them as to the Americans. There was the Coca-Colas that I got from Bahrain; they got the Coca-Colas too. They were a wonderfully great group and the camaraderie between us and them was solid and tight. There are still a very few of them at the embassy though many have moved on or are approaching retirement. Through all the intervening years they have remained loyal and dedicated employees.

*Q: Ah, well this is probably a good place to stop.*

GNEHM: I need to add one thing because it will fit now.

*Q: OK, sure.*

GNEHM: There was a very unfortunate incident on the second day I was back. This is before the Crown Prince arrived. A liberal member of the former parliament, Hamad Jouan, answered a door knock at his house one evening. The person on the outside open fire on him and fled, leaving him severely injuring. In fact, he was crippled for life. This was an unsettling development. You recall I mentioned we had some concern about the views of some Kuwaitis regarding the Kuwaitis who had remained in Kuwait. We had picked up some communication between a senior Kuwaiti official and his people inside the country. They were concerned about the loyalty of some persons that had been in the opposition before the invasion. I was afraid that they might have been behind this attack. I don't know who else would have considered him a threat. He was not. He was just an opposition politician. Further, he needed to be medevaced because of his serious injuries. I was determined to assist. I had to go through a lot with the U.S. military that was the only source of a medevac assistance. They said, "We can't do it, he's not American. He's not even in the military."

In the end I got the Department of State to weigh in and we got him medevaced. In subsequent years I saw him in the hospital. He continued to require lots of medical treatment. This was just an example of a thing we feared would happen, but fortunately it was the only such incident that I'm aware of. In fact, I would have known it had it happened. But it was a very unfortunate development.

*Q: Today is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, you just finished telling about the unfortunate attempt on a prominent member of the Kuwaiti opposition.*

GNEHM: Yes, that was in the first couple of days after I went into Kuwait in March. If I had to just quickly characterize the issues that were at play during the March, April, May period, I would say that the first was the reestablishment of security and order as well as

getting the Kuwaiti government back on its feet. The second big issue was the question of security arrangements for the post-liberation period and very significantly, what would be the U.S. presence or commitment to Kuwait. This involved a huge debate within our government as well as discussion with Kuwaitis. There was the issue of democracy. We continued to press and there were some developments during this period. There was the ongoing reconstruction and recovery efforts, particularly the removal of unexploded ordinance. The country was covered in cluster bombs that we had dropped on the Iraqi military in the desert.

*Q: Was there any concern about these cluster bombs before? Was this raised at all while you were with the war planning?*

GNEHM: No, not at all. I really can't tell you that I even knew that we were going to be using cluster bombs, but they were all over the country and a significant risk to civilians as well as our own military. And then of course there were a lot of ordinance that the Iraqis planted or left behind.

I already mentioned the huge refugee problem on the Iraqi border. The numbers were growing. These were people who claimed they were Kuwaiti or had family in Kuwait. The Kuwaitis continued to refuse to allow them to enter. We also had a horrendous number of visitors, as you can imagine members of Congress, people in the government like Treasury Secretary Brady and, of course, Secretary of Defense Cheney and Secretary of State Baker. We had many senior military officers visiting as well. I was also trying to put together my embassy staff. We entered Kuwait with just a dozen people and were trying to build the embassy back to the level that it should be.

*Q: I want to go back to something. These cluster bombs, I've seen pictures of these things, and this was a serious problem.*

GNEHM: Extremely.

*Q: If you're using this in order to kill your opponents, the residue remains.*

GNEHM: It does.

*Q: And it's going to kill the civilian population, animals, and your own troops.*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: It looks like one of these things where you sort of add it up and come out somewhat equal as far as who's going to suffer the most. Were there any objections you recall to using them?*

GNEHM: I don't remember ever hearing any criticism. Again, I certainly had no knowledge myself it was being used. You have to remember that the Iraqi military was deployed all over in the desert and up and down the coast. The air force blanketed these

areas with cluster bombs. I mentioned that some of the damage to the power transmission lines from the southern power plant to the city was caused by cluster bombs that hit the lines. The important point now was the danger to everyone from the remnants scattered all over the terrain. It certainly complicated effort to repair facilities, such as the power lines.

The coalition did not use cluster bombs in the city itself. I don't recollect anything like that. But Kuwaitis like to go to the desert and they also have camel and sheep herds in the desert. So we began to hear of deaths very soon after liberation. The U.S. military, from the first few days, cleared the main highways as they were essential for their own movements. You could not go off the highway however. You wouldn't dare go off the pavement.

This scattered ordinance was one of the major issues that the government had to face and they ultimately spent billions of dollars contracting with a number of companies and countries for teams to clear the entire country. They divided the country into sections and contracted each section out. In the end they swept the country clean, amazingly. I remember going out on the road north toward Iraq having been told about one of the groups. I believe it was a Sri Lankan company. This company had brought in a huge number of Sri Lankans who were walking shoulder-to-shoulder in a line moving forward collecting cluster bombs from the ground. In other words, they were working with hands and detectors putting themselves at enormous risk.

It was a manual project. It was not high tech but it was stunning.

With these different things going on all at the same time, I was very busy --- not the least dealing with my own government. We ambassadors often observed that we spent far more time working on issues with our own government than with the government to which we were accredited!

*Q: OK, --let's pick this up at different angles. Let's talk about the visitors. First place, American visitors. Can you feel the enormity of this?*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: And the attitude?*

GNEHM: The first visit that was absolutely incredible was the so-called "CODEL from hell," as we described it at the time. Sheikh Saud Nasser al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington, wanted to bring out to Kuwait members of the Senate and the House as well as some prominent businessmen who supported liberation as well as a collection of other people to see Kuwait as it was after the Iraqi occupation. He wanted all to see it before it was cleaned up-- while it was still in a sense burning. I remember when I got that phone call. I said, "Saud, we are really close friends but this is *crazy!* What are you going to do?"

He said, "Well, it won't be more than a hundred." It ended up being 137 as I recollect. They flew to Bahrain on a chartered 747. In fact they had to overnight in Bahrain. I told them there was no way we could find accommodations in Kuwait because virtually all of the hotels had been firebombed or were seriously damaged. In the hotel that we had our own employees staying in, which was next to the embassy, the Safir, also called the International Hotel, the Iraqis had taken all the doorknobs off. While the doors were still hanging, there was no way to lock the doors. There was no electricity, right? You had to walk up to rooms. So there were no lights in the stairwells and no water. All of my embassy people, who were staying there, if they had to go to the bathroom or needed a shower, had access to the embassy where we had water and working toilets.

I remember asking Saud, "Come to think of it, where are these people going to be able to use the toilets?"

"Oh," he said, "Not a problem, I'll take them to my house. We have lots of bathrooms."

I said, "Saud, I've been to your house. I'm sad to tell you; it's been destroyed. I mean they smashed the marble. They took the toilets and they took the shower stalls. They took everything." Long silence.

"Well, I will figure this one out," he said.

I continued, "But food. How am I going to feed these people?"

"Well, we'll bring food with us."

"You're going to bring food for 149 -- where are they going to eat?"

"Well, can't we use your residence?"

Recognizing that all my arguments against their coming was falling on deaf ears or more correctly, determined ears, I said, "I guess you can."

They came --- all 137 mostly VIPs! The Kuwaitis hired buses in Saudi Arabia that met the plane at the airport in Kuwait. With a US military escort we arranged little tour around the city. They saw the heavy damage by the Iraqi occupation forces. The tour included visits to a couple of villas that had been turned into detention and torture houses. They came to the embassy where they did, in fact, have lunch which we managed to cater from Saudi Arabia. They brought the food up on the buses as I recollect. And the military, which admitted that they had a surplus of wooden outhouses that they had built for the troops, nicely brought about 30 of them and lined them up along the wall of the embassy in the backyard of the residence. So our VIPs had outhouses they could use. I thought that was actually a fitting touch for the "CODEL from Hell!"

We also took them down to the edge of the oil fires in the Burgan Field, located just south of the airport. They all wanted to go up to very edge of the burning field to see this

horrendous catastrophe that had received considerable media coverage. The visitors also wanted to see the infamous ‘Road to Hell,’ an incline on the road to Iraq just north of the city. Coalition forces had bombed the fleeing Iraqi army as it tried to escape from coalition forces. Pictures of the landscape around this road showed an enormous number of vehicles destroyed with the presumption that there had been large loss of life as well. (Note: Many vehicles tried to get around the logjam on the road itself by cutting to the left and right of the road itself only to find themselves in the mine field set up by the Iraqi forces.) We took them to see the road. I remember the security officers’ warning everyone, and I reiterated the warning as well: “Do not pick up anything. Nothing has been touched or cleared except the road itself. Don’t leave the asphalt and please don’t pick up anything. Items could well be explosives and you endanger yourself and your colleagues”

A few minutes later, I walked around the back of the bus and found a member of Congress picking up souvenirs off the edge of the road. This despite the warning. Of course, the nightmare scenario was that they would put them in their bags, take them on the plane when they went back to Bahrain. If any ‘souvenirs’ detonated, they would blow up the whole plane killing all!

We had a lot of visits from members of Congress. Senator McCain was one. He had a plan to send a medical support team, which was helpful. We had a visit from the Senator d’Amato from New York. He had a number of things that he wanted to do, like run an American flag up the embassy flag pole. We were very accommodating.

There was Senator Exxon, Congressman Montgomery, and General Vuono U.S. Army and a lot more that I don’t remember, particularly senior military officers. As every ambassador knows, when a CODEL or member of Congress comes, embassies bend over backwards to support them. As I remember, one or two of them showed up in Kuwait without our even know they were coming. They came overland from Saudi Arabia. One group rented a car, drove up and just appeared at the embassy gate. Well, we took care of them. We showed them around and tried to give them a security brief; but as I told you about the one picking up souvenirs, they don’t always listen to what they’re told. But that’s all part of life.

To be candid, I understood that most of them came because they obviously wanted to see Kuwait and successful results of our military’s liberation. They wanted to be able to go home and share what they had seen.

*Q: There is going to be money and supplies and all sorts of stuff appropriated.*

GNEHM: Yes, that’s right.

*Q: The fact is that these people who are going to be involved in appropriations later. There’s a real solid purpose behind their visits.*

GNEHM: There was a solid advantage in having them come, if you want to put it that way, I knew that we were going to be selling Kuwait arms, working to rebuild their military, wanting a large exercise program as well as a military exchange program. All of this requires money and it is definitely better to have Congressional support than Congressional opposition. That's right.

*Q: Were you called upon, or did the military take care of running out boys from Tennessee in the military to meet their congressman or that sort of thing?*

GNEHM: There was some of that. Most congressmen wanted to meet people from their state or district. It wasn't that easy because there were not many troops in Kuwait City itself after the first few days. And those that were out in the desert weren't easily accessible. Then after a certain number of weeks many of those troops were pulled back to Saudi Arabia. We still had forces on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, but ongoing trouble with Iraqi forces meant they weren't accessible.

*Q: Were there any problems that you were aware of with women troops?*

GNEHM: None that I'm aware of at all; but your question reminds me of one very interesting encounter about women in the American force structure. I remember going to one diwaniya in the first few days after liberation. I remember the profuse 'thank yous' that I got from most people for what we did and the great praise and thanks and appreciation. What I remember at this one diwaniya, however, is that one man became really emotional and began to cry. With tears streaming down his cheeks, he described what was most moving and so hard for him to comprehend. "You sent your women to die for us. You sent your women to fight for our freedom." His point was that we didn't just send our men but our women and that would have real significance in their culture.

*Q: Oh yes. Well, it's true.*

GNEHM: It is true. One of the issues that I mentioned repeatedly is the issue of democracy and elections. As I have emphasized, this was something that the President was very concerned about. So Baker himself had it on his agenda. I obviously had instructions and received many calls urging me to get them to move forward on an election timetable.

I think it useful if I go back to some of the conversations that we had with the Kuwait Government even though those conversations covered more than just that one topic. On April 22, 1991, Secretary Baker came to Kuwait. He met with the Emir, the Crown Prince, and the Foreign Minister, who was then Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah. Also present was Suleiman al-Shaheen, the Director General of the Foreign Ministry and the Amir's translator, Tewfik Nasser.

With Secretary Baker was John Kelly (Assistant Secretary for NEA), Margaret Tutwiler (State Spokeswoman), Dennis Ross, and David Welch (DCM in Saudi Arabia). This was Baker's first time in Kuwait. His last meeting with the Amir had been in Ta'if.

Secretary Baker opened expressing his pleasure to meet the Amir in his own country, liberated. The Amir profusely thanked the President, Secretary Baker and the whole team and the American military for liberating Kuwait. But Baker had an agenda. He talked about the M.E. peace process and what other Arab leaders had said during the week or two before---comments that were positive and supportive of the initiative the President was taking.

This subject goes back to an earlier conversation that I reported earlier in Ta'if. In that conversation Baker had said that this was a real opportunity that we might not have again. We had asked the Kuwaitis to take some actions that would be helpful for us with the Israelis. Baker specifically praised the Kuwaiti decision to cease asking for certificates of origin for their imports. Previously as a means to enforce the economic boycott of Israel, governments had asked for certificates of origin for goods being imported. If certificates showed the origin of the goods was Israel, then the goods could not come in. The Kuwaitis had decided not to ask for these certificates in the future.

Baker asked for a brief on how things were going in Kuwait, security, and specifically the status of the Damascus Declaration. We were interested, at least in these early days after liberation, in regional states assuming more responsibility for their own security. The concept in the Damascus Declaration seemed to us a good approach. Yet, our impression was more and more that this idea was not moving forward. Now, over the course of the next couple of months and into summer, this initiative collapsed. Collapse is perhaps not quite the right word. It just slowly disintegrated. As I mentioned, the Kuwaiti and Saudi governments both began to have second thoughts about having a large Arab force on their territory.

The Kuwait side told Baker that the idea was still being discussed --- obviously not wanting to admit that it was going nowhere. The Kuwaitis at one point told us that "It may be OK while Mubarak is president, but what happens if there's a change in government and it's someone else? You know in Arab politics when you have forces of another Arab country in your country, then you can't be as independent in what you do on other issues in the region. You are under their influence and pressure."

Baker was aware that the Damascus Declaration initiative was unlikely to advance. He then asked about GCC developments, specifically the idea to create a more robust GCC force. He asked what the GCC might expect of the United States. Then he moved on to democratization. He said, "We welcomed your announcement on elections and we realize this is a delicate subject; but we hope you will indeed broaden political participation. Quiet and decisive action will definitely enhance Kuwait's status in the international community and in the media."

*Q: In the Syrian, Egyptian and other Gulf states view democracy at the end of the war?*

GNEHM: The Saudis had nothing to do with it. I guess the Egyptians and the Syrians didn't particularly have a problem with it. The Egyptians, of course, claim they are a

democracy and so do the Syrians, in spite of the fact they have a hereditary presidency. So no, they were not really involved in this particular subject.

Baker mentioned that if the Kuwait Government takes good actions, decisive actions, that it would improve their status in the public eye. He especially mentioned the opinion of the U.S. Congress and the American public as being important. He comes back to this later, by the way.

On the issue of human rights, Baker said, "I'm not saying that we accept everything that just came out in the Amnesty International report." That was a *very* scathing report accusing the Kuwaiti Government of not protecting expatriates and minorities. There were accusations of torture and abuse by elements of the government and security forces. It was really quite a devastating report. So Baker said, "I'm not saying we accept everything in the report, and we certainly understand how people feel about collaborators. But obviously there's no excuse for human rights abuses, particularly in Kuwait given the fact that there was just huge international support for you driven in no small way because of the brutal way that Iraqi forces treated your people." He was correct in making this point. "I really believe that the American public moved into strong support for the president's military action when the information of atrocities became public." Baker continued, "We, the U.S., have a vested interest in what happens now in Kuwait. We mobilized that international force that came here. Neither of us can afford to see human rights abuses in Kuwait." He was very, very strong on this point. On the oil fires he said he would like to get a status report on efforts to put out the fires.

The Amir responded, "On democracy, I announced public participation in elections in the coming year and I said in the coming year, not *after* but during the year." (Baker had used the words 'after a year.')

The Amir was saying that he meant the elections would occur in 1992.

In fact, Secretary said that, "You mean in 1992."

And the Amir replied, "That's what I announced. I can't determine the exact date now because we are missing a lot that must be in place before we can actually hold elections. Our voter registration list was destroyed; we have to have compile a completely new voter registration list." He mentioned that there were people who became of age in the year since the occupation that would have to be registered. Then he raised the issue of women voting, and he noted that there were elements in Kuwait that don't accept women as candidates. He continued, "The security situation is our number one priority. There are weapons everywhere. But we do not want to use force, like surrounding an area."

A pause on that to explain what he meant... The Amir meant that when the Iraqis retreated, they did it within hours of the order to retreat. They just abandoned all of their stocks, their stashes of ammunition and weaponry. The U.S. Military, as they went around the city and the country, found huge stashes. I am talking about huge containers of ammunition stacked to the ceiling or filling up an entire warehouse or apartment. There were maybe tens of tens of tens of them around the country. So the Kuwaiti

government had ample reason to be concerned about those weapons falling into hostile hands. Not only were they concerned that these weapons caches might be lifted, moved, stolen by dissidents or by average people, but there was concern about the danger to civilians if they blew up or were tampered with.

So the Amir wasn't wrong to say the security situation was the number one priority, particularly in collecting these weapons and ammunition. When he said that he didn't want to use force, what he was specifically referring to was a concern -- and that was in the Amnesty report -- that they were going to take actions against the Palestinian community. There was a belief that somehow the Palestinian community, having sided with Saddam, would have been a group that would have taken a lot of these weapons and stashed them inside the section of Kuwait that was considered a Palestinian section. But the Emir said, "We're not going to surround an area, seal it off, and send in forces" This address an allegation that they were going to go in the Palestinian areas and break into houses inspecting for arms. Reports argued that there would be abuses to people who lived there. On human rights the Amir affirmed, "Kuwait is a country that protects human rights. There was some confusion during the first few days. That's certain. We didn't have control, but the publicity we're getting now is simply not true. As to our planning for our national security," he said, "it's very important for the whole region. There will be a number of meetings that will include the GCC and others," again referring to the Syrians and the Egyptians, "but for now nothing specific, but there are ongoing negotiations."

The Secretary asked again what are you asking from us, both in terms of force and security? The Amir said, "Initially, we'll include the eight countries, the Damascus Declaration group. And once we've determined about that then we'll know how to deal with others, including the U.S. (The Amir was continuing to profess that the Damascus Declaration initiative was still a possibility.)

The Amir then made this important statement. "I mentioned in a speech that I would ask friends to keep forces here as long as the current regime in Iraq is in power, because we cannot feel safe as long as it is. This person, Saddam Hussein, is fast to agree and can break agreements just as fast. Either with Saddam personally in Baghdad or another individual who may have similar designs, we feel it very essential to have friendly forces here."

The Secretary asked in response, "Can the GCC and Egypt and Syria provide the ground forces? If so, with U.S. air and naval power, which is probably going to be a greater American presence in the Gulf then it was before, wouldn't that be sufficient? The President does not contemplate permanent presence of U.S. ground troops in the Gulf. We do contemplate air and naval presence in the Gulf in significant size. So what is a reasonable time frame to remove U.S. ground forces from Kuwait?"

Amir: "We need to know how to protect ourselves from Saddam's regime. What is the U.S. vision for protecting Kuwait? Is the air force and navy sufficient or is there a need

for ground forces? What does your military say? We can give our views after we know that.”

The Secretary obviously had his instructions from the President, which is no ground forces but a significant air and naval presence offshore. The Secretary responded, “Look, you have three levels of security. You’re going to have the political level, which is a UN presence in the demilitarized zone on the border with Iraq. You have the Damascus group and an enhanced GCC force for your ground troops, and you’re going to have a U.S. presence over the horizon. That security structure does not require U.S. ground forces.”

There was a lot more back and forth. Baker said, “Our drawdown can be measured, can be in sync with the arrival of other forces,” but he kept making it clear that we did not plan to keep ground forces in Kuwait. Then the Secretary made this really interesting observation, which I quoted many, many times. He said, “Your Highness, I just want to emphasize that the ability of the President of the United States to provide political and security support for Kuwait in the future will depend on your attention to the issues that I’ve discussed, particularly democracy and human rights. These are fundamental principles of U.S. foreign policy. What you have told me today, your response, is a good response in my opinion and I will tell the President what you have told me. I’m not laying down conditions or requirements, but the way the political situation works in the United States, the President will not have the public and Congressional political support to support you as we would like unless you can show you are making progress on democracy and human rights.”

My comment at that time and since has been that that was as beautiful a presentation of where America is on those two subjects as can be said, as well as relating it specifically to how it is in their interest as well. We knew they wanted us to be prepared to come back if that were ever necessary. What he was saying was that we might not be able to if Kuwait did not move forward in both democracy and human rights issues. Baker’s point was a very significant statement that the Kuwaitis took on board seriously.

The Crown Prince spoke up at this point about the Palestinian community and told Baker that he had met with leaders of the Palestinian community. He thought that those Palestinian leaders understood the government was committed to protecting them. I believe the Crown Prince was serious and ready to carry out commitments that he made to the Palestinian community; but there were still ongoing problems. He made this remark on April 22<sup>nd</sup>; but through all of May we still had incidents with the Palestinian community that were not good.

The Secretary then talked about the fact that it would be nice for American companies to get contracts for the reconstruction and he mentioned our need for a new embassy site. The Amir immediately replied, “I want to give the land for the new embassy as an expression of our appreciation to the American people for all they did.” Toward the end of the conversation, Baker thanked the Amir very much and said that he hoped the Amir would do anything he can to help us get the land and a building for the new embassy.

Before I left Kuwait in 1994, the Kuwaitis gave us a large piece of land and 100 million dollars as a gift to construct the new American embassy in Kuwait.

After the meeting with the Amir, Baker met with the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince, who was concurrently the Prime Minister, was the person who actually ran the Government. He would, of course, be differential in meetings where the Amir was the ranking Kuwaiti official; but he would most always have the most to say, as he did in this subsequent meeting with Baker. He said, "We take your points on democracy in the spirit of a friend to a friend. Regarding our Palestinians, our friends, they were affected by the statements of the leader of the PLO, Arafat, who supported Saddam's invasion and subsequent annexation of Kuwait. The reaction here in Kuwait to the Palestinians has been overblown; the publicity is false." He said, "I want the organization that deals with human rights to come here to Kuwait to meet with us. Two weeks ago, I met with the Palestinian delegation. They were prominent individuals with influence and power within the community. I welcomed that opportunity. They apologized for what some Palestinians had done. They confessed that some Palestinians, in fact, were collaborators. And they said Kuwaiti authorities should take action against those people including to try them --- not just take any action, but to try them."

Crown Prince: "They did express concern about the behavior of some Kuwaiti actions at the time right after liberation. They were concerned and thought there were plans to torture Palestinians. I told them officially to be comfortable; there are no plans to abuse Palestinians. Rest assured about your wellbeing and that of your families. There are indications that they are more comfortable now. I heard some Palestinians were afraid and wanted to leave, and I've said to those who do want to leave, we will help them."

Secretary said, "So you're not kicking them out. I was told that you were."

The Crown Prince said, "Well, there are many who want to leave or said they want to leave, but only 500 of them actually signed up. We understand our responsibility and we will not focus just on the Palestinians. There are other minorities." I think he mentioned Filipinos and others including Indians who also wanted to go back to their country.

When the Secretary asked him about the Kuwaiti response to the Amnesty International report he said, "I read it many times. As an international organization, I have the highest appreciation for their work. I'm more than willing to sit down with any organization to discuss the report and human rights in general. We have nothing to hide."

The Secretary said, "Well, is the report accurate or not?"

The Crown Prince said, "Maybe representatives of this organization heard some information from Palestinians and, if their representatives would like to come, they can meet with the Palestinians. On the third day after my return I met with some of them and they are back in government offices working." This was not true. No government offices were working that quickly after his return.

The Secretary said he thought it would be helpful if Amnesty International came to talk with the Palestinians so we could correct any misrepresentation.

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, a week after this meeting with the Amir, I was in Washington for consultations. I had not been home since December the previous year. I was able to participate in a meeting that the Secretary had with Ambassador Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington. I do not remember the exact date of this meeting, but I was there between about the 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> of April to May 4. Deputy Secretary Larry Eagleburger, Assistant Secretary John Kelly, and I were the three Americans who joined the Secretary. I knew that the important outstanding issue for the Kuwaitis was the level of US force presence that they wanted from the United States government.

The Secretary expressed appreciation for Kuwait's Middle East statement and Saud Nasser replied, "Some problems in the region are going to continue. The Crown Prince has asked me to tell you that there is no problem with prepositioning of military equipment, naval access, joint military exercises, and training. These are all elements that we have been talking about with you; but the Government of Kuwait would like to work out ways to implement these programs in a good way. In fact, the government of Kuwait would like to go beyond these areas of cooperation. The government understands the U.S. wants no ground forces in the region, but the government wants to find ways to operate together, not a visible ground force per se. Our concern and security needs exceed others in the Gulf region. We are the frontline. We are holding discussions with the GCC, and Egypt. Our Minister of Defense is visiting other GCC states today. We need your views. We want a military team to discuss training, reorganization, security, and equipment needs."

The Secretary responded, "Our overall principle as stated by the President, is no ground forces; but we want you comfortable with your security, prepositioning, the navy, active program of exercises and training. All that we are willing to do; we are very comfortable to do. There is a possibility of an embarked marine amphibious brigade in the Gulf available there for any emergencies. We are drawing down our ground forces; they should be out of the region by mid-July --- the 90 days I discussed in Kuwait City. We will withdraw gradually as necessary for your security. We are not interested in causing any internal security issues in Kuwait. Our withdrawal will not be so fast as to create an internal security problem. We are also looking at forward headquarters for CENTCOM, maybe in Bahrain, and we plan an enhanced naval presence. However, the first line of defense should be an Arab force. Do you want Egyptian and Syrian forces to stay? Tell us. Let your government know that the Egyptians are ready to pull out because no one has asked them to stay."

(Remember. I mentioned earlier that the entire initiative with Egypt and Syria was disintegrating.) Saud Nasser continued, "It will be some time before a GCC force will be ready, one year or so for Arab personnel. I want no space between us on this. It is important in the transitional phase now until July to try to put arrangements in place between us, such as the naval access, training, et cetera. We want this in place during this time frame." The ambassador goes on, "The symbolic Egyptian force could be acceptable

politically, but it must be discussed. We are concerned about Egyptian forces in Kuwait given the internal situation in Egypt, a change of government or politics, for example. What would their status be in that situation? We need arrangements, permanent and longstanding. What are” -- and then he asked the Secretary, “What are your limits and parameters? What about integrating U.S. forces with Kuwaitis for training? We need an agreement on these issues; we need to discuss training terms and numbers to be worked out.”

I'll just add as a footnote here. What Saud was thinking about is having sufficient forces imbedded in Kuwait units that those units would be combat ready. “One could call them trainers,” Saud said. John Kelly said, “You don't mean secuded forces like the British used to do because we don't do that.”

Eagleburger: “No, we don't do that.”

Saud Nasser: “The main objective is the security of Kuwait over the long term.”

The Secretary: “Are you ruling out a whole Egyptian division?”

Saud Nasser: “It's not our intention to have one. I doubt it for the long term.” This is the first time we're actually told the Kuwaitis are not going to accept a large Egyptian military presence in Kuwait.

John Kelly: “A second tier security arrangement has always been the Arab peace force, but every Arab state is running away from it.”

Saud Nasser: “My concern is I want to know what is going to be on the ground. We need something worked out between us. What arrangements do we have to train and organize the Kuwaiti Army? We need a high-level team.”

Secretary Baker: “We both lose lots of credibility if the U.S. is seen to have obtained bases as a result of our efforts. This is an important political issue. My initial reaction to a naval base is that it would be a mistake for us both. Access agreement is different; but a base creates major problems with Iran and the Soviets. We have significant additional deterrence with the UN presence.”

Saud Nasser: “I'm simply exploring ideas.”

The Secretary: “The air base you're talking about is offshore.”

Saud Nasser: “Much that I mentioned could be there all the time.”

The Secretary: “Yes, there could be lots of exercises.”

Saud Nasser: “The Iranians will always criticize. We have to take care of ourselves, irrespective of Iranian reaction. If access serves the purpose, fine. I said Kuwait wants

something that we are both comfortable with, but we do not want a transitional phase to pass with nothing done.”

The Secretary: “We will have an embarked marine brigade on ships in the region, an enhanced naval presence, a forward headquarters, training, exercise, and prepositioning.”

Saud Nasser: “Yes, but those refer to the region as a whole, but what is Kuwait’s share specifically?”

The Secretary: “You’re right; the naval presence is not just for Kuwait -- yes, the naval presence is not Kuwait specific, but it’s for all our friends in the Gulf.”

Saud Nasser: “So what is our share?”

Eagleburger: “Joint training exercises.”

The Secretary then asked, “What about your internal security?” The Kuwaiti ambassador said, “Internal security, as of this moment, is not as it should be. We had many people working in Kuwait who were not nationals. They are now out of the system. Others are out of country. All this has reduced the size of the security force significantly.” (What he was referring to was that many people in the security forces had not been Kuwaiti.) He continued, “We have a shortage of police. We’re recruiting. We’re trying to build up, but it will take some time.” Referring again to the non-Kuwaitis, Saud said, “We won’t allow them back into the security force or police, so security is not at the level it should be. So what do we do? We need training equipment and direction.”

The Secretary, “I believe we can do it --- arms and equipment, and there are things you can do such as set a date for elections. I did not press this when I visited Kuwait (sic). When I heard 1992, I did not think that was too slow; but setting a date is a good idea and the sooner in ’92 the better. Also get human rights organizations into Kuwait.”

John Kelly added, “And make sure there are no more human rights abuses, because they will come up during any congressional review of arms sales.”

The Kuwaiti ambassador responded on human rights violations, “With security in place, we’re doing our best to contain abuses. Courts are now in place; approximately 600 collaborator cases have been moved to the court. We will follow due process. The group, by the way, includes 16 Kuwaitis. They all have access to lawyers. We are not the kind of people to encourage violations. As to the elections, we are working to get the parliament building open by December and elections as early as possible next year. Many people are just returning to Kuwait during this summer.”

Secretary: “OK, just do it. When you are seen not doing it, it doesn't look good.”

The ambassador commented on the Israeli economic boycott, “We are not publicly issuing the change that we have made on certificates of origin. We are only a small Arab

country and have needed and will need the support of other countries in the region if our security is again threatened. But we are implementing it quietly.”

The Secretary: “I’m not asking for a public statement. What about prepositioning in Kuwait? Is there anything specific? Let us know today or tomorrow. We need to know what you want.”

*Q: I remember you warned that we were not going to preposition troops there.*

GNEHM: Yes. One of the things I mentioned as we started today was the enormous debate going on within the administration about our commitment to Kuwait. The President was clear, no ground forces but an enhanced air force and naval presence. Baker faithfully presented that position. He did provide a little wiggle room in terms of the rate of withdrawal, and then he introduced this idea of exercises.

I had a conversation with CJCS General Powell about this question. He visited Kuwait a couple of weeks after liberation. He was adamantly opposed to any residual force presence in Kuwait. He said, “There’s no way we are going to leave forces here.” I stressed in phone calls with the Secretary and when I saw him and General Powell that day in Washington that the Shia rebellion north of the border in Iraq and subsequent Iraqi forces movements left the Kuwaiti population anxious. They feared that the minute we were gone Saddam would act. Moreover, the odds of us coming back right away after we had gone home were, in their view, doubtful. That is why Saud Nasser argued so strongly for a military presence to remain in place. As have noted, the Defense Department and the military in general was opposed to any residual military force in Kuwait. I was privy, though the Kuwaitis were not, that the U.S. military planning for the future was to have nothing in Kuwait -- including prepositioning -- north of the city. Their contingency plan initially was that, if the Iraqis invaded again, U.S. forces would deploy from Saudi Arabia into the southern part of Kuwait. Thus, they would be able to defend any military equipment prepositioned in the southern part. They argued that they could never defend it north of the city. In other words, we were conceding the loss of the city of Kuwait in another round of fighting, and then we would retake it. The Kuwaitis never heard that --- never understood that was the U.S. military thinking. To be absolutely clear, that plan never got U.S. government approval, but it was the initial military plan.

So what actually happened? In the period leading toward the July withdrawal, there would be a series of military exercises. The effect would be an ongoing U.S. military presence in Kuwait. While the numbers would be nothing like the numbers during Desert Storm, the forces engaged in the exercises were combat units, not an insignificant military presence. Initially it was an Army exercise followed by the Marine Expeditionary Force. In the fall, the Iraqis moved troops toward the Kuwaiti border and that action pretty much determined a U.S. decision to maintain some sort of exercise presence in Kuwait on a constant basis.

*Q: Had the Iraqis and the Kuwaitis realized they were stretched too thin?*

GNEHM: I can't say that the Iraqis were prepared to move back into Kuwait, but they certainly threatened. That would have been Saddam's personality--- to show muscle, threaten, keep the Kuwaitis off guard. He wanted to make them worry all the time. His threatening actions solidified the Washington decision that we had to keep some sort of military force in Kuwait. In the end, we did preposition equipment as well. The army wanted to put M1A1 tanks there. General Powell, as I recollect, was still opposed arguing that they are too sophisticated to preposition and too hard to defend. We couldn't move them very fast if we had to get them out; but in fact we ended up doing it. We also ended up negotiating a bilateral military agreement, which still to this day remains secret though everyone is aware of its existence.

*Q: Were you watching defensive-- internal arrangements -- in Iraq, such as the major putting down of a serious rebellion. Did we have people in there looking at it?*

GNEHM: We did not have people in Iraq. Our information was solely from people who came out of Iraq. There was intelligence information and overhead surveillance that gave us some idea about troop movements; but we did not have a complete picture. In the period of March, April, and May, I was getting daily briefings on the movement of Iraqi forces from the U.S. military as long as they were there. There was some movement north of the border. At one point, the U.S. military became alarmed by the moves. The interesting point to note here is that the President thought the new world order he talked about would, as result of the Iraqi defeat, lead to the regional countries developing a defense security arrangement capability that we could supplement but would not depend entirely on us. That did not happen.

*Q: Did you believe it would have?*

GNEHM: I never believed it would. That was part of the reason why I argued for us having to be more serious about our own interest which, I believed, required a U.S. military presence and a commitment more significant than that being discussed in Washington. I could tell early on and Saud Nasser confirmed that neither the Saudis nor the Kuwaitis wanted Egyptian or Syrian forces in their country. Of course, there was GCC discussion on an enhanced Peninsula Shield Force, the initial fallback position when it became clear that the Egyptians and Syrians would be pulling out of Kuwait about the same time we were in July. I did not really believe that the GCC would agree to the formation of an effective GCC fighting force. I don't think any of my colleagues in other embassies in the Gulf believed so either. That proved to be true, as I have already described.

GNEHM: The next conversation with the Kuwaitis was May 7<sup>th</sup>, Secretary Cheney came to Kuwait with Paul Wolfowitz, General Yoosock, one of the general that had been working under General Schwarzkopf. They met with Sheikh Salem, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Sheikh Ali Khalifa and talked about long-term security issues. Cheney and his party later met with the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince said, "We have got to have the closest possible relations with you and we want U.S. military equipment. The GCC plus two is a good idea (still alleging that the idea had life), but it is never

going to be sufficient. We do not want you to be quick about withdrawal. Saddam Hussein is dangerous and he will not give up. His claim that Kuwait is part of Iraq is one that others have echoed. If you go back in history, you will find that even when there was a king in Iraq, he claimed Kuwait was a part of Iraq. Moreover, through all those regimes that followed, they said it too. So don't be too quick to withdraw." Secretary Cheney said, "We probably can leave a brigade until September 1."

The Crown Prince responded, "How about until the end of the year?"

Secretary Cheney said, "Look, I have authority to tell you today through September 1, but I will go back and present your date. In the meantime, exercises will continue. We will have rotating forces here and we will begin discussing with you about our repositioning."

I talked to Art Hughes a couple of weeks later. Art Hughes was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East. He told me that there may be more willingness now to consider something in Kuwait after September 1, but we have not yet heard from General Powell. Hughes added, "You know when we were in Cairo, President Mubarak told us that the Saudis told him to get out. That's the way he phrased it.' So by the end of May the Saudis and Kuwaitis had both communicated their decision to the Egyptians, and probably the Syrians, that they were not going ahead with the Damascus agreement.

It was on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April that the ceasefire with Iraq actually came into effect. An interesting little political move here is worth mentioning. The Foreign Minister of Iraq, I guess it was Tariq Aziz at that point, sent a letter to the Security Council accepting the terms of the ceasefire. The Security Council rejected his letter and demanded that the National Assembly of Iraq vote and accept it. In other words, the Security Council wanted more than just an individual government official, even one speaking for Saddam, to accept the ceasefire conditions. They wanted a larger, more popular body to endorse it - even though we all knew that the parliament was not exactly a popularly elected group of people. That is ultimately what happened.

The other thing that happened about this time was that UNIKOM, the UN International Kuwait Observer Force, arrived and began to set up in the border. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, a milestone was reached and a new government was announced in Kuwait. Many of the ministers that I had worked with in Ta'if were out.

There were several important changes, but the most significant change occurred in the Foreign Ministry. There was internal Sabah family friction between Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah who had served as Foreign Minister from the time of Kuwait's independence, and the Crown Prince over the role of another family member, Sheikh Salem Salem al-Sabah, the Minister of Interior. Sheikh Salem was the senior ranking family member in the Salem branch of the family after the Crown Prince. As I understood it, Sheikh Sabah said he would not serve in a government with Sheikh Salem and the Crown Prince was not willing to drop Sheikh Salem. Sheikh Sabah was livid and left the country. Sheikh Salem was named Foreign Minister. Sheikh Salem held the Foreign

Ministry position for over a year until there was a reconciliation in the family. At that point, Sheikh Sabah came back as Foreign Minister.

There was another development in Kuwait related to the question of democracy and elections. I heard about it at the end of April. In May the Government of Kuwait recalled the National Council. The Government of Kuwait had terminated the National Assembly and created a National Council as a substitute legislative body. Most Kuwaitis viewed the National Council as a rump council --- seen as unconstitutional. There had been elections for the National Council in the 1980s; but the majority of the Kuwaitis never accepted the National Council as a legitimate parliament. It certainly was not constitutionally established. The fact that the government recalled the National Council seemed to fly in the face of their promises, both in Jeddah to Kuwaitis and to President Bush, Secretary Baker and others, that they would restore the constitutionally based National Assembly.

To this day, I do not why they did it, except there must have been some in the family who argued that maybe they could get away with this and not have to go back to the National Assembly. There was a huge outcry in Kuwait against the government for this action and lots of editorials and newspapers denouncing it, refusing to accept it as in any way implementing the promise to restore the National Assembly. In the end, the National Council met several times; but it had no standing with the Kuwaiti public. Elections for the National Assembly were ultimately held but not until the fall of the following year. So they were not at the beginning of '92 as we had hoped.

One thing that I did not discuss was the Amir's call to the President, which will be out of order, but I can fix that.

*Q: It's all right. But I imagine there are other things that are going on here.*

GNEHM: There are, I didn't mention the oil fires and related problems.

*Q: I hope you'll return to some of this, because how often do we have an ambassador who's sitting there with places burning up?*

GNEHM: And by the way, it was in the first week of April that I presented my credentials to the Amir in Kuwait.

*Q: I was going to ask that.*

GNEHM: Yes.

*Q: You were doing all this stuff and not getting around to presenting your credentials.*

GNEHM: I understand the culture, and they eventually called to say, "You are going to be presenting your credentials to the Amir at one of the diwanias where he is holding his court. We are making a big protocol exception. We know there are others who probably should be ahead of you in precedent, but we are going to do you first."

I said, "Thank you," very appreciatively.

*Q: Well, there's nothing like having a half a million troops more or less under your authority.*

GNEHM: Behind your question is something that I think interesting for the oral history. For the record, it is important to note that everything that I did from the time I was sworn in on January 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> 1991 through all of this period into April, I still was not officially in my position. I had not presented credentials to the head of state. So I was not officially recognized as having assumed my ambassadorial position by the receiving country. Yet in fact, all the things that I had done were far beyond what an ambassador would ever do before presenting credentials. Still the situation I faced and times that unfolded were entirely unique and there was never a question either among Kuwaiti officials or in the U.S. Government that I was the U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait.

One final point... the Amir's decision to accept my credentials ahead of others was a nice affirmation of the relationship that I had developed with him personally and with other Kuwaitis. I think it was due in considerable degree to that first conversation with him in Ta'if --- that I would not present my credentials until we got to liberated Kuwait.

*Q: Good, well do the interns have any questions?*

*INTERN: I'm just wondering about the Iraqi citizens. How did they feel about all of this? Did they condemn Saddam or did they support it?*

GNEHM: In Iraq or in Kuwait?

*INTERN: In Iraq.*

GNEHM: Well, I think the whole southern Shia area in revolt against Saddam was an indication of how at least that segment of the population felt about him.

*INTERN: But that had nothing to do with Kuwait? They were just against Saddam?*

GNEHM: Yes.

*INTERN: OK.*

GNEHM: And the way he treated them during the 1980s.

*INTERN: OK.*

*INTERN: Were any citizens against it for like the humanitarian reasons?*

GNEHM: Not in a country in which the government uses brutality to put down any opposition. There were so many stories of executions and arrests, including one event where Saddam presumably asked his cabinet back in the Iraq-Iran War whether they thought he should go for a ceasefire. One of the ministers, I think it was the Minister of Health, actually spoke up. He said that given the number of people who had died and the economic situation, he thought that was a good course. Saddam thanked him, asked if he could step out for a moment, and, when he did, they shot him. Nobody else opposed it or had a suggestion.

*Q: Well, were there any efforts on the part of the Shias in the south to contact our military?*

GNEHM: No, but there were covert efforts with the general commanding of the Iraqi Fifth Mechanized Division, which was in the south to my recollection. The idea was that he was going to take some action against the regime, but it did not happen.

*Q: Sometimes we issue orders to stand by or to stay out of something, I know I recall talking to American soldiers who were in Germany when they were told to push Russian prisoners of war back to the Soviet Union. They practically had to deal with mutinous troops because the Russians knew they were going back to probable execution. It is very difficult for American troops to stand by. Did you run into any of that happening?*

GNEHM: People not wanting to go back? There were Iraqis who did not want to go back.

*Q: I'm thinking more in terms of "Let's do something, let's get these bastards who were killing these villagers and all that."*

GNEHM: Inside Iraq?

*Q: In Southern Iraq?*

GNEHM: The Shias were definitely killing the Sunnis, the Iraqi Military. They were, for a couple of days at least, Basra and other major sections in the south were totally under Shia control.

*Q: I was wondering whether there were efforts coming to our troops to come in and help us?*

GNEHM: There were some approaches on the ground while we still had forces north of the Kuwaiti borders. There were appeals to help them. This led to the discussions with the Saudis and the Kuwaitis and others about whether we should intervene. As I mentioned, their reaction was not to get involved. They thought it was an Iranian inspired rebellion. By the time we realized it wasn't, it was too late to help. By then, Saddam's was pounding them from the air with helicopters and were close to crushing the uprising.

*Q: Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. Skip is going to start with the call that the Emir made to President Bush. This may be a duplicate, but let's straighten it out later.*

GNEHM: On May 28<sup>th</sup> the Amir initiated a call to President Bush. I think through the context of the conversation it becomes quite clear why he did it. He obviously wanted to speak directly to the President about certain issues such as human rights and democracy-- areas where the media was very hostile toward the Kuwaiti Government. The Amir wanted to try to explain it personally to the President. He opened urging the President to really work diligently to find peace between Israel and the Palestinians. This goes back to previous conversations that the President had, as well as Secretary Baker and others, where they had urged the Amir to have Kuwait step forward and to encourage other Arab countries to step forward to take actions that would encourage Israel to be more forthcoming.

The Amir said, "if we don't bring about peace, there's simply going to be a new dictator in the region who is going to use that issue to mobilize the Middle East against Israel." Unsaid in that remark, though, was his anticipation that that person would be the still existing Saddam Hussein north of the border. He predicted that in raising hostility toward Israel, that dictator would rouse Arab public opinion. That in turn was threatening to the Kuwait and the U.S. relationship.

The President said, "It takes two to tango" and that there were problems with Israel, Jordan, and Syria. Within those countries, each was putting up obstacles, putting up conditions for moving the talks forward. The President asked if there were ways that Kuwait or others could weigh in with these three countries to try to push them to be more accommodating and interested in opening and having talks go forward. He complimented the recent GCC public statement that stressed the need for peace and the desire by the GCC to see peace. He described it as very positive step forward.

The Amir went on to another subject at this point. He talked about the reports in newspapers that really distorted the truth, particularly in the area of human rights in Kuwait and similar issues. He said that he knew that I, the ambassador, had spoken to the President because he'd asked me to. And the President said, "Yes, he gave me a better report than I see in the newspapers."

And the Amir said, "That is in fact the case." He said that they were not just putting anyone on trial as collaborators. He said, "We are conducting these trials in a civilized way. I will not have the reputation of Kuwait compromised. You can rest assured in that regard."

I think the President was actually sympathetic. His response to the Amir was, "I understand why there are trials and I appreciate hearing what you said to me. And so I encourage you to continue on that basis."

The Amir said, "On another subject, I want you to know that I have set up a committee that is working on the modalities for the election. I think elections can take place next year."

The President was pleased and then asked about the oil fires.

The Amir said, "Efforts are going well. About 130 of the wells have now been capped." The President asked him why martial law was continuing --- why was there a need at this late date at the end of May? (There was actually a decision by the government about this time to extend martial law.) The Amir responded, "The extension is absolutely necessary for us to be able to collect all the weapons and ammunition that are scattered all over Kuwait, and that means from Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis. This is not against just any one group. It will not be extended beyond this 30 days. This is the final 30 days." But he added, "Look, Saddam Hussein has survived. I'm not comfortable with him being there. He cannot be trusted. We need sustained pressure on him, including sanctions."

The President said, "Do all you can to counter the western press, but you can rest assured we're going to keep the pressure on Saddam Hussein."

It was a good conversation, but it leads me to go on to say that I knew that there was a decision again by the council ministers to extend the martial law for 30 days. I had an interesting call from one of my friends, who was actually a minister in the government and present in the meeting when extending martial law was discussed. The way he portrayed it to me was that the Crown Prince/ Prime Minister, Sheikh Sa'ad, opened the meeting on the issue saying that he was opposed to extending it; but that the trials had to go on because the trials had not been completed. He claimed that it was necessary to maintain martial law to keep the trials going until all accused had been dealt with. He was told by other ministers, and then by the Attorney General himself, that there was no legal basis for martial law courts if martial law was not in place. Sheikh Salem, who had been Minister of Interior, was adamant about keeping martial law in place. In fact, the minister talking to me said, "Solely because of this legality regarding the courts, the Crown Prince reluctantly changed his mind and agreed to a 30-day extension." I think that was in the press and that was another one of the precipitating factors for the Emir's desire to call the President and say, "Don't misunderstand this."

I think I said before, but it's worth repeating. The U.S. military and our KTF, the Kuwait Task Force, the civil affairs officers who had been working with me since liberation, had reported from the day of liberation right into May their continued discovery of large quantities of ammunition stacked in different locations throughout the country, including in a number of apartment buildings. This was indeed a real threat to public safety; but it was also a political issue. Those who were most concerned had it in their minds that the Palestinians were snitching the ammunition and hiding it to use it later against the government. Incidentally, the quantity of such items was staggering.

But as the Amir told the President, it wasn't just Palestinians who were picking up weapons and ammunition. In fact, I think there were probably a lot more Kuwaitis

stashing it away than there were Palestinians. There was one place where there was a huge stash of boxed ammunition that was stored in the ground floor parking area of an inhabited, 14-story apartment house along the coastal road. Had that been set off by accident of any sort, it would have brought the whole 14 floors down. So there was a substantial public safety issue here, as well as a general security issue.

As late as May, we were still getting some reports about people being picked up and dying in detention. There was one case -- I only recall the name Korshid -- where it was determined that he died under torture. The Kuwaiti government told me they had leads as to the culprits and they had transmitted the case to the Attorney General. The culprits would be picked up and tried. I mention it just is an example that there were still problems with security and vendettas against individuals.

There was an allegation at this time that Ward 18 at the Farwaniya Hospital had been taken over by the military and it was being used to hold people who had been arrested and detained. I spoke to the Crown Prince about this. He in turn talked to the Minister of Interior. He then told me point blank that a circular was going out that there would be no arrest without the approval of the Minister of Justice and that families had to be notified immediately once a person had been arrested. He said that I could rest assured that the government was on top of this and was going to make a really diligent effort to clamp down on any of these unfortunate incidents.

A few days later I knew there was a scheduled demonstration by Kuwaitis who were opposed to the extension of martial law and who were opposed to any delay in reestablishing the representative parliament. I think in the end that demonstration didn't occur because they met with the Crown Prince and he assured them that there would be progress.

These were indications of the seething that was continuing to go on in Kuwait, even as we went into early June. About this first week of June I drew up a list of the things that we needed to focus on in the next 100 days. Here is a rundown as it is a good way of documenting the areas of concern or of interest. One was business recovery --- getting the business sector in Kuwait back in place, especially the oil sector. The goal was to get at least two-third of the oil wells capped and to start initial exports of Kuwaiti oil. Another was the transportation sector, getting the airport and the ports up and running fully. They were operating but on a very contingent and tentative basis. Also by September, we wanted to have the schools ready to open for the fall session.

Just a footnote on education... A lot of the schools had been used by the Iraqi occupation forces. There was extensive damage. All of them had been looted. So there were no desks, no chairs, no light fixtures, etc. There had to be a major rehabilitation effort. Of course, most of the books had been stolen. So all books had to be purchased and shipped to Kuwait within a fairly short period of time. There also was mine ordinance clearance. As I mentioned earlier, there were cluster bombs and mines that the Iraqis had laid throughout the desert along the border with Saudi Arabia, along the coastline, along the

ridge north of Kuwait and on the off shore islands. These were definite safety threats and security issues. So demining the country was another immediate need.

I would like to discuss two issues that related to Iraq --- first, the border demarcation. By now, UNIKOM was in place. There were actually some incidents in the demilitarized zone --- firing from the Iraqi side on Kuwaitis. There was also the issue of missing persons that I previously discussed. While there had been an initial return of Kuwaitis about a week and a half after the end of hostilities back in March, there was only a trickle afterwards and there was a long list of still missing Kuwaitis. A government agency was set up to document those who were still not accounted for. UN Security Council Resolution 687 required the Iraqis to aid Kuwait in the return of these missing. The international agency that was given responsibility for monitoring this portion of the UNSC Resolution was the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

They were responsible for organizing meetings, usually on a twice-annual basis in Geneva, for Iraq and countries with missing to meet to resolve open cases. I attended these meetings along with a senior Kuwaiti official, usually Sheikh Salem Salem al-Sabah.

*Q: What was the final decision? How many were killed and lost, missing?*

GNEHM: I've lost that figure in my mind. It was in the neighborhood, I think, of 1,800. I'm not sure.

*Q: I was wondering, was there any sort of Iraqi attempt to destroy the intellectual group of Kuwaitis or the industrialists, or was this sort of hit and miss?*

GNEHM: Iraqi actions were more hit or miss. Many of the people in those categories either fled when the invasion occurred or were out of the country. Remember, the invasion took place in August. In August many Kuwaitis are outside the country. To respond to your question, the Iraqis certainly went after people that they thought were likely to lead any opposition. These were definitely picked up as well as any member of the Al-Sabah family.

*Q: Saddam's people had been taking notes for a long time.*

GNEHM: Sure. There were lots of Iraqis in Kuwait in the years before the invasion and many allegations, with some substance, that they were implanted in various ministries and semi-government institutions, like the Kuwait Center for Scientific Research, among others. So they knew the institutions and they knew the individuals in those institutions.

I was enumerating the issues that I was addressing at this time: human rights issues and democracy – meaning moving the country toward elections. Two other matters became more demanding about this time. The first was a military agreement for access for coalition forces. The Kuwaitis ultimately agreed; but implementation was not always smooth. For example, one small point in the agreement was simply to allow American

forces to enter Kuwait on their military IDs and not have to get passports and visas. You would have thought that this would be a no-brainer for a government that wanted US forces to stay; but as happens in this part of the world, the bureaucracy said, “Well, we don’t let any other country do it.” I said, “Yeah, but no other country liberated you.” We finally got that one signed.

The second matter that became more active was a Voice of America request. Voice of America approached the State Department and, ultimately, me to see if the Kuwaitis would agree to a medium and shortwave relay station in Kuwait, primarily aimed at Iran but to Iraq as well.

We began negotiations toward that end. The VOA wanted agreement to build a huge transmitter tower that would substitute for the one they had been planning to locate in Israel. The logic was that Kuwait is far better geographically located for the audience that they wanted to reach. I led the negotiations and actually reached an agreement whereby the Kuwaitis permitted VOA to establish a very large transmit tower and transmission system for the region.

The Kuwaitis were very open and generous in the terms they agreed to. For example, they agreed that anything VOA imported would be considered diplomatic and duty free. They also made clear that they did not want to be involved in the content of programs. Frankly, they said “We want to deny we had anything to do with content.” In fact this facility was a relay station. The programming was produced elsewhere. This, of course, enabled the Kuwaitis to claim that the programs were from Washington or London and not Kuwait.

Later on, I successfully negotiated another agreement, the third one, the U.S.-Kuwaiti military security treaty. It remains classified, though everybody talks about it.

It is interesting to compare my experience negotiating the Status of Forces Agreement with Israel to my experience negotiating a similar agreement with the Kuwaitis. As I mentioned earlier in discussing the negotiations with Israel, I was exasperated with the Israeli negotiating team because their team had a representative from every single concerned ministry and every interested party in the Israeli government. They tended to have more arguments among themselves than they did with me, posing all sorts of hypothetical questions. It would drive me crazy as well as the head of the Israeli team. I understood later that there was one huge advantage. When that agreement was signed and implemented, everybody in the Israeli government knew what they’d agreed to and we had no problems with customs or with the Ministry of Defense or any other unit in the Israeli Government.

The Kuwaitis, on the other hand, insisted that our negotiations be closely held, in fact in secret, and that the Foreign Minister that was going to be my counterpart in the negotiations. While he had a few people that I worked with, when we ultimately reached an agreed text (which took quite a while to achieve), the agreement was so closely held that it caused innumerable problems. As we tried to implement the agreement, we

discovered that none of the Kuwaiti government entities had been briefed about the terms that applied to them. So, when items arrived to be cleared duty-free, customs officials said they knew nothing about duty free entry. They insisted that we had to pay the import duties.

Such confusion required me to go back to the Foreign Ministry and say, “Now OK, who’s going to tell customs about this secret agreement between our two governments that gives us duty free privileges?” Their response: “Well, we can’t talk about it. It’s secret.” “So how are they going to find out?” I asked.

“Um, well,” mumble, mumble, mumble. It didn't matter where it arose --- the port, airport, customs, immigration, or whatever, the problem was always the same. Officials just did not know the terms of the agreement. It took us a while to get the word out to all the different departments. The U.S. military, for example, was authorized to operate a radio station; but nobody informed the Ministry of Communications! Such situations gave me lots to do.

Then there was the issue of land for a new Embassy complex. If you remember in one of the conversations between the Amir and Secretary Baker, the Amir said he want to give America land for a new embassy building. We had been looking for land before the invasion. In fact, in in June or July before the invasion the Department came to me to say that there was a property that Nat Howell, the former ambassador, had identified as a great location for the new embassy. It was a former palace of a member of the Sabah family but abandoned. It was a nice piece of land. Unfortunately, the owner, the Sabah Sheikh, wanted five million dollars for it. The price seemed on the high side. Now again, this is before the invasion. People in the State Department remembered that I had a very good relationship with Senator Fritz Hollings of South Carolina, Chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. He was an obstacle because he had to agree to the reprogramming of money so it could be used to buy the property. So they set me up to see Senator Hollings to get him to approval the reprogramming. I dutifully went to see him with a couple of the State Department representatives from the office responsible for such projects.

Before I could say anything beyond ‘hello,’ he said in his southern accent “Skip, I’m so glad to see you. It’s been a long time. Ah think I know why you're here.” I asked him if he wanted me to tell him but he interrupted, “No, you want me to agree to that five million dollars to buy that land for your new embassy. That’s right, that’s why you’re here.” I said, “Yes sir, that’s why I’m here. These guys (pointing to the other State Department officials that had accompanied me) think that I have such a good relationship with you that you’re going to say yes.”

Hollings replied, “I’m telling you right now, Skip. I don't know what those people are thinkin’. They spend so much money without thinkin’, they just go crazy. This is going to be the most expensive property we’ve ever bought. More expensive than that property in Amman, Jordan. I tell you, if I ever *eva* (as in ever) find out who did that land purchase, I’m going to get him.”

Now I was the one that negotiated that purchase. I didn't know whether he knew that. I assume he didn't. But I'm sure my ears must have turned as red as Santa Claus's red suit! All I could say was "Yes." He said, "Skip, I'm going to do this. But just because of you. Just because of you!" And he looked over to the other two and said, "And don't you ever bring him back for anymore."

Well, of course we didn't need it as a result of what subsequently happened.

GNEHM: With that background, you can see why we were very pleased with the Amir's offer to give us land. If you remember, Baker also said he hoped the Amir could give money toward constructing the embassy above just the land. This conversation launched me on a humongously frustrating effort to find suitable land. It couldn't be just any land. Whatever we were to be given had to meet very high standards set by Diplomatic Security, including a very large setback from any streets or other buildings.

*Q: This is a secure -- free from getting blown up.*

GNEHM: Right. I'd forgotten what it was, 160 feet, or something like that, off the highway. Then the buildings inside the wall had a further setback requirement. They wanted acreage, large acreage. And of course in Kuwait it was usually way out in the desert where you were going to find that kind of space. So at the request of the Department of State I undertook to try to put a little flesh on this offer. I was told to deal with the Foreign Ministry. We came up with one idea of some land in the heart of downtown Kuwait. Years before the Government had cleared away the old souks and the large open area remained undeveloped. Well, the response was "No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. That's land appropriate for ministry buildings." What they really meant was that they didn't want the American embassy in the middle of downtown -- too high a profile. By the way, 25 years later the land is still largely undeveloped, open and flat. So we began to look for at other places. They told me that they had two places in mind that they would show me. This effort went on for almost a year. I mention it only because Washington was pressing me to get a decision and I was trying to get the Kuwaitis to do something.

One of the places that they came up with was a beautiful piece of property on the coast. It was seashore property. I liked it. All of the non-security people liked it; but Diplomatic Security said, 'No way' because trying to secure the embassy from the sea approach was difficult, if not impossible. I understood that. In the end we did not really have an option on that place after all. When Sheikh Salem, the then-Minister of Foreign Affairs who'd been Minister of Interior and Minister of Defense previously, heard that we had been offered that site, he objected and killed the offer. He had planned to build an officers' club on that spot. He wasn't about to let me get that place.

So there were all kinds of obstacles. We eventually did get land. In fact, the embassy is now on the property that we finally agreed to with the Government of Kuwait --- a very large track of land with enormous setback. And the Kuwaiti Government ended up giving us 100 million dollars towards construction of the embassy complex. That amount was

very generous and beyond what was needed but it enabled us to build a truly nice embassy compound. I actually broke ground for the new embassy before I left in 1994. I never moved into it because it took several years for construction.

In the middle of June I had another conversation with the minister who was Minister for Cabinet Affairs and very close to the Crown Prince, again on the Palestinian issue. It turned out that the government was not restoring basic services in Hawalli, the largely Palestinian inhabited section of Kuwait City. There was still tension and friction with the remaining Palestinian community. So in spite of getting assurances from the Crown Prince and others, this was not being dealt with well.

Then there were Iraqi troop movements north of the border during this first part of June. That movement alarmed the Kuwaiti Government and us as well. The situation highlighted the fact that we still needed to define what the U.S. presence was going to be in the country.

In response to the Iraqi troop movements we immediately ramped up an exercise to put additional US forces into Kuwait. This situation really precipitated a decision within the United States Government that countered where Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had wanted things to go. His view was that we should be out of Kuwait entirely. We should not even preposition US military equipment there. We definitely should not have troops in Kuwait. He (and others) argued that any future Iraqi invasion was going to easily sweep across the border and occupy the country again. Their view was that the US military response would be similar to 1990. US forces had to go first into Saudi Arabia, which had depth and facilities, and then we would confront Iraq in Kuwait. With this new threat, the fact that Saddam remained in power, and the fact that the President himself was inclined to be supportive of the Kuwaitis, we came across the idea that at least for the foreseeable future we would have running exercises. So, for example, you would have a deployment of army forces who would come to Kuwait to exercise in the Northern Desert--do things that they would normally have done in Arizona or Nevada or maybe even in Germany.

At the end of that four to six month exercise, a Marine Expeditionary Force might then deploy to replace the Army. In other words the decision was that we would have rolling exercises so there were always US forces in Kuwait. This approach migrated through the years into the situation that we have today. Today we utilize two of their air bases with a virtual permanent military presence. These and another bases were central to our invasion of Iraq in 2003. We continue to use them now during a period in which there is trouble inside Iraq and as we confront Daesh. I do not foresee this presence ending any time soon. In briefings now from the U.S. Government – specifically from Central Command (CENTCOM), they openly and clearly describe our military presence in the region. Their forward headquarters and large military base is in Qatar, and the Third Army regional headquarters is in Kuwait. It may not be in printed documents, but it's stated in public remarks. I just should add that the security agreement that I negotiated with Kuwait and previously discussed is, in fact, a Status of Forces Agreement.

Another interesting thing happened towards the end of May, which was both humorous and sobering. It was a phone call from the Department of State. The message: "Skip, the war is over. The exceptions to policies and rules and regulations are no longer in place. You need to begin to operate as an embassy is supposed to operate and not be doing it on an ad hoc or emergency basis." It was sort of like a juvenile kid being called in by his parents and saying, "Son, you just turned 18, man. So at 18 here's what you're supposed to be and do, and don't come to us with the sorts of things you did before." You go through an emergency in the Foreign Service, a crisis, and it's good that the Department gives a post latitude to deal with things. As you've heard me talking about my entire experience from the summer of '90 now until the summer of '91, I had enormous latitude --- flexibility --- to do things. People bent over backwards to help get things done, such as immediately signing off on positions without having job positions fully cleared.

Now they were telling me, "You've come of age, kid. You need to now to follow the regulations --- the approved processes. So, OK, you want these new positions to cover all the additional activities? There's a process. Fill out the forms, come in officially, front channel, all with job descriptions, with the rank and justification, and we'll work it through the system."

By the way, my Kuwait Task Force, the civil affairs people, were getting much the same messages from the military. "Guys, the fighting ended back in February and we're now in June. We're not pulling you out, but it's a different situation." Even the Kuwaiti Government had told the task force group and its Kuwaiti counterparts, "By the way, that fund that was established for you to draw on for all of your projects and plans, as of June 1 is no longer available. The money is now in the budgets of ministries, you need to go through the ministries to get their approval and the counsel." So the Kuwaiti Government was making the same point. There were to be no more ad hoc special actions.

That access agreement that I had been negotiating was actually signed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September of 1991. I was out of the country most of August on vacation on home leave. Since I went to Ta'if the first week of January 1991, I had only been back to the States once --- back in the May-June period. This was the first time I'd actually had any time off.

I might just mention one other thing --- the oil fires. I think just to repeat, that almost every country that was anybody in the world --- maybe 30, 40, or 45 countries --- saw a very lucrative opportunity in assisting in the oil fields.

*Q: Oh yes.*

GNEHM: Many countries deployed firefighting teams. Some were more suitable to the requirements than others. I remember one looked like a boat on wheels with water shooting nozzles aimed at all directions. In the end Bechtel took over the management of the effort to put out the oil fires and cap the wellheads --- all with the aim of getting Kuwaiti oil production back on the market. What they discovered --- and it took a while to get there --- but what they discovered was that if they worked the burning wells like an

assembly line, they could make faster progress. Let me explain. In the Kuwaiti oil fields wellheads are in lines with a different well every certain number of yards. So you can stand at one wellhead and see to your left and right a line of wellheads maybe numbering a 100 long one way and 100 in another direction. And they're all burning or at least spewing crude oil. Kuwaiti oil fields produce under pressure. So oil is not pumped, hence the spewing oil and 100 foot fire plumes.

What they discovered was that if they worked down a line of wellheads like an assembly line, they were able to make more rapid progress than addressing one wellhead until it was completely under control. The truth was that the oil industry had never had to face so many blown wells at one time. Usually there was just one blown wellhead which you worked on until it was capped.

The effort to address each blown wellhead followed a clear pattern. First the team had to use water under high pressure to blow out the flame, to put out the fire. Once you blew out the flame, you then had oil spewing straight up in the air or in some cases in multiple directions. So they had big barriers, almost like shields, that they could work behind. They mechanically operated an arm that had a cutting tool which they manipulated into place to cut off the top of the damaged wellhead. The wellheads were largely twisted and gnarled from the explosive that the Iraqis used on each wellhead. Once it was cut clean, the team had to put something over it, thus capping the well. Again, remember. You have this huge pressure coming up the tube from below. So it was pretty amazing to watch the team cap a well.

Before any of the effort I just described could take place, Bechtel had to construct some support infrastructure. The first thing they did was to dig large sandpits and line them with plastic. They built a network of pipes through which they pumped water from the sea into these reservoirs. These reservoirs were the source of the water used by to blow out the fires. So just to summarize, there were teams focused on each step in attacking a wellhead --- a team to blow out the fire followed by a team that cut the damaged wellhead and placed the cap. The teams once they completed their work moved on to the next well in the line.

The public description of the oil field effort was not actually accurate. It wasn't putting the fires out; it was capping the wellhead to stop the spewing oil. So at night, if workers had managed to cut a wellhead clean but not cap it, they would reignite the well. It was better to have the crude that was spewing burning rather than spilling on the ground where they would have to work the next day. It was an interesting operation to follow and the use of teams, as I described, enabled the work to contain the fires and oil spills to move far more rapidly than ever predicted. I think the final well was put out in September, which is considerably earlier than anyone thought it would happen. Initially, people were predicting that it was going to take about a year and a half. What I can't remember is when they actually began exporting. I do remember that Kuwait began exporting some limited amount of oil even before all the fires were out and the well heads capped.

*Q: It was a really remarkable job, wasn't it?*

GNEHM: It was an incredible job.

Related to the oil field destruction was international concern about the resulting pollution --- on land, in the Persian Gulf, and in the air. In Kuwait itself much of its land was covered in a film of oil as particles fell from the sky from spewing blown wellheads. The smoke plume from the fires extended as far south as the United Arab Emirates. Oil also flowed into the Persian Gulf from wellheads that were not burning. Satellite pictures showed black tar washed up on beaches in Saudi Arabia and beyond.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration took a keen interest in the issue and initiated a proposal to dispatch one of their ships to survey the impact of the oil seepage into the Persian Gulf. There were dire predictions about the long-term impact on people, wildlife, and fish.

*Q: Yeah, I remember all these photographs of the Gulf, big oil stains in the Gulf.*

GNEHM: The NOAA plan was to have their ship come to the Persian Gulf and survey everything related to the oil spill. Their plan was to traverse the Gulf back and forth until they had documented the entire Gulf. Even further, they wanted to include scientists from all the regional countries, including Iran -- except Iraq. They also intended to work on land to try to determine what would be the long-term impact of the oil particulars on the land. The Iranians actually designated scientists to work on the ship alongside the American and the Saudi scientists. Further the Iranian Government permitted the ship to go all the way to the Iranian coast-- meaning inside Iranian territorial waters and back --- to conduct their research.

The conclusions from their research were stunning. The research concluded that there was no long-term impact from the pollution. The conclusion did not relate to the denigration of the oil field itself but rather to the desert surface and waters of the Persian Gulf. On land they concluded that the particles from the spewing oil that fell from the sky actually put a coating of oil across the desert creating a crust. As a consequence, when the rains came in the winter and the following year, it seeped immediately through the crust. The sun later dried out the crust; but the existence of the crust inhibited evaporation. The result was a far more verdant desert during the next two years. On reflection this should not be surprising. This is exactly what is done alongside highways in the United States when you cut the adjacent sloops clean and have seeded grass. You spray the sloops with oil to control erosion and to facilitate growth of new vegetation.

In the Persian Gulf they took samples along the sea beds. They expected to find globs of tar or residual crude. Instead they found that the under growth, the undersea vegetation, was luxuriant for the same reason. Oil is, after all, a fertilizer. In short nature was taking care of itself. The oil was decomposing and serving as fertilizer for the underwater vegetation. They took samples of fish expecting to find high levels of certain chemicals in fish. They did not find it.

I remember when the head of NOAA came out to brief the Kuwaiti government on the results. I hosted a lunch so he could brief the embassy people. He cited the situation in Alaska after that huge oil spill. He said that he could take us there today and show us *exactly* where along the coast the government ran out of money to steam heat in order to cleanse the coast from the oil. "We ran out of money and had to stop. Everything south of that line where we used the steam and chemicals is dead to this day. Everything north of it that we didn't get to is as luxuriant as it could be. We made a big mistake. We should have let nature and the various little animals that exist there and eat oil do their thing. We would have been much better off if we hadn't done what we did." The NOAA survey in the Persian Gulf adopted that premise for dealing with the oil pollution. Let nature do its thing. This is just an interesting footnote for history

*INTERN: So was there really a clean-up process then?*

GNEHM: No. They did some drainage of the oil pools that had formed in the oil fields but nothing was done in the desert or in the sea.

*Q: Where we were getting our oil? Was this all from Saudi Arabia?*

GNEHM: Yes. If you mean fuel for the planes and for the tanks and things like that. Maybe also from the UAE as well. I'm not sure, but they were both big producers and they were part of the coalition.

*Q: All right, well why don't we stop at this point? Where were you getting all the experienced people at putting out the oil fires? I think of Red Adair as a name that rings a bell.*

GNEHM: He was there.

*Q: He was there?*

GNEHM: Yeah, he was a big player! I think I've told you the story of the time I took Red Adair to see the Crown Prince?

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: Because he couldn't get the 550-dollar kits that he needed to work in the field. He came back to the States during this time and actually testified to Congress about his frustrations with the Kuwaitis and the way things could go a lot faster and better if they'd only do what he said--- which is all well and good except it's their country.

*Q: Were you running across this problem of sort of do-gooders and self-appointed authorities, saying why don't you do it our way since we captured the place?*

GNEHM: Absolutely, there were those kinds of people. There were businessmen who had all kinds of gimmicks to sell as well as people who came and thought they should be hired by the Kuwaitis because America liberated them.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: We just had to deal with it. But Kuwaitis did a great job in picking Bechtel to be the overall coordinator in the effort to restore the oil sector. Bechtel did a great job and did it in a very collaborative way. They got a lot of kudos.

*Q: Well, Bechtel has been around a long time and knows how to do that kind of job.*

GNEHM: Yes, they have worked abroad and in foreign cultures.

*Q: I remember when I was in Vietnam, Bechtel was a big player in doing all sorts of things there.*

GNEHM: I just remembered something that I should have mentioned today. In April or May my Commercial Attaché, Robert (Bob) Connan, said to me, “Why don’t we have a trade show? Why don’t we have a trade show here? Right now?” I said, “Are you kidding?”

He said, “No, this place was cut off from the world for seven months. If we want to get American companies in here early, we need to organize a trade show right now.” And we did it. We recruited American companies to come with exhibits and displays. We went across to the Safir Hotel next to the embassy. It had been burned and was in bad shape; but we put in generators and everything else that you would need for a show. I think we had 40 to 45 American companies with goods and wares to display and hopefully sell. I remember the Japanese ambassador coming up to me saying, “Skip, I don’t think this is a very smart idea to do this trade show when people still recovering.”

I just replied, “Well, we’ll see.” And we just shamed them all, because it was a *huge* public success. You know why? It communicated to the Kuwaitis that they were back and that we were there and in a different way -- not just military but commercial. It also was beneficial because they had not had access to goods since the invasion and there still were not that many goods available in the country. I think every exhibiter sold every single thing they brought in. And they did sign some contracts; but, most importantly, it was a huge morale boost for the Kuwaiti people. It communicated that we would come even then, at that early period. We weren’t waiting for everything to settle.

The Department of Commerce backed this idea with all their resources. In those days there was a section devoted in the Commerce Department devoted to the Middle East. It was an initiative by one of the Secretaries of Commerce. He recognized that there was money in the region and opportunities. The group was charged with finding those opportunities, matching American companies with regional partners, and facilitating their efforts. They did a great job. The section has since been dismantled unfortunately; but in Kuwait in the months just after liberation that group just took over. We gave them

administrative support. Frankly, it was loads of fun. But it was certainly out of the box, way out of the box!

*Q: Were there any problems during this period, end of the war, before all our troops got out with the troops wandering around?*

GNEHM: I am glad you mentioned that. Yes, there were troops all over the place in their khaki fatigues; but there were never any problems. Let me tell you something. There must have been two dozen, if not more, families in Kuwait who were hosting dinners for US troops in their homes. They couldn't stop -- I mean they would go out on the street and haul them in for the dinners. We were facilitating their contacts with the commanders. One well-to-do family, one of those who had stayed in Kuwait during the occupation and worked in the resistance, comes to mind immediately. He had one of the huge diwanias and, therefore, had a big place to feed people. He hosted a hundred troops there night after night after night. The US troops were celebrities! And there were always large numbers of Kuwaitis present and a lot of buddy-buddy stuff going on at these gatherings. Both Kuwaitis and Americans were in to sharing their war stories.

*Q: Just recently one of the renowned Middle East singers died. Were you able to get any sort of entertainers there, either American or Middle East to come in, help entertain the troops and others there?*

GNEHM: I don't remember that happening in Kuwait. Your question, however, leads me to think of Ali al-Qabandi and his band of fellows who worked in the oil fields south of Kuwait City in Al Ahmadi. That is where the refinery is located and where the British had run the petroleum sector in years long past. They built a town for their employees. By this time, of course, it was run by the Kuwait Oil Company and all the people living there were Kuwaitis. It was this band of patriots that went into the oil fields and sabotaged the Iraqi sabotage. They were working secretly as part of the resistance. They were also the group that received US special force that came in at night from the sea just before US forces launched their attack on Iraqi forces. They hid the Americans and facilitated them moving out. This is just before the invasion.

This group of oil workers hosted American troops as well. These were not rich Kuwaitis, but they were passionate about the special relationship with the coalition. They established a tradition for the day of liberation. They had flagpoles in the yard with the coalition flags, invited coalition ambassadors to attend and played their national anthems. They also invited American forces from the local bases, and all retold the tales and the stories about what went on during the occupation and liberation. This illustrates how intense and personal were the feelings of so many Kuwaitis toward the United States. They held this event all the years I was in Kuwait as Ambassador. When I went back for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of liberation, they were still hosting the event.

*Q: Were there National Guard units involved in this, weren't there?*

GNEHM: There were.

*Q: Did governors or members of Congress come to visit their troops?*

GNEHM: I don't recall visits by governors, but we did have a number of members of Congress come to Kuwait. They wanted to see Kuwait and to visit with troops from their state. To the extent that they had National Guard from their states, the military always arranged to get them together. We scrambled every time we heard that senators or congressmen were coming to find the appropriate people from their state. We were usually successful in finding people for them to meet. Your question reminds me about my T-55 tank that I mentioned before! It was the Tennessee National Guard that drove a tank into the embassy as a gift.

*Q: Was there much contact between students, Kuwaitis who studied in the United States coming back to help contact with Americans and whatever?*

GNEHM: I am glad you asked me that question. As our deployment was ramping up, our military said it wanted to get Kuwaiti volunteers who would work with U.S. units. These would be volunteers with language capability and knowledge of terrain. The Kuwaitis jumped on this because they wanted to participate desperately in liberating their country. Young Kuwaitis, many students in the US wanted to do something to get the country back. So there was a large number of young Kuwaiti volunteers, who were given basic training. They were placed in the units, seconded with the units. They were not formally part of the units, but in fact they were! They entered Kuwait with the troops. They were there when the fighting went on and they were there in Kuwait City when I got there. Many came around to introduce themselves. They were very proud of what they had done with us. They formed a really interesting camaraderie. I can tell you that one of them who was imbedded in a unit in 1990 volunteered 20 years later to go into Iraq with US forces in 2003. He told me, "I was a volunteer before and I'm ready to do it again." And he actually went in with U.S. forces all the way to Baghdad.

*OK, today is the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 2014 with Skip Gnehm. You've just talked about being the aftermath of the, of the Kuwait War. Do you want to pick it up from that?*

GNEHM: I want to begin with a quick overview of the last six months of 1991. The most significant issue that loomed over the US Government and, admittedly, the Kuwaiti Government as well, was the question of whether there would be an ongoing U.S. military presence in Kuwait. The sub issue was the extent of the US security commitment to Kuwait. It was a very complicated situation. There were multiple players in the USG and no consensus on a solution. I found myself engaged with Central Command in Florida, the Departments of Defense and State in Washington, and, of course, the Kuwaiti Government trying to deal with this question. The setting in the region, especially the situation in Iraq played heavily in the interagency debate in Washington. Saddam was still in power. In the summer he moved troops toward the Kuwaiti border. That alarmed the Kuwaitis considerably. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Powell, and several other people in Department of Defense, both civilian and military, were not prepared to see a continued U.S. military presence in Kuwait and questioned the level of any US security commitment to Kuwait. CENTCOM believed a US military presence in

Kuwait was essential given the uncertainties in the region. More importantly, President Bush (and thus the NSC) were far more committed to Kuwait and an ongoing US military presence.

The emir goes to Washington and sees the President. He urges the United States to extend the U.S. troop presence in Kuwait. The President said he would talk to Secretary of Defense Cheney and get back to the Emir quickly; but he told the Amir: "I will not leave you in a lurch. I promise you that. You will not be left in a lurch." This message was also communicated to the Emir in a subsequent phone call. So, it was clear that the White House was pretty solidly supportive of the Kuwaiti request and shared the Kuwaiti concern about their security.

*Q: Looking at this logically, my gut feeling is there's no way in hell we could go in, spend all this energy, and drive a force out and then pull out and say, "We're no longer with you." In some way we had to give a guarantee. It just defies logic to think that we would go through this massive effort and just leave it unsupported.*

GNEHM: You expressed my position exactly. You could not have done what we did and then look at the general political situation in the region and not think in terms of some residual US military presence. But that was indeed an attitude that I faced --- the fact that there were individuals in Defense who did not think that way. The arguments began almost immediately over whether the military presence that we had in Kuwait in June would leave in August or September. The departure date was later extended to late in the year and then extended further to January. So, a final decision was repeatedly pushed off as wrangling within the administration continued.

*Q: I could see taking troops out, but leaving behind the guarantee that we'll have massive retaliation, air power, et cetera, et cetera, if anything happens.*

GNEHM: Let me try to describe in more detail various issues that were being addressed if there was going to be a US military presence in Kuwait. Three elements were the actual commitment of a US military presence (which I have mentioned), the question of prepositioning US military equipment in Kuwait and finally, the agreed basis for an ongoing military presence (a Status of Forces Agreement).

Regarding the issue of an ongoing US military presence in Kuwait, protagonists in Washington reached a compromise. There would not be residual ground forces on a permanent basis in Kuwait; however, there would be back-to-back military exercises that would result in an on-the-ground military presence, at least for the foreseeable future. We told the Kuwaitis that we would continue to examine the political situation in the region, particularly in Iraq and, ultimately make long term decisions. Kuwait was not entirely happy with this decision but realized that it was the best they could get at this time. The first exercise would begin in January 1992 with a Marine exercise to be followed by a Special Forces exercise in February and so forth.

An important related issue was the prepositioning of US military equipment in Kuwait. CENTCOM had been working for years to find locations in the region where they could preposition military equipment that could be immediately available in time of crisis. Having just gone through a massive deployment during Desert Shield and fearful of another confrontation with Saddam, the idea of prepositioning equipment in Kuwait was attractive. Not all the key decision makers in Washington, including General Powell, supported prepositioning in Kuwait. During and after Desert Storm, the US military utilized a free port warehouse area, known as Doha, north of the city near the Mutla Ridge. The warehouse complex was ideal as a site for prepositioned equipment. Those opposed to prepositioning in Kuwait cited its vulnerability to seizure by Iraq given the proximity of the Iraqi border. In their opinion any prepositioning in Kuwait was questionable and the Doha site even more so. After considerable debate there was begrudging acceptance of prepositioning in Kuwait. As with the decision on any permanent military presence, final decisions as to the type of equipment and its location were left for the future.

The initial decision was to leave something like 32 tanks, which was nothing. During the next four to six months after constant debate, Defense accepted the proposal to preposition support vehicles, artillery, and other sorts of things like spare parts and ammunition. Incidentally, the decision to preposition military items meant the deployment of personnel to maintain that material. I spent *enormous* amount of time working personal relationships, arguing, making some enemies, and making some friends to try to have the U.S.-Kuwaiti military relationship develop in a mature and logical way.

This leads to the third issue in the military relationship that I was dealing with --- the military agreement between Kuwait and the United States. Underpinning all mentioned above was the requirement that there be a military agreement that established the legal basis for the U.S. presence in Kuwait and the obligations of both parties. I was designated the U.S. negotiator and Sheikh Sabah, the Foreign Minister, was my Kuwaiti counterpart. For multiple reasons the negotiations took time. Washington was frustrated. If Kuwait wanted a US military presence as they repeatedly stressed, then what was the problem getting an agreement. There was no doubt that Kuwait wanted a military agreement. The issue was in the details and the debate in Kuwait was against an historical experience that Washington simply did not understand. Admittedly, it was hard to get decisions out of the Government of Kuwait; even the ones that you would think were apparently in their interest. It was typical of my experience in Ta'if, when I was there with them in exile, but it was particularly true in the days after liberation.

*Q: What was the problem?*

GNEHM: In this case, the very concept of a military treaty with a major power, even with the country that had liberated them, ran against regional thinking in the years since independence. Kuwaitis remembered the intense criticism by Arab nationalists and others when Arab countries joined alliances with western powers. As I mentioned, there was in fact no significant opposition to a treaty; but there was considerable debate in Kuwait over issues of sovereignty, such as immunities to members of the US military. I must

admit that there was not a great appreciation in Washington about that mindset, given the fact that we had liberated the country.

If you think back on Kuwait's history, you can't but recall that in 1962, the year of the independence, the Iraqis declared that they were not going to recognize Kuwait as Kuwait was really part of Iraq. They also moved troops to the border. Under the terms of their agreement with Britain, the former protecting power, the Kuwaitis requested that the British deploy forces in defense of the state. The UK did, but Nasser led a *massive* propaganda barrage on Kuwait charging that Kuwait was nothing more than a lackey of colonial powers and part of the imperialist world. The result was an Arab League force replacing the British force. Kuwaitis remembered this history. As everyone who has been in government knows, we don't have much of a recall of history. We don't consider present events in the context of historical experiences. What happened last night is about as far back as we often go.

I understood the concern and thinking behind Kuwait's internal debates and I understood why Washington didn't. My job was to bring both parties toward agreement. It was not easy. There were multiple parties in both countries with their specific issues and all advancing their positions. The September/October timeframe was a particularly difficult period. We thought we had approved language from Kuwait and Washington had signed onto it. Then to our surprise the Kuwaitis tabled some language in certain important sections. At that point Washington went ballistic. They were livid. I was on the phone with Sheikh Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti ambassador in Washington, with whom I had worked very closely during the negotiations. He was a staunch advocate of the military treaty close to Sheikh Sa'ad, the Crown Prince-Prime Minister. Sheikh Saud said, "Look, this is outrageous. This has gone on far too long. You talk to the Crown Prince. I'm going to talk to the Crown Prince. We are going to get this fixed once and for all."

We both did and the message back from the Crown Prince was, "The previous language is OK. Forget our revisions." That decision ultimately led to a signature.

The other issue at play was the continued presence in Kuwait of the Defense Reconstruction and Advisory Organization, the civil affairs group that had been so instrumental in post liberated Kuwait. There were several extensions of their deployment, but their presence and what they were doing was controversial in Washington. Washington wanted to close down their operation, I was trying to keep them because they were an important support mechanism and important in helping the Kuwaiti Government stand back up.

*Q: Had there been a lot of destruction in the port?*

GNEHM: The entire coast had been mined, including the channels into the ports. The mining was a big problem. In addition, there was some destruction in the ports themselves. Some ships and boats that had been sunk needed to be cleared. There was much work that needed to be done and we tended to have the expertise.

Back to the U.S.-Kuwaiti military relationship, having an agreement is one thing. Implementation is another. The United States with the agreement of Kuwait intended to establish a joint military commission (JMC). A JMC is a common means for structuring military relationships. We have them with countries all over the Middle East and elsewhere in the world. JMCs meet periodically to review the major aspects of the military relationship. There should have been no problem organizing a JMC; but there was. Carl Ford, then Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East and South Asia, resisted forming a JMC as long as there was no decision within the USG as to our security commitment to Kuwait. The debate on that point continued in Washington. I admit that there was little support at this time in Washington, even with the President, for a permanent ground presence. No doubt about that. But there was widespread agreement that the U.S. needed to be able to react militarily if necessary, to deploy quickly, and to train Kuwaitis to build up their own capabilities.

A key element in developing the military relationship was a joint security review, a JSR. The JSR was to be a joint U.S. military-- Kuwait military review of their needs and capacities. The objective of the review was a report that would lay out actions that needed to be taken, including recommendations on arms sales to reconstitute the Kuwaiti military as a viable fighting force. There should have been no issue but there was. There had been an agreement to do a JSR in the White House; but the Pentagon was opposed. So, the fight among agencies was on again. I was on the side of we needed to do it. I had great support from General Hoar, the commander in chief of Central Command. The underlying issue with the military's opposition, and to some extent I would say more broadly in the U.S. Government, was not related to Kuwait but to the fallout from a similar JSR report recently completed on Saudi Arabia.

In short, the U.S. military working with the Saudi military produced a report that assessed Saudi military capabilities and needs. The report included a list of military equipment that it proposed the US sell the Kingdom. When the list of proposed arms sales became public, it became a political football in Washington. The Israeli lobby and the Israeli government strongly opposed arms sales to Saudi Arabia and specifically the JSR proposals. The dirty laundry here was that the agreement for the joint security review and the subsequent report with its recommendations was largely done military-to-military and did not have the political input that would have caught those sensitivities. While that Saudi-U.S. report did not commit the United States to any specific sale, the Saudis could easily and did say, "But you agreed and we needed it. Now you're telling us you won't sell it."

The fallout created a significant political problem between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. In Washington everybody was gun shy and worried politically about doing another JSR. General Hoar and I as well as some others in Washington argued that Kuwait was different. Ultimately, my school of thought prevailed. There was an acceptance in the end that Kuwait was different, that we could specifically sell things to Kuwait that we might not sell to Saudi Arabia, just given its smaller size, its geography, and the new relationship we had with Kuwait.

*Q: Were there really strict provisions about resale?*

GNEHM: There are always non-transfer agreements, that are required by any purchaser of American Military equipment is required to sign. The purchasers agree that they will not transfer that equipment to another party without the approval of the United States Government. If you do, the result could be a cutoff of further military sales.

*Q: Well, during these negotiations, what was the thinking or consideration of the menace of Iraq? What was happening in Iraq, and also Iran? Because these were the two forces that we were concerned about.*

Q: With Iraq, as I mentioned earlier, there was indeed the concern. In fact, at one point the President actually said in a press conference after he had been with the Emir that we intended to maintain tight sanctions on Iraq. And he added, "Until there is a new government in Baghdad!" So, he actually said publicly, "Our objective is to replace the government."

This view becomes important later in UN Security Council in the '90s during the Clinton Administration regarding the real purpose of UN sanctions on Iraq. For most members of the UN Security Council and most members of the UN, the purpose of the sanctions was to get Iraq to comply to the points of the ceasefire resolution, such as its border with Kuwait, the chemical weapons, biological weapons, and nuclear issues. It was not replacing the government. Regime change was, of course, the U.S. Government's objective.

Going back to JSR issues, I came up with a proposal, a very specific proposal, for the assignment of a general that I'd worked with before, Brigadier-General James Noles. I felt we needed a person with military experience in the region who also was politically sensitive to both concerns in Washington and in Kuwait. General Noles was the perfect person. He was brought into this issue to lead the review team and conduct the negotiations with the Kuwaitis.

Now, I had had two experiences with Jim. We had served together in Riyadh and I got to know him very well. He was extremely intelligent, very savvy. He had a political sensitivity and cultural savvy that was important in the situation we faced with the Kuwaitis. I had also worked with Jim in Yemen and had requested his help there in a similar situation. I was, therefore, confident that he was the right person for us in Kuwait. Ultimately the Pentagon agreed to bring him on. He put together a team from both State and Defense to try to counter any concerns that I mentioned earlier regarding the composition of the team that worked the JSR in Saudi Arabia. He came to Kuwait initially in the first week of September. He returned in January with a larger group. In his first meeting with Sheikh Ali al-Sabah, the Minister of Defense, Jim realized that the Kuwaitis didn't quite grasp the full scope of a joint security review. Jim worked the issue and they were on board for doing it. At one point Noles told me that the Kuwaiti command and control structure was virtually nonexistent. They just didn't have one. That knowledge just confirmed how important a JSR was.

I didn't mention to you that Sheikh Ali, the Minister of Defense, went to Washington in the fall and met with Cheney and other officials. It was a very positive visit. He made an excellent impression on people in Washington. Cheney reiterated the White House's commitment to Kuwait. Yet, Sheikh Ali was savvy in his own way. On his return he was asking me, "What's going on with you guys? I thought I had a commitment but, Skip, you can't tell me it's agreed to when there is so much infighting in Washington." This exchange illustrates a classic situation that many ambassadors will tell you about. Our host officials know what is going on in Washington and we ambassadors spend as much, if not more time, wrestling with our Washington relationships than we actually do with our host country relationships.

*Q: Oh yeah.*

GNEHM: It's very complicated. It is the interagency disputes that sometimes are personality driven in Washington that can impact on policy and decisions. These are simply issues that those of us who serve in the field have to deal with and manage. But as we move later into the fall and were ready to implement our 'exercise' policy, the question comes up, "Who's going to pay for these exercises?"

Of course, Washington and Central Command's view was, "The Kuwaitis should be paying. This is, after all, what they were asking for, a continued presence." This did not prove to be a problem. Kuwait agreed to cover the in-country cost. Then I was asked to raise transportation costs, the flying of the units from Germany to Kuwait and back. I did raise it with the Kuwaitis and ultimately, they did agree that they would cover all these expenses as well.

Then there was the issue of the camp up in Doha. Obviously, it was established during a war and it was very temporary. I mean *all* the facilities were temporary. They were living in warehouses, not in real barracks. The showers were literally platforms with sides that were open to air, wind, and sand from the knee-down and from the top. There was also no hot water. We were headed into winter and this clearly was not a good situation for the troops. The Kuwaitis had given me a verbal commitment to spend of the necessary money to renovate Doha, to make the facilities up to a standard that you would expect for armed forces. Now that we had troops coming in on a semi-permanent basis for exercises, it was more important than ever that the facilities at Doha be adequate to our standards for deployments. Even though I had a verbal commitment, getting the money committed was agonizing.

At one point Sheikh Ali, the Minister of Defense, said to me, "Skip, I've had it. I have talked to the Crown Prince-Prime Minister repeatedly for the money for Doha. I have also a pending request for funding an F18 upgrade support package under Foreign Military Sales (FMS), a contract that you tell me has to get money into it immediately. I've done all I can. You're going to have to raise it with the Crown Prince."

So once again, as I had become accustomed to doing through almost 10 months -- actually more than a year, I go to the Crown Prince and make my case for the funding. And his comment to me was, "Skip, every time you come here you're asking for money."

And I said to him, you know, "You're *right*, because these are things you've asked for. These are things you've committed to, and I am under enormous pressure from Washington. How do I explain to them that after you've told me 'yes' and after the government had agreed to do things and we've agreed to support you, and you don't come up with the money to get it done?"

This leads me to jump ahead just a little bit, because it's worth mentioning in this context. We got the money for the F18 FMS case, as I recall. The money for Doha, however, was very slow in coming. Washington was just livid. I decided reluctantly to go over Sheikh Sa'ad's head. This may be the only time I ever did this to Crown Prince-Prime Minister. Most of my dealings were with him and I had the highest respect and regard for him personally. The situation demanded this unusual effort. I asked to see the Amir. He gave me an audience, as he always did whenever I asked. When I got there that day, it was just him, the translator, Tewfik Nassar and me. I decided in my little devilish way, because I have this little streak that the Arabs call shaytan, the Arabic word meaning devilish. When I entered the room, I said, "Well, Your Highness, thank you very much for seeing me today. I have to tell you that I'm here on a very unusual topic. Toilets."

His head came up and he was clearly startled. I thought Tewfik was going to fall out of his chair. I'm sure no one had ever come in and said, "I've come here to talk to the Emir of Kuwait about toilets."

I said, "That's right, I am here to discuss that, but it is a symbol for a very big issue." I then walked through his request to the President for an ongoing military presence, the desire of the United States Government to meet his request to maintain some American forces in Kuwait, and his government's commitment to provide satisfactory support for the troops in Doha. I said, "I used the toilets and showers out in the cold in the desert to make an important point. It is now December and the weather is cold in the desert. Yet nothing has been done to improve the living conditions for our troops in Doha. I know this is not right. I also know that that's not the way you want it or anybody wants it. But I can't get the money, the necessary decisions, and the contracts signed to get this work done. I have no place left to go but to come to you. I realize I'm going over Sheikh Sa'ad's head. I apologize for that, but this is really important to do!"

The Amir, after I explained why I started with the word toilets, relaxed and smiled. When I got into the issue, he became very serious. And he said, "You are absolutely right. As long as I am the Amir nothing will ever happen that will cause a problem between the United States and Kuwait. on these kinds of issues." Now, he said, and I repeat this because I think it's really instructive about understanding how the Government of Kuwait works. He said, "But look Skip," and he started speaking in English, which shocked Tewfik because the Amir did not speak in English to foreigners. He said, "Look Skip, the way we work... When I was the Crown Prince-Prime Minister, the Amir at the time did

not interfere with the day-to-day work with government, and left it entirely to me. I leave the working of the government to Sheikh Sa'ad as the Crown Prince-Prime Minister." And there was a long pause. "But I will take care of this, just in my own good time."

I think I said something like, "I know you will, and I hope your good time will be soon."

He chuckled and laughed. He put up his hands. I took it to mean, "Leave it to me." And it ultimately happened.

Through all of these trying times and issues, General Hoar at Central Command was a terrifically good partner. He felt the same way I did. He understood the President's remarks. I found that I had to quote the President to people in the Pentagon and others saying, "You can't walk the way you're walking." I had support from Bruce Riedel in the National Security Council who understood it as well. We got there eventually, but it was not without enormous agony, frustration and time spent.

I continued working the issue of land for a new embassy. As I mentioned previously, the Amir had promised the President that he wanted to give us land for an embassy building. Finding the right location was the hurdle in moving forward. At one point I asked Sheikh Saud in Washington if he could help. He talked to the Crown Prince, and that's when we learned that that it was Sheikh Salem who was blocking us from the site on the coast. The Crown Prince was not willing to overrule him, and the Crown Prince hoped that we would accept the site in Mesref near Bayan, a large piece of land that met our requirements. I spoke with Washington. The Department said that if I could live with it, let's just go back to the Crown Prince and accept that piece of property. In their opinion the proposed site was flat and had fewer security concerns. So, I did in fact accept that property. That did bring this issue to closure. The Crown Prince by this point had spoken to me about a 70 million dollar gift toward the construction of the building which later became 100 million, which was very generous and very helpful.

The last well fire was put out and wellhead capped in the first week of November.

| That is an incredible eight months after liberation. The prediction had been a year and a half.

*Q: Do you have any stories to tell about particularly the American, or the other firefighters. I would imagine this would be a pretty rough and rowdy crew.*

GNEHM: Oh, they were; but the government kept them in the oil fields and down in the oil camps. There were lots of wild tales about these different groups working. There is one oil fighting group that deserves special note. In the summer, a group of Kuwaitis, some of whom were employees of the oil company, put together a very competent firefighting. They were very proud to be one firefighting team that was all Kuwaiti. There was one exception. Our embassy nurse, June Geake, came to me and said: "I would like to become a part of this particular group."

I noted that her participation would be highly unusual; but she was insistent. She said they might need someone there with medical training in case there is ever a problem. She said she would stay back from the danger area but really wanted to be a part of the Kuwaiti team. I checked with the Department and they said it was up to me as long as she understood that there was no American Government liability as a result of us doing it.

And June did. She joined it. I remember pictures of the team with her and her oil coveralls out in the oil fields. It was our single-person contribution for the mission to the firefighting effort.

*Q: When was there significant oil production?*

GNEHM: It began in the summer, some limited amount of exports. But it was really in the fall and winter/spring that Kuwaiti oil exports rebounded.

*Q: Japan has always been a major consumer of Kuwaiti oil. Did they make any contribution to the cause?*

GNEHM: I remember that Japan paid for the GSP system for the entire Persian Gulf during the Iraq-Iran War. That system supported navigation in the Gulf. I do not recall anything specific during the war.

There is another angle to the question of an ongoing military presence in Kuwait. One reason there was Washington resistance to such a presence was the expectation – actually strong desire – that the Gulf states take on more responsibility for their own security. At the end of the war the GCC states, Egypt, and Syria issued the Damascus Declaration. Under this GCC agreement with Syria and Egypt those two countries would maintain forces in the region as part of a defense force for the Gulf. I think it was to include 2,000 Egyptians and 1,000 Syrians for a 3,000-man force in Kuwait that would be there under the GCC auspices. In return the GCC would cover the expenses of that force. There would also be a significant economic development fund established for these two countries. Though we assessed early on that this idea was not happening, officials in the region continued to speak of this arrangement even as late as September. When the Amir saw the President in Washington, the President asked him about the Declaration. The Amir said that they were talking. He had just been in Cairo on his way to the States, talked to Mubarak, and they were still talking to Assad. When we talked to Mubarak, Mubarak said, “Oh yes, he was here but he didn't ask for troops.” So, the Kuwaitis, it turned out, were telling us they were pursuing it, or leading us to believe they were pursuing it. This created some angst and friction and anger in the U.S. Military that we were being duped. The military interpreted this Kuwaiti deception as a means of keeping US forces in the country. In other words, the Kuwaitis already knew that the Damascus Declaration plan was not going ahead, and they feared that if the US realized that, we would pull out.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: This issue came up in Riyadh as well. Our ambassador Chas Freeman ended up raising it with the Saudis. The Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal had been in Damascus and remained favorably disposed to the Damascus plan. King Fahd was not. Chas mentioned to me that there was a bit of an altercation between the King and the Foreign Minister over this issue. But in the end, it doesn't happen, and it doesn't happen for the reasons I mentioned that 1) they began to think they really didn't want that many Arab forces in the territory.

*Q: Well, small country and these are not the most uncontentious groups.*

GNEHM: One Kuwaiti official, and it might have been their ambassador to Washington, Saud Nasser said, "So what do we do if the Government in Egypt changes and it's a different government and they're hostile to us?" "As opposed to Mubarak, who's a friend?" The Saudis actually mentioned to me, "Why would we want that Ba'athi ideology? Why would we import that Ba'athist ideology?" It was just another bit of aggravation and another reason why the Damascus Declaration was never going to be implemented.

*Q: Who was Ba'athist?*

GNEHM: There were Ba'ath dominated governments in both Syria and Iraq. The Ba'ath Party in Syria and the Ba'ath Party in Iraq had been originally one party but had split early on when Assad broke with the Iraqis. I believe there was an Iraqi assassination attempt on Assad, which would have spoiled the relationship pretty quickly.

*Q: While you were going through all these negotiations with this agreement of how to deploy and supply forces, how did you deal with our Congress? Did you sort of keep a staff person pretty well informed?*

GNEHM: We had a lot of visitors from the Congress, including Mike Van Dusen who was the senior staffer on the House Foreign Affairs Committee as it was called in those days. And there were visits by members of the Congress. Less Aspen came out at one point with a trade delegation from his state. Most of the relationship with Congress was of course dealt with by Washington, not by me in the field. As with all missions, however, whenever Congressional visitors came to the country they met with senior officials at the top of the government.

*Q: There were some important figures in Congress or the staff who were you might say rabid supporters of Israel and they caused problems in the various negotiations. You mentioned how there were before, but I was wondering whether this a consideration -- these people who were sort of vocal and coming to Kuwait that you that had to deal with?*

GNEHM: It's a good question. In the late '80s when we were really in negotiations with the Kuwaitis over the sale of F18s, the Israeli lobby weighed in against certain armaments on the fighter or certain capabilities of the plane, even though the plane does not have enough fuel to reach Israel from Kuwait. In this period after the liberation we

didn't have any problems. Our military involvement in the liberation of Kuwait made Kuwait a special case when it came to arms sales. Then too, Saddam was still in power and he remained vocally opposed to Israel. Recall he talked about burning Israel with chemical weapons at one point, and he shot scuds at them during the war. So, arming Kuwait, an opponent of Saddam, was acceptable.

*Q: Had the Kuwaitis over the years, sub-rosa dealt with the Israelis, I mean the Jordanians of course had?*

GNEHM: No, not like several other countries. The policy of Kuwait prior to the Iraq-Iran War for certain, and almost up to including the invasion by Iraq, was very much to put themselves prominently in the non-aligned movement. In those days they often played us off against the Soviet Union, much to the anger and frustration of Washington. We were not happy with the way they dealt with us in those days.

*Q: Was that issue moot after liberation?*

GNEHM: It was moot. It was a very interesting six-month period particularly if we look at it in contrast to the 2000s. Today there is no secret about our military presence in Kuwait or that we have a defense agreement. It is still technically a secret. In 1991 Kuwait seemed particularly sensitive about public knowledge of the agreement. When the Kuwaiti Government learned that the Pentagon was ready to issue a press release that an agreement with Kuwait had been signed, they asked us to please keep their military agreement secret. In fact, to the embarrassment of everyone the Defense Department actually announced to the press one day that our agreement had been signed. I had to correct the record publicly to say that it wasn't yet signed. There were still a couple of substantive issues that need to be addressed.

The Pentagon retracted their announcement, but the Kuwaitis went ballistic. The reason they gave me was that they would become the target of Arab accusations that they were again joining the Western alliance. It was a concern more valid before Iraq's invasion, but they were still sensitive about it even after having been liberated. Understand that they had no problem with public knowledge that our troops were in Kuwait and they certainly made clear publicly that they wanted us to stay. It was just the fact that there was a military agreement that made them jittery. Now, of course, we have military agreements with every country in that region, and there is little sensitivity about being allied with us. There remains some opposition from the certain obvious groups in Kuwait; but the public is overwhelmingly in favor of Kuwait's close military ties to the US. Remember that Kuwait was in the vanguard, the first country in the region to sign such an agreement.

*Q: Did you have communication problems?*

GNEHM: My administrative officer, Jim Seward, as I think I mentioned earlier, was very innovative. He quickly agreed to the Minister of Communications request in the week after liberation to put Kuwait's new satellite dish with 150 phone lines on the embassy compound for security reasons. In return the Minister gave us 15 or 17 lines. Once we got

it operating, which was not very long, we could dial in and out pretty easily on the phone lines. Those lines were not secure. We got our diplomatic communications up quite quickly, but it was not at the level we have today. We didn't have emails and the fax was just coming into play. We were basically okay. In fact, I was on the phone to the State Department multiple times each day. David Mack and Jock Covey in NEA were terrific in their support. My desk officer, Barbara Leaf, bless her soul, was indefatigable. She checked around town and gave me good tips, as did David and Jock, on the different players in Washington and where they stood on all the issues that I was facing.

*Q: You didn't mention John Kelly.*

GNEHM: You know, in all this period I have only one reference to having talked to John Kelly. He was Assistant Secretary of State.

*Q: Essentially in bureaucratic terms, he was your immediate boss.*

GNEHM: Yes, but through the months before the invasion and throughout the exile period, John was constantly out of touch with the reality of developing events. His orders to me on more than one occasion were countermanded by the Secretary. I was conscious of the delicacy of my relationship with him and tried not to exacerbate the situation.

*Q: Did you feel that he was being bypassed by lots of people in NEA?*

GNEHM: It was not apparent to me that he was engaged in the issues that I have discussed today---at least not to my knowledge. I'm sure Jock was reporting to him. He was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for NEA.

*Q: And who do you think were probably your most important contacts back in Washington?*

GNEHM: In the White House, Bruce Riedel. Bruce and I had established really a close relationship. He was head of the Mid-East Division in the NSC. He was the one I spoke to most often. Bruce had been a confidant during the days of occupation letting me know where the White House stood on various issues. His insight into the politics in Washington among agencies and parties was invaluable. Sandy Charles, who was my deputy when I was in Defense, was another person of importance in keeping me informed. In the State Department, Jacques, David Mack, and Barbara Leaf were the people I mentioned to you before and were the ones I spent the most time talking to. In Defense, Fred Smith in DOD/ISA, another former colleague when I was at Defense, was helpful in my understanding DOD positions. Carl Ford was another DOD interlocuter; but he tended to be the odd man out more often than not. Dick Clark was another important person. In fact, Dick Clark was engaged in all the discussions about the military relationship. He was in that group that was quoting the President: "Look, the President has said that we're not going to just walk out of there." He was very supportive within the interagency working groups.

GNEHM: I should mention the democracy issue during this period of time. I kept getting word from the White House from Bruce Riedel that there was a letter coming to the Amir congratulating him about the oil fires being out. It gets delayed and when I inquired as to its status, I was told that they were putting something in the letter urging the Amir to move forward on elections.

The letter came, but moving forward on the democracy front was a subject that I raised constantly at all levels in the government. Every congressional delegation that came raised it. They were always told that elections would take place next year as the Amir had promised. The Government was under pressure from its own citizens as well. On December 10<sup>th</sup> a group of Kuwaitis who designated themselves the Democratic Forum declared themselves a political party, which of course is prohibited under Kuwaiti law. They actually made the point that they were doing it literally to put pressure on the government to move on down the road toward elections, because they were suspicious of the Government's intentions. This was a center-left group. I don't recall that they ever really did anything in a major way. The fact that they did this was public pressure on the government, the family.

*Q: Did you find that Kuwaitis who'd studied in the United States and probably UK and all were heavily behind -- I mean and they caught the liberation or democratic, whatever you want to call it, spirit and all?*

GNEHM: I did not see that Kuwaitis who had studied in the US or other places outside the country were any more active in pressing for elections than most Kuwaitis. There was a groundswell as a result of the Iraqi occupation to restore parliament as established in the constitution. Kuwaitis place much importance to their constitution and the rights it gives citizens to participate in governing the country. Citizens reminded the al-Sabah family that in a conference in Jidda, Saudi Arabia, during the Iraqi occupation they had promised to restore the National Assembly.

*Q: Yeah, that's fine. And where should we pick up at the next point?*

GNEHM: I guess January 1992. 1992 is the year when parliamentary elections take place in the fall. It is also the year when we implement rolling military exercises to maintain a US military presence in Kuwait.

*Q: Today is the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 2015 with Skip Gnehm. I'm going to let you pick up where you think you left off.*

GNEHM: I think we were ready to kind of move into 1992. As an introductory observation, all the issues that I had been dealing with in the fall of 1991 continued into 1992. What is surprising to me as I think back is that we were almost a year after Kuwait's liberation, at end of February 1991. One of the hot issues that I still had to deal with was the issue of the United States' security intentions with regard to Kuwait. You would have thought that would have been addressed early on, before liberation or

certainly in the first four to five months after liberation. Instead, I was still embroiled in major inter-agency fighting over what our policy was going to be.

*Q: Well, you know, I've had Chaz Freeman talk about how there was no end game to the war. It was not discussed in any of the initial conversations. This is very American.*

GNEHM: This is very American, unfortunately, and I was dealing with a Kuwait that was still very uncertain of itself, and very anxious about its security. Saddam was still in Iraq and threatening. Things were not going well in terms of the UN and Iraq.

*Q: How stood Kuwait money-wise at this point? Had their treasury been robbed?*

GNEHM: Well, the treasury was not robbed. The sanctions the United States government and the UN, put on Kuwaiti accounts protected them from theft, so only the capital that might have been in banks in Kuwait could be taken. That was not usually government money as much as it was private funds. But your question is a good one because the Kuwaitis had expended such enormous sums of money to gain support globally and politically, particularly for votes at the UN on various UN Security Council resolutions. They had expended billions of dollars in *direct* financial transfers to Egypt and Syria, largely because of their willingness to contribute troops. They also contributed to many of the other countries like Morocco, to maintain their political support, and Russia. This was right after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the United States was actually supportive of getting assistance and aid to the Russians and keeping them politically on board. Kuwait gave several billions of dollars in outright gifts to the Russian government. There were also lots of expenses for Kuwaitis in exile, especially those who were out of the country who had no access to bank accounts.

So they had spent a lot of money already, and then after liberation they had the enormous expense of reconstruction. I think I mentioned earlier enormous expense in clearing the country of munitions and cluster bombs. It cost several billion dollars to hire private companies for these tasks. I know for a fact from conversations I had with the Minister of Finance, with the Minister of Oil, and with the Crown Prince that by the start of 1992 the government was having liquidity problems. They didn't want to sell from their investment portfolio. Such sales in any quantity would have actually depressed the value of the stocks they would be selling. We didn't want them to do that either. At one point they were even considering a one-billion dollar financial loan package from international markets, simply to avoid having to cash in investments.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: They were not wrong in saying they had financial constraints at that time of a particularly unique kind. No one doubted that they could pay off a loan, but the Kuwaitis really didn't want to do that.

*Q: It looked bad.*

GNEHM: Yes. Because of this they were holding back on payments and not signing agreements. That reticence accounts somewhat for my and the U.S. government's frustration with them in this period. In addition to the issues I mentioned, we were dealing with Iraq at the UN and unhappy with the way the Iraqis were responding to the sanctions and to the UN Security Council resolutions. There were also domestic problems inside Kuwait itself, which centered in large part on a promise to the Kuwaiti people that the Amir and family had made in Jeddah in September 1990 that when they came back they would restore parliament. Instead of restoring parliament they had brought back something called the National Council, which was a group elected in a very manipulative way.

The National Council had been set up before the invasion and all Kuwaitis interpreted this as an attempt to substitute the constitutional body for a non-constitutional body. Of course when the Government reconvened the National Council, there was an enormous public outcry that the Sabah family was renegeing on the promise that they had made and were trying to get this national council to be accepted by the Kuwaiti people. In the U.S. we were interested in seeing democracy go forward and in seeing the Constitution back in place with the parliament or National Assembly, as it was named in the Constitution, back in place. We also had a commitment from the Amir on that. During the Baker meeting with the Amir and the Crown Prince that I had mentioned earlier, Baker said, "Look, the extent to which my President can come to your aid when there's a security threat depends a great deal on your dealing with the democracy and human rights issues, because he can't act without both congressional and public support, which you won't have if you don't implement the commitments you made in these two areas." I would have to remind them that these things were important to them because of our security relationship.

*Q: Where in our eyes was Kuwait failing on the human rights issue before the war?*

GNEHM: Well, the world focus on this issue came particularly from Human Rights Watch and other global non-governmental organizations that focus on human rights. They were very attentive to accusations that they heard from people who came to them. Allegations also came from the Palestinian community that remained in Kuwait during the occupation. Reportedly, there was abuse by some Kuwaitis who thought the Palestinians in Kuwait had sided with Saddam Hussein. Arafat had announced his support for Saddam publically. Doing so, he immediately drew blame to the Palestinian community in Kuwait. To some extent, there were plenty of Palestinians in Kuwait who were happy to work with the Iraqis. The Kuwaitis never permitted them to become citizens and always kept them in a second class situation. They had a good life financially and socially in Kuwait, but they were never Kuwaitis in the eyes of Kuwaiti society. Even so, there were many Palestinians who were very pro-Kuwaiti and who had no desire to see Iraq stay. They were hurt badly by the occupation and the sanctions.

Then there were other human rights issues like the treatment of servants and maids. These persons were third country expats who were brought in to Kuwait for essentially servant work. Filipinos, Sri Lankans, and Indians were the three nationalities that I

recollect most. These were largely women brought in for domestic service, and there were abuses.

*Q: This is sort of a worldwide problem during our era. Here in the U.S., diplomats would bring Indian maids or Filipino maids and not pay them or mistreat them.*

GNEHM: We've had a couple of recent incidents in New York that have been quite ugly. That's quite right. This particular problem is not just a Kuwaiti-specific issue. But in the context of our public commitment to Kuwait, these issues were naturally going to be closely observed by American groups who view these issues as important. And they are important.

So that's essentially where that issue was. –

By now the oil fires were out. During this period the oilfields come back into production. Revenue began to flow into the treasury but in smaller amounts than it had been before. There was also the issue of a Voice of America agreement on the list of priorities. I'd been working for some time on this request to the Kuwaitis to allow a Voice of America transmitter in Kuwait. The transmitter was simply a relay station. This facility would rebroadcast programs produced elsewhere, for example either in Europe or in Washington, to the nearby region. The situations inside Iran and Iraq were primary targets.

As I said, negotiations had been going on for some time. Decision making within the Kuwait government wasn't easy then and it still isn't easy now. Those of us who have lived in the Middle East and know the culture of that part of the world have learned it has its own clock. Things move at their own pace. You can try to hurry things up, but you may well get yourself into more trouble trying to hurry it up than just accepting it as it is. I didn't have that luxury with Washington on my back. Another issue of interest to Washington was the land for the embassy and the money from the government of Kuwait to build the chancellery. I think I mentioned earlier the Amir had given us a great parcel of land. The question was how much money would they give us and when? Those are the issues that I was looking at when we started 1992.

*Q: One further question before moving on. Was there a concern that Kuwaiti oil had been out of circulation so long that the consumers of Kuwaiti oil had found other sources and they were losing customers? Or was oil so needed in the world that this wasn't a problem?*

GNEHM: I don't recall there being any major concern about Kuwaiti oil coming back on the market. Certainly in the period we're talking about, remember that Iraqi oil was not on the market. It was several years before the UN agreed to permit to sell oil in any quantity. At this point I would like to mention some of the individuals that I've been dealing with, and then when I talk about them, there'll be some background. The Amir, of course, was the most important figure. He had been Prime Minister for quite some time when he was the Crown Prince. The two positions were linked. He said to me at one

point, “Our tradition has been that the Crown Prince runs the government and I’m the Amir. My predecessor as Amir did not interfere day-to-day in the government’s business and I don’t interfere day-to-day with Sheikh Sa’ad, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.” That didn’t mean that they didn’t meet on a regular basis and that the Amir was aware of all that was going on, because he was. Just to remind you that the invasion and his exile had been devastating personally to him., He had been *crushed* that Saddam Hussein would have been as two-faced as he was. The Amir had been in Baghdad the year before and received the highest award that the Iraqi government could confer on a foreign person. It was conferred with great publicity and national coverage. He took the invasion personally and had been greatly depressed by it. By 1992, he had largely recovered from that. Still, he was not actively about town and around. He was far more a recluse than you might imagine, certainly in contrast the present Amir, Amir Sabah, but Sheikh Jaber was someone that I saw and spoke with on an ongoing basis when I needed to.

*Q: Was he a popular person? How did the populous feel towards him as far as you could gather?*

GNEHM: Overall the population simply saw him as the father figure, the Amir, and had great respect for him in that capacity. There was certainly a segment of the population that held him responsible for the defeat and the occupation. That sentiment was only expressed in private, not public. I think that the explanation for his public support and the reason there wasn’t broad opposition to the Sabah family after liberation was twofold. Foremost, the al-Sabah are Kuwait especially in the face of Saddam’s efforts to declare Kuwait’s demise. Secondly, there was the continued threat from Iraq and the need for national unity. Any internal dissention, any diminution of the authority of the Amir, the respect for the family, was too much of a risk, even if some people harbored some criticism in private.

*Q: The war at that point didn’t end the threat from Iraq.*

GNEHM: Not at all. The Kuwaitis were paranoid about it, and I think they had a right to be paranoid about it. I mentioned in my prelude that the Iraqis did sign a ceasefire agreement of sorts at Safwan north of the border that ended hostilities. The Iraqis were subjected to UN Security Council Resolution 687 that set forth all the obligations that they had to undertake for there to be a peace agreement. These included destruction of their weapons of mass destruction, nuclear program, chemical weapons, and biological weapons. Additionally, they had to return all the stolen Kuwaiti property, account for the missing Kuwaitis, accept a demarcated border, and a number of other things.

The public response by the Iraqi government was basically to reject the resolution and its obligations. They acquiesced to the deployment of UNSCOM, the inspection unit. They attended a meeting of the UN border commission, the UN commission that was to demarcate the border. However, they rejected all of the Kuwaiti border claims. In fact, they maintained the claim there was no border because they considered Kuwait still part of Iraq. They reiterated that position in UN committees and circles. Then they moved

troops! Remember, in the fall of '91 there was actually Iraqi troop movement toward Kuwait. We reassured the Kuwaitis that we were absolutely resolved to hold Iraq to all the obligations in UNSCR 687 and that the Iraqis would not get away with anything at the UN. We had the votes at the UN to insure that.

When the Iraqis continued to threaten Kuwait and repeatedly claimed that Kuwait was part of Iraq, there was discussion within the United States government and between the President and British Prime Minister Major about actions that the U.S. and the coalition might take. One of the options, which we ultimately did, was to create a zone in the southern part of Iraq in which we would not permit Iraqi planes to fly, a no-fly zone as it was called. We didn't implement it at this point, but we were talking about it. We shared that thought with the Kuwaitis, who expressed concern that actions, like this, might actually instigate Iraqi retaliation. What they most feared was that the Iraqis would respond by firing SCUDs into Kuwait City. This led the Kuwaitis to ask the United States to deploy Patriot air defense systems, which occurred in the fall. The decision to deploy Patriots was not without hot debate within the USG. The US had also made a commitment to deploy Patriot missiles to Saudi Arabia for their defense. We did not have a large number of Patriot batteries available and the closest available unit was in Germany for what had been a Soviet threat. Even though that threat was gone, they were still part of NATO and part of that U.S. commitment to Europe.

There was a breakfast meeting between Baker, secretary of state, Cheney, secretary of defense, and Scowcroft, National Security Advisor. They ordered the Pentagon to deploy the Patriot system to Kuwait. That decision came after the Crown Prince, frustrated at the long number of months with no answer to this request expressed frustration that we liberated the country only to leave them without the Patriot system's protection. In any case, Powell was dead opposed to it. He was opposed to a broad commitment of U.S. staying in Kuwait anyway. In the end it was finally resolved because Cheney decided to back the military and not agree to move a system out of Germany. We went to the Saudis and asked them if we could deploy one battery as an exercise, not a permanent stationing. Even that didn't happen until May. That's a very good example of the ongoing debate within the U.S. government about our commitment to Kuwait.

Returning to the important persons with whom I worked, I began with the Amir, By far the most important person that I dealt with on a regular basis was the Crown Prince-Prime Minister, Sheikh Sa'ad Abdullah al-Sabah. He was the senior official running the government. The Council of Ministers reported to him, and he was my principal interlocutor on all the issues that I have mentioned thus far.

*Q: How old was he and how old was the Emir?*

GNEHM: I think the Amir was in his late '70s, and the Crown Prince was not much younger. I've already spoken much about the Crown Prince. Both in Ta'if and in the immediate aftermath of liberation, I worked very closely with him and admired him greatly. He was a good person. He had a big heart. While he wasn't actively out and about around town on a constant basis, he did go out. He was accessible. He visited diwanias

from time to time. He also maintained a very open majlis, a very open diwaniya himself that people went to frequently. He was really the one that people went to most often with petitions.

*Q: You might explain what a majlis is.*

GNEHM: A majlis is an open gathering in which a patriarch of the family or in this case a government official holds an open house. People throughout the community – citizens and non-citizens -- can come freely. They don't need an invitation. They can approach the person, in this case the Crown Prince-Prime Minister with petitions, or to tell him that they're unhappy with something, or to urge him to take a particular action. Some may attend simply to share something about their own family that was good that they wanted him to know about. It is a way in the society for people to have access to their leaders. The Crown Prince certainly maintained this kind of majlis. He always had people coming to him with different points of view and suggestions about what he should do.

Sheikh Sa'ad was often slow to make decisions. He tended to put them off. He would cogitate long periods of time about them.

An important part of my responsibilities as the American Ambassador was to try to get the decisions that I felt needed to be made for the good of both the Kuwaiti and the U.S. governments. Such efforts can of course be delicate. I was very circumspect when doing this. I did not approach an official, like Sheikh Sa'ad, in front of people but in private. Yet people were aware of my access him and other senior officials. In Ta'if and to this very day when I go to Kuwait, Kuwaitis will tell me, "Oh Skip, you need to talk to the Amir about that, because he'll listen to you" or "He likes you very much. He will do what you want him to do." Of course, it wasn't true that officials always agreed to do what I wanted. I greatly valued my personal relationships and was careful not to abuse the access. This was particularly true with Sheikh Sa'ad.

These comments from Kuwaitis were an acknowledgement that my relationship with officials was good and strong, however, it was also a way for Kuwaitis to avoid raising issues themselves. If they weren't asking an official for something directly, then they avoided an obligation to that official. It also was a way to avoid having their request rejected directly.

The third person of importance during this period was the Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber al-Sabah. Sheikh Sabah had served as Kuwait's Foreign Minister since independence in 1962. Thus, he was a key figure in all matters concerning Kuwait's relationships globally. During the occupation period he travelled extensively throughout the world building support for Kuwait's liberation. His years of experience were invaluable to Kuwait during those dark days.

After liberation he continued to serve as Foreign Minister with the exception of one year. Sheikh Sabah was my primary interlocutor in negotiating several bilateral agreements,

including the all-important military agreement, He was an extremely important figure within the Sabah family and close to Sheikh Jaber.

Another key official was Sheikh Salem Salem al-Sabah who was Minister of Interior during the period of occupation and later served one year as Foreign Minister. During his tenure as Foreign Minister, he was also First Deputy Prime Minister. There was a government shuffle in the fall of '91. Accompanying that change of government was a family feud. Feud may be a strong word, but it was a very emotional time. There were differences, reflecting competition, between the previous Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Ahmad Jaber Al-Sabah and Sheikh Salem. There was also some problem between Sheikh Sabah and the Crown Prince-Prime Minister. In the end when Sheikh Sabah confronted the Crown Prince over what role Sheikh Salem would have in the new government, the Crown Prince actually sided with Sheikh Salem.

Because of this, Sheikh Sabah left the country. Then the Prime Minister appointed Sheikh Salem from his branch of the family as Foreign Minister, and he gave him the title of Deputy Prime Minister, which elevated him in the hierarchy. That tended to be the nomenclature for the number three position both in the government and in the family. In other words, the Deputy Prime Minister was the next rank within the hierarchy after the Emir and the Crown Prince-Prime Minister. This was the title and position that Sheikh Sabah had held previously. Sheikh Sabah was livid, furious. He left the country and began to work with some of the democrats and other opposition figures to undercut the Prime Minister and Sheikh Salem.

Sheikh Salem was only in this position of Deputy Prime Minister-Foreign Minister for one year before there was another change of government and Sheikh Sabah returned as Foreign Minister. Several years later, Sheikh Sabah became Prime Minister as a result of Sheikh Sa'ad's medical condition.

I mention this family division as it impacted on my relationships and complicated my efforts. Sheikh Salem was "fighting for his political life," in the words of Sheikh Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington. Sheikh Salem was being undercut by the previous Foreign Minister as he was trying to prove himself in a new position within the government. In my observation he seemed rather insecure. We had our differences. One of them I mentioned earlier, which came from intercepts of him talking to his Interior people inside Kuwait during the occupation about his concerns that the resistance might be resistance not just to the Iraqi occupation but to the Sabah family itself. As Minister of Interior, he was a strong arm tactic man when it came to using arrest, detentions, blocking meetings, and moves against the Shia population. We had some difficult times dealing with each other. Again, I was respectful, but he resented my ability to go directly to the Crown Prince-Prime Minister and to the Amir.

The other person just worth mentioning rather briefly is actually his brother, Sheikh Ali Salem Salem al-Sabah, who became Minister of Defense in this government. He was very capable and had close ties with the tribal elements in Kuwait. If you want to talk about someone who got out and about, it was Sheikh Ali. Sheikh Ali would go to the

diwanias of tribal groups or families quite regularly. He was very popular. He invited me to accompany him several times. He'd say, "Come on, go with me tonight. Let's go see some of these people." I went with him, and he was marvelous to watch. The way he could correct the misunderstandings that he heard from the tribes without offending them while making them feel good about their remarks. He was quite impressive. He was the principal counterpart, of course, to our Secretary of Defense and was involved in all the negotiations about our military relationship. That concludes my reflections on personalities that were my closest interlocutors during my time as ambassador. There were others whose relationship I valued immensely. I have mentioned some already and will mention others later.

Getting into the U.S.-Kuwaiti military relationship, we started off the year with the arrival of Brigadier General James Knowles from his assignment elsewhere with the army to head up a defense review group. That group was to look at Kuwait's military establishment and do a broad sweep evaluation leading to recommendations on force structure, organization, communication needs, and weapon needs. The objective was a plan to create a viable, professional military. I mentioned earlier that there had been considerable opposition to a review group, particularly from Carl Ford who was the DASD for the Middle East in OSD, Office of Secretary of Defense. This opposition stemmed primarily from the negative fallout from the DRG in Saudi Arabia. And I remember that well.

*Q: What were some of the issues with the defense review group in Saudi Arabia?*

GNEHM: The final DRG plan for Saudi Arabia included recommendations for significant arms sales to the Kingdom. Unfortunately, the civilian side of the USG in Washington at the Department of Defense, the State Department, and the White House did not pay a lot of attention to the defense review process. So it was led by the uniform military. Army, Air Force, and Navy officials looked at the Saudi air force, army, and navy and recommended weapons systems that they believed Saudi Arabia needed to have for an effective military force. The Saudis then wanted to buy these weapons. That immediately led to massive opposition from Israel and the pro-Israel lobby over this *huge* development of Saudi military capability that included fighter jets, battle tanks and other advanced weapons systems. By the time the review became public and the civilians realized what they had on their hands it was too late to pull back. The Saudi view was that if the proposed military items were essential to Saudi security and endorsed by the US military, the sales should go forward even in the face of Israeli opposition. You can see the dilemma for Washington.

In view of the reaction to the Saudi DRG, there was considerable hesitation to risk being caught in such a politically unpopular situation again. I ended up having strong support from the then CINC of CENTCOM, a position now called "regional combatant commander." As I wrote in cables at the time, Kuwait was different. There wouldn't have been the concerns from Israel over weapons sales to Kuwait as there had been to sales to Saudi Arabia. The size of the sales to the Kuwaiti military was going to be a whole quotient different from what we were talking about with Saudi Arabia, which has a

border close to Israel in the Gulf of Aqaba. It's quite different when a country is about 1,500 miles from the Gulf of Aqaba. Eventually, that argument prevailed.

Even more important was a political decision by the White House, by the President himself, that we had an obligation to Kuwait. General Knowles and his staff ultimately produced a good report. The British had undertaken a similar study; but the Kuwaitis agreed with General Noles that the UK defense plan was a bit grandiose for small Kuwait. Sheikh Ali, the Minister of Defense, made it very clear, when he saw what we had proposed, that our plan was the one they were going to go with. They thought it was well done and wanted to move ahead. I had been trying very hard to get the Kuwaiti government to sign base contracts for reconstruction of the Jaber and Salem Air Bases, which were air bases that we planned to use if we ever needed to. We were planning to relocate from northern part of the country, and they had dragged their feet all the way through the process. They finally signed the contracts in January, which at least moved the airbase reconstruction process forward.

I was still trying to get a signature on the contract for F-18 parts. They have F-18s, but they needed spare parts and maintenance support that required a new LOA. I called Sheikh Ali. He was as frustrated as he could be. He asked if I could write a strong letter to him that he could then share with the Crown Prince to try to prod a decision out of the Council of Ministers.

Right in the middle of all this, an issue that you asked me about earlier came up yet again---the testimony of one witness before a committee of the House of Foreign Affairs Committee chaired by Congressman Lantos. Witnesses were given anonymity. One spoke about seeing terrible atrocities in Kuwait. I forget exactly what precipitated it, but there was an article in some media, I believe, that questioned the veracity of this witness. This accusation created a big stew when it came out that Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington, was her father.

When I was discussing the principal Kuwaitis I dealt with, I made a gross mistake by not including Ambassador Saud Nasser al Sabah. He was a very active and involved player in the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship. He was very close to Sheikh Sa'ad, the Crown Prince-Prime Minister. He had direct and immediate access so he could call and talk to him whenever that was necessary. He was well respected in Washington for all that he did in supporting us and working with us during the occupation and liberation period. He was someone I could call and I often did. I think our closeness was unique in terms of ambassador-to-ambassador relationships. There can be competition between the American ambassador in a foreign country and that country's ambassador to the US. The relationship between the Saudi ambassador in Washington, Prince Bandar, and our ambassador in Saudi Arabia is a good example of how difficult those relationships can be. However, in our particular case Saud would call on me, confide in me what he'd done, tell me he weighed in on behalf of the things we were trying to get, and give me counsel when he thought I needed to back off. Our very close relationship helped both of us in each of our capitals.

Saud Nasser hired Julius Kroll, an investigator, to go to Kuwait to help investigate the deaths under the Iraqis and to try to come up with a professional, unbiased report that would vindicate what his daughter had said. Within the U.S. government, the intelligence community's view was that the Ambassador and Hill & Knowlton, a public relations firm that the Kuwaiti Government had hired during the occupation period, had concocted this story and that while there were plenty of atrocities in Kuwait, there was no evidence of Iraqis dumping babies out of incubators onto the floor.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: We were saying publicly that we had no confirmation of this allegation, but we certainly knew about many Iraqi atrocities. In fact, the morgues in Kuwait were full of the bodies of their victims. Washington did not want our credibility to get tied up in this story with the daughter.

1992 was an election year, and Congressman Lantos had an opponent who was attacking him for allowing witnesses to appear at his hearing without giving their names or using false names. In fact witnesses were hooded so that they couldn't be seen. I called Larry Eagleburger, the Deputy Secretary of State. I told him that I thought the attacks on Lantos were in some ways false, and that I really wanted to help him in this regard. I didn't want to get involved in politics without someone like him knowing about it. (You notice I did not call my Assistant Secretary, John Kelly.)

Larry Eagleburger said, "Well, let me think about it and I'll get back to you." His chief of staff, Bill Montgomery, called me back a little bit later and said, "I've talked with Larry. Larry would actually like to help out Lantos, but we certainly want to be careful. If you believe what you're saying specifically on the point that Lantos was right to allow witnesses to testify without giving their names and incognito, because the Iraqis were still present in Kuwait and could identify witnesses and retaliate against relatives or families of these people in Kuwait and you still want to write Lantos along those lines you should do it." I did write a letter to Lantos.

*Q: Could you tell me a little about Lantos's background?*

GNEHM: Lantos was a longtime member of the House of Representatives. He was a very senior member, a Democrat, and a Holocaust survivor, which clearly identifies him as Jewish. He was very supportive of Israel. Therefore, he was a staunch opponent of any actions the U.S. government would take in the Middle East that would in any way undermine Israel or its security. He also was knowledgeable of other things that were going on in the region, and he was a strong supporter of Bush's actions to liberate Kuwait.

His view of the Iraqi aggression led him to hold these hearings to highlight the atrocities. I should have noted earlier that Lantos was ardent crusader for human rights. This focus came from his own suffering and that of his family and his coreligionists. To repeat, he was a very active proponent of human rights issues. It was knowing his motives for

holding his hearings that led to my view that this particular criticism was unfair, so I said, I wanted to reach out to help him. I thought a letter addressed to him with my opinion, as the US Ambassador to Kuwait, that his actions were entirely appropriate given the circumstances was a reasonable way to do this. I wrote the letter, and the letter became public, as I expected it would. As a result, this issue was no longer a significant issue.

I have mentioned the Kuwaiti money for the new embassy. I had a colorful exchange with the then Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem, which gives you a flavor of his personality and our relationship! I asked him, "What's the status of the money for the embassy construction today?" He had already told me that there would be no money. They didn't have the money and that was that! So, he asked me, "Did you report what I told you?" I said, "No, I didn't report what you told me." I wasn't about to tell Washington that I'd just been told there wouldn't be any money, particularly when it came from him. Then came his punch line: "Then I've lost my bet with the Crown Prince. He said you wouldn't report that." We both laughed, and then he told me that he and the Crown Prince had met with the Amir, and he could now tell me that they would be providing 40 million dollars.

I told him, "That's very generous, but that's not enough. We need 70 million. That's what we had asked for and that's what we need you to do." He responded, "We can't afford it now. Maybe they'll be more later." I said, "In due respect. That's not entirely helpful. 40 million is a start, but we can't sign a contract to build an embassy that's going to cost 70 million when we only have 40 and don't know when we're going to get the other 30." He basically said, "Just take it now. You will get more later, but I can't promise you that now."

I appealed to Sheikh Saud Nasser in Washington, to help me with this issue. He had talked with the Crown Prince on the phone after my meeting with Sheikh Salem, "Skip, take the 40 million; Sheikh Salem is right. The Crown Prince really went to bat for you on this. There will be more later, I'm sure of it. Just accept it."

Then the State Department, had their own little fight between the A Bureau and the Foreign Buildings Office. One thought 40 million was OK, and the other one said it's not enough. Some said we could go ahead with a contract that includes clauses that will protect us. Others disagreed. In the end, they asked me if I could get an immediate transfer of five million, which would cover the cost of the preliminary plans and the sight survey. Then Washington wanted me to get the remaining 35 by a certain deadline. Ultimately the Kuwaitis told me politely but firmly to leave it at 40 million for the time being.

I said, "OK." But that didn't stop me, to be very honest. Whenever the subject came up with anybody, I would say, "Yes, we got 40; but we had *originally* asked for 70." I never let them forget that that's where we started. In any case, there was progress, we did get to move forward with the 40 million.

*Q: Did you have problems with the State Department with the planning for the embassy?*

GNEHM: Well, sort of yes and no. In the end, the bottom line the answer is no. In the process of working through where we would be located, meaning the land, and what kind of embassy we would have, there were differences between us in Kuwait and people in the Department. We were not able to get land in the inner-city. We were asking for such a large pieces of land for security setback that it was just impossible to get that size of land inside the first or second-ring road. We ended up out at the fifth-ring road, a long way away from the city center. It happened to be in the vicinity of Bayan, which was a group of six palaces and conference halls that was built for the GCC Summit and now being used by the Amir and other senior officials as their primary offices. Because the Iraqi Military used these palaces for their generals and their senior ranking officers, it wasn't destroyed. In fact, the Amir and the Crown Prince initially took up residence there while they rebuilt their palaces. So in the end, we weren't far from the government, but most other ministries were all downtown. Another issue related to security. Specifically, was the embassy complex itself going to be a 'fortified' facility, a walled embassy?

*Q: I was picturing it as Fort Zinderneuf from "Beau Geste," the movie. In other words, that it would be a fortress with big walls and turrets.*

GNEHM: It does have big walls and sits way back from the adjacent streets. It looks something like a desert fortress. They didn't want to build a tall building because the blast could come over the wall. So all the buildings in the compound are just two levels. The Washington view was that the chancellery, the ambassador's residence, the recreation facilities, the warehouses, and some staff housing would all be in this compound. Part of the reason certain elements of the department argued, "Just go ahead and start construction with the \$40million" was that construction could begin with just the chancellery. Other buildings could be built later when additional money was forthcoming from Kuwait.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: I was able to break ground for that embassy in the spring of 1994. So it took us two years to get through the design phase and the contracting process. The embassy complex, of course, is long since completed and it's actually quite a very nice facility.

*Q: From my professional perspective, building the Consular Section was always a problem. Sometimes planners want to put the Consular Section somewhere else, and keep the visa applicants and consular officials away from the other officers. Was the Consular Section built alongside the rest of the embassy facilities?*

GNEHM: Yes, it was and is. The way the building was designed, there are essentially two wings that come out from the main building to form a U. The door of the chancellery is in the bottom of the U, and the left-hand wing is the Consular Section.

*Q: You keep it separate because it is open to the public?*

GNEHM: Right, and it has its own entrance for people. Visitors don't enter through the main embassy; they go to a consular entrance.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: There was also the issue of accessibility. How would Kuwaiti guests come to my house if I were the ambassador? Obviously, Washington wanted to put the residence inside the compound. I finally got them to agree that there would be an entrance on the wall nearest the residence faces and there would be parking separate from the main entrance for guests at events.

*Q: As we built all of these facilities, the center of town ended up moving to where we were, not necessarily because we were there, but because of the numbers of people flocking into the city.*

GNEHM: No question. That's exactly what's happened in Kuwait. Now the city extends way out past the sixth, seventh, and I think even the eighth ring road. The city continues to grow out into the desert areas. In Jordan, where I bought land on a hillside past where there were any roads, it was just stones on a hillside and no building of any sort. The only edifice was a Bedouin tent where a man tended his goats, sheep, and tomato plants that were growing interspersed with the rocks. That was all that was there. Now, the Abdoun region is the most expensive in Amman, -- the Beverly Hills of Amman, Jordan. Amman now goes for miles past the Abdoun area.

The Kuwaiti government lifted press censorship in January, which was a good development. I was still arguing with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the residence permits and visas for the FSNs that I had brought back to Kuwait when we re-staffed the embassy. There was another little brouhaha worth mentioning. The United States was still looking for all the ways that we could hold Iraq's feet to the fire at the UN. Part of UN Security Council Resolution 687 dealt with the group of missing Kuwaiti detainees. We relied on the Kuwaitis to produce a list of names of the people who disappeared and had not returned.

The Kuwaitis did not follow a very systematic process. Washington concluded that the list that the Kuwaiti Government produced was not reliable. We would be embarrassed if we made a big issue of it, only to have the Iraqis show us that a number were still alive and had gone home or were in Iraq and didn't want to come home. I was under pressure to get a good list. Again, I was dealing with Sheikh Salem at the Foreign Ministry to get a more accurate list. This went on for quite a while until they finally came up with a creditable list. It was over a thousand to start with, but came down to a little over 700 by the time they had a list that we were willing to use in applying pressure on Iraq

Sheikh Salem went to Washington in January of 1992 and met with Ed Djerejian, who was at this time Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs. They discussed security arrangements. While I was very critical about the way the U.S. government was approaching the security arrangements, we were getting some dissimulation from the Kuwaitis as well. Sheikh Salem talked about Egyptian and Syrian forces that were to stay

on the border and said that Sheikh Ali, the Minister of Defense, had talked to both of them. He went on to praise Sultan Qaboos's design for a stronger GCC force but didn't respond to the direct question about what the Kuwaitis were going to do. Kuwait needed to do something or these plans were going to fall apart. The truth of it was that long before this point the Kuwaitis and the Saudis had already concluded they didn't want Egyptian and Syrian forces. Yet, Sheikh Salem raised this as if it were something that was still under active consideration, which Ed knew wasn't true. Sultan Qaboos had already presented his design for the GCC force, and we already knew from other sources that the small Arab Gulf states were not prepared to move ahead with such a force that was going to be dominated by the Saudis.

Sheikh Salem was pressed on the missing detainee list, and he said he would soon have a refined list. Ed told me that in his opinion Sheikh Salem pontificated throughout the meeting. Regarding the International Committee for the Red Cross, that had responsibility for dealing with the Iraqis and the Kuwaitis over the missing, Sheikh Salem blamed them for not taking action. As Ed said, "If you can't come up with a list of the people you're really looking for, there's not a lot the ICRC can do."

*Q: While you're talking about the problem, I want to bring up Iraq's very real presence in the area and how we planned to deal with it. Was there any real talk about going back again and continuing the war?*

GNEHM: The answer is yes, at least at one point. The president actually said, "If I have to, I will do anything necessary" either to defend Kuwait or contain Iraqi, including force.

*Q: Which president is this?*

GNEHM: George H. W. Bush. Again, this was in '92. I'm sure there was no big desire to have to do this.

*Q: It's still an option that has not been completely disregarded.*

GNEHM: Right. At this time, there were also discussions about the Patriot missile system. I was in Washington and had a meeting with General Hoar and General Powell in the afternoon. At this meeting Bruce Riedel from the National Security Council told me that the President had called British Prime Minister Major over the ongoing Iraqi challenge and told him the U.S. was ready to use force. The President told Major that and Major was on board, if we have to. We told the Kuwaitis about the conversation, but nevertheless, they continued to feel vulnerable.

The Kuwaitis didn't yet have from us a commitment of troops.

*Q: No.*

GNEHM: Washington was waffling on the question of the Patriot missile defense system, which as the Crown Prince correctly said was the only defense system in the world against Scuds, the one thing that Saddam could actually use.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: The Crown Prince felt very strongly about Patriots. "How would I explain to my own people that the U.S. was refusing to deploy Patriots to protect the capital? How do I explain that Kuwait will have a defense cooperation agreement with the U.S. but we won't send the one weapons system that you've got to defend Kuwait?" The White House was sympathetic and just furious at the military and the Joint Chiefs of Staff for their opposition to this deployment.

Around January 28, I called Fred Smith who was in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I had worked with him when I was at Defense. Fred told me that Carl Ford was trying to work around the president's policy. Carl Ford didn't want to have any forces in Kuwait and he was undercutting us. I later heard the same perspective from General Hoar. Carl Ford was really a problem. He was the one figure who was a real problem within the U.S. government, in addition to General Powell. He did not want major arms sales to Kuwait arguing that it would make the states in the region independent. It was a counterintuitive argument.

Back on the issue of money to cover the military LOAs, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February the Director General of the Foreign Ministry, Suleiman al-Shaheen, told me that the Crown Prince did have the money, did have the commitment from them and that I shouldn't worry about Sheikh Salem. Then there was an interesting development on issue of the radio and the VOA transmitter. There was actually strong sentiment in Washington to shift the funding for the VOA transmitter from Israel - where it was planned to be built - to Kuwait, because Kuwait geographically was much better located for the audiences that VOA wanted the transmitter to cover. What were they? Iran, Iraq, and the new republics of southern Central Asia. So, building it in Kuwait was much better for technical reasons.

*Q: It's closer. Did you see at the time that putting the Voice of America would open a possible objection from the Kuwaitis to the contents of broadcast, even if it's just a relay station?*

GNEHM: Yes. I took extensive notes about the negotiations. VOA sent its own negotiating team. They had circular 175 authority, which an agency is required by law to have to negotiate an agreement. I think it's actually a standing authority for this sort of facility. They did have the lead in the negotiations, but when the negotiating team wasn't there, I was the interlocutor. I had to get them what they wanted and what the Kuwaitis wanted. The issues that came to the fore were precisely the ones you just asked about.

We were determined that the Kuwaitis would have no say over content. We argued that this was just a relay station and was not producing programs. The content was not coming from Kuwait, but from Washington or New York. The Kuwaiti response to that was if

one of their neighbors, especially Iran, did not like the content, they're not going to say the program came from Washington. They are going to say it came from a transmitter just north of Kuwait City. In the end, they agreed that the content was for us to decide. There was an issue over the length of time. We wanted 20-year agreement, partly due to financial investment and partly because you want to have some longevity. They countered with five. We ended up with at least ten.

There were also issues over the tax exempt status of the station, whether our employees would be considered as if they were on the diplomatic list, and so on. The Kuwaitis came back to us and said, "We want reciprocity. We're willing to give you all of that, but should we ever have the idea to have a similar facility in the United States, we want to have similar guarantees."

We said, "We can't do that. We can't do that because we have so many state laws. The only way the federal government can extend those kinds of tax benefits to a foreign government is by a treaty that requires ratification by the Senate. A treaty is the only way to supersede state laws." I explained that we were not going to negotiate a formal treaty.

They requested reciprocity to save face in case anyone in Kuwait asked the Kuwaiti negotiating team why they gave away all these things. In the end, they had to accept that we could not grant what they were requested. We agonized over this point for a long time.

On the agency transmitter, the Crown Prince had misunderstood what it was we were asking. He involved the Minister of Information, since it was a transmitter. He didn't fully understand that this was a CIA operation, and clandestine. The issue was left hanging half open-half closed, and in the end it was only finished when the President himself wrote the Amir a letter.

*Q: Were we planning to use Kuwait as a site for listening to broadcasts in Iran or close by?*

GNEHM: Actually, we were not, at least not at this time. For VOA it made enormous sense from a technical and geographic point of view. Ultimately the Amir did respond to the president's letter saying that he would instruct his government to agree to our request.

The government was moving ahead with elections. I had a meeting with the Minister of Interior on the third of February, 1992, and he sketched out the timetable. He said that registration for elections would be in February. March to April 15<sup>th</sup> would be a challenge period. People could challenge someone's eligibility to vote, for example, on the grounds that the candidate was not a citizen or was a convicted criminal. The voter lists would be posted from April 15<sup>th</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup>. The Minister noted that nothing happens in the summer; therefore, campaigning would take place in September and elections in October. It was a long process. Remember, I mentioned earlier that one of the big problems was that they needed to update the voter registration list. There had been no elections since

before the invasion. Many people would have come of age and be eligible to vote. They had to register. Their eligibility could be challenged.

*Q: Were women included?*

GNEHM: Well, that's a very interesting question. I asked that question at the time, and he actually responded to it. He said that that would have to be a decision of the National Council, which stood in for the Parliament. He doubted very much there would be any willingness to increase the voting list. He said 80% would be against expansion because they lose power if there are more voters. In other words, people who can vote are not going to agree to an expansion of the voting list. The voter list at this time excluded women and second-class citizens. The Bidoon were also excluded. "Bidoon" in Arabic means "without." This nomenclature refers to people who live in Kuwait but who the government does not recognize as Kuwaiti citizens. They are, therefore, ineligible to register to vote.

So, people could register to vote in February. Challenges follow in March and April. A voting list is posted from April 15 to June 15. Campaigning begins in September. I moved ahead at this point in time to set up an election task force within the embassy, which I'll discuss further when we get to the election period.

In February, I went to Riyadh and Bruce Riedel called me. "The baby story's back in the news. 60 minutes highlighted a letter attacking the press for not identifying witness." So it's still alive; it hasn't gone away.

*Q: So babies being thrown out of --*

GNEHM: Babies being thrown out of incubators, right. Barbara Leaf was my desk officer. She is a fantastic officer and has just been confirmed as ambassador to the UAE (United Arab Emirates). The same day Bruce Riedel informed me of this development, she called and said there would be a Deputies Committee Meeting on the VOA relay today, and the VOA wanted to go ahead with the relay station in Israel and just dump the Kuwait option because it was taking too long. I said, "No, we're in the middle of this. We can't just walk away." Eventually, I got this back on track; but this sudden reversal by VOA is a good example of how events in Washington can suddenly impact on you in the field.

I had a very interesting visit by Richard Shifter, the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights. Richard is a remarkably nice and balanced person. He came to Kuwait and had really good meetings with Kuwaiti officials about allegations of human rights abuses in the country. He went back to Washington with far more understanding of the situation in Kuwait, especially the feelings of Kuwaitis after the invasion and liberation, and the steps the Kuwaitis were taking to address their problems.

*Q: I would have thought one of the dynamics would have been the Kuwaitis disillusionment with the Palestinian cause. This must have made them a certain bit grata with the Israelis and the Israeli lobby in the States. Did that translate that way?*

GNEHM: It is true that prior to Arafat's support of Saddam Hussein's invasion the Kuwaiti government was very pro-Palestinian. In non-aligned conferences and meetings of Islamic organizations, Kuwait was usually quite vocal in supporting harsh resolutions against Israel. All I can tell you is that the one issue that we did press the Kuwaitis on from 1992 to '93 was the Arab boycott of Israel. They did alter their boycott rules. That was partly because there was new U.S. legislation that made our cooperation with any country that was boycotting Israel quite circumscribed. Restrictions could well have affected arms sales and trade. Then too, Kuwait had a very different attitude toward Palestinians after Arafat's support for Saddam's invasion. There was one prominent young sheikh in the al-Sabah family who went to Israel. He justified his visit saying, "We have common interests in Israel." On his return, he talked about his visit which was covered in the press. He was attacked by some of the nationalists in Kuwait. Even with Kuwaiti hard feelings toward the Palestinians, the ruling family wasn't prepared for this kind of overt interaction with Israel.

I had a conversation with General Hoar in early February again about the problems we were having. He said to me, "You know, we're having huge problems with the army and coming up with a strategy for Kuwait, especially over the cost of prepositioning equipment and exercises. The army is opposed to prepositioning of any ammunition, though the army in Europe is actually all for it. The strategy that now is prevalent for defending Kuwait is that we fall back to Saudi Arabia if Iraq attacks. Then we regain Kuwait in much the same way as we did last time. That's absolutely ridiculous."

I said, "Yes, that's exactly what I've been fighting against now for nine months."

General Hoar said, "I think the focus now has to be on the cost of exercises and the prepositioning. That is probably the largest problem. I need Kuwait's financial support for the prepositioning and the exercise program and the financial support needs to include paying for the transportation to get the troops there for the exercises." He was unhappy with the results of the Joint Military Commission meeting. He wanted to meet with Sheikh Ali, the Minister of Defense, to try to get things back on track. He emphasized the need to get the exercise planning underway if this was going to succeed. There was general acceptance, almost as a fallback, that while we would not have a permanent stationing of U.S. forces in Kuwait, at least at this point in time, we would have rolling exercises. The army would exercise in the desert, obviously north of Kuwait and the Iraqi border. When they finished, we would bring in the Marine Mobile Force off the ships with their equipment. They would deploy and exercise for three weeks to four weeks. So there would, in fact, be a U.S. military force in the country even though not actually assigned there. He warned that the army would not commit to a scheduling plan until there was a way to pay for it. He saw that as relatively under control because of the tacit Kuwaiti agreement that they would pay. However, he needed me to find out if the Kuwaitis understood that that also included the covering the cost of flying there, even

from the United States. He said, “This is my number one priority, but I’ll tell you right now, Chuck Ford will throw everything in the air and mess it all up if we don’t have answers to these questions.”

On February 11, David Mack, the Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA, called me to say, “The Kuwaiti detainee list is pathetic. Tell them to go back to the drawing boards. Further, you need to know that our press guidance on this whole incubator issue with the babies is to say that the embassy has been investigating this for months. We are ready to assist any of the human rights groups who need assistance out there.” Then he said to me, privately, “We’ve already told Middle East Watch that we really thought their last report was bad. It was biased and it was not at all accurate.”

I wrote a cable about this time in which I tried to put the atrocity issue into broader context pointing to an earlier observation that Iraqi actions against Kuwaitis were sufficiently atrocious to be called atrocities. I stayed away from babies in incubators, but I documented the mutilated bodies that had seen in the morgues and anecdotes from Kuwaitis about that they saw. Some buildings that we visited had pictures of torture. And then there were sites where torture was actually carried out. I got a call from Eric Boswell, and he said to me, “*Huge* flap over your cable. It was leaked by someone here in the building and given to the Hill.”

I called Jock Covey, who was still Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA. He said, “I hope it will quiet down. It was a powerful cable and I certainly hope you can stand by it. People are shooting at it. I happen to personally believe that it leaves things right where they ought to be.” Well, I don’t recall that there was any long-term flap about this, but the Amir actually thanked the President for my cable. By then it was circulating, and the Kuwaitis got copies of it from the Hill. Basically, I said that it was all being hyped and the debate was missing the points about what had happened that we could confirm, which were worth noting and documenting.

*Q: The story about the babies is more of a headline-grabbing news item.*

GNEHM: Yes, unfortunately.

One other problem that we were having with the Kuwaiti government had to do with differences in the family’s outlook toward the US, and the ability of the family to discipline one of its members. The contracting officer in the Ministry of Defense was none other than Sheikh Saud Nasser’s brother. He had a very different personality from that of Sheikh Saud Nasser. He also didn’t particularly like the way the U.S. relationship with Kuwait was developing, and he became an obstacle in getting some important contracts signed – most notably one with the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE). I appealed to Saud Nasser who threw up his arms and said, “Look, I don’t have the very best relationship with my brother.” I spoke to the Crown Prince about it, and he said he would take care of it. He never did. Perhaps it had to do with internal family issues. I just do not know in truth.

I spoke to Sheikh Ali, the Defense Minister. He said he would fix it, and we would get around this obstacle eventually. The eventually took a long time, by the way.

By the middle of February, we were still talking about the VOA transmitter. I had a visit by the President's son, Marvin Bush. He was coming as a businessman. The instructions that I got from Washington was to treat him as I would treat any other businessman. No special treatment because he was the president's son. President Bush was that way about his family. I never felt any pressure from him or the White House for favorable treatment for him and his family *or* anybody close to him politically.

In the ongoing conversations about the VOA agreement, I called Saud Nasser. He had met with Ed Djerejian just prior to Ed's upcoming trip to Kuwait. Saud Nasser wanted to make sure that Ed would raise both the VOA issue and the upcoming tender for battle tanks in his conversation with the Crown Prince. Then there was one of those unexpected flaps that seem to occur all too often. The Javits Report was a congressionally mandated report that requires the Executive Branch to notify Congress of all intended sales of military equipment for the coming year so that the Congress has advanced word. I was told that report did not include M1 tank sales for Kuwait, which they had asked for and I had expected to be included in the Congressional notification. I was furious when I learned of this omission. I called Dick Clark who was then Assistant Secretary of Political Military Affairs. He said, "Look Skip, I think the people in Washington just didn't believe that Kuwait would really agree to such large expenditures this year. We can still proceed with the sale if it's not in the report. We just have to file an exception."

I confirmed that in fact Kuwait did want to move ahead this year with the tank purchase. Then the next day I learned the Javits Report had not yet gone to Congress, so it was all resolved quite quickly.

On February 20, rumors spread throughout the city of Kuwait about a possible Iraqi attack on the anniversary of liberation, which was six days away. This happened over and over. Fear. Anxiety that the Iraqis were actually going to attack.

I had a meeting with the Crown Prince. I told him there was no eminent threat from Iraq based on our intelligence. I discussed the VOA agreement. He said he would work it right after the holidays, both Liberation and Kuwait National Day at the end of February. The Crown Prince was really upset that the U.S. was not ready to deploy the Patriots with U.S. forces, leaving Kuwait vulnerable. He spoke about Saddam Hussein's unpredictability and noted the possible use of Scuds. As he had before, he asked how he would explain to his people the U.S. refusal to deploy the only defense system available against the Scuds. And after we had a defense cooperation agreement. He asked me to ask the President to reconsider the decision. I mentioned this earlier, but this conversation happened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February. The Crown Prince said that he and the Amir deeply appreciated my report to Washington on the atrocities. "It was the truth," he said.

I met with Sheikh Nasser Mohammad, who was in Kuwait for the anniversary. He said to me, "This transmitter issue should never have been given to the Minister of Information.

It really screwed things up.” He did not understand why the Crown Prince was moving so slowly on the VOA relay. He mentioned that Kuwait would be receiving both a Kurdish delegation and a delegation from Bakr Hakim, who was an important Iraqi Shia leader in exile in Iran. (He later returned to Iraq after the 2003 invasion.)

I received the text of a bilateral investment treaty to present to the Kuwaitis, which opened another negotiation. David Mack called me about the 27th of February to say, “Well, the latest detainee list which has about a thousand names is acceptable. We think this is one we can act on.”

Jock Covey called me on February 28<sup>th</sup> to say “we are working on contingency planning for Kuwait. Again, this is the whole situation is ridiculous – the fact that we did not have an agreed contingency plan for Kuwait! He said if I heard anything on this matter through military channels, I should not write or respond, but call him. This told me that there was such sensitivity within the Executive Branch over this whole policy that it would be better not to have much in writing.

I talked with Bruce Riedel on the 29<sup>th</sup>, again at the White House. He told me that the National Security Council supported the Patriot deployment to Kuwait. The request was legitimate and yet General Powell was hard against it. In terms of Iraq, we were looking at what was going on in Iraq. They appeared to be trouble in Iraq and maybe even a revolt.

*Q: I take it Colin Powell was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and didn't appreciate the importance of Kuwait.*

GNEHM: No, it was more his thinking about the US presence in the region. Specifically regarding Kuwait, he was consistent and clear. He told me personally, when he came to Kuwait just a few days after I got there, that we were not putting a permanent military presence on the ground at all. I expressed concern about the quick withdrawal. Powell just said, “Look, I'll tell you right now, it's not going to happen.”

When I saw him in Washington on one of my trips back to DC, he agreed that my logic about Kuwaiti anxiety and the lack of response for the Patriot system was reasonable, and he favored a series of brief exercises, but remained opposed to a permanent presence. He was also dead set against prepositioning in Kuwait. With our equipment that near to the Iraqi border, Saddam could get to it before we could ever get there either to save the equipment or our personnel there to take care of it. Yes, he was very much opposed. I can only add that he always gave me the opportunity to argue my point of view and he was always clear about his.

I went over to the Amiri Diwan to give Sheikh Nasser Mohammed the letter from the President to the Amir on the Voice of America transmitter. Nasser Mohammed later became Prime Minister, but at this point he was the Minister of Court for the Amir. He said the Amir would reply quickly that all was in order. Then he gave me a curious

instruction, if I put it that way. He said, “Don’t distribute copies of this letter to anyone else. The Amir will give this letter to the people that he wants to see it.”

I mention this because I had a conversation later with Sheikh Salem who was angry that I didn’t deal with him directly. In fact, I did meet with Sheikh Salem later that morning and we covered some of the same issues that I mentioned before. He admonished me, “You need to be working through me. I am the Minister of Foreign Affairs and yet you keep going to all these other people.” On the detainees and the new Kuwait government list, he reiterated how important it was to have a good list so we could apply real pressure on Saddam Hussein. Sheikh Salem said he hoped to have yet another revised list within two or three weeks that might bring the number down to 750. The lower number was due to a decision to drop the Bedouin and those that we knew were dead. On the situation in Iraq, I told him there was some movement in the south but it was aimed at the Iranian borders, not at the Kuwaiti border. On the VOA I told him that I hoped we could finish the review today and take it to the Council of Ministers tomorrow. He said that was their goal. On this transmitter he said, “Yes, I told the Ministry of Information to close down the operation,” and I let him know what I thought about that.

He said, “All right, I’ll call them back and reverse the order, but you see, you didn’t talk to me about it and we just need more information. If you would work through the proper channels and I am the proper channel.” Then he told me that we would be getting the five million dollar transfer for design of the new office building as soon as the Minister of Finance returned.

Should we stop here?

*Q: Yes, I think we should.*

GNEHM: I’ll make my mark here, March 1.

*Q: Today is January 15, 2015 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, pick up.*

GNEHM: General Noles, who was heading our defense review group, was in Kuwait to meet with General Jabber who was then the chief of staff of the military. This was about March 1, 1992. This ongoing effort by the United States aimed to identify what the Kuwaitis needed to do to build a military force that could be used to some degree to defend the country. There had been, again, many concerns about it and problems because of previous troubles with Saudi Arabia and their defense review group. By this point in time, we were beginning to reach some conclusions. General Knowles, a good friend of mine who had worked and served with me in Yemen, was going back to Washington to present his conclusions and to get the U.S. government approval. That approval was necessary before he could formally present the recommendations of the DRG to the Kuwaitis.

*Q: A question here. How significant a threat to Kuwait did we see Iran?*

GNEHM: We were not focused very much on Iran as a threat. The focus continued to be very much on Saddam Hussein and Iraq.

*Q: Well, I guess Iran basically had been beaten down by the Iran-Iraq War.*

GNEHM: That's correct.

*Q: It wasn't a boiling threat at this point.*

GNEHM: No. The Iranian military had suffered a great deal from that war. Its equipment was, of course, American provided from prior to 1979, so it was considered antiquated at the time. It is worth noting, however, that as I sit here with you in 2015 they are still flying the same American planes. In fact, they are using them to bomb IS in Iraq. At that point in time, however, we didn't assess the Iranian military as being very capable.

The ongoing issues on the Defense Review Group (DRG) continued to be (1) getting an American commitment to Kuwait security, (2) what we were going to do, and (3) still an argument about the number of U.S. forces we would have in the country. The US was thinking of a couple of hundred military; the Kuwaitis were thinking of thousands. So there was a big discrepancy between us. Then there were the ongoing issues of the VOA facility, a transmitter for the agency. And again, I was having discussions with Sheikh Salem, the Deputy Prime Minister-Foreign Minister. He said that things were moving smoothly, that the number two, meaning the Crown Prince, was going to be meeting with the Amir to discuss these matters. Sh. Salem said he had no problems with us going ahead on the VOA, at least with some of the contract negotiations so that we could be ready to move forward when the final decisions were made.

When I was headed back to Washington, the Crown Prince called me to wish me bon voyage. I mention that only to underscore the kind of relationship I had with the Crown Prince. He was aware of what I was doing and he would often take the time for that personal communication. I greatly appreciated that and I think it goes back to the experiences that we had together both in Ta'if and in Kuwait following the liberation.

He told me that there was going to be a meeting of the ministers on the upcoming Saturday on the VOA and he hoped there would be a final answer for us next week. Just as a footnote, that didn't happen. I mean the decision just dragged on for weeks and weeks, which is something I had gotten quite used to with the Kuwaitis, but Washington never did.

So when I was in Washington, this is May 5, I had lots of meetings as is the case when you are in from the field. You need to meet with all the various agencies that you have been working with in terms of programs and visitors. That includes, among others, Commerce, Defense, and the CIA. I met with General Hoar, CENTCOM Commander, who was in Washington. I also met with General Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to talk about the issues that I know he had regarding the number of troops to remain in Kuwait and the defense strategy that we needed to develop for Kuwait.

I was at the White House speaking with Bruce Riedel, who had been my interlocutor during the war period and was still in the Near East division at the National Security Council. He reported to me that there was an effort underway to move some elements of the Patriot missiles from Saudi Arabia to Kuwait, but there was concern not to undercut our commitment to Saudi Arabia. Again, and we talked about this previously, we were concerned about recent threatening statements by Saddam and Iraqi threats in New York to cease cooperation with UNSCOM. The President was increasingly angry, irritated, frustrated, and voiced privately that he may need to use force against Saddam again --- all of which the Kuwaitis were generally aware of. It was their concern about Saddam's threats that led them to request the deployment of a Patriot missile defense system to Kuwait. They assumed Saddam would retaliate against them if the U.S. initiated military action against Iraq.

We were our dragging our feet and not making decisions that I'm now discussing and talking about. I had an interesting meeting with Paul Wolfowitz at Defense. Paul told me that he strongly believed that Kuwait was inside our defense line, meaning that our line would be at Kuwait's northern border. That goes back again to some comments that I know General Powell made, as well as others. I am referring to some in Defense who were proposing that in case of another invasion, we would have to fall back to Saudi Arabia. Then we would recover the City of Kuwait when we had forces deployed. Wolfowitz clearly opposed that thinking. He said, "We can't afford" -- he point blank said -- "We can't afford to lose Kuwait again. Politically it would be devastating." He did admit that the military did not yet have a plan on how to defend Kuwait.

Wolfowitz said that Prince Saud, the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia, had told Secretary Baker last March that the Shia in Iraq were different from the Shia in Iran. They were not a threat and they were far better than Saddam Hussein. Now, I mention that as a significant point because Paul goes on to say that they, he and others on the plane with Baker on the flight to Riyadh, had argued with him on this point. They had been unable to change his view of the Shia, which was that the Shia in Iraq were dangerous, that they were elements and instruments of Iranian power and therefore, a threat. Paul went on to say that the Saudis felt even more strongly about that now, meaning in 1992 than they did in 1991. Paul went on to say, "I have to tell you, I'm very embarrassed to admit that General Powell and the military have had much too much influence in the post-Gulf War policy. The decision to pull out so fast was wrong."

Back at State, I met with the people in the administrative bureaus on the chancery building and the 40 million dollars the Kuwaitis were going to be giving us. I got really strong support for moving ahead. They were going to proceed toward a contract with a design firm to get the process launched. They very much wanted me to get the 40 million dollars from the Kuwaitis as quickly as possible, mentioning that back in April I had promised to try to do that. I reminded the Department again that the Kuwaitis were really slow in reaching decisions but I was continuing to work the matter.

I had an important military meeting on Kuwait. This meeting covered the whole range of military issues that we had been discussing. Importantly, we had a signed defense cooperation agreement. Implementing that agreement and how we would go about it was a major point of discussion. But again, the issue became very complicated because the people representing the uniform military at the meeting simply were not on board with the same approach as the civilians, which included White House and State. Going back to my comments earlier on General Powell, his view was that we should not have forces in Kuwait --- period! On prepositioning, we had some major discussions again about that --- the lines of authority, command and control. If you did put prepositioned equipment in Kuwait, who would be in charge of it? Does that mean then that you needed a permanent presence to support that prepositioned equipment? That led the discussion back to the numbers of U.S. forces that should be there. In addition, there was concern about development of the new sites for the prepositioning. We did not really want to remain north of the city. That required the Kuwaitis to sign FMS (Foreign Military Sales) cases to both begin construction and to cover the move costs. There was still no action by the Kuwaitis in that regard. We were concerned in the meantime about promised improvements in the Doha site north of the city. The promised work to upgrade the site and to provide more facilities for the small number of Americans and contractors who were there had not begun.

Again, the Kuwaitis had simply not acted. There was a committee review about exercises for 1993, a schedule, and again the issue came up of transportation cost. Would the Kuwaitis be willing to pay for the cost of moving the troops and equipment into Kuwait for these exercises? There was also discussion of range construction. The Kuwaitis had offered us the use of the northern part of the country. That region was generally under military jurisdiction. The US military was quite excited with the prospect of using the area as a firing range. In fact, we had the M1A1, M1A2 tanks in Kuwait. The US army said that Kuwait was the only place in the entire world where they could actually fire their tanks the full range of the tanks' capability. In Germany, they said, given the population and the villages located near the military sites, they could not fire these tanks to their maximum capability in exercises. So, the tank guys were really excited about exercising in Kuwait. This highlights the mixed views of various elements of the military about a presence in Kuwait.

We talked about what the Kuwaitis might want to procure—tanks (maybe 200 plus), planes, additional 32 F-18s, helicopters, and then the entire C3, command and control system. Such a volume of sales raised the entire question of congressional notification, the congressional calendar, and, therefore, when these things might go forward. Of course, some people at the meeting expressed concern that the full range of sales had not been fully briefed to Congress and that might be a problem. Others arguing no, that after all our efforts to liberate Kuwait and the need to create some sort of force in Kuwait that could help defend it, that there would not be the same negative congressional reaction as there had been to arms sales to other Arab countries.

I would just underscore at this point how invaluable it is for an ambassador to get back to Washington periodically where one can have face-to-face conversations with the people who are engaged in the decision-making on issues you are dealing with in the field.

*Q: Were you able to come to your own conclusion of where Kuwait stood in American estimation? I mean its importance after this war, but there had too much money and it was a mixed bag.*

GNEHM: It's an interesting question. What I understood in the field and what I saw clearly in my visit to Washington in March--and again when I went home on R&R (rest and relaxation) in May and June--was that the political people (who reflected the President's views) were committed to Kuwait's security long term. They were in clear conflict with General Powell as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff representing the military that was generally opposed to long term commitments to Kuwait. They conceded that if there ever were another invasion by Iraq they would have to come and once again liberate the country, but they were resistant to commitments in the short term, meaning the repositioning and the exercising program. They were opposed to any kind of long-term station of forces. There were elements at Defense, as I mentioned to you Paul Wolfowitz and other civilians in the Pentagon, who agreed with the political people at the White House. The State Department was quite supportive of me personally and my position which was that we had an obligation, a commitment, and that having expended such an effort to liberate Kuwait that it would have been hard politically and publically to tolerate another occupation by Iraq. I think that was what was driving the President's thinking.

You will see later when I describe a particular crisis in Kuwait that the White House was *very, very* concerned about how Kuwait might affect the elections in November 1992. There was ongoing concern that issues, like the one with Nayirah, the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador, and her testifying about the incubator and babies, would again become headlines. There was similar concern about democracy in Kuwait and the pace toward elections. The press often questioned Kuwait's commitment to democracy (indirectly criticizing the President for his support for Kuwait). The press continued to claim that human rights abuses were still going on in Kuwait often citing human rights groups. I mentioned earlier that I had sent a cabled assessment on what I considered the correct description of the human rights situation. My assessment was much better than press reporting. As I mentioned earlier, the report was leaked to the Hill. Again, I think all of this was mixed up in the domestic politics, the upcoming presidential elections, and the position of the President. Because the liberation of Kuwait and the mass deployment of U.S. forces to the Middle East was the most dramatic development during the Bush administration, certainly in the international arena, our relationship with Kuwait was bound to be an issue in the campaign --- hence White House concern about developments in Kuwait.

As I told you, I got around while I was in Washington. I went to Commerce. Commerce was very praiseworthy of our efforts in support of American business. They told me that our work for companies and businesses was unprecedented and extraordinary, especially

in getting American companies into Kuwait immediately after the liberation. I met with VOA and the agency over both the VOA relay station and the transmitter.

At the White House Richard Hass and Bruce Riedel reported to me that the military was already backtracking on the agreement to exercise the patriot missiles in Kuwait. The military was saying that they wouldn't do it unless they talked to the Saudis since some of the Patriots in Saudi Arabia would be moved to Kuwait. The military believed the Saudis would object. Richard Hass told Bruce, "I want you to ask on behalf of the White House for the military plan for exercising Patriots over the next six months in Kuwait. Let's smoke them out. Let's make them either not respond and then we have them or they do respond and we get the exercise program." We discussed the situation in Iraq again. There was a sense, and I picked this up elsewhere in Washington, that there might be a revolt by the military against Saddam and maybe even a second uprising of the Shia in the south. We wanted to be ready for that to be able to respond. And again, I pointed out that if there were major developments inside Iraq, there might be a threat to Kuwait. That concern is precisely why the issue of our military presence and the Patriot deployment had such immediate relevancy.

The next day Bruce Riedel called to tell me that Paul Wolfowitz was holding up the cable on the Patriots--saying that the Saudis are in crisis and probably would never agree to a redeployment. Wolfowitz had told him that the only way to get Patriots to Kuwait was to use the Patriots that we have in Germany and that both EUCOM and Joint Chiefs of Staff were balking at doing that. (I would just remind you that at this point in time the number of Patriot missile systems in our inventory was limited. We didn't really have a large number.) So pulling them from Germany, even though the Soviet Union had collapsed, was a political statement toward our commitment to NATO and Europe. I understood that. Bruce told me that the NSC had told Paul Wolfowitz that he had the weekend to work out this problem with the Chairman, Powell.

I was back in Kuwait within the week, back on the 17<sup>th</sup>, and gave my country team a readout of my meetings in Washington. I reported that regarding the Defense Review Group my talks generally went well. The issues in Washington had to do with keeping everybody fully informed, particularly superiors. That meant the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and not creating any arms sales surprises for Congress. One concern on the US side was that if the DRG, Defense Review Group, talked about how the costs of various weapon systems, such as tanks or planes, the Kuwaitis might hold us to those prices when in fact those prices had to be negotiated subsequent to the agreement to sell.

A cable authorizing a briefing to the Defense Minister was being worked. The final draft of the Defense Review Group was going to go from General Noles to General Hoar at CENTCOM, from General Hoar to JCS and DoD, ISIA, in other words both to the Joint Chiefs on the military side, as well as to the civilian side of the Pentagon. Once they approved it, it would go to State for State's blessings, under cover of a letter from the Secretary of Defense. I made the comment both in Washington and to my team that we wanted to be a part of drafting that cover letter to make sure that it said what we wanted it to say or at least carried the points that we hoped it would make. The hope again was that

this could be delivered by the end of the month, if that was at all possible. General Hoar said he wanted to visit Kuwait, and I welcomed that visit.

Again, on the Patriot request, the hostility that I found at the White House toward JCS was palpable. They were furious at the failure of the military to support the President's position to deploy the Patriots to Kuwait. There was a breakfast just before my arrival by the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State as well as with Brent Scowcroft, the national security advisor. The decision was made then to send the Patriots, but they bowed to the military's insistence (and Powell's) that the movement was to be described as an exercise of the system in Kuwait rather than a deployment. I reported to the country team that Powell clearly was fearful of recommitting U.S. forces to the Gulf. In fact he had said to me in the meeting, "Any force is too much."

*Q: Did you come away with the impression, which I'm getting from your account, that here is General Powell, had become sort of really a folk hero in the United States. But as a Foreign Service officer in a strategic point, did you question his strategic instincts in that he seemed to be not aware of what I gather was your point of view of the strategic importance of the Gulf and you just couldn't leave it open? Was there a questioning of Powell's worldview?*

GNEHM: What I am describing is a huge gap in the perceptions of the civilian side and the military as to what we needed to do in the Gulf. I have a great admiration for General Powell. He had his military perspective that was different from policy makers in the white House.

I was disappointed, I confess. And I said this to him. I was disappointed that he didn't see the important interest that we had in Kuwait and protecting those interests was going to require a military presence of some sort. I would not insist on the permanent stationing of U.S. forces, and I told him that. In my view, the concept of an ongoing exercise program filled the need of reassuring the Kuwaitis that we would be there if needed, and of signaling the same point to Saddam across the border. I was concerned, as the Kuwaitis were concerned, not to the level of paranoia they were. I knew that Saddam had his designs and from his point of view, he intended to try to reassert them. I knew he had capabilities to do things against Kuwait, such as subversion, cross-border incursions, and firing Scuds. I told Powell that, in my opinion, the Kuwaitis were not wrong in being concerned.

*Q: All during this time, was there a waiting for the shoe to drop or great disappointment? There had been the feeling that Saddam would never have survived the tremendous defeat he had and be back in power, stay in power.*

GNEHM: Right.

*Q: And it didn't happen.*

GNEHM: Right.

*Q: Was this sort of something that hung over all of you?*

GNEHM: You touch on a good point. There was an expectation that he would in fact be toppled as a result of Iraq's defeat. I don't think any of us really contemplated post-liberated Kuwait and what we would need to do in the context of him remaining in power. So that meant that there hadn't really been any planning. I don't remember in any of my meetings when I was shuttling back and forth between Washington and Ta'if or even in the days of Desert Shield/Desert Storm, particularly the Desert Storm part in January/February, that we ever really talked about such an outcome. We never asked, "Well, what happens if he survives?" Because it just wasn't considered likely. So, I guess what we are now seeing in the Washington setting is the system wrestling with how to deal with a different situation.

Getting back to this situation in Washington, Paul Wolfowitz had held up the cable about the Patriot deployment because he wanted some reference to the possibility of using the Patriots in Germany if Saudi Arabia refused to move Patriots from the Kingdom. Chairman Powell absolutely refused to permit that. In the end, the Secretary of Defense caved and overruled Paul and said we would not move the Patriots out of Germany. He did agree that we would approach the Saudis to see if they would agree to move at least one battery to Kuwait. Powell had told me in the meeting, "Look Skip, I accept the need to exercise Patriots in Kuwait, and I'll support doing so from Saudi Arabia after I've checked with the Saudis." So, that was his position and the position that the Secretary of Defense ended up supporting. Powell went on to say, "If threat rose to Kuwait -- but in the U.S. assessment, not the Kuwaiti assessment." This last remark was important in understanding Powell's responses to Kuwait. I sensed from my several conversations with him that he was very skeptical of Kuwaiti requests. He believed that the Kuwaitis were not being honest in their appeals to us. Specifically, he thought that they had their reasons for hyping the threat. They had their reasons for demanding more attention and in his assessment, they were not as threatened as they said they were. Yet, he said, "I will support deployment of Patriots to Kuwait, and, if Saudi Arabia could not be the source, yes, I would have to use the Patriots from Germany." So again, I felt that he wasn't as hard over on this issue as some people were telling me. In fact, the Saudis did ultimately agree when we went to them for a very short deployment.

On the VOA relay station and the transmitter, I was told in Washington that the Kuwaiti failure to reach an agreement on these projects was really souring the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship. Hass urged me to continue to do whatever I could to push this forward. He said he had called Ambassador Saud Nasser to express the urgency and press on moving ahead with both of those requests. In my meeting with VOA, they agreed to send out a negotiating team on the agreement and to talk about site, frequency, and the possibility of an interim facility that could become operational sooner.

I did pick up in Washington (and reported back to my country team) that on the diplomatic political front with Iraq there was a sense that our pressure on Iraq and our efforts at the United Nations were working, moving in the right direction. Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, had gone to the UN and had made outrageous statements

about the border and Kuwait and, and the international reaction was hugely negative. Washington's assessment was that he, in effect, had helped the United States and undercut Iraq with the international community quite significantly.

I was told confidentially in Washington there was contingency planning underway for the use of military force, if necessary. The NSC and State remained very angry over latent opposition to such planning by the military and Joint Chiefs of Staff. There were some leaks to the press about the contingency planning. In the minds of the NSC and State the leaks were deliberate attempts to derail the military option. The President, according to what I was told, said "I will not let the fact that this is an election year deter me from taking the necessary decisions to force Iraq to comply fully with the UN resolutions." He made this statement before pundits wrote that the President would not take military action because he wanted to make sure he was reelected. The Kuwaitis were aware of these reports and somewhat concerned. Richard Hass told me: "I told Saud Nasser that we're headed toward another confrontation with Iraq. We are not seeking it, but we are not afraid of it either. If we have to we will use force to make Iraq comply with the UN Security Council resolutions." The President and Prime Minister Major spoke on the phone about this and agreed that we would use force if necessary. This relates back to what I said earlier. Hass's call to Saud Nasser that there was potential military action helped address their concern about our military commitment to them.

*Q: I keep coming back to Iran. Did Iran and Kuwait have diplomatic relations?*

GNEHM: They did.

*Q: Were you able to use that to catch the temperature in Tehran, or not?*

GNEHM: No. Kuwait was not one of those gateway-reporting posts for Iran. The Iranian ambassador was not really approachable. The Iranian mission wasn't either. When Kuwaitis spoke about Iran, they usually expressed themselves privately and confidentially. Their comments invariably focused on their concern about Iran's subversive activity, people sneaking into Kuwait on fishing boats, smuggling in arms, and always with reference to Iranian connections with the Shia population in Kuwait. We didn't really see Iran as a threat to the regime itself, a significant threat, but Kuwaitis remained very wary of the Iranians.

I don't remember whether I mentioned this at an earlier point in our conversation, but I remember a very strange conversation in Ta'if back in the days of the occupation when I was sitting with some Kuwaiti ministers. They all said to me, "You know, Iran is a much bigger threat than Iraq."

I said, "Wait a minute, what are you saying? Iraq is occupying your country and you are saying Iran is a bigger threat?" They said, "Yeah, absolutely, absolutely! If you look at history, over time, they're a far bigger threat than any other country in the region."

*Q: The Persian Gulf.*

GNEHM: As they talked, I found it really very revealing that even before they were liberated, they had in mind potential problems with Iran.

*Q: Were there any indications that Iran was trying to stir up the Shias in the Kuwait?*

GNEHM: No, Kuwait is a Sunni country, but it has a significant Shia minority. It's about 30 to 35%, depending on whether you're talking to the Shia or to the Sunnis.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: They are without question the best-integrated Shia community in any of the Gulf countries, and that's true even to this day. There are within the Shia community major trading families, wealthy trading families. If you looked at the 12 to 15 historic major business family, you would find that several are Shia. They are active in the Chamber of Congress. It is worth pointing out that there are two groups of Shia in the country. There are those who trace their lineage back to Iraq. Their historical relationships are with the Iraqi-Shia. Many own or owned businesses and farms in Iraq. Then there are the Iranian or more Persian oriented Shia in the country. They have been in Kuwait for a long time, but their connections are with their Iranian relatives. The Government of Kuwait was always wary when they picked up intelligence that someone had come from Iran and was visiting Shia diwanis. They were particularly sensitive if the visitor was stirring up anti-Saudi feelings. The Sunni government in Kuwait, the Amir and family, are more oriented toward Saudi Arabia than Iran. They are very conscious of Saudi reaction to any anti-Saudi efforts by Iran.

*Q: It always seems to be that Qatar is punching above its weight in Gulf matters. Was Qatar at all a factor in this time we're talking about?*

GNEHM: In '91/'92 they were not. We had had a very awkward relationship with Qatar because of the Stinger Missile Crisis. The strained relations related to their claim that they had Stingers and their refusal for US access. I mentioned earlier that when Cheney was in the region to negotiate access agreements, we actually went to Qatar. They became a part of the coalition to liberate Kuwait opening a new and better chapter in our relationship. In that regard they were all with us; there was no hesitation on their part.

*Q: They're really on two sides; they're sort of ahead of sort of the more fundamentalist movements and at the same time sort of a small military power. Aren't they, or not?*

GNEHM: Qatar is not really a military power, but it is a wealthy state. They had resources to spread around. Qatar was then and is now an interesting country. It is the other Wahhabi country in the world; but you wouldn't know it from a visit. It is not as rigid in its social restrictions as Saudi Arabia. For example, women drive in Qatar. You don't have religious police going around with switches whacking people for breaches in obeying religious rules. You do, however, find a mentality on the part of the Qataris that "we've come late, but we're going to prove to you that you're going to have to take us seriously." The best example I can give is their relationship with Saudi Arabia. They

actually love sticking their finger in the Saudi eyes and creating something akin to a rash or bee sting just to aggravate the Saudis.

*Q: Well, as ambassador in Kuwait, did you have to keep an eye on the other Gulf States? I mean were they a supporter or a nuisance from your perspective?*

GNEHM: Generally speaking I would say the other Gulf states were supportive, not a problem. I made it a priority to see the Saudi ambassador to Kuwait frequently because he represented a very influential country in Kuwait. The Saudis are not hesitant to put pressure on the Kuwaiti Government on issues that they--the Saudis---think are important. This definitely included the question of democracy. They basically urged the Sabah family not to do what we were asking them to do. I thought it was really important that he know me, know what I was doing, but what I wasn't doing, and that is undermining the Saudi-Kuwaiti relationships. So I could agree with him on lots of things, but tell him where I was going on democracy and I wasn't trying to subvert the family's authority in doing that.

The Bahrainis were very friendly and I knew many Bahrainis from having visited there during the occupation period and in my previous two jobs, both at Defense and State. I went down to Bahrain a couple of different times while I was in Kuwait. Once I went for a commercial exhibition where we were had a large number of American firms participating. I also wanted to maintain my good relationships there. I do not remember much about the UAE at that point, or the Omanis being terribly active. I do not even remember if the Qataris were very active at the time.

*Q: Speaking to you now as an Arabist, was there a concern about promoting democracy in Saudi Arabia and what would happen to the royal family?*

GNEHM: I think in 1991 and '92 there was not any serious discussion within the government about bringing democracy to Saudi Arabia. There was an academic debate outside of government on this topic. The general view within the government was that there really wasn't an alternative in Saudi Arabia to the Saud family. The focus on the democracy question was very much on Kuwait. Again, the President's prestige, the fact that the United States sent troops and people died to liberate Kuwait was *not* just to install, to reinstall, the monarchical government. Our objective was to reverse aggression and support the restoration of the legitimate government, including the Amir but importantly the constitution and parliament.

In conclusion what I was picking up in Washington, which I found interesting but did not believe was reality, was a real sense that somehow there was going to be a revolt in Iraq against Saddam. At one point I was told, "Oh yeah, there's going to be an Iraqi general that is just going to decide to move his troops into Baghdad and topple Saddam Hussein." And so, the talk went on, "So, what can we do to precipitate that? What can we do to provoke it?" In the short term, we were planning to do intrusive UN inspections that would denigrate, depredate Iraqi sovereignty, embarrassing Saddam. There would be further restrictions on the Iraqi Military, both in the north and the south. This was the

beginning of the idea of the no-fly zones. Also the seized Iraqi assets would be used by the UN to pay compensation claims. All were seen as ways to so humiliate Saddam Hussein that they would provoke Saddam's overthrow. If this happened, the Kuwaitis needed to get ready for possible military action in Iraq that might affect them and there might even be refugees. I was told that I had better have the Kuwaitis ready to deal with the refugee question. I said to them at the time, "Well, I'll do that, but you know this is going to provoke them on things like the Patriot deployment and the U.S. Military commitment. They're going to say, 'Wait a minute. We will handle refugees, but are you going to be here if we are threatened by events north of the border?'"

Just an aside, Paul Wolfowitz told me in the conversation that I had with him that he thought we should actually undertake a major humanitarian effort in Southern Iraq, even with Saddam in power. We should send in food and other sorts of support for them. Such an effort might both stimulate opposition to Saddam but also help stabilize that region if there were internal unrest.

Back to the issue of the deployment of Patriot missile system to Kuwait, I mentioned that the Secretary of Defense did in fact back down this confrontation with the Chairman. The Chairman won. It was decided that there would be a deployment -- the option would be one battery from Saudi Arabia for a very limited time, 10 to 12 days. And in fact, as I said, the Saudis had agreed. The good news in Kuwait toward the end of March 1992 was that revenue was now flowing from the Oil Ministry to the Finance Ministry, meaning the export of crude had reached a point where they were not just using their revenue to reconstruct and rebuild oil fields, but were now able to transfer money to finance other government expenditures. They were expecting revenue of about 1.7 billion dollars between March and the end of June.

I met with Sheikh Ali, the Minister of Defense, to go through the issues that had been raised in Washington and again to address US irritation at the slow progress on a various number of contracts and repairs. I reported that the DRG review was going well in Washington, that U.S. was going to be supportive, and that we certainly didn't expect congressional problems on arms sales. These were all important reassurances.

In early April, as I had mentioned earlier, I had been assured by the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Foreign Affairs that the VOA and transmitter were going to be taken care of within the week. It is now three weeks later, almost a month later, and David Mack called me to say that Washington is furious that there has been no decision. He said they had called in Ambassador Saud Nasser to urge his help with the government in Kuwait to get these issues moving. Saud was actually coming back to Kuwait on a visit. As I have noted repeatedly, Saud played a remarkable role in strengthening and building the US-Kuwaiti relationship. He had a vision for Kuwait's security that was very clear, very much annunciated, that Kuwait had to do *everything* it could to have the strongest possible relationship with the United States. In his only the United States would save Kuwait from a fate of absorption by one of its neighbors.

We leaned on him a great deal. Finally, on April 2, we get the cable out to Saudi Arabia on the Patriot deployment. It took a month to get to this point! So, the U.S. government is not much faster (*laughs*) than the Kuwaiti government.

Saud Nasser was in Kuwait in the first week of April. He was very upbeat about the VOA agreement. He said that there was going to be a meeting with the negotiating team in a few days and he hoped to work everything out. The main issue, as he saw it, was the duration of the agreement. VOA wanted 20 years; the Kuwaitis riposting five. So, there was a big gap. The VOA was also concerned about some other language that the Kuwaitis had proposed. One in particular had to do with possible restrictions on broadcasting content. VOA had had trouble in Bahrain and did not want trouble in Kuwait.

Then we got a huge success. Boeing and Kuwait signed an agreement for three 747s. That was a big airplane sale. We beat out the Airbus after a lot of effort. A week later there still was no movement on the VOA and the transmitter. Then another issue came up in the middle of April. The UN Commission on the border between Iraq and Kuwait, which is part of the UN Security Council resolution, met. Sheikh Salem told me that Kuwait voted for the commission results, in other words what the commission decided to recommend, even though it wasn't 100% satisfied. There were different historical records resulting in three different lines for the border. One was what they call "the legal line." The second was a "technical line," and the third was "the proposed line, which was actually between the first two. The main issue was that the line cut straight through part of Umm Qasr, one of only two ports in Iraq. Basra was still not able to function as a port because of the ships sunk in the Shatt al-Arab during the Iran-Iraq War. Umm Qasr was really the only operating port in the period prior to the invasion of Kuwait. As proposed, the boundary actually was going to slice off half the Iraqi naval base putting it inside Kuwait. That is the line that the commission opted for. The Kuwaitis were pressing me to get a Security Council resolution to endorse the decision of the border commission. The Iraqis rejected it outright, made all sorts of threatening remarks about how Iraqi territory was being seized and their sovereignty impacted. The heightened rhetoric at this time coupled with the other possible developments in Iraq heightened our concern for the situation in the area.

I met again with the Minister of Defense, Sheikh Ali. They had begun the repair work in Doha, which I thanked him. I briefed him on the Patriot deployment from Saudi Arabia. He had a very interesting reaction. After all that we have gone through, all the pressure from Kuwaitis to do it, what does Sheikh Ali tell me when I tell him it's going to happen? He says, "Please, we don't need any publicity. We want this low-key. We don't need it in the newspapers."

I said, "Well, Sheikh Ali, we don't really have a reason to have it in the newspapers, but that's kind of strange after you said you wanted it as a signal to the Iraqis." He replied, "Well, the Iraqis will all know about it. They'll get the message. We don't have to make it a big PR issue." It was almost as if they were concerned that we might provoke the Iraqis for doing what they had asked us to do, which was to deploy the Patriot system.

So, this is just one of those things that the ambassador has to deal with. Here is the Crown Prince speaking to me. "You're telling me that there's a potential military action with the Iraqis and there's possible retaliation on me, and you won't deploy for me the only instrument that you have to defend me."

Then here is Sheikh Ali saying, "But don't tell anybody that you're doing it." So what's going on! I don't think I reported this to Washington (*laughs*). I did not think Washington would quite comprehend the subtleties of local politics.

I had a meeting with Sheikh Sa'ad. He was concerned about the Bahrain-Qatari reaction to the way we were dealing with Iraq. He was beginning to sense certain softness. Remember, the Arab states of the Gulf saw Iraq as a bulwark against Iran and its threats. We had devastated Iraq's military capability, though Iran was still there. I think there was a rising concern about Iran at this time. This led some of these governments to believe that we should not be as hard on the Iraqis in terms of driving them down as we in Washington and the Kuwaitis certainly wanted.

Then I had another little bit of a curve ball from Saud Nasser on the VOA agreement. Saud Nasser told me that the transmitter was approved, but on the VOA there was a problem. We need reciprocity. I said, "What do you mean, you need reciprocity? You're not going to build a VOA relay station in the United States?" "No, no, no, no, no," he said, "No, we're not. But -- and you know we're not -- but we need to tell our own people when we sign this agreement that we're being treated equally." I said, "That doesn't make any sense."

Saud explained, "you're asking for tax and customs exemptions and other special terms -- visa exemptions and so forth. We want to have the same thing in the United States, even though we won't use it."

To which I replied, "Look, this is impossible. In the United States, we have federal taxes, which we can easily agree you would not have to pay, but we have no jurisdiction over state taxes. If we were going to get exemptions for you from all of the state laws and state taxes, we have to sign a formal treaty. Such a treaty has to be approved by the United States Senate per the constitution, and there will be no appetite in Washington for such a move at all." Oh, mumble, mumble, mumble. He says, "I don't know what we're going to do then." I said, "Well, you just need to tell the Crown Prince and others that that's simply not going to happen."

I also get a call from this point from Glenn Rudd at the Pentagon who heads the Defense Security Administration that handles the Foreign Military Sales (FMS). He told me that with the failure of the Kuwaitis to sign the outstanding cases and deposit money to cover them, we have an emergency. He said, "We're going to have to stop any deliveries of the F18 spare parts. In fact, I am going to have to start terminating the contracts that we already have in place. We have no option. By the end of the month, we will have no money left in the Kuwaiti account. We don't even have enough money in the account

now to pay the outstanding bills.” The issue sent me back to see the government again to press them to make a payment into their account. They had to make some decisions on these cases and they had to deposit some money.

At this point, I called Sh. Nasser Mohammad al-Sabah, the Minister of the Amiri Court, a person that I had become quite closer to in Ta’if days. I briefed him on the VOA, specifically about the reciprocity issue, so that he could brief the Amir. I wanted the Amir to be aware of what I was saying to the Crown Prince. I found over time, and I know this is true for most of us who serve as ambassadors abroad, that there is not always good communication within the governments. They have their own politics of who may say what to whom, and how they then present a matter. So one of the things that I was really good at it -- I must say, I was really, really good at, and this is probably why I ended up having the influence I had, and also the enemies that I had--is that I made sure I communicated the same message to multiple persons. I talked to each of the factions and the key persons in each of the hierarchical structures, like the military. Therefore, when the Foreign Minister went to tell the Crown Prince what I had told him, the Crown Prince had already heard what I told him. He could then gauge what the Foreign Minister was telling him against what he had heard from me.

My situation with Sheikh Salem was always a challenge. At times he would try to get the Crown Prince to be upset with me. I knew all of this and so I knew, in this particular case our position on the VOA as it would get reported up the chain was likely to be a little different from the way I wanted the Amir to understand it. I did not need to see the Amir; I saw his office director. That served me well because indeed what I expected to happen actually happened and I was thanked -- and particularly later in context of the way things happened.

Toward the end of April, Middle East Watch, which was writing about human rights issues, came to Kuwait. I facilitated their visit to the extent I could. They met with the Prime Minister. He gave them a very good accounting of the efforts that he was trying to make to control the human rights problems. There were many visiting groups during these days. For example, we had an Intellectual Property Rights delegation coming in May.

Meanwhile there was a political crisis in Kuwait. The Board of the Chamber of Commerce, a very important lobby group in Kuwait dominated at this time by the major, wealthy commercial families, resigned in mass. They were protesting the government, its inactions, and the way things were going politically inside the country. I will mention it when we get to events in the next month when there is a major blow-up in Kuwait that involves me and others, including the Chamber of Commerce.

I briefed the palace, the Crown Prince, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defense, that the Patriots would now be arriving on May 17<sup>th</sup>. There would be a combined exercise with the Kuwaitis from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Patriot system would then be redeployed to an exhibition site on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, which would be open to the public. By this time there were other elements within the government that wanted the Kuwaitis’ population to

be reassured about this weapons system. I know that a public ‘open house’ is not in accord with what Sheikh Ali had told me. By this time, another element within the Kuwaiti government wanted the Kuwaiti population to be reassured by the deployment of a system that could protect Kuwait City from an Iraqi missile attack. The public would have access on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. The Patriot battery would be redeployed to Saudi Arabia on the 25<sup>th</sup>. So essentially the Patriot deployment was from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup>, eight days. So much for a great brouhaha.

Now, I’d like to talk about the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. It was cake visit day to the Universal American School. Now, let me remind you. During the occupation period, I had been doing VOA telecasts to the Middle East. These were interactive interviews. On one occasion in the UAE studio, suddenly a young boy shouted: “Mr. Ambassador, I want to ask you when am I going to get to go to Kuwait? When am I going to get to go home?” I realized from the way he expressed himself that that the question was coming from a youth and not a reporter. I answered him, “You will be going back. I can promise you that. The President has told me that. You will go back.”

Now, about a month later when I was in the region making my visits to various countries I went to the UAE where I was going to have a press conference. I asked the embassy to find the boy and make sure that I can meet him when I was there. He came to the press conference and he asked the same question again. I brought him up to the podium. Perhaps I should have been more careful because he rather hogged the show. He took over the microphone and I had to diplomatically get it back from because he started haranguing Iraq and saying, “Long live Kuwait, long live Kuwait.” When I finally had control of the situation, he said: “Before I sit down, Mr. Ambassador, I have a gift for you.” What he gave me was a wood carving of a Kuwaiti gate into a house, into a garden. He said, “This carving is a replica of the gate in Kuwait to my grandmother’s house. I want to see that gate again.”

I looked straight into his face and said in front of the press and all, “And you will. You will. And I make this promise to you. When we get back to Kuwait” -- because he had said he wanted to go back to his school, I want to go back to my school -- “When we get back to Kuwait I will come to your school with the biggest cake I can find and we’ll celebrate,” all right?

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: So April 28, 1992, I go with the biggest cake that I can get (*laughs*) to his school. We remember the encounter in the UAE and we celebrate our being in Kuwait. I mention this because it got a lot of press attention and they picked up the previous press reports. Through this story and other events, Kuwaitis got to know me in a personal way. It conveyed that I think of and care for people. I’m not just into politics. That becomes really useful later on.

The next tempest in Kuwaiti politics came about this time. The National Council, the rump parliament that the Sabah family had organized as a substitute for the

constitutionally established National Assembly, decided it wanted to hold a meeting in the National Assembly building. The Kuwaiti public was already inflamed over the Government's decision to reconvene the National Council. The idea of its meeting in the National Assembly building was clearly an effort to give legitimacy to the National Council. This development raised public concern that the government was renegeing on its agreement at the Jidda Conference to hold elections for the National Assembly.

My concern went beyond that of the Kuwaiti public. As I mentioned earlier, the USG refused to take on the task of the physical reconstruction in Kuwait. The one exception was the National Assembly building for obvious reasons. The US wanted to associate itself with the reconstitution of the elected parliament and what better way than to repair the extensively damaged set of parliament. For the USG and for me, as Ambassador, the use of that building by the National Council was an issue. It would have attracted criticism from elements in the US that continued to denigrate our liberation of Kuwait and the restoration of a monarchy that had questionable support for democratic institutions.

*Q: Yeah.*

GNEHM: The target date for completion of construction was July 29, 1992. The main hall and the Amir's reception room were to be ready by the middle of June. The National Council wanted to meet in the parliament building on July 9. If that happened, the building would have had to be closed for three weeks, increasing the cost significantly and delaying completion. I used the construction delay and increase in cost to argue against the meeting of the National Council in the National Assembly building.

I was back in the U.S. from about May 5 to June 4 on R&R. I really needed it. Nevertheless, I had more meetings in Washington. I met with General Hoar. There was a final interagency review of the DRG scheduled for May 15. Remember these datelines. The DRG was supposed to be completed in March; but here it is already the middle of May. Carl Ford was coming to Kuwait the end of May and he would deliver the final report, including our proposed exercise program.

Then there was the ongoing saga of the VOA relay station and the transmitter. I called Saud Nasser. I was angry that, having been told that the transmitter project had been approved, there was more delay. I said to Saud in angry terms that the Foreign Minister's credibility was simply gone. Saud Nasser said that the Kuwait Society for Science had refused to follow the instructions of the Council of Ministers that had approved the transmitter, but they hoped to have this reversed and taken care of by Saturday or Sunday. On the VOA relay station, he said, "Do not expect a quick reply to your new language."

I replied, "Well, I never thought the word quick was even in the Kuwaiti vocabulary (*laughs*), so I certainly wasn't expecting any quick reaction." My personal relationship with Saud gave me the liberty to be that honest with him. I said, "We've been negotiating this since last August, you know. This is now 10 months."

He said, "Well, let me report one thing, one good thing. I can report to you a favorable reaction on the question of the duration of the agreement." I did not really expect we were going to get it, though he didn't tell me what the agreed duration was. When I asked him about article four, and this had to do with the question of content, whether there would be restrictions on content, Saud Nasser said, "Look, that's not a problem. The only problem we had was duration." "Well," then I said, "if you've got a solution on duration and content is not a problem, we ought to be able to move this toward a closure."

I returned to Kuwait on June 4. Something had happened while I was away and was just unfolding as I was returning. This was a big thing that I should start with in our next session.

*Q: All right, why don't we stop here?*

GNEHM: The head of the National Council, his name is Musaoud, made a public statement, reported in the press attacking me for all of my interventions in Kuwait's domestic affairs. He also attacked the United States for not being a good ally. He questioned President Bush's commitment to Kuwait and gave all kinds of ulterior motives for the US actions to liberate Kuwait. His remarks created *havoc* in Washington. Of course, it is now in June and we were moving into the presidential primaries toward presidential election in November. This was one of the most incredible experiences I ever had in my career. The issue involved American politics, Kuwaiti politics, me as an ambassador in a country, and Washington's support for me, all at the same time. In the end, it worked out, but there was a two or three-week period during which all sorts of stuff hit the fan!

*Q: We'll pick it up then.*

*INTERN: I'm Grace Perez, and I was wondering about General Powell. I wanted to ask, did he ever come around to embracing U.S.'s decision to be committed to Kuwait probably a lot longer and more committed than he wanted to? Or did he, did he kind of believe against it?*

GNEHM: He always remained somewhat a foot on the brake. Not braking it entirely, but just keeping it from moving forward too rapidly. Circumstances overtake Washington decision-making. The Iraqis put planes in the air and fly in the direction of Kuwait. That provocation demanded a response and that is how we get to no-fly zones. We did get approval for the ongoing exercises and he agreed to that. Once US forces were on the ground and the uniform military saw the advantages of being able to use Kuwait, then you begin to military advocacy for a long-term presence in Kuwait. So, events in some way preempted his generally negative views. Ultimately based on the defense agreement that I negotiated, we actually began using two air bases and the large exercise terrain in northern Kuwait. The Kuwaitis come forth with financial assistance to build these two bases to our specifications and to build excellent repositioning facilities. The sub-

commands, third army in Atlanta, the special operations, the marines, all wanted to use Kuwait. So again, these players became advocates for our military presence in Kuwait.

*INTERN: Thank you.*

*Q: Today is the 5<sup>th</sup> of February, 2015 with Skip Gnehm. And Skip, would you start again on what kicked off this tremendous political firestorm? Somebody made a speech?*

GNEHM: Yes, it was Abdulaziz Musa'id, who was speaker of the National Council at the time. The National Council was an attempt by the al-Sabah family prior to the invasion to create an alternative to the National Assembly, which was constitutionally mandated. The Government had suspended the elected assembly. This action was never accepted by most of the Kuwaiti people as legitimate, and the ruling family had made a commitment in Ta'if in September of 1990, after the Iraqi invasion, to restore the Assembly. To the consternation and, I think, astonishment of many Kuwaitis, the Government permitted the National Council to reconvene. This development invariably led to a lot of questions as to whether the ruling family was serious about having parliamentary elections. It turned out they were.

On June 4, 1992, I arrived back in Kuwait from Washington to a morass of chaos and problems, probably the worst crisis in U.S.-Kuwaiti relations since the Iraqi invasion. It was precipitated by the Speaker of this rump council. He made a public statement, questioning the United States' motives for the interventions that liberated Kuwait. This was a *stark* change from the normal characterization of the United States' role in liberating Kuwait. Abdulaziz Musa'id questioned the motive of President Bush specifically and the motive of the entire coalition effort to liberate Kuwait. He attacked me as well, claiming I was interfering in Kuwait's internal domestic affairs. He said I was going around the city visiting diwanis and talking to people alleging that this was interference in Kuwait's domestic affairs. He charged that I was violating the diplomatic principle of what an ambassador should be and what was acceptable behavior for a diplomat.

His allegations to the press created a horrendous reaction in Washington. His comments made people furious in Washington from the President, personally, to the Secretary of State, and others. I got a phone call within hours from Ed Djerejian, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. He had just come out of a meeting with Secretary Baker, who was furious. The Secretary had read an AP story that was based on an interview Musa'id had given. The Secretary said the outrageous remarks were creating a major political issue in the United States. He wanted to know what was going on. The White House was equally furious.

The Secretary asked me to see the Amir *immediately* to express great dismay that a high-ranking Kuwaiti official would have made such statements. He expressed serious concern over the remarks, as they cast doubt on the victory by the Desert Storm Coalition, and especially on the role of the U.S. led coalition in liberating Kuwait. The Secretary said, "Statements like this have a very negative effect on the United States and it's the worst

possible thing that could happen right now.” He was referring to the fact that we were only four months from the November elections, and President Bush was running for reelection. The President was under attack for several different reasons, but especially for his strong action in putting together an international coalition liberating Kuwait, which had given him a lot of support at the time. Having someone with a title in Kuwait now criticizing him just provided fodder for the Democrats in their attacks on him.

Ed Djerejian told me that the secretary took great umbrage at the criticism of my role, the Ambassador’s role, and said Ed should tell me that I enjoy the *full* confidence of the President and the Secretary of State. Ed then told me that he would appear before the House Foreign Affairs Committee the following week, and he had no idea what he was supposed to say when he was asked about this. He repeated the Secretary’s words. “This just has a very, very negative impact and I can’t understand it. No one can. What we need you to do, Skip, is get the Government of Kuwait to repudiate the speaker immediately and publically, to disavow his statements, and to reaffirm the very positive Kuwaiti view of the United States and what it had done for Kuwait.”

Now, it wasn’t clear to me at this point in time what Musa’id’s motive was. Obviously, when it was personal on me, I could guess that he was using me for some sort of domestic purpose.

*Q: Had you had much contact up to this point?*

GNEHM: Not with Musa’id personally, no. What came out over time is that his comments were indeed related to domestic politics. He was furious at the so-called democrats, the liberals, who were pushing for the reconstitution of the National Assembly. And why? Because obviously his prestige and his influence in the country was due to his leadership of the National Council. He saw my efforts at promoting the elections and the reestablishment of the parliament as personally undercutting his authority and power. Then you get into all kinds of internal Kuwaiti shenanigans. In short he was not focused on Washington, or even on Bush. He was trying to discredit all the people who were pushing for general elections in the fall.

I called the Crown Prince and delivered the message that I had been asked to deliver. I urged him to make an immediate public statement repudiating Musa’id. The Crown Prince’s reaction was that Musa’id did not speak for the government. He was only in the National Council, and he was not a representative voice for the government. The Crown Prince simply could not comprehend why Washington was acting so strongly. I explained the public relations concerns and the impact his comments had had, and how they were being perceived and portrayed in Washington. I mentioned the impact on the President personally. I emphasized that, because I knew how much both the government and the Kuwaiti people loved him, I thought that might make a difference. The Crown Prince indicated that he understood my point, but there was really nothing he could do before Saturday. Now, I think that this conversation was on Friday, which is the weekend, or perhaps Thursday, which is also the weekend in Kuwait. He said, “I can’t do anything until Saturday.”

I immediately told him, "Look, timing is everything on this. Two more days of this story out there without repudiation is going to be terrible. We need to get something out publically." But he just wouldn't budge on the timetable. So about 30 minutes later I followed up that call with a call to the Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Salem. He said the Crown Prince had already called him. Sheikh Salem said that we were just overreacting and he belittled the whole matter. He echoed the Crown Prince's remark that Musa'id was not part of the government. I repeated all my points. I emphasized that they were underestimating the reaction of the Secretary and the President and others in Washington to Musa'id's interview as well as to its affect. I emphasized the seriousness of the situation, and that there now existed a real crisis in the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship, which was in neither of our interest.

Sheikh Salem said the Council of Ministers, which he intended to chair on Sunday morning, would discuss the issue. I said Washington would like a response for the press inquiries immediately. I told him that the subject had to be raised with senior officials in the Kuwaiti government, so that I could inform Washington that the issue was being discussed and that I had been told that Musa'id did not speak for the government.

Sheikh Salem said to me, "Look, I'm not going to go any further than where the Crown Prince is. The Council of Ministers would discuss it on Sunday." I said we would use that answer publically, whether he could or not. We would say publically that we had discussed the matter with senior officials and that Musa'id did not speak for the Kuwaiti government.

Sheikh Salem was the Foreign Minister, a position he had not held before. There was significant competition between Sh. Salem and the former Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah. Sh. Sabah had been the Foreign Minister from 1962 to 1991, and he would come back as the Foreign Minister the next year. Incidentally, he is now the Amir. In these days Sheikh Salem was feeling quite confident in his new position. He rarely missed an opportunity to tweak me. On this occasion Sheikh Salem said, "Skip, Remember. I warned you that you have enemies here. Not all the people you see as friendly are in fact your friends. I warned you about going to all those diwanias." Then he made a passing jab at freedom of the press by saying, "You're pushing freedom of the press all the time. So now you get it and now you are complaining about it?" As I said, Sh. Salem enjoyed goading me. I think, in fact, that I actually told Washington on a phone call that I thought Sheikh Salem might even be behind this, given the way things are going internally. In hindsight I think I was wrong about that. I think he simply found Musa'id's remarks gave him a good opportunity to razz me, but that sort of comes out later. I called Ed Djerejian back to relay the substance of both these conversations. He had just spoken to Margaret Tutwiler, the Department's spokeswoman. Ed said they were going ahead with a public response, as I had told Sheikh Saleh that we would.

Ed said the Kuwaitis had better understand the serious impact of Musa'id's statement in Washington. I suggested that Ed call Sheikh Saud Nasser, the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington, who, as I've mentioned before, was a very active player in this whole

relationship, going back to the invasion and right through to the present. I told him that that Saud Nasser was actually with the Amir in South America and you make the same points with him. He will relay them directly to the Amir and I know that the Amir is going to respond differently than what I'm getting here from the Crown Prince and the Foreign Minister.

I had a call the following day from Bruce Riedel, who was in the National Security Council at the White House. He asked me whether I had any concern that this was a deliberate attempt on the part of the family to undercut the move back toward the National Assembly. He said, "I want you to know, you have the President's support, 100%. Do not back off of any of the things you've been doing. There's no lack of sympathy here for you. The President is writing a message, underscoring the importance of the October elections. The White House is very concerned with this recent turn of events." Bruce didn't have any specific new points to give me, but he said that I could continue to be strong on our stance on democracy. He told me not to back off on that.

I had a call from Sulaiman al-Shaheen, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who was with the Amir in Caracas, Venezuela. Shaheen wanted me to know how outraged and angry he was at Musa'id's attack. He said I should not get upset. Musa'id is an old, senile man who represents *no one*. I repeated the points about the negative political and public relations impact in Washington and belittled the attacks on me personally. I really did appreciate what Shaheen had said; but I was much more concerned about the Washington angle than I was my own situation. This was particularly true having been told by Washington that I had their backing. Shaheen went on to tell me that Washington had called Saud Nasser, which of course I knew. They had been discussing the issue for over one hour with the Amir. The Amir made clear Musa'id was not speaking for the government. He did not represent the Amir's views, and the Amir wanted to disassociate himself from it all. I told Shaheen that those things needed to be said publically. Shaheen said he would need to talk later in the day with Sheikh Salem and thought there would be a statement. He thought that Sheikh Salem was going to be calling me to see me on Saturday or Sunday. Laughing he confided that Musa'id once had told the Crown Prince that my embassy staff and I attended opposition diwanias to undercut the prestige of the National Council. He also said Musa'id was angry that I had never visited his diwaniya. That information began to give me some understanding of what was going on. Musa'id felt ignored. I hadn't given him the attention that he thought he deserved and I was going to these other diwanias with people whom he considered opponents, thus strengthening them in the ongoing domestic issue over political representation. So life is a hoot when you're an ambassador.

Later that day I called David Mack to tell him about this call from Shaheen. He said that Saud Nasser had, in fact, called Ed Djerejian and told him that the Amir disavowed Musa'id entirely and was really furious at the remarks. David and I agreed that we, the United States, probably could benefit from the stupidity of Musa'id in attacking us, and undercut him with the GOK's repudiation of Musa'id. The GOK would find itself in a very awkward and weakened position vis-à-vis the democratic groups and would have to relax their current efforts somewhat to chorale those groups. It also put them at a

disadvantage toward me. I thought I should repeat the Secretary's line that he used last year when he was in Kuwait, that the Kuwait-U.S. security relationship was definitely related to actions that they took on human rights and democracy. He agreed that that would be a good thing to emphasize publically.

David Mack, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, and I had a number of conversations during this period. I had a meeting with Sheikh Salem in which, again, Sheikh Salem told me that he loved to gig me. I guess he thought he was deflating me, but he wasn't at all. I wasn't too upset by his criticisms. David Mack was concerned about Sheikh Salem's claims that I cook all this stuff up, which is a bit crazy because I thought he had cooked it all up. David said that everybody was very pleased with the way The Washington Post was covering things and with the quotes that I had given him. He confided that some of the flurry in the days before was an overreaction on the part of Margaret Tutwiler.

We were now what, four or five days into this? I was receiving a lot of phone calls from different Kuwaitis with support. One of the most interesting calls was from Khalifa. Khalifa was at that time Deputy Speaker of the National Council. In other words he was Musa'id's deputy. He called me to tell me that he disassociated himself entirely from Musa'id. He said he had talked to Musa'id, who was running another article tomorrow, the 10<sup>th</sup>. Khalifa said he was trying to get him to change his words. He said, "Look, I'm really upset with Musa'id, and I threatened to do something against him if he didn't change his position." Khalifa went on to say that there needed to be a way out. He didn't want these things, this thing, to get worse. Musa'id's battle, he told me, was with the Kuwaiti opposition. That has been longstanding and it is not with the United States. This was the second indication that this crisis was not exactly what it appeared to be. The situation was still serious, no doubt about that.

It is important to understand the complexity of the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship and my role in that relationship as well. Even while I was under attack, they actually desperately needed the U.S. government and me personally to deal with another issue. The Iraqis had communicated to the UN Security Council their rejection of the Council's resolutions, and they used great hype to attack the UN's role on the border of demarcations, among other things. I got a call from the very same Foreign Minister, who had just lectured me on my behavior, urging me to use my influence with Washington. He wanted me to get Washington to agree that there would be an immediate statement by the Security Council, repudiating the Iraqi demarche and telling the Iraqis they had to comply fully. So again, this interface just underscores how events can work in two different directions.

I had a call from Saud Nasser on the tenth to say that he'd been trying to reach me to express how very upset he was with the attacks on me and with the statement about the U.S. as well. Nasser said he was with the Amir when they had discussed Musa'id's statements and the Amir had been furious. He had said it was totally wrong. The Amir said that I, the Ambassador, should continue to do what I was doing, specifically mentioning visiting diwanias. He had asked if I had seen Sheikh Salem. He wanted to know how these meetings went. I kind of left it with a long moment of silence and then

flipped to talk about my meeting with the Crown Prince, which was great. I made it very clear that the first appointment with Sheikh Salem was not a good conversation, while the second was. At one point I told him that Salem had offered a lot of personal advice. He knew what I was talking about. I was on an open line from Kuwait. I had to be careful. Sheikh Salem, who had been Minister of Interior, would certainly get reports of any and all of my conversations at the time.

Sulaiman al-Shaheen, the Secretary General of the MFA, called me from Buenos Aires. I think Saud Nasser must have told him about my call, because Sulaiman wanted to know if there were problems, and particularly in the relationship with his boss, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. He asked if there was anything he could do to help. He said he was with the Amir, that he had access, and he could talk to the Amir about this. The Amir, however, had made it clear that I, the Ambassador, should not change my habits and in fact he hoped that I wouldn't. I took this as an important message. Saud Nasser, my friend, could have told me what he really wanted me to do and attributed it to the Amir. The fact that Sulaiman called me and repeated the message was positive proof to me that the Amir was in fact fully supportive. Sulaiman went on to ask if I felt I was under pressure. I said yes, but I spoke glowingly of my meeting with the Crown Prince, in contrast to these other problems. I admitted I had heard slightly tougher language from the Deputy Prime Minister. With a chuckle I told Sulaiman that Sh. Salem just wanted to stop me from going to diwanias!

Sulaiman said: "Again, I'm very sorry" and he repeated how the Amir supported me and that I should just continue to do what I had been doing.

I felt by this moment in time that the issue for Washington had been dealt with as well as it was going to be dealt with. The Amir was on board to essentially repudiate what Musa'id has said. I was focused now on my own situation inside the country, and perhaps not the way you would think. I felt fully covered. In my view the only individual in the government who mattered and who might be hostile or critical was the Foreign Minister. I believe much of the problem was personal as much as anything. I think he was jealous or at least concerned at my popularity. He was sensitive about disrespecting his authority and position in the government. Remember that he had said to me in an earlier meeting that he didn't like my going over his head and seeing the Crown Prince and the Amir. He thought that I really should be dealing with him. I was an ambassador and he was the Foreign Minister. I had known and worked with Sheikh Salem for some time and felt I could work through my relationship with him.

I was, however, worried about the situation with Musa'id. He was an elder gentleman. I recognized that elder people in Middle Eastern societies have status. He did have a prominent position in Kuwait. Whether I thought the National Council was valid or not was immaterial. I knew that I had overwhelming popular support. He, on the other hand, was receiving extremely hostile reactions around Kuwait, including editorials in newspapers and critical op-eds, all of which basically were attacking him for criticizing me. I felt like it wasn't good for me, the embassy, or the U.S. relationship with Kuwait to have a person, even given his political position, denigrated in a way that might later come

back in a negative way. So you know what I decided to do? I decided to deal with this as Arabs would deal with it.

I went to my friend, Sheikh Ali Khalifa Al-Sabah. (This is a different person from the Khalifa mentioned above who was the Deputy Speaker of the National Council.) Ali Khalifa was Minister of Oil when the US agreed to reflag the Kuwaiti tankers. I knew him from those days. He later became Minister of Finance. So I went to Ali Khalifa and I said, "Look Ali, I don't want this matter with Musa'id to keep festering. I don't want there to continue to be trouble between Musa'id and myself. I need a mediator; I need someone to approach him to work out a solution." I asked him to see Musa'id on my behalf and broker a meeting for reconciliation. I mentioned to him that Musa'id's Deputy had called me and wanted to find a solution. I told Ali Khalifa that I had told the Deputy that I needed assurances from a well-respected intermediary that Musa'id would not use anything that I said or the situation to embarrass me and my government. The Deputy had called me back to say that he had spoken to the Speaker. He had passed along the notion that in the best Arab tradition, I would like to reconcile differences and that Musa'id, too, would like to put the whole matter behind him. Musa'id wanted me to call on him at the National Council before Tuesday. There was to be a meeting of the National Council on Tuesday, a meeting at which he intended to attack me and everybody else all over again, if the situation had not been resolved. The Deputy added that, if we met, the speaker was going to apologize for any misunderstanding. He just wanted me to visit him before Tuesday. The Deputy Speaker added again that, "If there was not a meeting by Tuesday there would be big trouble on Tuesday" which the Deputy hoped to avoid.

So again in my conversation with Sheikh Ali Khalifa, I had said I needed assurances that if I did what I was being asked to do that Musa'id would not turn it on me later. Ali said, "I will do this. You are doing the right thing, but the rules do need to be set. It needs to be very clear." He added that he had been wondering what I was thinking and thought that I might come out in this way. This pleased him. Ali said Musa'id had fought the leftists for over 30 years and the Pan-Arabists in favor of ties with the west. So his present remarks were just in keeping with where he had been for so long. Sheikh Ali, this is Ali Khalifa, said that the meeting, in fact, should be on neutral ground. In his opinion, Musa'id should agree to stop any further press attacks and there should be a mutually agreed upon statement that would be issued. After he thought about it for a while, he said, "Look, I am going to call one of my good friends, Mustafa Boodai, who is a very close friend of Musa'id. Mustafa Boodai and I will represent Musa'id and you to the other party. We will decide what we think is the best way. Then we will present it to both parties as the arbitration." Again, this is a *very* Arab way of reconciling differences ---*very much* in the culture.

Ali Khalifa called me the next day to say that he and Boodai had met with Musa'id and everything had been agreed to. However, he noted that Musa'id was in a very difficult situation. The meeting needed to be in the National Council. Otherwise Musa'id might do anything. Musa'id fully appreciated what I was doing. Editorials will stop immediately. The meeting would be on Sunday, and it would greatly relieve the pressure on him. In other words, Musa'id was now trying to get out of all this given how much he was being

attacked. He was trying to save face, which is exactly what I was trying to do for him. I had all this public support from everyone under the sun, the Amir and all the others. So I was on high ground.

Here were the ground rules. It would be a purely courtesy visit to renew friendship and that would be sufficient. Musa'id did not want anything that would embarrass the U.S. So Sheikh Ali Khalifa offered to draft the statement, which Ali then asked me to write for him. Musa'id had said, "Anything the Ambassador wants is OK with me, and nothing will be said on Tuesday at the National Council meeting regarding the Ambassador's call, except what's in the statement." I was still worried that he might say, "You see? The Ambassador knew he was wrong and he came to see me."

Sheikh Ali told me that Musa'id was besieged. He was very relieved that I was calling on him. Ali assured me that he was sincere and that there would be no politics. There would be TV coverage, however, which I had assumed. I asked straightforwardly then if Ali Khalifa recommended that I go ahead with this meeting. He said, "Yes, I strongly suggest you do." I agreed to go based on his and Boodai's assurances.

Later I sent over a draft statement. Ali Khalifa liked it and said he would translate it into Arabic, and clear with Musa'id. I also asked if we could restrict the press to KUNA and Kuwait television. I knew that these were official government voices and would not report anything that the government would not want reported about the meeting. I thought that was protection for me. If open to everyone, you had no idea how the meeting would be described. Sheikh Ali thought this was a fair request.

The meeting did take place a couple of days later. The statement I had drafted that Ali Khalifa had given Musa'id was issued as the press release for the meeting. It was all hunky dory. The one other feedback that I got after the meeting was a message that Musa'id asked through the intermediaries if I would visit his diwaniya, which I did, but not immediately. I put it off about a week and a half. I had no reason not to go there; I really hadn't intended to snub him. I didn't realize that my failure to visit his diwaniya had come across that way. In the end all was well. The way it worked out actually solidified my own position in the country. There were, as I say, all of these statements and editorials noting how much I had done for Kuwait and especially mentioning during the occupation period. They underscored that I had come in with the troops, that I had lived through the bad weeks right after the liberation with no water, no electricity, etc. They went on and on. It was a nice tribute.

*Q: What was Musa'id's perspective through all this?*

GNEHM: He was seeing himself, at his age, as being tarred and feathered -- my words now -- He felt the attacks on him were for being part of the National Council, and he was being vilified by the democratic side. There were going to be elections. The democratic side was going to come back into power and Musa'id was going to be left in the trash bin of history. I am sure that was what was driving his actions. So I let him save face, which was fine. I had nothing to lose at that point. But it is an interesting lesson in how one

deals with cultural delicacies and with personalities. The role of an ambassador is delicate in a situation like this. One could really have become a target of criticism that would have undermined the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship. In this case it didn't.

At the same time all of this was going on, one of the other issues at play was in the Defense Department: the controversy and dispute over just what commitment the United States had to Kuwait's security. This was in-house, meaning this was not a dispute in the public eye and, therefore, the Kuwaitis were not aware of it specifically. They certainly noticed that a year and three months after liberation they had still not heard from the United States as to what we would do if there were another attack from Iraq. I knew we would come to their aid and defense, but just how in specific terms remained a question.

Here again, the controversy was between, on the one hand Paul Wolfowitz, the Undersecretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell. Wolfowitz was appalled that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (and General Powell) and CENTCOM were drawing the defense line south of Kuwait City. In other words, they were going to concede Iraqi reoccupation in the capital, regroup in the southern part of Kuwait, and retake the city. Paul Wolfowitz said, "No, no. No, no. The line has to be north of the capital. We cannot go through another occupation." Paul was also pushing for a larger repositioning of tanks and ancillary military equipment. In fact, he was advocating 340 tanks, plus ancillary equipment, which was far larger than the U.S. military was thinking. In my conversations with Fred Smith, who was also in the Pentagon, Fred confided that he really doubted that Paul was going to win this one. Nevertheless, Paul was in the fight.

The issue of Kuwaiti detainees also comes up at this point in time. The Kuwaitis criticized the United States for not taking sufficient action to deal with the missing detainees. Washington was saying to the Kuwaitis, "You still can't come up with a good list of names, when they were taken, and where they might be either. So don't throw rocks our direction until you've got a concrete list." It was just another one of those irritants at the time.

Another issue at this time related to the Defense Agreement, as I mentioned earlier. There was agreement that US forces might need to use Kuwaiti military facilities. (Indeed, ultimately US forces actually utilize two Kuwaiti air base.) The bases, of course, had been heavily damaged during the Iraqi occupation and the coalition military action to liberate Kuwait. They needed to be rebuilt and at specifications that were adequate for our equipment, such as planes and tanks, but also for our manpower. This issue embroiled me in controversy between the Government of Kuwait and the U.S. Corps of Engineers (COE). The COE had the contract for overseeing the reconstruction. They weren't doing the work directly. The COE contracts with suitable companies. The person in the Ministry of Defense responsible for contracts, particularly this reconstruction effort and, hence the supervision of the Core of Engineers, was Sheikh Sabah Nasser al-Sabah, none other than the brother of the Kuwaiti Ambassador in Washington,. So Sheikh Sabah was the chief engineer and contracting official in the Ministry of Defense. Frankly, he was an obstacle and a very negative person. He was constantly critical, constantly

holding up signatures on documents, and constantly redefining what it was he wanted. It always seemed to me and others, particularly on the American side, that what he really wanted was to replace all these Americans --- to get rid of the COE.

I appealed to Saud Nasser in Washington. He continued to be an important partner in helping resolve problems. He basically said, "My brother is beyond me. He infuriates me. I don't know what he's doing, but I think that the problem is that he wants to control everything. By having the Core of Engineers managing those contractors, he's out of the loop. So he's just trying to get more authority and power over what's going on." So I met with Sheikh Sabah. During the meeting he attacked the Core of Engineers for being bureaucratic and being overly expensive. He admitted to me, "Look, we'll go ahead with the COE to finish phase one, but I'm not sure I'll want the Core of Engineers involved in phase two." The Secretary of the Army had someone in his office, Nancy Dorn, who's an extremely competent and helpful interlocutor. On multiple occasions we spoke on the phone trying to see how we could resolve the matter. The COE wanted this to work; they didn't want friction. They also wanted phase two. It was a big thing for the Core of Engineers, as it was for the United States government, to maintain our involvement in the reconstruction of the military bases. Nancy said the Secretary of the Army told her to tell me that they were willing to do anything to smooth over the problems, including changing personnel. In other words, if the problem was the head of Core of Engineers in Kuwait, if there was some personality issue on our side, or even if he thought there was, they were willing to replace their lead person. So, I kept working it. In the end, with great agony and great efforts we did move it forward. But again, it's just another one of those issues that had the potential of disrupting the good relationship with Kuwait.

*Q: Well, it's the sort of thing in a way -- I won't say you were trained for it, but you were selected for it as a person who could get something done without upsetting too many people.*

GNEHM: I hope what is coming through in this story is not so much me. I'm telling it not just because I was the Ambassador in the action, but to explain how many different issues I was dealing with at the same time and describe how an ambassador handles such situations. Clearly, it was important to address the issues between the COE and Kuwaiti personnel even though it's not as sexy as some of the other issues an ambassador faces.

I'm also dealing with personnel problems within the embassy --- with staffing. As we reached the month of July (1992), the Embassy was going through a major turnover. People that I had brought in with me a year and a half before were not on two-year tours. They were leaving. The Consular Officer, Gail Rogers, who had been in Kuwait before the invasion and a hostage for five months during the Iraqi occupation, was absolutely wonderful. She was leaving. Her husband, Bruce Rogers, the Economic Officer, was leaving. My Commercial Attaché, Bob Connan, who had been outstanding in supporting American business and reconstruction efforts, was leaving. My RSO, John Frese, was also departing. He was far more than just my RSO. He was someone who cared about me personally as he did for all the personnel in the Embassy. He would often come down to the residence and pluck down in a chair and say, "Mr. Ambassador, you need to slow

down or take it easy.” He was thoughtful and caring and he was leaving. Colonel John Macel had been head of the Office of Military Cooperation during the liberation and knew why Kuwait was important. He had a great understanding of Kuwaiti politics and had built up important relations with the MOD. He was leaving.

*Q: Did it occur to you that maybe we should try to do more to maintain the staff in a crisis?*

GNEHM: Continuity. Yes, it did. Yet I understood people had already made sacrifices. People had careers. I saw that I was getting good qualified people as replacements. I guess what you’re hearing from me is a very personal --- an emotional feeling. These were people that I had bonded with. Many of them had been in Ta’if with me. I didn’t have to tell them about what had gone on; I didn’t have to fill them in with the background; I didn’t have to worry about them. They were out and about, and they knew the people I was dealing with. I knew it was going to be a new scene.

So, the Embassy building... I mentioned earlier how the Army Special Forces had pretty much destroyed that Embassy building when they had “occupied it” at the time of liberation. Their actions had made the building itself uninhabitable! Well, by now the main part of the building had been restored. We were working in it; but it was simply not big enough for the new embassy presence in the country, given the new role of the embassy. In this time period, May, June, and July of 1992, we were in the process of constructing an addition to the building. So we had mortar and bricks and other construction material scattered all over the place. This was just another of the issues that was going on at this time.

The Voice of America agreement seemed to be moving, as it had for a long time, toward reconciliation or resolution on key points. One of them had been, for example, the issue that I mentioned to you earlier about tax and customs benefits. The Kuwaitis had come back to me to say they wanted reciprocal (*laughs*), reciprocal rights, and I had explained to them that in our federal system the tax laws were largely state laws, and that the federal government did not have the authority to give them immunities from state taxes. Anyway, VOA came back and said, “Let’s just drop it entirely,” which I thought was fantastic. And they said, “Let’s just make reference to the Geneva Conventions and protocols and rights and privileges.” That would mean it would apply to U.S. government employees but would not apply to contractors, which VOA had tried to include. That made a big difference and I was able to reach an agreement with the VOA. I said to them, “Look, we could solve the import problem by having anything that you need come in through the embassy, as if the embassy were bringing it in.” That satisfied them. That satisfied the Kuwaitis. So we found ways around the real sticking points. I will jump ahead time wise to note the VOA agreement, God bless it, was finally signed on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, a month later.

Incidentally, there was no problem with the Kuwaitis about the content of VOA programming. They didn’t want to get involved in content. I thought that was remarkable given potential sensitivities about their neighbors and how their neighbors might react to

items broadcast from Kuwait. So I don't need to talk more about the Voice of America agreement at this point, which was a wonderful thing.

Another major issues that I was still dealing with, along with the Defense Department, was the arms sales to Kuwaitis. The specific issue was whether the Kuwaitis were going to get to consider the M1A1 and M1A2 tanks. This has had an interesting twist on it. It looked to me like there was not going to be a problem with the Kuwaitis seeing both, which the Kuwaitis liked. It turned out, however, that in our negotiations with the Saudis the Saudis opted to purchase the M1A1. We told the Saudis that in fact the United States was going to stay with the M1A1 tank as its prime fighter tank and we were actually encouraging others to stay with it, too, simply for the sake of interoperability. The Saudis wanted me to convince the Kuwaitis to follow their decision. I didn't want another problem with the Kuwaitis over this. I did pass the message along to the Kuwaitis, but to Washington I said, "Look, let's still stick with demonstrating both versions." I got guidance back from my very talented desk officer, Barbara Leaf. She said, "My advice to you, Skip, is don't push this point anymore. You know we have other things to think about and you're getting some negative reaction back here in Washington from your continued push on this point."

That's a good desk officer, I might add, and a tribute to Barbara Leaf. A good desk officer watches out for his/her embassy and for the Ambassador back in Washington, in the capital. Barbara had her feelers out and her networking so she could pick up on those kind of reactions. I've been blessed, to be honest with you, blessed in my career with really solid, good desk officers. Of course, these are mid-grade officers, not seniors; but their skills and their intuitive abilities are what makes an embassy and an ambassador effective in Washington. They are key to successful relationships between embassies and Washington.

*Q: As an ambassador do you have any control over a desk officer, or is it the luck of the gods?*

GNEHM: *(laughs)* I think it's largely the latter; it's the fate of the gods. I don't recall ever being asked if I was willing to accept a particular desk officer. They might call to say they have selected X person as the next desk officer.

*Q: Well, what was her background, your desk officer?*

GNEHM: I don't remember at this point in time, but I think she had had some NEA assignment before. Later Susan Ziadeh became my desk officer. She spoke Arabic. She had served in the region and, again, was one of those really remarkable individuals who knew her way around Washington. She was self-confident -- while being careful, of course. She didn't mind advocating my views both within the department and with other agencies. She knew exactly how to present issues in the manner most likely to achieve agreement. That's the way things ought to go.

Another issue erupted in Washington in July. (Remember that my meeting with Musa'id following his public attack on the Bush Administration was June 21.) In the month of July, Congressional Democrats, as a consequence of some reporting in the press, began focusing on what they described as the Bush administration's ill-adroit handling of Iraq prior to the invasion of Kuwait. They were focusing on the Fall of '89, Spring of '90, and the failure of the administration to carefully watch what Saddam was importing, particularly items that could be used for the nuclear program. Implicit in their attacks was that the actions of the Bush administration, in the best of all worlds, was naïve and, in the worst of all worlds, was aiding and abetting dangerous Iraqi military programs. They focused their attacks, as reported in press articles, on certain key people, one of whom was John Kelly, then Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East. They alleged that he had no Middle East experience, which was not quite true. He had been ambassador to Lebanon. Of course, they also identified April Glaspie, our Ambassador in Baghdad and also Richard Hass pointing out that he had no Middle East experience. Richard Clark and Jock Covey, deputy to John Kelly in NEA, were also mentioned. As is often the case in Washington, once an issue is in the press, it leads to one article after another.

*Q: And this was an election year!*

GNEHM: Yes, it's absolutely election year. A deputy in the EB Bureau testified that he had called attention to his boss about some of the Iraqi contracts mentioned in the press articles, and that he had also raised concern about the diversion of some of the CCC money. The Commodity Credit Corporation runs a government program that sells U.S. agricultural products at concessionary rates generally to countries facing difficulties feeding their people. The deputy said, "I warned people that there is evidence that some of the money is being diverted into purchasing these other kinds of things." The administration said that was not true; but when his boss later leaves government, he actually says his deputy was right. All of this was just food for fodder to attack the administration for its Iraq policy. It was undercutting Bush's asset flowing from his liberation of Kuwait. It was discrediting the administration. In rereading the articles that were appearing in that time, none of them picked up on Musa'id's attacks, which I had resolved only a few weeks before. For this I was thankful. Clearly, as I worked issues in Kuwait, I had to be very sensitive to the political environment in Washington.

The other thing that I want to mention is that in July Nat Howell, the former Ambassador, my predecessor, and his wife, Margorie, came to Kuwait as guests of the Kuwait government. They were invited back to Kuwait for a week's visit from July 14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>. Nat had been kept in Kuwait after the Iraqi invasion to demonstrate to the world and to Saddam that we were not acquiescing in his annexation of Kuwait. We did not accept his statement that there was no longer a Kuwait and we were not withdrawing our diplomatic presence just because he ordered all diplomats to leave. So Nat stayed in Kuwait from August 2<sup>nd</sup> to December 13<sup>th</sup> with a small group of officers. They suffered a lot during this period. I mean they were isolated. They always felt under threat. They weren't sure whether the Iraqis might come across the wall, and what they would do when they came across the wall. What would happen to him if he were taken as a hostage to Iraq? In the end he and his staff got out safely. The Kuwaitis wanted to bring him back to thank him

for this service, for the time that he spent under siege in the embassy and what he had done during this period. The Amir gave him a very nice award, a decoration from Kuwait. That week is a wonderful week. Nat saw the Amir, the Crown Prince, and virtually everyone that he had known before, like Sheikh Ali Khalifa, the Minister of Finance, and Sheikh Sabah. All these people greeted him with enormous warmth and kindness. This return was really meaningful for Nat and Marjorie. I remember at one point here was question as to whether Marjorie, a woman, could attend the ceremony with the Amir. Everything worked out the way you would have expected and hoped it would. She was there. The entire visit was a tribute by the Kuwaitis for what Nat (and the US) had done for them. And again, it came just after this Musa'id business. It's another reaffirmation, an outpouring of Kuwaiti popular support of an American diplomat and also for relations with the United States.

I was looking at some articles in the files this week in preparation for this session. I found some from December of this year and the following January that Musa'id actually attacked the United States again (*laughs*) for getting involved in Kuwait's domestic affairs. Fortunately, these new attacks were not picked up in the American press.

*Q: Had he been disconnected as an individual with the National Council?*

GNEHM: The National Council had already been abolished following the elections for the National Assembly. I don't know what set him off this time. I don't find in my notes that anybody ever really talked to me about this, other than to say, "There he goes again, Skip, he's just old, you know, just forget it." As I said, his remarks never got picked up in Washington. By this time the President had been defeated. The elections were in November and these remarks came in December. This is just a footnote to earlier events.

UNIKOM is the United Nations interim force on the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. It was established by a UN Security Council Resolution. Its mandate was just was to monitor the border for any incursions and also to supervise and support the demarcation of the border as it was approved. The first general to head UNIKOM was an Austrian. He was really superb --- really excellent, as you might expect from someone who came out of a professional army. He understood what one could and couldn't do. He structured and ran a very good organization. I went up to the border on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July as his guest. There was a reason for the visit at this time. There had been Iraqi threats and incursions across the border from Iraq. It wasn't clear if they were Iraqi government sponsored incursions or just farmers who'd been displaced, or Bedouins, or Bidoons (individuals who claimed ties to Kuwait).

The Iraqi government statements were belligerent, bellicose. By this time it was clear as a result of professional research, where the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border was going to be. The most acute issue was Umm Qasr, a small Iraqi port located on the Khor Abdullah. The Khor Abdullah is a small river really only a navigable indentation of the sea. Given Iraq's small shore line on the Persian Gulf, Um Qasr is the only Iraqi port other than Basra. At this time the river, the Shatt al-Arab, up to Basra was still not navigable due to the sunken ships from the Iraq-Iran War. So Umm Qasr had become, in fact, Iraq's only port even

though it had been largely destroyed in the war to liberate Kuwait. The issue for Iraq was that the new boundary line was slightly north of where it was before the war. As a result, it was going to cut through the former Iraqi naval base and put approximately two-thirds of it in Kuwait's territory. The Iraqis just went ballistic!

*Q: This is part of the normal ebb and flow of the rivers, isn't it?*

GNEHM: *(laughs)* No, I think it's because over time the Iraqis had encroached south of the border they had agreed to earlier. In spite of the Iraqi anger and protest, the Security Council supported the demarcation of the border where the experts had determined the correct border to be. There was no sympathy for the Iraqis at all in this point in time. I went up to the border at Umm Qasr to see it so that I could see it with my own eyes. I could then talk about it in first person terms. I mention the first UNIKOM because he was replaced by another general who was not nearly as adept at dealing with delicate bilateral problems that the Iraqis and Kuwaitis would raise. This ended up as another problem on my plate throughout the next year. I never had to think about these things when the Austrian general was there. Now I found myself often having to intervene with the Kuwaitis and with him and try to explain to Washington why this didn't happen or did happen. It was essential that I address the issues that arose but it was delicate as I had no authority over him.

*Q: You're sort of the expert.*

GNEHM: Yes, and I knew the history of things.

*Q: Where was he from?*

GNEHM: Nigeria. He just didn't want to get involved in any kind of controversy. And if there was a controversy, he sat in his trailer, air-conditioned trailer, and said this had to be handled in New York *(laughs)*, which is not the right response.

There is another issue worth mentioning. Ambassadors have certain authorities; they have certain responsibilities, and certain things they're supposed to watch and do. One of them is to grant or refuse country clearance for US Government travel to their country. There was a congressional staff delegation that wanted to come to Kuwait. They were rather arrogant, not uncommon. They wanted to come on a weekend, the only two days that they could come to Kuwait, and they wanted to see everybody --- the Amir, the Crown Prince, and everybody else. Of course nobody was going to see them on the weekend and I passed that information to the staff delegation. They were outraged that the Ambassador couldn't provide any appointments. I went back to them and said, "You know, we can do it either before the weekend or after the weekend, but not on the weekend" -- and I denied them country clearance. In the end we worked it out. They did in fact change their schedule, which I knew they could do, but they continued to mumble that we were going to charge them for staff overtime and a few other things. I said, "You know, you can come or you can't come. You know you have to cover these kinds of costs."

The other issue that came up was OPM, Office of Personal Management. They had somehow been in contact with part of the Kuwaiti government, which I didn't know about. They had reached a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to come into Kuwait and advise Kuwaitis on general personnel actions and how to restructure and reorganize the bureaucracy. The first time I heard about it was when my desk officer learned that there was a letter that was going to be signed in a couple of days between the Kuwaitis and OPM. My desk officer asked me if I knew about it and if I had approved it, to which I said, "This is the first time I've heard about it. No, I don't approve until I understand what the MOU entails." That froze the MOU, at least until we reconciled just what it was they were going to do. It was odd for another government agency to think they could come into a country to negotiate and ultimately sign an agreement without the ambassador knowing about it. Beyond the substance of the matter, the embassy invariably will have to provide admin support for them, right? Budgeting is the big issue of course. The State Department often finds that other agencies come in not realizing what the overhead costs are going to be. They often do not negotiate those costs in their agreements. Then they end up arguing that the State Department should be providing all this free office space, cars, housing, whatever else. This is a longstanding problem for the State Department. In this particular case, OMB hadn't even considered who was going to be paying the in country costs for these things. I said, "That alone stops this letter from being signed until we understand who will be paying for these things." So I didn't really block it on substantive grounds other than saying I should be a part of this and know what it's for. Such is the life of an embassy.

The President actually saw the Amir in Rio. I believe that was a global environment conference, as I recollect. The President went and made a speech, the Amir was there. The President had two issues to raise with the Amir. There was some concern in New York, and therefore with us, about paying for UN activities in Iraq. This related to inspections. Originally the UNSC resolution required the government of Iraq to pay for all these expenses. But that presumed Iraq was selling oil and having a revenue stream to do so. In this very early year that revenue stream was just not there. So there was a need to find alternate funding sources. The President made it clear that it was not just Kuwait who was being asked to provide funding. The UN was asking the other Gulf States to do so as well. The other issue that the President raised was Jordan. He asked Kuwait to provide some economic support for Jordan and said he conditioned any support on the Jordanians joining the sanctions against Iraq in a very firm way. Well, the Amir's response to that was "don't look to us for any help with Jordan." The bitterness toward Jordan was far too deep for what King Hussein did after Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. According to Bruce Riedel, who was giving me the debrief, the President didn't push (*laughs*) this point. Of course, you know, Bush liked Hussein; but he was angry at Hussein for the position he had taken. At the same time he certainly recognized the importance of Jordan and the King.

One of the issues that didn't seem to have come up was the October elections in Kuwait for the National Assembly, which I was surprised about. Evidently the President didn't raise it according to Bruce. Bruce also underscored to me -- again, this is in July toward

the latter half of July -- how concerned the White House was with some of the actions of the Iraqi government south of Basra toward the Kuwaiti border. There had been some troop movements and more bellicose language that worried the Administration. They didn't want to be surprised again. There was other activity in Iraq in July activity. Saddam was stymied in the north in his confrontation with the Kurds. He obviously was not making headway. Washington feared that because of his tenuous domestic situation, Saddam he might try to do something with Kuwait. Even knowing he would be clobbered, he might still do it to get domestic support by rousing a national spirit against the outside attacks.

*Q: Was there any intercourse between Kuwait and Iraq in this period?*

GNEHM: No, none whatsoever. The only time -- well, there were two places where they might come together, meaning be physically present -- one was at the UN. The UN was where Security Council met on Iraq. Each country might have a representative present; but they didn't talk. The other place was at the Red Cross in Geneva, when the International Red Cross Committee sponsored its periodic meetings over the detainees.

*Q: How many missing were there in Iraq?*

GNEHM: I think we were talking at this point about 180 Kuwaitis but there were also a few other nationalities.

*Q: Was there any solution on this?*

GNEHM: No, there never was. The only time there was some resolution, and I said some, was after our invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003-2005. As U.S. and Iraqi forces began uncovering mass burial sites, which had been either rumored or documented to have happened under Saddam, they did find Kuwaiti bodies. Through DNA they were able to the Kuwaitis, which brought to closure some of those 180. Others have never been accounted for. I might add that the burial sites also included a large number of Kurds as well as Iraqis.

*Q: Also what I wanted to ask you, at that time, was there any reflection on our election period?*

GNEHM: Yes, I want to talk about that. Kuwait went into depression on Election Day. Kuwaitis could not believe that Bush could lose. In spite of the polls, in spite of what I told them, they were stunned. *Stunned*. As I remember it, when I looked down on the morning the day after Election Day the streets were empty. It was a work day and the streets were empty. Everybody was home. Nobody wanted to go anywhere. When I went to the diwanias that evening, they were all crying. They couldn't believe it. It had to be wrong!

Then concern arose before the inauguration that Clinton wouldn't keep Bush's policy in the region. And yes, Clinton did in fact make statements about Iraq that indicated he was

willing to have a different relationship with Iraq, if they're willing to apply to the UN Security Council resolution. That position was OK and, in fact, not all that different from what Bush might have said under those circumstances. But the Kuwaitis interpreted that remark as walking back Bush's policy of firm opposition to Saddam. I ended up getting mixed into it. After election day there were articles and editorials in local newspapers that expressed the hope that Clinton would keep me as the ambassador. I had nothing to do with any of that. But they said if Clinton really wanted to indicate that his policy was not changing, Clinton should keep me. Clinton actually did keep me, and I want to talk about some of this in a little more detail. The White House told me that it was very much for that reason, that he knew there was anxiety and he would like me to stay to alleviate Kuwaiti concerns that US policy toward them and Iraq was going to change. It wasn't.

There is one final and unexpected development around the election time that I want to mention. I got a letter and then a phone call from President Bush a week before elections. He called me personally. He said, "Skip," he said, "You want to be my Ambassador to Jordan?"

I said, "I beg your pardon, sir?"

He said, "Yeah, I'm just calling because, you know, your tour's coming up and I'd like you to go to Jordan if you'd like to do that."

I said, "Certainly, sir." I called Bruce Riedel right afterwards. I said, "Bruce, what the hell is the President calling me for with this?" It was on a Friday before elections on Tuesday. I said, "What's he doing, sitting at his desk calling me when he's got to be out there campaigning?"

Bruce said, "Skip, he's convinced he's going to win. I was in a meeting and somebody said to him, you know polls and all -- he said, 'When people go into that booth they're going to look at the two names and they're going to vote for me.'"

*Q: It's interesting --*

GNEHM: Bruce told me the President was completely blown when he later talked to him after the election. So I had my letter from the President and another from the Department of State congratulating me on my selection to go to Jordan as ambassador. This is in the Fall of 1992 and bizarre as I later do go to Jordan as Ambassador but in 2001!

In between my situation is even more bizarre. Because you know what Clinton does? Clinton asks me later in the spring to be his Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. And that is another whole story of intrigue with Prince Bandar, then the Saudi Ambassador in Washington.

*Q: OK, well we'll pick this all up. We have a question.*

*INTERN: So Musa'id, he was angry you didn't go visit his diwaniya, correct?*

GNEHM: It had been a combination of personal reasons and his own dignity.

*INTERN: Right. Did you get any criticism from Washington or Kuwait for not doing that? Could the situation have been avoided?*

GNEHM: No, there was not criticism from Washington. Remember. Our primary objective was the restoration of the legitimate National Assembly and Musa'id was part of the rump council that opposed the elections.

*INTERN: So it was kind of inevitable. He was just going to overreact to—*

GNEHM: Yes, if there was any Washington was focused on his attack, it was his attack on Bush and the USG.

*INTERN: OK.*

GNEHM: The truth of the matter is that I was an *avid* attender at diwaniyas. I went all over the place. There had been a little criticism hither and thither and yon, but most people supported me and said, "Oh, this guy? He's a Kuwaiti!"

*INTERN: Sure. Right. Do you think he would have found something to overreact to even if you had visited his diwaniya?*

GNEHM: I don't know, maybe. See, I think what mattered to him more than anything was that he was in the National Council, which as rejected by most Kuwaitis.

*INTERN: Sure.*

GNEHM: And I was out there advocating elections for the new National Assembly parliament, which was going to supplant him and replace him. So he was really after the democrats. He was really after them -- and I was aiding and abetting them, and therefore he was going to take me down with them kind.

*INTERN: Right. Did this hostility ever manifest in threats—did you ever feel in physical danger?*

GNEHM: Never.

*End of interview*